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SAIGON--Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Do said free elections would be "a big gamble" for his country.

"We don't know what the results of the election will be," he said. "But we want to be really, truly democratic so we take the risk to have an election and it is only fair that we accept the results."

The statement of the veteran diplomat was distinctly less optimistic than those of high officials within the Johnson Administration in Washington, who have claimed that the Saigon government could beat the Communists <sup>at the ballot box</sup> ~~with free elections~~ in South Vietnam.

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Dr. Do, a medical doctor by profession, ~~representative~~ was an official observer at the ~~1954~~ 1954 Geneva Conference ending the French Indo-China War. He openly wept when the French and the Communists signed the agreement dividing his country into a Communist North and an anti-Communist South.

"We are now on a deadline to have free elections (in South Vietnam), he explained. "If we can't have elections by the end of 1967 (which the government has officially announced), it will be a failure-- a collapse. But we are convinced that we will control enough territory and people to have the election."

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The distinguished-looking foreign minister said that the Honolulu Conference attended by President ~~Ly~~ Lyndon Johnson and ~~leading~~ South Vietnamese leaders earlier this month was also a "gamble, too. The question is now whether or not we can obtain and reach the goals," which have been given world-wide publicity.

The exclusive interview with the Foreign Minister, made last week, came in the aftermath of the statements by Sen. Robert Kennedy (Demo, N. Y.) advocating that the Communist Viet Cong be given a chunk of power and responsibility in the Saigon government.

"We can't accept the proposition to have the Viet Cong in the South Vietnamese government," Dr. Do emphasized. "We have seen the results of the ~~talk~~ troika system in Laos and it has never worked. So we never accept such a proposition. A ~~coal~~ coalition government has never worked either in under-developed countries or in Central Europe. .... The Communists will succeed to take over the government, if not by force, then sooner or later they eliminate their adversaries." <sup>By eliminating</sup> IN A COALITION.

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Dr. Do said the statements of Senator Kennedy were based on "a lot of misunderstanding." He <sup>2</sup>urged Western leaders ~~not~~ not to envision a "democratic regime in an Occidental conception."

He explained that the South Vietnamese people have for years lived under French colonialism and dictatorial regimes and so "we aren't able to have nationalist parties as well organized as the ~~Comm~~ Communist Party. In Asia or Africa, the ~~Comm~~ Communists are the only party well organized and disciplined. In Vietnam, we have an economic-political-social structure not ~~not~~ comparable to more advanced countries like the United States or Europe. So we can't afford to have a democratic regime in Occidental conception. <sup>2</sup>...We have to <sup>2</sup> give the people political education so that when elections are held they will have some meaning. Some people say we should have elections now-- but they will be ~~not~~ meaningless if the people aren't prepared and they don't know <sup>2</sup> ~~what~~ they are voting for."

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The "gamble" of free elections in South Vietnam is directly related to the future success or failure of the two-year "Pacification Program, which was discussed extensively at the Honolulu Conference, in an attempt to fight the war on the social-economic front as well as the military front.

Reliable sources estimate that currently the South Vietnamese government ~~controls~~ controls fifty percent of the nation's fourteen-plus million people; twenty five per cent are considered to be controlled by the Communist Viet Cong and ~~the~~ the remaining twenty five percent live in "contested" areas.

~~By the end of 1967, the Vietnamese government~~

By the end of 1967, when free elections are officially scheduled, the Vietnamese government hopes to have seventy six percent of the population secured and living under its control. The Vietnamese government has ~~openly~~ hopefully planned to "pacify" about thirteen or fourteen percent of the required twentyfive percent by the end of this year.

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In this narrow belt of ~~the~~ villages to be pacified, rural ~~cent~~ construction teams are assigned to give the population political instruction, to help them build schools and ~~local~~ <sup>other</sup> self-help ~~proj~~ <sup>proj</sup> projects, <sup>and</sup> to assist in training local villagers to provide rural defense.

<sup>Now</sup> "We hope that in two years, our rural construction teams ~~are~~ <sup>can</sup> working in pacified areas ~~in order~~ to educate and assist our people," Dr. Do explained. "We hope that in two years we'll be able to hold free elections. It's a matter of phasing and timing.

"If we have free elections with the people well educated, then we'll accept the result of the election--it's only fair. We take the risk to have the election and accept the result."

Dr. Do said it was "difficult" to achieve a military victory in this type of guerrilla war, but that a type of political victory would result by bringing security to the villagers and then achieving <sup>B</sup> "social work, ~~introducing~~ <sup>INTRODUCING</sup> introducing education, building schools and education and a more ~~prop~~ <sup>prosperous</sup> prosperous era with more liberties for our people.

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"We always want to negotiate with the Communists on a basis <sup>THAT</sup> they stop their aggression," Dr. Do ~~said~~ said. ~~is~~

He explained the government's three-part program in dealing with the Viet Cong internally. First, those "that misunderstand us, can join us (in the Open Arms program for returnees); second, "Those who want to go back to North Vietnam can go;" third, ~~new~~ <sup>CHOICE</sup> "those who make neither ~~choice~~ will be treated as pirates and ~~outlaws~~ <sup>outlaws</sup> and we'll eliminate them."

~~Dr. Do~~ Dr. Do explained, "We want nothing in North Vietnam--all we want is that ~~North~~ North Vietnam stop their aggression and withdraw their troops beyond the seventeenth parallel.

"we want <sup>No</sup> ~~to~~ more." And he added ~~had~~ <sup>2</sup> hastily, "We want no less."