

Thieu's War Prediction

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Saigon

President Nguyen Van Thieu claimed in an interview Wednesday that the Soviet Union had urged Hanoi to launch a military offensive here in order to block any efforts by the United States and China to "solve this war" during President Nixon's Peking talks.

He said South Vietnamese Army attacks and United States bombing had prevented the threat from materializing.

He said he thought Russia was worried that Washington and Peking might find "a basic agreement to restore peace in Indochina" and was determined to prove that the key to any solution lay in Moscow, not Peking.

Thieu repudiated all thought of invading North Vietnam should the conflict continue. He expressed will-

ingness to join with that country and eight other Southeast Asian states in a kind of neutral bloc that would renounce foreign bases or alliances in this area.

OFFENSIVE

Speaking English, seemingly at ease, the President contended:

"Nothing came of the so-called offensive they (the Communists) were supposed to be mounting here during President Nixon's visit to Peking. I imagine they will try an all-out offensive later on to exploit political differences in the United States and to press Nixon to yield more in negotiations."

dream is to bring peace to Vietnam. I am ready to return to civilian life as a simple citizen. When I proposed

to resign a month before new elections I did so in all sincerity and honesty.

He thought there was no doubt that the Communist side had hoped to mount a major operation this month to coincide with the American president's trip. "They introduced a whole division into South Vietnam, west of the Kontum-Pleiku area (in the Central Highlands)" he said.

"They also initiated small guerrilla attacks around the country. However, the main threat west of Kontum-Pleiku was set back by South Vietnamese ground attacks and United States bombing."

PREDICTIONS

Thieu predicted another limited Communist offensive effort at the time of Mr. Nixon's Moscow trip in May to demonstrate how strong the Communist position is in the Indochina war. He also forecast a strong offensive in the late summer that would seek to influence the American elections against Mr. Nixon. He foresaw a final military attempt next year before Hanoi agrees to some form of settlement.

Thieu was asked whether if he did resign a month before free elections — as pledged in the Washington-Saigon peace proposal — he would run for re-election.

"I cannot answer that yet," he said. "It is a very delicate question. My only