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huong 1 (normass/deepe)

(This is the second of a two-part series on the newly-installed Cabinet of Prime Minister Tran Van Huong.

SAIGON, MAY 27--The newly-announced Cabinet of Prime Minister Tran Van Huong, entrusted with unifying the non-Communist ~~sector~~ political sector--is regarded here as shifting the internal political power structure away from a duumvirate--perhaps towards a triumvirate. ~~in the~~

To unify the ~~exs~~ government, the three leading power personalities who need close cooperation are the 65-year-old Prime Minister, President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky.

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huong 2 (normass/deepe)

Before the appointment of Huong, the duumvirate of President Thieu and Vice ~~President~~ President Ky were the chief policymakers; Prime Minister Nguyen Van Loc had been appointed on the recommendation of Vice President Ky; Loc's Cabinet was approved by the most powerful generals in the country. ~~Loc~~ Loc's chief virtue, <sup>AS</sup> one Western diplomat noted, "was ~~he was~~ a compromise candidate, between Ky and Thieu—a bridge between ~~them~~ them, and this is not insignificant. But, with the personal and political rivalries between ~~Ky~~ Ky and Thieu and the inertia of the Loc Cabinet, the net result ~~of this~~ virtually left South Vietnam's executive functions paralyzed.

Besides the personal rivalries between Thieu and Ky, Thieu and Ky appear also to <sup>Differ</sup> ~~dis~~trust each other on the question of negotiating with the Communists; Ky <sup>S</sup> fearing that Thieu is much more willing to compromise on letting the Communists into the South's political structure. The Ky group, which includes other powerful generals, <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ also critical of some ~~of~~ civilians serving in Thieu's Presidential offices, some of whom they ~~are~~ consider as <sup>is</sup> pro-Communist.

~~Early last week~~

When Thieu named Huong as prime minister and ~~for~~ <sup>more reuter</sup> invited the entire Loc Cabinet to resign, Western diplomats were impressed by Thieu's "courage and e<sup>#</sup> decisiveness." Later in the week, as bickering over the Cabinet formation in<sup>o</sup> continued, another diplomat viewed Thieu the President as "an empty container. <sup>ANYONE</sup> ~~The Americans~~ can put any policy they want to in him."

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huong 3 (normass/deepe)

With the appointment of Huong, a Southern school teacher, as Prime Minister, the power structure has shifted—the full direction of the shift has to be revealed in the future. Huong is not a compromise Prime Minister between Ky and Thieu. In fact, highly informed sources say that he was the first choice of neither. They say Ky's first choice for Prime Minister was General Nguyen Duc Thang, a dynamic Northerner who is strongly anti-corruption and anti-Communist. He is currently commander of the 16 provinces south of Saigon. Thieu's first choice was reportedly General Tran Thien Khiem, a four-star general, close friend of Thieu's and former ambassador to Taiwan. If General Khiem was not acceptable, then Thieu wanted a weak political, but competent, administrative prime minister. But, these sources say, the American officialdom threw its full weight behind Huong, who had long been a favorite of the Western diplomatic set, and Thieu gave in to Huong's appointment.

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huong 4 (normass/deepe)

Instead of either a ~~pro-Ky~~ pro-Ky or a pro-Thieu Prime Minister in office, both Ky and Thieu ~~are~~ <sup>being</sup> ~~find~~ <sup>find</sup> an independent one who is ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> a national figure ~~in~~ his own right.

Thus far, on the surface, all three officials appear to be unified. Both Thieu and Huong carefully noted that "the constitution must be respected"—a defined ~~clear~~ <sup>clear</sup> that the President <sup>is</sup> was responsible for the policy direction of the government and the Prime Minister <sup>is</sup> was simply responsible for executing that policy. In an interview with the semi-official government news agency, Vietnam Press, Huong also ~~clearly~~ specifically applied this procedure both to foreign policy and military affairs. Yet, a pivotal question being asked by political sources in Saigon is how well Thieu and Huong will cooperate in their respective roles.

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Symbolically, the three leaders represent three regions of Vietnam: ~~the~~ President Thieu from the Center, Vice-President Ky from the North, Prime Minister Huong from the South. To emphasize unity on the regional issue, Prime Minister Huong made a point of naming three ministers without portfolio who also represent the three regions.

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huong 5 (normass/deepe)

Also, Huong in a private session with Vice ~~President~~ Ky, persuaded the Vice President to support him. Ky was reportedly impressed with the ~~humilitary~~ in humility, integrity and patriotism of Huong. Ky privately ~~promised~~ and ~~publicly~~ publicly announced his support for Huong. But, below these official positions lies a great deal of disgruntled feelings, reliable sources report, which could easily surface to snarl the government. One of the first tests in the Ky-Huong relationship ~~will arise~~ is expected to arise if Huong attempts to fire or replace a pro-Ky general, such as General Nguyen ~~Ngoc~~ Ngoc Loan as chief of National Police, a move widely rumored in Saigon for days. One of Huong's announced first missions is to curb ~~corruption~~ and malpractices among the government's administration; to ~~accomplish~~ accomplish this will create ~~frictions~~ frictions among high-placed officials.

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Other points of significance about the Huong Cabinet area: are:

First, in the strict Vietnamese definition, the Huong Cabinet is not considered to be pro-neutralist, which has consistently meant pro-French. Most of the Huong's 18 cabinet members have served in previous governments which maintained a hard-line anti-Communist position. But, since the beginning of the Paris peace talks, when American foreign policy openly moved into peace negotiations, a new trend has begun to unravel in Vietnam. That large category of Vietnamese leadership which had once been embodied in the "pro-American, anti-Communist" bloc is now forced to choose between being pro-American and anti-Communist. This large coalition of interests is now fragmenting. Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky probably symbolizes best the Vietnamese who have chosen to remain anti-Communist (against a coalition government) even if it also means becoming anti-American. (In another past crisis of this nature, a Vietnamese politician explained, "Please remember it is the people who are most anti-Communist who eventually become the most anti-American. In little ways, your policy always ends up helping the Communists, rather than the anti-Communists"). Typifying the officials who have chosen to be pro-American, pro-negotiation, rather than remaining anti-Communist might be Dr. Phan Quang Dang, a Harvard-educated minister without portfolio and also minister of the Open Arms program, or Buu Diem, Vietnamese ambassador to Washington who is now acting as official observer in Paris. The political coloration of the Huong Cabinet is considered to be more pro-American than it is anti-Communist; and more pro-American than pro-French. Very leftist elements who were rumored to be in the Huong Cabinet were later dropped, the most prominent example being Lawyer Tran Van Tuyen and ex-general Le Van Kim.

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huong 7 (normass/deepe)

Second, in terms of quality, the Huong Cabinet is credited here as being a vast improvement over the Loc Cabinet, although some doubt that the Cabinet has improved proportionate to the increase in non-military problems since the Tet offensive. Huong is easily acclaimed to have more prestige and stature than Loc, ~~however, even though~~ <sup>ALP</sup> one-third of the Loc Cabinet has remained to serve Huong.

In terms of quantity, the Huong cabinet is regarded as ~~more~~ <sup>barely more</sup> civilian than the Loc Cabinet. Loc's cabinet had three generals serving in it; Huong's has two generals, a colonel, and a military-oriented civilian in charge of the Prime Minister's office.

Regarding a government with a "broad political base," a favorite ~~expression~~ <sup>American</sup> expression of American officialdom here, Huong did not appoint political party leaders to his cabinet as was expected. Instead, he replaced Loc's non-political administrators with what he has ~~termed~~ <sup>termed</sup> "patriotic people." This move has cost Huong the support of some political figures; it was the basis of the disagreement between Huong and ~~the~~ <sup>Ha Thu</sup> Ky, leading a faction of the Dai Viet party, who refused to join the Huong Cabinet. To a lesser extent, some ~~parts~~ <sup>parts</sup> of the religious sect factions are also dissatisfied because their political leadership is poorly represented in the Cabinet. If the Huong government is to ~~acquire~~ <sup>acquire</sup> a broad political base, it ~~is~~ <sup>will be</sup> derived from the prestige—and later performance—of Huong and his subordinates, rather than the backing of the traditionally factionalized political parties.

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Fourth, while the power of the Vietnamese generals has been seriously <sup>and</sup> temporarily reduced, they still form what ~~is~~ amounts to an invisible "super-government," which at this time would prohibit a major shift ~~towards a~~ allowing the formation of a Communist-dominated government in the South. This ten-man council of generals is extra-legal, much like the formation of the American Cabinet in the early days of the United States government. It's formation is based on a political agreement going back to the time when the generals backed Thieu, instead of Ky, as their ~~President~~ candidate during ~~last September's~~ elections last September. In exchange, ~~Thieu~~ Thieu promised that the nine ~~other~~ other generals could name the future Cabinet and that Ky, chairman of the council, could name the Prime Minister. Ky's ~~choice~~ choice was Nguyen Van Loc, who has just been dismissed.

When Thieu announced ~~he~~ he was changing the government, the generals called on Thieu and reportedly asked if Loc would also be removed. Thieu assured <sup>them</sup> ~~that~~ Loc would remain in office. On Saturday, May 25, Vice President Ky flew to Nha Trang with his wife to entertain students at the resort beach--and President Thieu appeared on ~~the~~ national Vietnamese television announcing he had replaced Loc with Huong.

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huong 10 (normass/deepe)

Sources close to Thieu say that Ky and the other generals had been informed in advance; ~~sources~~ sources close to Ky say ~~it~~ "that's a big lie by Thieu," and consider that Thieu has betrayed them. Two days later, the nine generals, excluding Thieu, met in Ky's office <sup>in the</sup> left-wing of the Presidential Palace, and decided to "wait and see" what should be done. Following Huong's visit to see Ky, later in the week, Ky became the moderate element of the group and reportedly persuaded the others to support Huong.

~~But~~ Although Thieu may have appointed a prestigious Prime Minister ~~and~~ during the past week, he has lost the confidence of his powerful generals, who seem clearly to be watching the Paris peace talks with one eye and the <sup>(increasing)</sup> ~~intensity~~ intensity of Communist <sup>military</sup> attacks with the other.

(Hank: I'm off to Danang and probably will not file the remainder of this week) <sup>✓</sup>

Regards Bev).

== End Report ==