

(Morgan Gandy)

SAIGON, 19170, (UPI)---From the very moment Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky stepped into office, he was aye general without command and aye Prime Minister without aye country.

During his eleven months in office, he failed--- history may say he failed totally---but then he never had a chance to succeed.

"Ky was aye champion---very much of aye champion," one Vietnamese politician explained. "But he was aye champion of aye cause that was already lost."

That lost cause was victory. Ky publically announced--- in fact dreamed---that he himself would preside over the victory not only in South Vietnam, but also would dramatically lead the invasion to liberate North Vietnam.

But, in the end, he was only bequeathed the right to preside only over the requiem of his own military regime.

The demise of the bouncy, dynamic, outspoken Prime Minister, and his regime during the next three to five months when a constitutional assembly is slated to be elected is thus interpreted here as an end of an era. The coming fall of the Ky regime is the final shadowy anti-climax of the anti-Communist Ngo Dinh Diem era, which determinedly insisted not only on aye military contest against the Communists but also on aye political battle against any neutralization a la Laotian troika style.

(More---Miller---BD)

The Ky regime was considered the ~~final~~ last government that would fight the Communists not only militarily, but more significantly fight them politically--~~and~~ to oppose the ~~political~~ ~~re-arrangements~~ internal political re-arrangements which would pave the way towards an eventual negotiation with the Communists. The future Saigon governments are predicted to ~~have~~ ^{mouth} officially the anti-neutralist political line--while clandestinely politically sparring with the Communist-led Liberation Front ^{for} on negotiations. This Ky flatly refused saying, "This is not a question of my government--it's a question of my country."

It was the 54-year-old Prime Minister at the Honolulu Conference in February who attempted to dissuade President Lyndon B. Johnson from holding early elections in Vietnam--elections which precluded the political re-arrangement necessary for future negotiations. This was Ky's ultimate failure, but others more prestigious have not ~~tr~~ succeeded in ~~to~~ persuading the President Johnson.

"The Americans in Saigon called Ky 'Captain Midnight,' as though he had dropped from the clouds into a science fiction adventure here," one Vietnamese politician explained.

"But, in fact, he was Don Quixote in a black flying suit. He was striking at windmills that he thought were fortresses. He sought to preserve a past anti-Communist policy that was already obsolescent. He was vain, glorious, dynamic, colorful and ~~brave~~ ^{He} brave, ~~and~~ thought he would be the national hero to defeat the Communists. But instead, he was forced to lead an invasion against ^{Rebellious} rebel Danang, his own second largest city--and even ^{He} hopelessly failed in that. He thought he could win the war--but both America and his country wanted peace more than ~~victory~~ war and negotiations more than victory."

Why did Prime Minister Ky have neither the chance nor the choice of succeeding?

In simplest terms, he possessed the appearance of power--which was magnified at the Honolulu Conference--but none of the substance; he had inherited all of the responsibilities of leading a nation at war, without the authority to do so. He named a war cabinet, but not a government, he had a bureaucratic apparatus, but not an administration.

Horizontally, he was from the moment he entered office continuously being politically ~~aspirated~~ suffocated by his "first enemy within"--the Communists, his "second enemy within"--the Buddhist politico-priests, and ironically by his staunchest ally, the Americans. He was a political pawn of these three power ~~block~~ blocs--and ^{FN} ~~a political prisoner~~ immobile political prisoner within the very country of which he was Prime Minister.

Vertically, the continuous process of the fragmentation of the central government peaked under Ky; the late Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963 attempted to concentrate power at the central echelon, and was overthrown by the Americans and the Buddhists; General Nguyen Khanh a year later attempted and failed to centralize power in Saigon--he was toppled by the Americans and his own generals. Ky did not even possess the power to attempt--little own attempt and fail--to centralize ^{Authority} ~~power~~. The power to run the war was usurped by the four Vietnamese corps commanders--and by American unit commanders--the former who could and did refuse his orders; the latter whom he could not even command.

In short, Ky symbolized the shrinking authority of the central government in Saigon. Geograph

Geographically, this shrinking process was done by the Communists, the Buddhists and the Americans. When ^{is} Ky stepped into office, the Communists ruled most of the countryside. The Communists had seized power militarily and were administering it politically; they had become the government in the countryside and Ky's weak political apparatus became "the shadow government." Neither Ky the man, nor the Saigon regime nor the anti-Communist cause commanded any support from the countryside, for during the past eight years the Communists had either "liquidated" or "neutralized" any anti-Communist ~~or~~ opposition. At the Honolulu Conference, American officials sought to make Ky and his policies popular and respected; but this mystique was already too late. For, the Communists had ^{effectively} already implemented the crucial principle of Mao-Tse-Tung: "Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun."

(More--Miller--HD)

Ironically, American combat units could successfully contest the Communist military units, but they could not protect fill the anti-Communist political vacuum in the countryside. In one night alone, in one village ^{SIX MILES from} outside of the Marine-protected Danang airbase, a small-unit Communist sq uads assassinated eight pro-government peasants.

"Saigon is ~~in~~ ^{indirectly} so isolated that it is now the Ky government that must smuggle shrimp and rice into the city from the countryside," one Western diplomat explained. "It is the ^{SAIGON} ~~Ky~~ government ~~rather~~ ~~that~~ that must pay the Viet Cong road and canal taxes--which is creating the inflationary spiral in the cities. It is the central government that must put helicopter gasoline in civilian trucks, pay Viet Cong taxes to transport it even ^{to} ~~on~~ the outskirts of Saigon. Even an American gasoline truck convoy wouldn't get through; one and a half American combat divisions outside of Saigon can not protect stop the Viet Cong moose around the cities."

With the countryside under the rule of his first enemy, the Communists, Ky was losing the cities ~~both~~ to and because of both the Americans, his ally, and the Buddhists, politico-priests, his "second enemy within." In June, when Ky came into office, the urban revolt had already begun--the revolt against the ~~American~~ consequences of the American troop buildup, which would and could be channeled by ^{PRO-Buddhist} growing Buddhist political machine. Ironically, the American troops that Ky needed so much to win the military war became his most ~~and~~ ~~damaging~~ ~~political~~ ~~liability~~.

fifth add--morgan gandy--saigon

LIABILITY
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The initial impact of the American troop build-up in the cities was myriads of bars along the mainstreets, battalions of bargirls and prostitutes and another gallop towards inflation. Ky signed a decree ordering the bar-owners--at an unspecified date--to move into designated "recreational areas;" but, the American officials did not want organized red light districts which would be subject to Congressional investigations.

In an attempt to curb the black marketing of American dollars, the Ky government, after ~~threemonthsof~~ four months of haggling, instituted the American military scrip, but at the rate of one hundred eight ^{cu} piastres per dollar instead of the official seventy three piastres per dollar.

"You see, the Americans were not interested in stopping inflation," one Vietnamese politician fumed. "If they had been, they'd have accepted 73 seventy three piastres per dollar instead of ~~one~~ one hundred eighteen. The Americans demanded a privileged position--and Ky lost some of the Vietnamese economic sovereignty to the Americans."

In an attempt to control the acute ~~housing~~ housing shortage, Ky signed a decree stating the Americans would move out of Saigon. But, the American officials could not move thousands of military personnel outside of Saigon; the logistical system already was clogged to get in necessary war materials; the Vietnamese construction workers were ~~encouraged~~ ^{ALREADY} soaked up to ^{ing} build necessary military installations.

(CROSS-MILLER-BD)

After eleven years of American military presence in Vietnam, the lack of any secure ~~area~~ ³ "ghetto-ized" military ^{HYE} cantonment area outside of Saigon was the symbol of the unplanned war which Ky inherited.

Ky did have the power to make promises—and to make programs on paper. He promised any crackdown on corruption, but when he executed publically any convicted Chinese businessman, American officials, Buddhist politico-priests and the wealthy Chinese businessmen turned against him. Still, any court designated under the Ky regime also convicted and sentenced to death any Vietnamese government official—the appeal is still pending. ² ~~Also~~ Another six Vietnamese Customs officials were sentenced to prison terms of hard labor.

In an attempt to re-assert anti-Communist political authority in the countryside, the pacification program was ~~against~~ ^{revised, re-named} rural development, and the long process of training rural health workers, counter-subversive agents, ^{RURAL} policemen and propagandists began. But, before the rural program had any chance to succeed or to be implemented, ^{Anti-Government} the urban/revolt was already underway.

"Ky was notrptnot defeated in the Communist-held villages, but in his own cities," one Vietnamese politician explained. "He was notrptnot defeated so much by the skill of the Communists—but by the mistakes of the Americans and ~~the~~ ^{the} anti-Communists."