

Thieu Picks Dalat As Seat of Council

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SAIGON, Dec. 11—The Thieu government wants the mountain resort city of Dalat, rather than Saigon, to be the site of meetings for the proposed National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, according to reliable Vietnamese sources.

The selection of Dalat, a small, sleepy city in the hills 140 miles north of here, seems to suggest that the government would like to reduce the council's importance and isolate its members from the rest of the country.

There appears to be little chance that the Communists will accept this proposal. The fact that this trial balloon is being sent up, however, is a sign that the government is beginning to grapple with the logistical and political problems it will face if a peace agreement results in the creation of an administrative body that would have Communist and neutralist participation.

Recent moves within the Vietcong Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) and National Liberation Front (NLF)—including what may be a program of introducing potential council members to the South Vietnamese public—are seen by some analysts here as indicating that similar matters are being considered on the Communist side.

The scope of the council's responsibilities is believed to have been a principal issue in the current Paris peace negotiations. Whatever is decided, the Saigon government faces at the very least the prospect of some public, legalized Communist presence within South Vietnam.

Government sources say that this means that answers will have to be found to these questions: How will the Communist representatives live? Will they occupy villas with their families, or live together in a hotel as the Chinese do in New York? Will they be free to move around and have contact with ordinary South Vietnamese? Will they be allowed to hold press conferences? Will the local press be permitted to attend these? Will the Communists have their own security force?

Similar questions are being raised by U.S. officials. The Provisional Revolutionary Government member would presumably be entitled to live and work somewhere in South Vietnam in order to participate in what White House negotiator Henry A. Kissinger called "two-power" and "four-power" negotiating sessions. The distinction is between those talks involving Saigon and the Vietcong alone, and those also including Hanoi and Washington.

The potential difficulties raised by these issues, according to sources in the Thieu government, accounts for the preference for Dalat as a site for meetings with the Communists. A popular, evergreen-shaded resort town of about 86,000 people, Dalat is relatively isolated in the hills.

To hold the meetings there, informed sources said, would minimize the council's contact with the public and press. It would also, they acknowledge, deny the PRG and NLF rep-

resentatives the recognition force in South Vietnam that as a legitimate political they seek, and for that reason, they are thought unlikely to agree to the proposed site.

Beyond the issues of meeting place and physical arrangements is the question of the council's membership. Unlike the proposed "two-power" and "four-power" sessions, which are presumably adversary proceedings with the participants representing their own interests, the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord is to operate, Kissinger said, "on the basis of unanimity."

The Thieu government, which has steadfastly opposed creation of the council, has given no indication of who its representatives would be, or whom it would choose as its nominees to the "neutralist" third segment.

Recent Communist radio broadcasts have prominently mentioned some of the more moderate members of the Vietcong, provisional government and National Liberation Front leading some analysts to believe that these persons are to play a visible political role in the South after the shooting stops.

An article that appeared last month in the French newspaper *Le Monde* purporting to describe an armed confrontation between hardline Communist elements who wanted to fight to the end and moderate forces advocating compromise—which reportedly ended with a victory for the moderates—is viewed here as an allegory. No actual battle is believed to have taken place, but the names of those mentioned as victorious are being publicized in Communist broadcasts.

Some of these moderates are reported to have participated in a high-level conference in Hanoi early in November, and their remarks were later broadcast by Vietcong Liberation Radio.

With the exception, a U.S. analyst wrote, "None of those listed are identifiable as hard-core Communists."

It is thought possible that the "other side's" members of a postwar council may be from among the following:

• Trinh Dinh Tao, a lawyer, vice chairman of the

PRG advisory council and chairman of the Vietnam Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces, a satellite group formed after the 1968 Tet offensive.

• Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the PRG advisory council and chairman of the NLF Central Committee.

• Huynh Tan Phat, an architect, president of the PRG and vice president of the NLF Central Committee.

• Duong Ky, said to be a professor, secretary general of the Vietnam Alliance and a member of Vietnam's Nguyen royal family.

The only "hard-core Communist" whose remarks went out over the radio was Tran Nam Trung, a name usually associated with the post of defense minister in the Vietcong provisional government.

President Thieu insists that there is no third force, only Communists and anti-Communists. Hanoi's view, described in a recent editorial in the newspaper *Han Han Dan*, is that "the present real situation in South Vietnam" consists of "two administrations, two armies, and three political forces."

Western analysts here consider it probably true that the vast majority of the South Vietnamese people support neither Thieu nor the Communists, but they say it is another question whether those politicians who claim to represent this "silent majority" really do so either.