

[138/02/14]

Roberts File

502

MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

July 22, 1969

~~SECRET~~



MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Anti-Communist Prospects in South Vietnam

You have asked that I report to you concerning an article by Richard Dudman in the St. Louis Post Dispatch claiming that an "inquiry" by the paper had established that the prospect for a political victory by the "non-Communist populace" in SVN is "poor and worsening." The article asserts that President Thieu has narrowed rather than broadened his political base of support among the populace.

Polling

You have asked why the U. S. Government does not conduct a poll to establish the facts of the matter. Sampling of popular opinion in SVN is regularly carried out by the U. S. Mission in Saigon and is used as background information for policy guidance. The polling results are not made public, since this has resulted in charges in the past that the U. S. was attempting to manipulate public opinion.

The latest poll conducted in June (Tab A) showed a general approval of U. S. troop reductions and no particular drop in confidence in the GVN or its policies. The poll indicated considerable popular interest in Government programs for land reform and housing. Although it is clear that Dudman's case on popular attitudes and prospects is greatly exaggerated and overdrawn, I am not sure whether this could be successfully established by means of a U. S. -sponsored poll, particularly in view of the mixed results of our own sampling so far.

The June poll did show an increase in pessimism concerning an early end to the war, and doubts over the ARVN capability to take over full defense of the GVN. We are hopeful that popular morale and support for the anti-Communist cause can be maintained at a reasonable level. Much will depend on the allied ability to keep the enemy military threat within its present bounds and on the continuation of the recent rise in rural confidence concerning prospects for livelihood and maintenance of the improved security situation.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5  
NW 07-07/11 per Hr 9/20/2011  
By *AWP* NARA, Date 4/16/2012

~~SECRET~~

Thieu's Political Base

Dudman's evidence that Thieu has narrowed rather than broadened his political base is also a collection of misinformation and half-truths. Thieu has made solid progress on this in the past few months with the new political front organized around him, and with efforts to cultivate some of the National Assembly leaders and other politicians more carefully.

A great deal still needs to be done in this field, however, since the lack of active and adequate party and grass roots support is still a major weakness of Thieu's position vis a vis the Communists. We are urging Thieu to do more, and we are trying now to build up the steam behind this issue to make it a primary one in terms of our advice to the GVN. He is said to be planning some limited moves soon to broaden the political representation within his cabinet.

As a final commentary on political strengths in South Vietnam, it might be useful to look back over the events of the past eighteen months -- the Tet offensive, the April 1, 1968, limited bombing halt, the opening of the Paris talks, the May and August, 1968, "High points," the full cessation of bombing and opening of the expanded Paris talks, the 1969 post-Tet offensive, the Midway Meeting, and finally your May 14 speech and Thieu's statement -- to show that South Vietnam has withstood, successfully a whole series of events which some observers could have expected to be major political shocks.

Attachment

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US Mission - supported

1. CENTER FOR VIETNAMESE STUDIES JUNE 16 TO 30 SAIGON OPINION SURVEY-BASED ON USUAL MODIFIED PROBABILITY SAMPLE, 452 INTERVIEWS, 28 PERCENT INTERVIEW REFUSALS SHOW THESE THREE RESULTS COMPARED TO MAY SURVEY:

INCREASED DISSATISFACTION (50 PERCENT AMONG THOSE AWARE OF TALKS) WITH PARIS TALKS PROGRESS, INCREASED PESSIMISM RE EARLY END TO WAR (ONLY 21 PERCENT NOW EXPECT END WITHIN YEAR); CONTINUED DOUBTS RE ARVN ABILITY ASSUME FULL DEFENSE NEAR FUTURE (ONLY 20 PERCENT THINK ARVN CAN DO SO, WITHIN 10 YEARS, 10 PERCENT WITHIN FIVE YEARS.)

2. NEVERTHELESS, NO EVIDENCE THUS FAR THAT TROOP REPLACEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SPECULATION TO DATE HAVE DISTURBED ANY SUBSTANTIAL PORTION SAIGON GENERAL PUBLIC. ONLY 4 PERCENT VIEW REPLACEMENT 25,000 TROOPS, AND ONLY 11 PERCENT SEE ADDITIONAL 1969 REPLACEMENTS RESULTING IN "CONSIDERABLE LOSS" IN MILITARY STRENGTH. ONLY 14 PERCENT REGARD REPLACEMENT OF ALLIED BY ARVN TROOPS IN 1970 AS NOT BENEFICIAL TO GVN, 39 PERCENT REGARD IT AS BENEFICIAL, 47 PERCENT NO EFFECT, 35 PERCENT DONT KNOW. REPLY TO PARIS TALKS, 10 PERCENT NO EFFECT, SIX PERCENT NOT BENEFICIAL, 41 PERCENT DONT KNOW. ONLY 2 PERCENT INDICATE AWARENESS OF SPECULATION

[119032 4/70-10MM]

REGARDING REPLACEMENT TIMETABLE FOLLOWING NIXON JUNE 19 PRESS  
CONFERENCE.

3. MIDWAY MEETINGS VIEWED AS BENEFICIAL TO GVN BY 90 PERCENT,  
NOT BENEFICIAL 2 PERCENT, NO EFFECT 4 PERCENT, DONT KNOW 35 PERCENT.  
OPINION ALSO PREDOMINATES THAT MIDWAY MEETING WILL HAVE FAVORABLE  
EFFECT ON "PROGRESS TOWARD SATISFACTORY SOLUTION FOR SOUTH  
VIETNAM IN PARIS TALKS" (50 PERCENT FAVORABLE EFFECT, 3 PERCENT  
UNFAVORABLE, 5 PERCENT NO EFFECT, 42  
PERCENT DONT KNOW).

4. BELIEF IN DEPENDABILITY OF US AS ALLY MORE WIDESPREAD THAN  
ANY TIME SINCE TET 1968 (92 PERCENT CHARACTERIZE US AS DEPENDABLE ALL  
Y,  
23 PERCENT NOT DEPENDABLE, 25 PERCENT DONT KNOW).

5. GVN DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO PEASANTS (35 PERCENT) AND AVAILABILITY  
FO MORE HOUSING (35 PERCENT) ARE MOST OFTEN CITED AS RECENT DEVELOPME  
NTS  
~~CONSIDERED OF MOST IMPORTANCE IN PROVIDING FOR THE PEOPLES  
WELFARE~~

7. STATISTICAL TABLES POUCHED JULY 4. NARRATIVE WILL FOLLOW  
EARLY NEXT WEEK.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

SECRET

July 18, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Dean Moor *A*

THROUGH: John Holdridge *JHH*

SUBJECT: Presidential Request

The President has asked that you report to him concerning the prospects for a GVN victory in SVN. The President's interest was sparked by a St. Louis Post Dispatch news article by Richard Dudman which alleged that a recent "inquiry" by the paper showed the prospects for the "anti-Communist" side in SVN "poor and worsening." (Tab B) The article alleged that Thieu had narrowed rather than broadened his government over the past few months.

The President believes the news article to be completely incorrect. He asked if the CIA could not undertake a poll of popular attitudes in SVN.

The U. S. Mission in Saigon does take periodic samples of SVN public opinion. The latest one in June tended to bear out the contention that popular confidence in the GVN's ability to win is slipping (Tab C). It is clear, however, that Dudman's article greatly exaggerates the difficulties in all respects. We have prepared a memorandum which, we believe, depicts the present situation more accurately.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab A.

Attachments

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US Mission - supported

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REGARDING REPLACEMENT TIMETABLE FOLLOWING NIXON JUNE 19 PRESS CONFERENCE.

3. MIDWAY MEETING VIEWED AS BENEFICIAL TO GVN BY 59 PERCENT, NOT-BENEFICIAL 2 PERCENT, NO EFFECT 4 PERCENT, DONT KNOW 35 PERCENT. OPINION ALSO PREDOMINATES THAT MIDWAY MEETING WILL HAVE FAVORABLE EFFECT ON "PROGRESS TOWARD SATISFACTORY SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM IN PARIS TALKS" (50 PERCENT FAVORABLE EFFECT, 3 PERCENT UNFAVORABLE, 5 PERCENT NO EFFECT, 42 PERCENT DONT KNOW).

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6. GVN DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO PEASANTS (35 PERCENT) AND AVAILABILITY FO MORE HOUSING (35 PERCENT) ARE MOST OFTEN CITED AS RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ~~CONSIDERED OF MOST IMPORTANCE IN PROVIDING FOR THE PEOPLES WELFARE.~~

7. STATISTICAL TABLES POUCHED JULY 4. NARRATIVE WILL FOLLOW EARLY NEXT WEEK.

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.: 731

Date: Tuesday, July 15, 1969

Time: 11:30 A.M.

FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

DR. H. KISSINGER

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: Monday, July 21, 1969

Time: 2:00 P.M.

SUBJECT:

President's request for a poll in South Vietnam.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- For Necessary Action
- For Your Recommendations
- Prepare Agenda and Brief
- Draft Reply
- For Your Comments
- Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Please submit a report on what actions will be taken to comply with the President's request.

PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a delay in submitting the required material, please telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

JRS  
K. R. COLE, JR.  
For the President

[UN07-07/11 p 80811]



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 14, 1969

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

HENRY KISSINGER

According to a July 6th Richard Dudman article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the results of a month-long inquiry by that newspaper suggest that the prospects of a political victory by the non-Communist populace in Vietnam must be read as "poor and worsening." Dudman also reports that Thieu is narrowing rather than broadening his political base.

The President commented to you that Dudman is a "violent leftist" and that these statements are completely opposite from the truth. He asked, "Again - why doesn't the CIA take a poll in South Vietnam . . . i. e. Communists versus non-Communists?"

Would you please report back to the President on this matter.

*Alex*  
ALEXANDER P. BUTTERFIELD

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

# VIETNAM ROUNDUP

No. 76

July 11, 1969

## Saigon Regime's Chance Against Reds At Polls Rated Slim

By RICHARD DUDMAN  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
of the Post-Dispatch

FIRST OF A SERIES

SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 5 — As the Vietnam war slowly begins to run down, the emerging main test of success or failure of Allied policy and strategy is whether any South Vietnamese government can compete effectively against the Viet Cong.

Can the 2-year-old republic, with its American-style constitution proclaiming government "of the people, by the people and for the people," survive the change from shooting war to political contest?

Findings in a month-long inquiry by the Post-Dispatch suggest that the prospects of the non-Communist forces in the approaching political contest must be rated as poor and probably worsening.

It appears, moreover, that the political contest has begun and that the government headed by President Nguyen Van Thieu may be losing and the Viet Cong winning.

### Keeps Narrow Base

The trouble is that Thieu is clinging to his narrow political base, largely military and Roman Catholic. He is using his extraordinary wartime police powers to block efforts to form



Nguyen Van Thieu

a broader, non-Communist "third force."

Paradoxically, the showings on all the secondary tests have turned generally favorable in recent months.

The actual fighting is going well for the government for a change. Enemy body counts are up. Although American fatalities are holding steady at more than 200 a week, the enemy-to-friendly "kill ratio" shows that the other side is being hurt more. It may well be true, at

last, that the enemy can no longer mount a major offensive.

Pacification, as measured by the computerized hamlet evaluation survey, shows steady progress. Each month, a higher percentage of the population is rated as living in relative security.

Pacification, which means different things to different people, is the term used to cover a broad range of activities aimed at improving life and freedom for South Vietnamese, and destroying the Viet Cong's popular support. Saigon thinks the program is designed to create positive allegiance to the present government. Washington regards it as an effort to bring about widespread popular support for any government the South Vietnamese people may choose.

Cash rewards bring in more and more enemy defectors, Intelligence reports, and tips on where to find enemy caches of weapons and food. Other cash payments persuade more and more "friendly" Vietnamese to build new houses, repair bridges and canals and restore abandoned rice paddies.

Operation Phoenix, the heart of the pacification effort, has an impressive record in its task of wiping out the Viet Cong's shadow government that still collects taxes, recruits new troops and even runs its own mail service over much of South Vietnam. Monthly reports usually show that a thousand or two of these underground officials have been captured, killed or persuaded to defect.

But what will happen when the fighting tapers off, when the long-sought cease-fire comes at

Continued on page 2

## VIET HOUSE OK'S NEW PRESS CODE

Law Passes By Default  
After Year Of Debate

[By a Sun Staff Correspondent]

Saigon, July 9—Vietnam's Lower House enacted a press-regulation code by default today, replacing a potpourri of rules, some of which dated from the French Colonial era.

The enactment ended a year of wrangling over details of the proposed code—a year in which more than 30 newspapers including some of Saigon's most influential dailies, have been suspended either temporarily or indefinitely despite an official announcement that censorship was to end more than 12 months ago.

The delays ended today not because of any decision to enact the bill but because the House failed to muster the quorum that was required to prevent enactment.

### Earlier Version Approved

An earlier version of the bill had been approved by the house, and when the Senate sent it back with amendments, the House was required under the constitution to produce at least 90 votes against the amendments if it was to contest them.

The House met all day yesterday in an attempt to get a quorum but ended the day with only a fourth of the approximately 90 members who were present for the opening of the session.

The bill eliminates an existing rule requiring that publishers get permission from the Ministry of Information before establishing their newspapers. It also allows them to publish after merely notifying the ministry of their intention.

Vietnam now has about 30 newspapers, but the end of the permission requirement could greatly increase that number. Vietnamese sources estimate that as many as 700 applications are on file from would-be publishers who were not given permits.

### NOTICE

Material in Vietnam Roundup is selected by CSIA for reference use by personnel having an official interest in its contents. No other use of this publication is authorized.

last?

**Few Committed**

After all the years of fighting and propaganda and cash hand-outs, a reasonable estimate of the present state of South Vietnamese allegiance puts the number uncommitted to either side at 70 per cent. Only 20 to 30 per cent are lined up solidly with either the government or the Viet Cong.

A widely respected former minister of information in the Thieu government, Ton That Thien, now a professor at Van Hanh University, offers that estimate. What is more, he says the government is lucky that the number uncommitted remains as high as it is and that so few have swung over to the Communists.

When the time comes to vote, the choice will not be the simple ideological one of capitalism versus Communism or the still simpler one of freedom versus slavery. Instead, it will be Ho Chi Minh (or rather his ally in the South) against Thieu or whichever other non-Communist leader emerges in the meantime.

A main issue is likely to be peace versus more war. Peace sentiment runs strong. Vietnamese are sick of bombing, sick of artillery barrages, sick of being drafted, sick of being taxed, sick of the constant trouble and danger that comes with the war.

**Nationalism Factor**

Another is likely to be Vietnamese nationalism. On the communist side will be leaders who have established a legitimacy by fighting against foreign intruders no matter who they were — the Japanese, the French and now the Americans. On the government side, the leaders, until now at least, are those who sided with the French and now side with the Americans.

Looking toward peace, many South Vietnamese students and intellectuals have begun to hedge against the future by moving toward their personal accommodations with the Viet Cong. Being civil to a Viet Cong agent might keep one off the Viet Cong blacklist if it turned out that the communists came to power outright or became an important force in a ruling compromise coalition.

The Viet Cong's recent proclamation of a provisional revolutionary government of South

Vietnam stepped up the political warfare. Although American officials scoff that the leaders of the new "government" are the same old faces from the Viet Cong and the transitional Alliance of Peace, Nationalist and Democratic Forces, many South Vietnamese consider the move an important one.

**First Alternative**

For the first time, there is an alternative to the Saigon regime. If the enemy now should ask for a cease-fire, the United States and Saigon could hardly refuse. The next step would be a regrouping of forces into assigned areas, the Viet Cong into a generally recognized "liberated zone." The result would be de facto partition, with two capitals and two governments.

The present situation has been long in the making, and the obvious remedy has long been discussed. What was needed, it was said, was for the Saigon government to broaden its base, bring in all the non-Communists, and develop a popular regime.

Whatever Thieu's other achievements, his response to these suggestions has been to narrow his political base rather than to broaden it.

He has closed newspapers that have said too much about peace or coalition with the Communists. He has used the draft and imprisonment to put his non-Communist political rivals out of action. Many potential leaders of a broadened regime have been jailed, drafted into the army or sent into exile.

**Picked Group**

When Thieu announced the formation of a political front this spring, it included only the groups he could trust. Even the opposition front, in Saigon, put forward as the start of a loyal opposition in an eventual two-party system, was hand-picked on an invitation-only basis.

This opposition front has become something of a joke, inasmuch as the head of one of the component parties has been telling friends that Thieu personally asked him to take part in the opposition bloc.

A somewhat more independent group, some lawyers, professors and one member of the lower house of the National Assembly, is headed by Tran Ngoc Lieng, a Saigon lawyer, it has

been walking the narrow edge of what is permitted. The group carefully avoids the forbidden terms "neutralism" and "coalition" in its program calling for a "government of national reconciliation."

Lieng was summoned to national police headquarters for questioning. He says he expects continued harassment but hopes to avoid arrest.

**Examples Given**

Those who have dared to go farther have been put out of action entirely. Some examples:

Duong Van Minh, one of the generals who led in overthrowing the dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem, was kept in exile and prevented from running in the 1967 presidential election. He now has been permitted to return but remains on the sidelines.

Au Truong Thanh, former minister of economics in the Nguyen Cao Ky government and regarded as one of the most promising potential leaders of a non-Communist or coalition regime, is in exile in France. He was thrown off the ballot shortly before the 1967 election on the ground that his peace candidacy was neutralist and pro-Communist. He later was arrested, ostensibly for his own protection. Eventually, after intercession by the U.S. mission, he was released from prison and permitted to go with his family to France, where he teaches in a university at Tours.

Gen. Nguyen Chang Thi, former commander of the northern First Corps, one of the few national leaders who had the respect of the militant Buddhists, is in exile in Washington, where Ky banished him with the help of Gen. William C. Westmoreland.

**Buddhist Drafted**

Tran Quang Truong, a widely respected Buddhist layman and university professor who walked out of the constitutional assembly in 1966 because of the government's suppression of the Buddhist struggle movement, was ordered back into the army for additional duty, although he had long since completed his military service and has no prospect of returning to politics.

Vinh Kha, who was president of the student body of the University of Hue and took a leading part in the struggle movement, was drafted as a sergeant

although he was a fourth-year medical student. He is in prison, convicted of desertion.

**Under House Arrest**

Hoang Van Giau, another leader of the struggle movement, was drafted, went into hiding and was caught and sent to prison.

Thich Tri Quang, the able if troublesome and charismatic leader of the militant Buddhists, as anti-Communist as he is anti-Thieu, is under virtual house arrest at the An Quang pagoda, effectively out of action for the present.

In its systematic suppression of the struggle movement, the government followed a pattern of drafting hundreds of the student activists as privates, although Vietnamese university students entering the army are almost invariably commissioned as officers. Many either evaded the draft or deserted after induction and wound up in prison or, in some cases, with the Viet Cong.

Whatever the merits of the cases against Thich Thien Minh, director of the Buddhist youth center, Truong Dinh Dzu, runner-up peace candidate in the 1967 election, and Nguyen Lau, editor of the Saigon Daily News, their continued imprisonment is a constant warning to Thieu's non-Communist opposition to lie low or take the consequences.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH