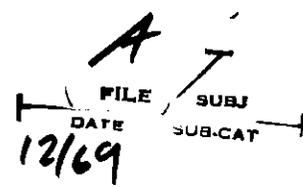


UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum



TO : Mr. Pike

DATE: Feb. 14, 1970

FROM : L. Nakai

SUBJECT: "As I see Vietnam" by Masaru Arimoto

An essay by a layman - the author being former army officer, lived in Vietnam in 1944-1946 engaging in railroad construction work, who is now an engineering staff of a construction company. No analysis or deep insight, with very limited background information.

About the organization- Although names of influential businessmen are shown among board members (Chairman Daigoro Yasukawa, Advisor Kogoro Uemura), the organization itself is less known. Kotani and Kusumi never heard of the organization before.

The pamphlet does not seem to have any noticeable impact on political, business or media circles.

1. Preface At the invitation of the Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations I had a chance to visit Saigon and its vicinities for some tendays.

The main purpose of the trip was to see Vietnam today. I am reporting here what I saw there while realizing the difficulties of telling about Vietnam on the basis of a short stay.

Quite too often distorted pictures of Vietnam have been reported here in Japan. It is primarily because the visit to Vietnam is restricted due to prolonged war. Eventually exaggerated miseries or reports based on one-sided view are confusing Japanese all the time.

I hope this report be useful for fair understanding of situations there.

2. To Saigon Arrived in November 6 (1969) at Tan Son Nhut . Was surprized at poor facilities at the airport which is said to be the busiest in the world.
3. Saigon-Past and Present I am revisiting Saigon after 23 years. Streets which were used to be very quiet are now jammed up with automobiles , just like streets near Osaka Station. French signs are gone from streets - Vietnamese are used for traffic signs and billboards.
4. On Securities We have an impression through newspapers and television in Japan that dangers are all over even in Saigon cities. The real situation is, however, the city is a peace itself. Citizens are working hard for town reconstructions. People there had learned through long period of wars to "live with war". People are enjoying outing, eating and mah-jong, as well as night life with swimming and horse-riding.. restaurants and cabarets are full house. Practically no sign of "gray mood" we experienced during the war.

While the houses of high Government officials are heavily guarded, policemen on the streets look rather relaxed. Although in Japan it is generally believed that the South government is securing only "points and lines", this may not be right.

Comparing the South which fully enjoys democracy and the North which is under national mobilization, I cannot but feel that the South has too much of vulnerability the democracy itself harbors. Still, more and more awareness among the Southerners on the problem of security seems to be coming up since the TET offensive.

5. What are in the mind of Vietnamese people?

Vietnamese seem, comparing with other Asian peoples, to be more friendly and frank. People on the streets are kind to others.

Vietnamese have respects for the seniority, and think highly of friendship. Therefore, we cannot work together with Vietnamese while neglecting the human relations aspect.

In a way, they are enjoying "freedom" to its extreme today. Life in Saigon may be tense, but also extremely carefree.

I talked about "happiness" with one citizen- he thinks "to be loved by others" comes first, and have a good wife and children in a peaceful society next. "Money and materials only won't make people happy" he said.

People I talked during the trip all wanted "peace", and a peace in which they can enjoy freedom too.

6. Southerners' View of North Vietnam

People came to have strong hatred against Vietcong after TET offensive and also by witnessing Hue atrocities. At least after the TET offensive people's view of Vietcong have quite changed, I was told.

It is talked among people that struggles are going on in Hanoi for the leadership after Ho's death, and accordingly Vietcong power is much in decline and the moral being lowered. Still, some others tell that they won't be too optimistic about the chance of Vietcong attacks in dry season.

Although the revolutionary influence is often over-estimated in Japan, no existence of the so-called temporary government was confirmed.

I think it is more desirable that such organization like the United Nations steps in for the settlement of Vietnam issue rather than the individual countries such as the US, Communist China or Soviet intervene.

Some people said to me that if there were no intervention by foreign military in the Vietnam War, the peace could have been attained much sooner. Or, others said that three million Northerners must have fled to the South instead of one million should the people had that freedom, and the people could have been divided according to their own individual choices about the ideology, and the South and the North could co-exist that way.

I often heard people ask one question. "Why the peace talks in Paris?" It is more expensive to have peace talks in Paris, and more chances of foreign influences. Vietnamese want the talks to be held in their own country just like one on Korea held in Panmunjam.

7. War and Citizens' Life

Vietnamese people are suffering heavily from the war economically with more than 1.5 million people getting salaries barely sufficient to live, while neighboring people in Hong Kong are enjoying much better life as a result of Vietnam War boon.

Still, I believe Vietnamese people will overcome this economic difficulty. We Japanese should give helping hands and encourage them now when they are suffering most.

8. French Inheritance

It seems that Vietnamese people are now feeling a kind of nostalgia to old days under French people. Much of French customs still maintained, and French manners are still observed at homes.

I asked some people on the streets which they liked better between Americans and French. Their answer was: "We are grateful to Americans for their help now, but we are fond of French who left many nice things to us." Of course this does not mean that they are absolutely for the French. Vietnamese will accept what are good to them. A question came to my mind then, "Would Japan pay as generously as Americans do? Or, would Japanese be liked as Frenchmen were by the Vietnamese?"

Unless we understand Vietnamese people very well, and unless we have mutual respects, no cooperative ventures would be successful. I already said that the post-Vietnam has already begun, but a little more time for preparation is necessary for Japanese to go out to Vietnam for help.

9. Buddhism and Christianity

While Catholic population is only some 10% of the whole Vietnamese, Catholics have international contacts all over the world and are quite active. Buddhists barely have any international activities. Buddhist groups of Japan should help them in extending international ties. In Saigon, Buddhists and Christians were working together, and I hope seriously that the people in whole Vietnam be united.

10. Present Government

A chance of coup d'etat was rumored in November but nothing happened. It seems that there is hardly any able leaders who can take over the present government.

I see the real power of the current Government in the political capabilities in administering Saigon City, and in the successful enforcement of tax system reform in November.

11. Prospect of Peace and Post-Vietnam

It seems that the fightings will be over by 1971. This is the same answer came from everybody, men, women and children, and not my own speculation only. Both the North and the South are quite exhausted now, and already reached to the limitations of everything. It is not quite impossible that such a "happening" takes place one day all the sudden ~~and~~ the war is over.

that Of course, even after fightings are over, it should take one or two years to come to an agreement. After all, the South and the North be divided at 17th parallel, and the North going something like the Socialist Party of Japan and the South going democratic socialists similar to DSP of Japan.

In a way, reconstruction of Vietnam is already starting. In Bien Hoa, factories and plants covering 68 different categories are being constructed. Looking at these scenes only would give you an impression that the post-Vietnam is already starting. There are of ourse many difficulties- crowded cities, financial problems, labor shortage as well as employment problems of repatriated soldiers. Here lies the need for aid from various countries. Japan should try to help not only in money, but should give real assistance in providing administrators for planning and management as well as technicians.

The Lillienthol Plan which is too wide in the range and involving too much of security, labor and funds problems, does not seem to be feasible unless the whole area be stabilized first.

12. Conclusion

What is most urgently needed now is good leaders. I seriously hope Vietnamese leaders will work together without trying to offset others among themselves. Also, those Vietnamese students studying in Japan stop wasting time by engagin in anti-Government movements, but instead try to learn from Japan as much as possible for the future building of tomorrow's Vietnam.

Also, we Japanese have to try to put into practice any effective measures to aid people in Vietnam now when they are suffering most and the help is most needed.