

# Why Thieu Hates 'Em All

By Bob Considine

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SAIGON — One gathers the impression listening to South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu for a couple of hours that he doesn't like Communists.

That goes for North Vietnam Communists, South Vietnam Communists, Russian Communists, Chinese Communists, and, by blanket indictment, the Communists of eastern Europe, Albania, Cuba, Africa and South America. Hates 'em, and has reason to.

He believes as a fundamentalist anti-Communist that whenever and wherever the free world relaxes its determination to stay free, the Communists must step in and fill the vacuum. That is their only mission in life.

The filling of the vacuum need not be militarily achieved. Indeed, he feels, Russia and China are making particular efforts to be Good Guys, on the surface at least. They have become great rivals in how to win slaves and influence captive peoples without lopping off heads.

Their now separate aims are to create governments in various "neutral" countries which will be subservient enough to them to announce that aid is no longer needed from the free world (specifically, America) so Go Home, American. Or go home South Vietnamese, in the case of Cambodia and Laos.

Thieu feels that Russia, rather than China, is in the better position to take over. He thinks that their rivalry within the Marxist world could possibly ignite World War III, if there is a rat race to fill vacuums such as would be left if the U.S. pulled completely out of this place and everywhere else where it has solemnly-worded mutual assistance pacts.

Thieu's not nearly as colorful as the country's former premier and, later, his vice president, Nguyen Cao Ky.

But he obviously packs all the clout in this country. He's the only reigning officer (though in prim mufti, with a square tie a Wall Street customers' man would endorse) who was part of the "Big Minh-CIA" coup that de-horsed and murdered President Ngo Dinh Diem on November 1-2, 1963.

Momentarily steered off his anti-Communist declamations — including the revelation that his country has killed 500,000 of them from the north and among the native Viet Cong — he briefly discussed his own political situation, and that of Ky specifically.

He said, if I intercepted his gallantly struggling English correctly, that it was his idea — not the U.S. government's — to bow out of office a month in advance of the next election, so as not to seem to dominate the voting as much as he did the last time.

I think he said that the next election need not necessarily be a one-party rubber stamp job. And I think he said he was not even sure he'd run again.

But he seemed to doubt that Ky — who is now in the political woodwork — would make it to the presidential palace. Incidentally, the presidential palace makes the White House look like a gent's room of a service station on Route 66.

Thieu acknowledged that Ky was not actually politically dead, but that he figured the "Captain Midnight," as some of Ky's American detractors once called him, can attain a seat in the South Vietnamese Senate. He suggested also (I think) that if the war is not over by 1975, he'd run again, and that if it was over — he'd be re-elected by acclamation.