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AN OPTIMISTIC LOOK AT PACIFICATION IN VIETNAM

HON. WILLIAM S. BROOMFIELD

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. BROOMFIELD. Mr. Speaker, those of us who support the President's policy in Vietnam realize that its ultimate success hinges on the ability of the Vietnamese to assume the major burden of the conflict. In this regard, there have been a number of encouraging signs in recent weeks. I was privileged to receive an especially optimistic report from Mr. Richard Hretz, a resident of my congressional district and a Deputy provincial senior adviser with the U.S. Agency for International Development, who has just returned from Vietnam. I call my colleagues attention to the following article which appeared in the Royal Oak, Mich., Daily Tribune, based on an interview by Mr. Hretz:

NIXON "PACIFICATION" WORKING, SAYS VISITING VIET ADVISER

(By Evelyn Dysarz)

In the South Vietnamese twilight, a U.S. official watched distant flames engulf hillside hamlets.

The fires, set by Viet Cong to terrorize the mountain folk of northern Phouc Long province, also illuminated the problems facing former-Detroiter Richard Hretz. His job was to develop the economic, social and political fabric of South Vietnam despite the war.

"In my last five or six months we had almost got the problem licked," he said. "The people were coming to us for advice rather than us going to them."

"The 'pacification' program has been going very well since Nixon took over. There's been a change of emphasis from the (American) ambassador on down.

"The new name of the game is to advise the Vietnamese, but let them decide and do it. Before we would decide and build whatever was needed."

Hretz told of his two-year stay in Vietnam when he brought his wife and six children to visit her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Lynch of Royal Oak.

Hretz is a deputy provincial senior adviser with the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) in Vietnam. While there, his wife and children, then ranging in age from three months to nine years, live in Bangkok, Thailand.

"The normal things we would do in peacetime, such as building schools and establishing a sound political base and economic growth, we have to do under war conditions," said the 40-year-old Hretz.

"We were also responsible for training of villagers for defense of their village."

American military, Vietnamese and American civilians made up the AID program in Vietnam, he said.

TEACH TO HELP SELF

Under the "pacification" program, the officials also advised the Vietnamese how to provide public works services for themselves.

AID gave each village the equivalent of \$8,000 after all village officials were elected and the village's defense, called Regional Forces, formed, he said. Use of the money, which could buy fertilizer for a growing season or finance water wells, was left up to the villagers.

"It took up to three months to convince some elected chiefs they could use the money freely," he said. "Some didn't want to spend the money because of their tremendous fear of failure, of losing face."

Two Vietnam provinces where he was stationed, both in the northern part of the country, provide studies in contrast.

FLAT FARMLAND

While in the province of Long Khang during the last part of his two-year stint, "enemy activity dropped off drastically," he said. "We were able to provide 100 per cent protection to the population" of that flat farmland area, he said.

The province, populated by Catholics who fled from North Vietnam in 1954, was 95 per cent self-sufficient, he said. Giant strides in schools, roads and the planting of a high-yield hybrid rice were made in the strongly anti-Communist province, he said.

Viet Cong activity fell off for two reasons, said Hretz. One was the introduction of the 4,000 soldiers in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade. The other comes from the attitude of Viet Cong who believe they are "winning the war on the streets of the U.S. although losing it in Vietnam. They believe they will get their goal anyway," he said.

MOUNTAIN AREA

Before coming to Long Khang, Hretz was stationed in 1968 in Phouc Long province, the mountainous home of the Montagnard tribes. There he watched the fires burn peasant villages.

South Vietnamese control of the northern province consisted of four city enclaves which were surrounded by mountains, lush "four-tier" thick jungles and Viet Cong. Helicopters connected the friendly dots on the provincial map.

In Phouc Long, said Hretz, the "struggle was to stay alive and protect the people." Ninety per cent of the population huddled into the four cities, he said, and depended on welfare for food and clothing.

BARELY SCRATCHED

"If ever there is peace, Vietnam would be a wonderful place for economic development. We've barely scratched the surface now."

With peace, Hretz sees the U.S. combat soldier leaving and the military adviser staying. "The people really must deal with the Viet Cong themselves. It's a local problem. The Viet Cong would have to fit into the political fabric or be controlled legally."

If given a free choice, Hretz thinks the South Vietnamese will form some type of democracy. They believe in the basic self-determination, he said. There would be no self-determination if the National Liberation Front ran the country, he said, but rather a "Stalinist" type of political orthodoxy.

BUDDHIST ORIENTED

"The people have a Buddhist-oriented mind which is very hard to understand," said Hretz. "They are very practical. They will accept the best they can achieve now. What they can take today, they will, and wait for tomorrow for the rest. But they never give up their ideals."

Hretz said, therefore, the Viet Cong would probably allow themselves to live under a democratic government and bide their time.