

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

I. Attitudes Toward Top GVN Leadership

A. How much has confidence in Diem and Nhu been impaired?

1. Cabinet Ministers

No comment.

2. Saigon Bureaucracy

Feelings of frustration which have existed for years now reach point of despair, with GVN officials openly asking Americans to intervene in some manner.

3. Urban Professionals, Intellectuals and Students

Reaction varies from distaste to bitterest hostility, including manifestations.

4. Top Level GVN Military

Bulk of generals are considering ways and means of overthrowing Diem and Nhu, particularly the latter.

5. Lower Level Officers

Those connected with general staff have been more restive than the generals.

6. Labor

Leader of principal union has promised to call general strike in concert with military and opposition political action.

7. Organized Religious Groups

Buddhist reaction is obvious.

8. Business Community

Distaste for regime, but less violent than in professional and intellectual circles.

B. Has Diem escaped opprobrium?

All groups consider Diem less distasteful than Nhu and Madame Nhu.

C. Attitudes toward Nhu.

Nhu is acceptable to no one, except the President and individuals who

need his immediate protection (Colonel Tung). Some feel Diem and Nhu inseparable, with Nhu going immediately and Diem going later, but opposition politicians think Diem must be removed immediately as a practical matter.

D. Attitudes toward Vice President and other Cabinet Ministers

No Cabinet Minister has put himself forward as an alternative to the present regime. Groups feel that take-over could only be effected by military, but opposition has already made written agreements with leading generals to deter possibility of military dictatorship.

E. Are actions taken considered to have been excessively oppressive?

Answer of all groups is clearly yes.

F. Has discontent crystalized into dissatisfaction? How determined and militant? At what levels is it most serious among military and civilians?

Bureaucracy is highly dissatisfied, urban professionals, intellectuals and students even more so. Top level GVN military are organizing to overthrow the regime. Labor has offered general strike. Reaction in countryside not known.

G. How serious is impact on efficiency and morale?

Attitude of many bureaucrats is one of quiet desperation and looking to Americans for solution. Urban professionals, intellectuals and students substantially disaffected.

H. Does each target group have feeling of stake and participation in government policies and program?

All target groups have suffered for years from feeling of inadequate participation in GVN decisions, which have been closely held within the Ngo family. On the other hand, many individuals and target groups have stake in present regime in terms of wealth, prestige, and fear that coup might result in danger to them personally.

I. Do target groups believe situation will stabilize under Diem and Nhu, or that significant political challenge will recur?

Dissatisfaction is so widespread within target groups that recurring

crises are inevitable. Diem and Nhu might stabilize temporarily by force, but the situation will boil over again.

J. What alternative political leadership is mentioned?

Certain organized political opposition groups have already worked out written programs in conjunction with top generals, looking to an interim government with elections at a later time. These groups have no agreed single leader, but would initially rule through a coalition government, even recalling some leadership from abroad, although such leadership would not necessarily be allowed to take charge.

II. Attitudes Toward Top Military Leadership

A. How are generals regarded now? Are they viewed as having supported recent GVN actions? How is their failure to act appraised? Are they strong, weak or irrelevant factor in situation?

Some groups regard generals as being figureheads lacking real courage and zeal. They are not viewed as having supported specific actions of Nhu and Madame Nhu in regard to the Buddhists, at least in the Saigon area. This opposition, intellectual and bureaucratic circles who are closest to the situation, feel that the generals failed to act thus far because they did not receive sufficiently categorical proof of the U.S. attitude, and also partly because they had to make appropriate tactical dispositions to assure success. All groups viewed the military as the deciding factor in an overthrow of Diem and Nhu, since the Palace's security forces could not be opposed by unarmed civilians at this time.

III. Attitudes toward VC and the War

A. How has war effort against VC been significantly affected?

Saigon bureaucracy, professionals, intellectuals and students and other civilian groups have not been consistently preoccupied with the war against the VC in the past, and this war is of secondary interest to them now. This is partly because of good security in the Saigon area.

B. Is there the feeling that the war can be continued with reasonable prospect of success?

No group in the Saigon area has any conviction that in the long run the war can be won under Diem and Nhu leadership.

C. Can Diem and Nhu regain momentum and progress in winning the war?

Virtually impossible.

D. How has GVN action affected attitudes toward the VC? Is VC regarded as only opposition to regime which has any chance of success?

One can only conjecture how many students and "little people" have gone over to VC either physically or in terms of their sympathies. There is considerable agreement, however, that the Army, in conjunction with opposition groups and labor, will overthrow the regime. Thus, the VC is not regarded as the only possible alternative. Many people are impressed with the relative failure of VC to capitalize on recent chaos.

IV. General Attitudes

A. Is there more thinking now than before about rapprochement with Hanoi?

No elite group (GVN, professional-business, senior military, etc.) is thinking in terms of rapprochement with Hanoi. Extent of Hanoi propaganda in the general population or among students not known.

B. What are current attitudes toward U.S., U.S. policies and U.S. advisors?

GVN bureaucracy at lower than Minister level, intellectuals, students, religious groups (particularly Buddhist) and top level GVN military are all looking to the U.S. for categorical action indicating opposition to Diem and Nhu. Many people blame the U.S. for propping up the present regime over the past eight years. Some anti-American feeling beginning to appear at the student and general population levels. VOA broadcast exonerating Army from attacks on Saigon pagodas was very well received, and all groups are listening to VOA.

C. What are current attitudes toward France and General DeGaulle?

GVN bureaucracy says Vietnamese people would be quick to reject any political reassertion of French influence in Vietnam. Intellectual and opposition circles in Saigon are nevertheless concerned about the French role, because they believe that Ngo Dinh Nhu is quite capable of reaching an accommodation with the Viet Cong, which would dovetail with the current French maneuver.