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Wednesday, October 25, 1967
6:35 p.m.

Pres file

Mr. President:

This report of Vietnamese
attitudes is interesting.

W. W. Rostow

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Saigon, October 17, 1967

The Honorable
Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to
The President
The White House

Dear Walt:

Enclosed herewith is Barry Zorthian's first "Nationwide Hamlet Survey," which was taken on various subjects in 14 hamlets in Thua Thien Province and 12 hamlets in Quang Tin Province in I Corps. He is in the process of taking similar surveys in the other three Corps.

The following are conclusions in which you would be particularly interested:

1. Seven in ten people welcome the American presence in Viet-Nam, mainly for military reasons, and partly for economic and other aid. Less than one in ten (six percent) do not welcome the Americans here, the remainder rendering no opinion (pages 2 and 7).
2. Nearly ten times as many people blame the war on North Viet-Nam, Communist China, the VC and Soviet Russia as on the United States. Fifty-four percent blame the war on one of the mentioned Communist forces, only six percent on the U.S., and 40 percent don't know (page 6).
3. Villagers who say their life is worse now than it was a year ago outweigh those who say it is better--by a ratio of two to one. Negative appraisals are based

mainly on inflation and poor harvests (pages 2 and 12). (It is to be noted that I Corps is the one area where the war has greatly intensified over the last year. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how other Corps villagers answer this question.)

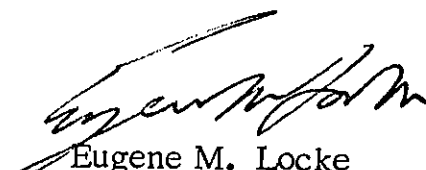
4. The VC image is bad. One-third describe the VC as "brutal," "inhuman," "murderous," "subversive," "tyrannical," "terroristic," etc.; another one-third describe the VC as dominated by Communist China or Soviet Russia; one-fourth express no opinion; and one-fifth simply state the VC are Vietnamese (page 8).

5. The Revolutionary Development program is widely known (two-thirds of the villagers) and the image of Revolutionary Development Cadre is by and large favorable, both in terms of their personal behavior and usefulness (only one percent derogatory and most of the remainder complimentary).

6. The report deals with a number of other subjects, as indicated in the Table of Contents. The above mentioned information may be useful in connection with our program to get the facts known.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,



Eugene M. Locke
Deputy Ambassador

Enclosure:
JUSPAO Research Report dated
10 October 1967

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JUSPAO RESEARCH REPORT
10 October 1967

NATIONWIDE HAMLET SURVEY

(First Interim Summary Report - I Corps)

DISTRIBUTION: Limited

PUBLISHED BY:
JUSPAO PLANNING OFFICE
SAIGON, VIETNAM

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- (a) The Land Title and Tenure Program
- (b) The Agricultural Credit Program
- (c) Other Programs

4. Situation and Aspirations

I. INTRODUCTION

During the period July - September 1967, the Saigon Center for Vietnamese Studies, under JUSPAO supervision, conducted a survey in some 120 hamlets throughout the Republic of Vietnam. They are located in 15 provinces spread through all four Corps regions. The number of respondents totaled more than 1200.

The localities and respondents were sampled in accordance with random methods and in consideration of the population spread. The questionnaire was structured by JUSPAO in coordination with other offices engaged in Psyops and RD policy and program work. It should be borne in mind, however, that the survey had to be restricted to localities which are reasonably secure and accessible.

This is the first of four interim summary reports. It covers I Corps and is based upon the tabulated responses of 218 interviewees sampled in the two provinces of Thua-Thien and Quang Tin. Interviewing was carried out during the first two weeks of July 1967 in the following 25 hamlets:

Thua Thien Province

Ming Thanh, The Lai Thuong, Lai Khe, Bao Vinh, Trieu Son Tay, Duc Buu, Doc So, La Y, Trung Dong, Mau Tai, Lai Triem, Tan My, Van Tan My, An Ninh.

Quang Tin Province

Van Long, Dan Ha, Dan Trung, Doan Trai, My Thach, An Tay, Thanh Long, An Tan, Long Phu, Long Binh, Dong Yen

Similar interim summary reports will be issued for each of the other three regions plus a final interpretative report. Detailed tabulations will be available at the Survey Research Branch of the JUSPAO Planning Office.

II. HIGHLIGHTS

..... Loudspeaker systems are the dominant source of information on inside-district events, radio on outside-district events. BBC and VOA are the only foreign stations with at least a limited audience

..... Newspapers play a very small role, but the survey underscores the effectiveness of Huong Que magazine

..... A large majority are undecided or reluctant as to suggestions on how to end the war and only very few foresee an early end

..... Seven-in-ten people welcome the American presence in Vietnam, mainly for military reasons, and partly in consideration of economic and other aid

..... The way GVN and Allied forces treat villagers and their property is seen as a prime factor in fighting the Viet Cong effectively

..... Villagers who say their life is worse now than it was a year ago outweigh those who say it is better - by a ratio of 2:1. Negative appraisals are based mainly on inflation and poor harvests. The future outlook is also lackluster

..... Public utilities and security rank highest in hopes and wishes for the future of the hamlets, while greater income and prosperity rank highest in personal aspirations

..... The Revolutionary Development (Rural Reconstruction) Program is widely known, although only a limited number of hamlets have so far experienced its implementation. The image of RD cadre is by and large favorable, both in terms of their personal behavior and usefulness

..... Knowledge about the Government's Land Title and Tenure Program is rather limited in range and substance, even though three-fourths of all respondents do not own the land they till

..... Only half of all respondents have some notions of the land ownership and title concept, but many more react in a positive vein after a brief explanation of the Program's basic objective

..... Most respondents are familiar with the Agricultural Credit Program, and only a minority finds faults with it

..... Loan programs on the whole top the list of Government programs deemed most useful

..... There is little cognizance of the Constitution and even less substantive information on it

..... The great majority is satisfied with the local hamlet elections of early 1967, in terms of their process as well as prior information which was received mainly through VIS cadre and loudspeaker systems

..... The ordinary people in hamlets are seen as the major factor in helping refugees resettle satisfactorily

..... The Chieu Hoi Program is widely known and there is still some good potential for people in hamlets appealing to relatives in VC ranks

..... The Viet Cong image is largely a derogatory one, yet, a substantial minority among the respondents are non-committal

III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Media

(a) Information on events inside the District.

Loudspeaker systems top all other media, as 51% of all respondents list them as their usual source. Person-to-person communications rank next with 45%, radio third with 26%. Bulletin boards (18%) and mass meetings organized by GVN cadre (13%) are next in line. Newspapers and magazines rank very low, with 3% and 2% respectively.

Credibility ratings run along a similar pattern, with loudspeakers outweighing person-to-person communications and radio each at a 2:1 ratio and bulletin boards and mass meetings each by more than 3:1.

(b) Information on events outside the District.

Here, radio is the dominant source, as listed by 66% of all respondents. Next, but far behind, are person-to-person communications (24%), newspapers (22%), loudspeakers (18%), bulletin boards (12%), magazines (7%), newsreels (6%) and GVN cadre (5%). (Television was included in the list shown to the respondents, but was not checked by any of them).

Credibility ratings run similarly, with radio clearly outweighing all other sources. Almost as many who list radio as their usual source also say they receive most of their information from it.

(c) Radio listening

Forty-four percent of all respondents own a radio and an additional 18% have access to a radio where they live. Nearly all of these two groups (56%) say they listen to radio every day; the others listen at lesser intervals, except for 17% who say they never listen to radio.

The most listened-to stations are Hue (65%) and VTVN (62%). Thirty-six percent listen to VOF, 29% to Radio ARVN. The only foreign stations usually listened to are BBC, listed by 14%, and VOA, listed by 8%.

VTVN is the best liked station, as stated by 24%. Next are the Hue Station (18%), VOF (8%) and BBC (7%). Less than 1% list VOA as the station they like best. The chief criteria for liking a station best are its attractive programs, fast and wide news coverage and strong and clear signals - in the order as stated here.

IV. THE WAR

1. Outlook

Only 4% of the respondents think the war will be over in less than a year. Ten percent expect it to last from one to five years, 14% more than five years. The vast majority of 72%, however, say they do not know.

A plurality of 40% say they do not know who is responsible for the continuation of the war. The others place the blame mainly upon the Government of North Vietnam (39%) and Communist China (28%) whereas 23% blame the Viet Cong in the South and 17% blame Soviet Russia. The U.S. is held responsible by a small minority of 6%.

The chief reasons for the continuation of the war are seen in colonialism and ideological and economic expansionism. As many as two-thirds of all respondents seem undecided or reluctant to offer any suggestion on how to bring the war to an end. Of those who do, a plurality of 16% advocate intensification of the war, whereas 10% advocate negotiations, and the small remainder come up with various irrelevant points. It is interesting to note in this context that, whatever the suggestions offered, twice as many people want the GVN to "do it" as want the U.S. to "do it."

2. Allied Aircraft/Artillery Attacks on Hamlets.

Twenty-two percent of all respondents say their hamlets were at some time or other struck by artillery or aircraft fire. About half of that group attribute the attacks to GVN forces, the other half to the Americans. Most say they do not know the reason for such attacks or blame them on stray shells. A few see the attacks as aimed at the enemy or at preventing VC penetration; only 1% say their hamlet was attacked by mistake.

Eight percent say civilians were killed, 5% say civilians were injured in such attacks. Three percent say the victims received compensation. Only 2% feel the casualties were unavoidable. The others are uncertain or think the armed forces could have fired more carefully. As to whether these strikes altogether could have been avoided, most of the respondents concerned are uncertain (14%), the others (8%) are halfway divided in yes and no.

3. Security

Only six percent of all respondents say their hamlets are not protected by any friendly forces. Eighty-two percent say their localities are protected by Popular Forces or self-defense militia, 26% by Regional Forces, 22% by Armed Youth, 13% by American forces, 5% by others. (Many of these respondents mentioned more than one category).

(d) Newspaper and magazine reading

Sixty-six percent of all respondents never read a newspaper. Only 2% read one every day, the others at lesser intervals.

Huong Que magazine, on the other hand, is read by 25% and an additional 4% have it read to them or just look at the pictures. Only 3%, however, say they receive the magazine regularly. Less than half of all readers are able to keep copies, while most have to share them with other people.

The majority of Huong Que readers (15%) obtain their copies from military units or government services; nine percent borrow them from other people; only 2% read them in an information office, hamlet office or reading room.

In reference to the format of Huong Que, eleven percent of the respondents like its "nice and clear" pictures best. The quality of paper and print and the "attractive" cover pages, are specifically praised. As to contents, the majority of readers (18%) like articles on agriculture best, and 12% refer specifically to animal husbandry in this connection. There are virtually no suggestions as to changes in contents.

2. VIS Cadre

Four-in-ten respondents say cadre of the VIS have been or are working in their hamlets. When asked to describe their functions, most (27%) say the cadre give information, 14% say they show films, 11% say they make propaganda and 7% say they organize mass meetings. The impact of mass meetings is underscored by the fact that 18% ask for more of them.

3. Cultural/Drama Teams

Two-in-ten respondents say their hamlets have at some time or other been visited by cultural/drama teams. Half of them (11%) attended performances of such teams. The other half give lack of spare time as the main reason for not attending. Nearly all of those who attended were favorably impressed, with 7% describing the performances as interesting and useful and 2% stating specifically that they gained a better understanding of government policies from them.

Seventy-five percent are satisfied with the way the forces protect their hamlets; only 4% are not, the others are not certain. Eighty-eight percent, in fact, say they and their families feel safe going out of the hamlet to tend their fields. The others do not feel safe going out or have no outside fields to take care of.

As for the personal behavior of local troops, only 6% of the respondents say they are dissatisfied, partly because of arrogant behavior and partly because of the troops' disregard for personal property. Seventy-eight percent, however, say they are satisfied.

4. American and Allied Presence in Vietnam

Seventy-one percent say they welcome the presence of the American forces in their country; only 6% say they do not, yet, 23% are either undecided or reluctant to commit themselves on this point, saying they do not know. Half of all respondents welcome the American presence because it aids the fight against the communists and assures security and peace for them. The others focus on economic and other aid aspects.

When asked what the forces of the GVN and its Allies should do to fight the Viet Cong more effectively, the majority of 60% express no opinion. Among the others, a plurality of 15% stress the need for a fair and sympathetic attitude toward the people to "win their hearts", 11% call for adequate security through encampment in villages, etc., and 9% suggest intensified military pressure.

About half of all respondents express no views on what the forces of the GVN and its Allies should refrain from doing in order to fight the Viet Cong effectively. Among the others, the vast majority focus on the disrespect for people's lives and properties and on impolite acts and attitudes; seven percent urge no more random shooting or shelling and an equivalent proportion criticize the lack of discipline, such as drunkenness or misbehavior toward women. Only 2% specify defoliation as a practice that should be discontinued.

5. Refugees

About half of the respondents say there are refugees living in their hamlets. Only 6% of all respondents are refugees themselves.

A plurality of 28% feel refugees in their hamlets are satisfactorily settled, 17% feel they are not, mainly because they have not received any assistance and have to live on their own and on assistance by other people in the hamlet.

When asked who helped the refugees most in settling in their hamlets, only 9% of all respondents mention the government or local authorities and another 9% mention relatives, whereas 21% say the people in the hamlets helped them most.

6. The Viet Cong Image

When asked to describe in a few words what a Viet Cong is and what he does, one third of the respondents use such derogatory terms as "brutal", "inhuman", "murderous", "subversive", "tyrannical", "terroristic"; another third describe the Viet Cong as subservient to Communist China, to Soviet Russia, as totalitarian and as dominated by communist ideology. One fourth express no opinion at all and one-fifth simply state the Viet Cong are Vietnamese.

7. The Chieu Hoi Program

Two thirds of the respondents have heard of the Government's Chieu Hoi Program, and nearly all of them can describe what they heard. A plurality of 34% say they heard the Program provided assistance and fair treatment by the government; twenty-nine percent say it meant return to the national government, to the national cause; eighteen percent recall the government's appeal to come back to one's family; thirteen percent stress the element of amnesty and government generosity; four percent recall the promise of rewards by the government and 3% the government's call to come back to avoid death.

Only 1% of all respondents have some suggestions on how the Chieu Hoi Program could be improved and made more effective. They call for better livelihood provision for returnees and for better and wider dissemination of the Chieu Hoi appeal, including use of better broadcasting equipment.

When asked what people like themselves could do in connection with the Chieu Hoi Program, only 15% respond affirmatively; nearly all of them think that they could effectively appeal to relatives still in Viet Cong ranks.

V. CIVIC AFFAIRS

1. Hamlet Elections

Virtually all are cognizant of the hamlet elections conducted in the spring of 1967 and 87% say they voted in these elections. Most of the non-voters explain that they had no voting card, being either too young or too new in the hamlet; the few others say they were away on election day or too old or sick or too preoccupied at home to go to the polls.

Eighty-seven percent state that they are personally satisfied with the way the hamlet elections were conducted, 9% are not sure and only 3% express dissatisfaction. They are divided in a few who say there were not enough candidates to choose from and a few who merely describe the election as unfair and undemocratic.

Eighty-seven percent also voice satisfaction over the individuals elected. Ten percent are not sure and the few who say they are dissatisfied base this mainly on candidates' mediocre qualities.

Eighty-eight percent think they had all the necessary information about the election before it took place. The balance are halfway divided among some who do not know whether they had all the information and a few who feel they did not have it, but do not seem to know why. The majority of 57% received their information in mass meetings organized by VIS cadre, 38% through loudspeaker broadcasts, 8% through radio, 7% through leaflets, posters, bulletin boards, and 4% through other people.

2. The Constitution

Two-thirds of the respondents never heard about the Constitution of the Republic of Viet Nam which was promulgated earlier in 1967. One-third heard about it, mainly through radio (22%), but also through GVN cadre (12%), newspapers (4%), and other people (4%).

Nevertheless, only about 13% are able to say what they heard about the Constitution and their knowledge is very superficial. They merely recall that the Constitution is "the country's law", "the government system", or "freedom, democracy".

However, when asked what the Constitution meant to them personally, most of those who say they had heard about it seem to have some meaningful concepts. Twelve percent say the Constitution protects the citizens' rights and properties; ten percent see freedom and democracy in it; and 2% associate it with social justice.

VI. ASPECTS OF REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

1. General Reactions

Two-thirds of the respondents say they have heard about the RD/Rural Reconstruction Program currently being conducted by the GVN.

Seventeen percent of all respondents say RD cadre have been or are working in their hamlets and another 33% say they heard of such cadre working in other hamlets.

Only 1% comment derogatorily about the personal behavior of these cadre, saying they take things away without paying. All others comment favorably, emphasizing particularly the cadre's nice, polite, and cheerful behavior.

Only 4% say the cadre are not useful at all to the people in a hamlet, whereas 22% stress their help to the community (building roads, markets, schools, wells, etc.), 11% point out their help to individuals (assisting them in building or repairing homes), 8% stress their help in agriculture and animal husbandry, 6% stress their educational and hygiene work, 5% their help in paper work and in dealing with local authorities, and 5% their role in providing security.

2. General Suggestions

After listening to a brief explanation of the basic RD objectives, all respondents were asked what they thought should be done in their respective hamlet to achieve these objectives. A plurality of 35% suggest building or repairing public facilities and utilities, such as roads, bridges, canals, electrical systems, etc.; 28% suggest the supply and low-cost sale of agricultural and fishery implements, including buffaloes, fertilizers, sampans, etc.; 13% suggest more public buildings to house dispensaries, schools, information offices, hamlet offices, etc.; 13% suggest helping needy people with jobs, food, medicines, etc.; 8% suggest the supply and low-cost sale of construction materials to individual villagers; 5% just suggest loans in general and another 5% suggest providing security to hamlets.

Among the 17% who said that RD cadre were or had been working in their hamlets, only 2% felt that the Program (a) lacked realism and consistency and (b) should not exert contributions in money or labor from the villagers.

3. Agricultural Reform and Related Programs

(a) The Land Title and Tenure Program

One fourth of all respondents own the land they till, three-fourths do not. When asked what it does - or would - mean to them personally to own land and hold permanent title to it, half of all respondents say they do not know. The views expressed by the others are all of practical nature without idealistic overtones. Twenty-two percent say they would not have to rent land and be exploited by the rich; eighteen percent say they would have enough to eat; twelve percent say they could use the ricefields any way they liked; six percent say they would work carefully and get good harvests.

Only 13% know about the Government's Land Title and Tenure program, but their knowledge is spotty. Eight percent say it means purchasing land by installments and the others say it provides farming loans and sales of fertilizers and vehicles.

After listening to a brief explanation of the Program, three-fourths of all respondents say they approve of it, one fourth express no opinion. The main reasons for approval are "villagers would have rice fields of their own and rights on them" (23%), "villagers would have enough to eat, higher living standards" (18%), "villagers would not have to rent rice fields and be exploited by the rich" (16%), "poorer farmers would not have to work for others" (5%) and "the gap between the rich and poor classes would be reduced" (5%).

(b) The Agricultural Credit Program

Sixty-two percent say they know about this government program, with 40% viewing it as an opportunity for low interest funding. Fourteen percent criticize it because the loans are inadequate, too selective, or badly timed in issuance and repayment; six percent criticize its practices as unfair and bureaucratic.

(c) Other Programs

Only 15% know of any other current Government programs to help farmers, e.g. animal husbandry and breeding assistance and distribution or sales of seeds, fertilizers, insecticide, agricultural or fishery implements. Most of them react favorably to these programs, while 3% merely say the results are not good.

As far as their respective hamlets are concerned 26% of all respondents deem loan programs "most useful". Ten percent give this label to programs supplying implements at low prices, 10% to public utility programs, 8% to title-ownership programs and 4% to animal husbandry programs. Very few mention programs as "least useful".

When asked what other measures should be taken by the authorities to help hamlet people improve their lives, one third of all respondents say they do not know. Most of the others speak in such generalities as help to needy villagers (24%), public utilities (22%) and help in agriculture (17%).

4. Economic Situation and Aspirations

Forty percent of all respondents think their life is worse now than it was a year ago, while only 20% think it is better. Thirty-nine percent think it is about the same. Higher income, good crops and higher wages (12%) and better and more secure roads (5%) are the main reasons for the favorable appraisal. Inflation (19%), poor harvests, low wages (16%) and defoliation plus road and air strip construction (8%) account chiefly for the negative appraisal.

The future outlook is also dim. Only 9% think their life will be better in a year from now than it is today; thirteen percent think it will be worse; twenty-nine percent think it will be about the same and 49% have no opinion at all. Higher income (5%) and more security (3%) are the main reasons for optimism. Poor harvest, drought (4%), defoliation (3%), insecurity (3%) and inflation (3%) account chiefly for the pessimism.

Among the respondents' hopes and wishes for the future of their hamlets, public utilities and security rank highest, with 36% and 28%, respectively. Next in line are low-cost sales and loans (19%), public buildings, i.e. schools, dispensaries, etc. (16%), and no more damage from defoliation and construction of roads and air strips (8%).

Most of the hopes and wishes for their own and their families' future center on income and prosperity (49%), but they also concern health (11%), educational advancement (10%), real estate and properties (10%), the family's happiness in general (9%), better agriculture (7%), employment (6%) and a normal secure life at the regular place of residence (5%).