

# Thieu Links War, Nixon Re-election

By Kingsbury Smith and  
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Special to The Examiner

SAIGON — South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, asserting that the Soviet Union is calling the shots in the Indochina War, predicted yesterday that the Communists will launch a major military offensive later this year in an effort to influence the American presidential election.

Should President Nixon be re-elected, Thieu told William Randolph Hearst Jr., editor-in-chief of The Hearst Newspapers, in an interview, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong will make a final military push early in 1973 in the hope of strengthening their position in peace negotiations.

Failure of that drive, Thieu said, probably would result in the Communists fading out of South Vietnam and concentrating on Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

Although he said he has an agreement with Nixon for the United States to continue its air support of South Vietnam "as long as we need it," Thieu warned that if America withdraws from Southeast Asia, China and the Soviet Union will confront each other in a power struggle that could precipitate World War III.



NGUYEN VAN THIEU  
'Fight or die'

die," Thieu emphasized that his government has no intentions of "flirting" with the Communist regimes in Moscow or Peking in the manner of other Asian Pacific nations like Japan, the Philippines and even Taiwan.

While he thinks South Vietnam will be able to defend itself on the ground against its enemies after all U.S. troops are removed, he said it cannot do so without continued support from American B-52 bombers and tactical planes.

"We have an agreement from the United States to maintain American air support as long as we need it," said Thieu, adding that "aviation is most important" to South Vietnam in its fight against Communist aggression.

#### 'Russia Backs War'

Stating his view that China is far less afraid of attack from the United States than from the Soviet Union, Thieu said:

"China sees the United States as a missionary priest and Russia as a tiger."

He added:

"Russia is keeping the war going in Vietnam. It wants a

#### Rare Occasion

The interview with Hearst, syndicated columnist Bob Considine, Kingsbury Smith, European director and chief foreign writer of The Hearst Newspapers, and Robert E. Thompson, Hearst Newspapers national editor, marked one of the rare occasions on which the elusive president has talked privately with newsmen.

Vowing "we will fight or

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settlement on its terms, a settlement that will enable it to maintain a dominating influence in Indochina. It wants to dominate Asia from India to Indochina and from Japan to Thailand."

Thieu said if North Vietnam cannot achieve a military victory in the South it may seek to conquer Laos and Cambodia or at least achieve political domination of those two Indochinese states.

The President said he did not believe Moscow wanted to see North Vietnam gain complete control of Laos and Cambodia. The Soviets, he added, prefer to see the creation of neutral governments in Cambodia which would be Soviet oriented.

#### 'Vietnam Test'

"If South Vietnam folds, all of Southeast Asia folds," said Thieu. "Vietnam is the test. Thailand and the Philippines say that if South Vietnam cannot defend itself against the Communists no one else in this area can do so.

"If the Communists gain control of South Vietnam, they will have the richest and the best army in Southeast Asia and I mean the armies of both North Vietnam and South Vietnam together." With that, Thieu added:

"Every state in Southeast Asia will fall."

Thieu then declared quite firmly:

"The key is Vietnam."

The president said everything the Communists have been doing in Indochina since last September and October points to a major offensive in the late summer or early fall of this year, just prior to the presidential election in the United States.

#### 'Last Chance'

"This is their last chance," Thieu said. "If they fail to achieve a major military victory this year or early next year they will be too weak to launch another big push. It will be too late for them because South Vietnam is getting stronger all the time."

He stressed that the North Vietnamese cannot sustain a big push for more than 90 days.

"They are now poised for attack," the president added. "But I think they will wait until later."

If they fail, said Thieu, they may try again early in

America, Russia will take over. If you withdraw the Seventh Fleet from Asia, the Soviet fleet will replace it."

Asked how he felt about the possibility of neutrality

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1973. Should they again fall short of success, he added, they may fade out of South Vietnam and seek to take over Laos and Cambodia.

The 49 year old president, now in his second four-year term, said:

"They need a military victory of some kind to justify to their own people the loss of half a million men and the failure to conquer South Vietnam."

With four divisions in Laos and Cambodia, Thieu asserted, the North Vietnamese may throw everything they have into those two countries if victory appears to be beyond their grasp in South Vietnam.

"Russia may say, 'no,' but the fact is North Vietnam has powerful troops and they could win a victory in Laos and Cambodia very quickly and enforce their control," said Thieu.

Turning to the struggle for power in the far East between Russia and China, the president said that Moscow wants to create the impression in Asia that it, and not Peking, is the key to peace.

"If you (the U.S.) pull out, Russia will fill the vacuum, just as if you were to withdraw in Europe Russia would replace you," Thieu contended.

"If you pull out of South

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for Southeast Asia, he said he had grave doubts about neutrality. "Neutrality for whom?" he asked.

"When Gen. de Gaulle was out here he talked about neutralizing Indochina. To de Gaulle, neutralization meant chasing the Americans out so the French could come back."

He added:

"When Russia suggests neutrality for Indochina, it means America gets out and Russia comes in."

Thieu's concern about Soviet encroachment in the Western Pacific was reflected earlier in interviews held by the Hearst Task Force with Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos

and the top leaders of the Nationalist Chinese regime on Taiwan.

#### China to Resist

"I understand very well that everybody except the United States has designs on

Indochina," said Thieu. "As long as the United States stays here, the others cannot achieve their aims. But if the United States goes, who is going to replace it? Not China, but Russia."

The president emphatically continued, "if Russia tries to fill the vacuum in Indochina, China will resist and that could be the beginning of World War III."

While Thieu said he does not think it feasible for Mainland China to invade Taiwan militarily, he did express some concern over that island and suggested that the 10 million Chinese who live abroad may now shift their support from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

"The overseas Chinese have been helping to support Taiwan financially and economically," said Thieu. "They were in fact one of Taiwan's main sources of support. They may now be afraid to continue that support. That is very important."

As a result of Mainland China's ouster of Taiwan from the United Nations and President Nixon's visit to Peking, the smaller free nations of Asia feel the United States will abandon its friends in the Far East, said Thieu.

#### Look to Future

"Sox people feel they are not strong enough to stand up to the Communists without American support, and they are now beginning to flirt with the Communists; to make reservations for the future," the president added.

While other countries of Asia may not have the determination of capability to fight the Communists, Thieu said, "for us there is no question about making reservations with the Communists."

He then declared:

"We will fight or die. If the United States and our other friends abandon us, maybe we will die under China or under Russia, but

we will fight."

"Some people are not so determined to fight," contended the short, dark-haired president, explaining that he has informed leaders of other Asian nations that they must not only have the determination to fight but also adopt "Vietnamization" as a policy for survival.

#### Confidence

"If President Nixon applies well his doctrine, I agree with him that it should not be necessary to maintain American forces here," said Thieu.

"If you do in other countries what you are doing in Vietnam, you will give them confidence to exist."

Vietnamization is the policy of the United States of providing other countries with the resources so that they can defend themselves.

This policy should be broadened in Southeast Asia, said Thieu, to include "Cambodiaization," "Thailandization" and "Laosization."

time ago were it not for North Vietnam's intervention.

"The Viet Cong have not been able to recruit any reinforcements in the South since two years ago. Even the North Vietnamese mor-

ale is very low."

#### Hanoi Knows

He added:

"The top men in Hanoi realize this."

Referring again to President Nixon's visit to Mainland China, he contended

that its principal result was to boost China's morale vis-a-vis the Russians.

Summing up the picture in Indochina, he concluded:

"The war will end only when the other side wants to end it."

On the continuing conflict in South Vietnam, the president contends that "the Viet Cong has been defeated in South Vietnam. They are nothing anymore. The war would have ceased a long