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Disagree--page 1

(This is the last of a three-part series on the significance of the Communist-held elections at the rice-roots level of South Vietnam).

SAIGON, SEPTEMBER 19--There is intense disagreement about just how successful the Communists have been in electing their "people's liberation" village governments in the countryside and in wooing urbanites in South Vietnam's cities and towns.

The "people's liberation" councils elected in the villages are in effect a miniature Communist state in which Communist military forces have seized power from the Saigon government, in which the elected Communist village government supplants the Saigon regime as an overt, official government and the people's militia forces substitute for Communist guerrillas and regulars in maintaining power. *THESE ELECTIONS DO NOT RELATE TO THE* In the cities and towns, the *urban* ~~so-called~~ Communist-inspired alliances and other groups *suck* are primarily designed to ~~such~~ political strength from the Saigon government effectively enough for the Communists to seize political-military power at the central government level and establish their own "revolutionary state government."

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Disagree—page 2

On the rural elections, American sources indicate the Communists are doing poorly—if not failing—but the Communist radio broadcasts since early September have been churning out glowing reports of prge progress of their "people's liberation" councils, not only at the village level, but also in some districts and in t at some district levels and a few provincial levels. Neither the Communists nor the Americans have foa released any solid, countrywide figures on the number of villages the in which the Communists have actually held elections—but there is agreement on all sides that some have been held.

One might presume that the Communists have overemphasized inflated their successes in their radio broadcasts, but also that American intelligen intelligence information is not so accurate or up-to-date in receiving reports from Communist-held areas on such fuzzy, quasi-military numnum developments.

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Vietnamese government intelligence sources, however, estimate that two-thirds of the villages under Communist control have held their "people's /& liberation" council elections--and that in some cases, the village population has been issued arms for fighting. By Vietnamese government figures, this would mean more than 360 ~~villages~~ Communist-controlled villages ~~would~~ have held their elections.

Vietnamese government official statistics--probably optimistic ones--indicate there are a total of 2541 villages in South Vietnam. Of these, 1249 are 100 per cent under Vietnamese government control; 549 are 100 per cent under Communist ~~ctr~~ control and 743 villages are contested--neither the government nor the Communist control each hamlet in the village. In some of these "contest-hamlet" "contested" ~~if~~ villages, however, either the ~~if~~ Communists or the government have may have the preponderance of control.

Vietnamese government sources who study the ~~stilt~~ situation are not ~~over-~~ overly-concerned about the Communist elections in the countryside--but are anxious about ~~is~~ the urban-oriented Communist satellite organizations which ~~so wh~~ would directly sap political strength from Saigon's constitutional government.

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Disagree--page 4

Outside of Saigon, American officials, including a visitor from the White House, inspected each of ~~thirteen~~ ^{twelve} provinces in the area. Their over-all assessment was, in the words of one: "Th

"There are only two provinces of the 12 in which we really know of an effort by the Communists to do this. These elections are being over-sold. The Communists think if they establish these overt village organizations, then if there is a ceasefire, they could claim a de facto government."

He said Binh Long was a ~~principle~~ ^{principal} place where the Communists were active. The province ~~situatu~~ situated along the ~~jumbled jungib~~ ^{jungled} Cambodian border northwest of Saigon is thinly populated, mostly with primitive Montagnard ~~p~~ tribesmen.

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"In Binh Long in February, the Communists tried in five hamlets of two or 200 or 300 population each to set up their councils," he continued. "But, they appointed, rather than elected their councils and then they issued weapons to the people. By late July, however, a dozen of the members of the Co Communist councils came over and turned themselves in as Ho Shanh Ho Shanh (the (a defector from the Communist side). The commit council members wanted to shed their alignment with the Communists and the all the weapons once issued by the Communists were either taken back by them or else brought over to the government side.

"The Montagnards villagers were forced to take the weapons and they had not wanted them because they were afraid they'd be shot by the Allied troops. ~~misleadingly~~ We believe that none of these five councils actually functioned and that they have passed out of existence."

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The second of the 12 provinces surveyed in which the Communists showed political activity was Binh Tuy, a province northeast of Saigon situated on the South China Sea.

"In Binh Tuy provinces, also, we found the Communist village organizations died out of ^{THEIR} own accord; in none of the other 12 provinces is there evidence to attempt the Communists attempted to organize the rural areas," the official said.

Other reliable sources, however, report that in another of the 12 provinces--in Phuoc Tuy--revolutionary administrative committees were reported to have been set up in three villages.

"Little seems to be known," one Allied source explained, "but ^{ABOUT} these developments in Phuoc Tuy province, but the Communist ~~or~~ propaganda lines taken in this connection are interesting. In Phuoc Hoi village, the Communists told the people they should unite to oppose the bad people in the Vietnamese government. In Phuoc Loi and Phuoc Hoa Long village, they told them that the people should unite for peace."

From the rice-rich Mekong Delta area south of Saigon, Allied reports of Communist success are "sketchy."

"There is little doubt that this is a Communist objective," one Allied source explained, "and that they are trying to achieve it in almost all provinces. However, concrete examples of functioning committees are scarce."

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He continued:

"The evidence from An Xuyen province seems to indicate that in this basin bastion of Communist influence, some committees have been established, but elsewhere the situation is unclear. One indication that the Communists may be having more difficulty than anticipated with this program is that intelligence reports show that the date for the inauguration of the new organization keeps being moved back."

But, the Communist version of the matter is quite different. They claim on their radio broadcasts that the "P" "people's liberation" council elections are rolling along smoothly, not only at the village level, but higher higher up the politico-administrative ladder to the district and provincial level. The next step would probably be the central government level--where, instead of forming a "provisional government" by themselves, they would form a "coalition government" with either pro-Communist or anti-government political groupings who agree that the current constitutional government in Saigon should be overthrown and the American troops ^{5/4-61 BE} withdrawn from South Vietnam.

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On September 7 6th, for example, the Liberation Front clandestine Liberation Front radio reported that from the beginning of August, 107 out of 159 villages in Quang Ngai province finished their elections. In addition, four district liberation councils have been elected and during the first first three weeks of August, more than 300 300 male and female youths had joined the Viet Cong. (n (One confusing aspect in trying to match up versions of the elections is that a Communist province or village does not consistently match the political entity of the same name & equivalent comparable political entity on the Saigon government's side. Also, the Communists speak of villages, but the statistics on the Allied side are measured in ^{more precise} by hamlets. A hamlet is Several hamlets make up a village).

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The Communists also stressed much more than Allied sources their progress in the heavily-populated Mekong Delta region. Their radio broadcasts said "hundreds of liberation committees at the ^{district} level at have been set up and thousands of liberation councils at the village level were established from the jungles to the lowlands to the Mekong Delta. In the western part of the Delta, 9 district committees and more than 85 village government have been established. My Tho has 107 liberation village councils. Vinh Long has 35 ~~and~~ and some councils have been elected very close to several cities. We ... We have committees now not only in the countryside, but also in the cities, including Saigon."

The radio broadcast stressed their view of the importance of the elections.

"The people are struggling to take over the government and then to establish ~~this~~ our revolutionary kind of government. This is a deadly blow against ~~the~~ neo-colonialists neo-colonialism à la American in South Vietnam. This is the forewarning sign of ~~their~~ inevitabl inevitable, total collapse of the puppet government and their hencemen."

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In discussing the formation of provincial councils in southernmost An Xuyen and in the Pli Pleiku area, the radio broadcast said, "This is of strategic and significant victory. This is a turning of the corner of the development of the revolution for the people in these areas."

One of the chief weaknesses of the elections is that the A Communist government now becomes overt, instead of clandestine, and hence becomes more difficult to hold in the event of an Allied military offensive in the area.

"Since the French days, the Communists have used these village apparatuses—and on these the pa Party on this Party apparatus, their military activity has always rested," one informed source explained. "Until now, this has been clandestine; now with the elec elections, they become overt. It means the Communists have up a sign up over a village the village—and in the nature of things the Communists can not do this, because they can not stand and hold ground against superior Allied military forces. Once they put a sign up in a village, they are committed to it—but, they will have trouble holdin keeping it up if the Allied forces want it to tear it down. The Communists can set up these committees, but they can not keep them going. They could do this during the French times in the remote, jungled areas, but the helicopters have revolutionized this war. No mountain or jungled area is secure from for them from Allied troop troop movements."

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Victory--page 14

The Communists have apparently thought of this. On one radio broadcast they warned the villages that while the building of their revolutionary governments was difficult, it would be even more difficult to maintain them. Hence, They urged the people not to "spare your hard work to build their revolutionary government at any cost, and their blood and bones to protect ~~it~~ their revolutionary government at any cost."

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