

Sleight Comments on Vietnamese Elections

The true villain of this Sunday's election in South Vietnam is not the popular target of persecution, President Thieu, but rather the shrewd, exsmugler Vice President Ky and the bias, fault seeking American public. Of course President Thieu is no moralistic crusader either, but then again very few, if any, successful politicians are, regardless of nationality.

Thieu has tried his best to make the coming elections a two or more man race, if for no other reason than to claim democracy in his victory.

When Ky submitted his petition for candidacy, confident of it being rejected because of a lack of supporting signatures and leaving him an excuse to claim a rigged election, Thieu had the South Vietnamese Legislature make an exception and permit Ky candidacy regardless. Ky then declined, holding to his claim that the election is rigged.

It is true that it would be fruitless for Ky to run, but not because the election is rigged. Ky does not have the majority of the people's support. They have been so accustomed to hearing and seeing the name of Thieu that they will automatically vote for him. Ky knows

this. He knows that his only chance for the Presidency is through a coup d'etat with a rigged election as justification.

The fear of being imprisoned, as were opponents of Ky and Thieu in the last election, does not hold up in Ky's or General Minh's case. Both men have strong ties with the South Vietnamese Army and Air Force and only a fool would attempt arresting them. Thieu unquestionably has the authority to do so, but he certainly is not foolish enough to try.

Thieu cannot force Ky, Minh, or anyone else to run for the Presidency. What he has done, in order to make the election as democratic as possible, is to announce that if he does not receive 50 per cent of the votes cast he will step down. He has even campaigned and explained to voters how to vote against him. Under the circumstances one could not ask for much more.

It's true that the South Vietnamese Government has it's faults--too many of them. Many of it's leaders are selfish opportunists with few moral ethics. But one must remember that this government is in it's infancy and all beginning governments

pass through similar growing pains.

As for democracy, it is in a poor state of existence in Vietnam. Democracy is always difficult for a nation to construct and maintain when that nation is fighting a war for its very survival. England completely abolished her elections during W.W. II. At least South Vietnam has not yet abandoned that practice.

President Thieu might not fit the mold of an ideal national leader according to American democratic standards, but he's the best South Vietnam has at the moment.

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