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VIET CONG MOTIVATION AND MORALE IN 1964: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

John C. Donnell, Guy J. Pauker and Joseph J. Zasloff

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

This report is based on 145 interviews with Viet Cong POWs, defectors, and suspects, carried out between July and December 1964. As explained in greater detail in the Preface, the findings of this study, which was the first to assess Viet Cong motivation and morale, were made available immediately through briefings in Saigon and Washington, D.C. in December 1964 and January 1965. Then, in March 1965, this report was circulated within the U.S. Government. The report was declassified and released for open publication by the Department of Defense in March 1971, and is now being reissued by The Rand Corporation to make it more generally available.

PREFACE

This Memorandum attempts to convey how the Viet Cong see themselves and their revolutionary struggle in South Vietnam. It is an expanded and revised version of a briefing given by the authors in Saigon to the American Ambassador and the United States Mission Council; to the Commander, United States Military Command, Vietnam, and his staff; to the staff of the United States Information Service; and to Vietnamese staff officers. Subsequently the briefing was given in Washington, D.C., to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and his staff, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Air Staff, and the Department of State.

Some of the questions asked during these briefings are reproduced with the authors' answers in the final section of the Memorandum.

The views and conclusions presented here are based on a preliminary analysis of the data collected. A systematic study of the interview material, and of correlative information from captured VC documents, is now in progress. RAND staff members have undertaken additional interviewing in South Vietnam to determine, particularly, the precise impact of various tactics and weapons on Viet Cong morale.

SUMMARY

This briefing report is based mainly on interviews with 145 Viet Cong POWs, defectors and suspects, carried out by a RAND team of Americans and Vietnamese between July and December, 1964. The interview sample was composed as follows: Southern VC POWs, 36 per cent; Southern POWs who had been regrouped in the North and later infiltrated the South, 29 per cent; defectors from these two categories, 21 per cent; persons imprisoned by the Vietnamese government as VC suspects, 11 per cent; and Northern POWs captured after infiltration of the South, 3 per cent. Captured VC documents and earlier interrogations of POWs and defectors in our sample have also been utilized in rounding up the information on which this Memorandum is based.

The Viet Cong movement embraces a mass of Vietnamese, ranging from the casual peasant supporter who occasionally buys supplies for the VC on a trip to the local market, to the most deeply dedicated cadre in the main forces. The latter usually is a Southern Vietnamese "returnee" from North Vietnam where he received after 1954 five to ten years of systematic training and indoctrination before infiltrating the South sometime after 1959. We focus here on the hard-core VC, who is usually a cadre and a Party member. About one-third of our sample were Party members. The proportion of cadres with military or civilian command responsibility was somewhat higher. (When a cadre is not a Party member, he is usually an applicant for membership in the Party or its mass feeder organization, the Liberation Youth.) Our underlying assumption is that the cadre's views are shared by the rank and file to an extent which can be

predicted fairly accurately in any individual case when such factors as the following are known: his level of intelligence and energy, length of service in the movement, highest rank and function attained, and, particularly, whether he is a returnee from the North.

The older generation of VC fought as Viet Minh against the French and by now are 30 years old and older. Many of them were regrouped in the North, but some remained underground in the South. These men form the backbone of the revolutionary effort in the South and they see it as a continuation of the war of independence against the French.

The regroupees were bitter at the United States and the South Vietnamese government for the cancellation of 1956 reunification elections and the consequently prolonged separation from their homes and families in the South. Many were antagonized by the harshness of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) land reform of that period, but appear to have had their faith in the wisdom of the leadership and its ability to learn from mistakes confirmed by the regime's subsequent "rectification of errors" campaign.

Whereas the older interviewees went into the Viet Minh mainly for nationalist reasons, the younger generation, recruited mainly after 1958, has joined the VC for a mix of motives including protest against social injustice at the village level, lack of educational and career opportunity on the Government of Vietnam (GVN) side, antipathy to being drafted by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) under circumstances making that appear to be a dangerous and politically dubious commitment, adventurousness, the desire to escape from unpleasant

personal situations, admiration for an older Viet Minh member of the family, and, intertwined with these as a result of VC political indoctrination, a desire to protect Vietnam from "the American imperialists and their lackey, the GVN." Coercion, e.g., kidnaping, is used in recruitment but usually is combined with persuasion and patriotic appeals.

The extremely effective political control mechanisms of the VC owe their inspiration to the Chinese Communists. The cadre has a more heroic image in South Vietnam than in older European or Asian Communist movements because of the qualities of leadership and self-sacrifice he must continually be ready to demonstrate in this "national liberation" phase of the struggle. The three-man cells into which the squads are divided are a politicized "buddy system." The kiem-thao criticism and self-criticism sessions usually held daily at the three-man cell and squad levels (and less frequently at higher levels) are effective not only as intimate indoctrination units, but also as a continuous psychological prophylaxis against tension and anxiety which could threaten unit solidarity and, more generally, a combatant's revolutionary commitment.

The VC claim that they "live splendidly and die gloriously," even though their living conditions are miserable from the material viewpoint (e.g., food rations are monotonous and insufficient). Over the long run, however, living standards have improved somewhat and morale generally appears to be rising. Most interviewees believed the war would last a long time and would end not in a VC military victory, but in a gradual exhaustion of the enemy.

The flow of defectors from the VC could be increased by improved GVN treatment of its POWs. The VC convinces its men that surrender to or capture by the GVN will only bring torture or execution and actual GVN practices all too often lend credibility to this allegation.

Defections from the VC have resulted mainly from personal rather than ideological factors: the principal ones are inability to stand the rigors of the revolutionist's life and prolonged separation from home and family. While defectors and some PCWs did criticize the VC, they usually expressed disaffection with difficulties in their own personal roles in the movement rather than with the aims of the revolution. Indeed, most of them displayed some embarrassment or feelings of guilt over their inability to stand the hardships of guerrilla life.

A monkish solidarity is achieved in the main forces by a strict puritanical sexual code, and by compensatory strong emotional ties within the unit heightened by an emphasis on the "father image" of the military commander and the "mother image" of the political officer. Violations of discipline are dealt with, not by corporal punishment or imprisonment, but usually by prolonged criticism sessions and temporary assignment of a man to headquarters for a period of enforced idleness on full rations.

The second generation of VC has a shallower comprehension of Communist doctrine and tends to cite the revolution's goals as simply "peace, independence, democracy and neutralism." They consider "socialism" good and many identify it vaguely with communism, although they often cannot discuss communism in any detail.

Both generations call this a revolution by and for Southerners, with some welcome assistance from Hanoi, and even the returnees stress the nationalist idealism of the movement rather than socialism and communism. Many Southerners appear uninformed on the extent of Hanoi's role in the war and the returnees appear to have been instructed to play it down. The Southerners know little about the Sino-Soviet split and the resultant increase of Chinese military and political influence on the DRV, but both generations tend to reject any suggestion that the Chinese Communists might eventually try to use their influence in an exploitative way because these Chinese are not the "feudalistic Chinese of Chiang Kai-shek." Even so, there is some evidence that the VC are reluctant to let their followers know the extent of the Chinese commitment to the war effort (e.g., Chinese weapons distributed to them are unmarked) for fear of arousing long-standing, somewhat latent fears and suspicions of the Chinese.

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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In April 1964, RAND was asked by the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, on behalf of the Vietnam Coordination Committee, to study the motivations of the revolutionary fighters in South Vietnam, commonly known as Viet Cong (VC). Despite the scope of United States assistance to the counterinsurgency operations of the Government of Vietnam (GVN), the Diem regime had refused American research personnel access to enemy captives or defectors. No systematic study of VC motivations, attitudes, and behavior had been possible before November, 1963. The human factors of the insurgency were therefore understood only in an impressionistic and intuitive fashion. This was bound to affect policy decisions with respect to counterinsurgency.

Dr. Guy Pauker and Dr. Stephen Hosmer of RAND's Social Science Department visited South Vietnam in May 1964 to survey the feasibility of a study of VC prisoners and defectors. It appeared that captured enemy personnel could be interviewed at Divisional and Corps Headquarters of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and at the Military Interrogation Center (MIC) and National Interrogation Center (NIC) situated in Saigon. Defectors were also available in a number of camps, especially at the Chieu Hoi Center at Nha Be, near Saigon. The American intelligence community in South Vietnam, military and civilian, offered generous assistance in the implementation of this project, while GVN authorities promised to facilitate access to the sources needed.

Consequently, Professor Joseph Zasloff, of the Political Science Department of the University of Pittsburgh and a RAND consultant, arrived in Saigon in July 1964 to initiate the research operations. On the basis of his past connections with the Vietnamese National Institute of Administration and of the University of Saigon, he enlisted the assistance of a score of Vietnamese scholars as interviewers, translators, and research assistants.

Between July 27 and September 5, Professor Zasloff and his Vietnamese associates interviewed forty-two persons at NIC, MIC, Nha Be, and in the project's Saigon offices. The interviews, administered in Vietnamese, followed structured questionnaires, but with enough latitude to give the informants a chance to develop occasional points of special interest. The interviews were then translated into English or French from notes taken on the spot in Vietnamese by members of the team working with Professor Zasloff.

In September 1964, Professor John Donnell, of Temple University and a RAND consultant, joined the research team in Saigon. At that time a very detailed questionnaire was developed with the hope that extensive socio-economic background material could be obtained from the prisoners and defectors under study.

Between September 28 and November 6, 86 interviews based on the new questionnaire were obtained. These interviews ranged in duration from one to twenty-five hours each. They, too, were recorded in Vietnamese, translated into English or French, and then coded and processed statistically.

In addition to the three above-mentioned centers in and near Saigon, the team conducted interviews inside two prisons in the Saigon area, as well as in POW camps in Hue, Da Nang, Tam Ky, Pleiku, Bien Hoa, Can Tho, My Tho, and Bac Lieu, thus covering the territory of all four ARVN Corps. By going to a number of Divisional Headquarters, the team was able to interview some recently captured prisoners, including part-time village guerrillas, or simple liaison agents who were not likely to be transferred to the higher echelon interrogation centers. In a number of instances, the team screened suspects, casual collaborators, and victims of circumstance.

Dr. Guy Pauker was with the team in Saigon between November 18 and 29 to review the general direction of the project. It appeared that the data did not lend themselves to meaningful quantitative treatment, and the effort to follow a rigorously structured interview schedule was abandoned. It was then decided that Professors Donnell and Zasloff would continue their research in South Vietnam until late December 1964, concentrating on a smaller number of unstructured depth interviews, aimed at a more detailed comprehension of those questions revealed as most significant by the previous research. Until December 18, when the first phase of data-gathering was completed, 44 additional interviews were obtained, bringing the total to 172.

Before leaving Saigon, Professors Donnell and Zasloff briefed Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor and the U.S. Mission Council, General William C. Westmoreland and his MACV staff, officers of ARVN GHQ, and USIS personnel.

Essentially the same briefing was given in the second half of January 1965 in Washington, D. C. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs John McNaughton and his staff, as sponsors of the study, heard the briefing first. It was then repeated a number of times for the Vietnam Coordination Committee, the JCS, DIA, ARPA, the Air Staff, and the Department of State.

The text presented in this Memorandum represents a slightly edited version of this briefing, so as to make available without delay what we learned about the **Viet Cong fighting the current revolutionary war in South Vietnam.** These findings should be regarded as tentative, to be followed by a detailed study based on a careful analysis of the interviews and on captured documents of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV).

The first phase of this study concentrated on understanding the reasons why the Viet Cong join the Front, why they fight against the government of Vietnam, and how their movement maintains morale and inner cohesion. It soon became apparent that from an operational point of view it was very important to establish what the impact was on VC morale of different kinds of weapon systems and military operations. Consequently, a second phase of this study, which is still going on, was initiated in late December 1964. It involves, in addition to the Vietnamese members of our team, Dr. Leon Gouré, Dr. Stephen T. Hosmer, Dr. Charles A. H. Thomson, Joseph M. Carrier, Jr., and Anthony J. Russo of the RAND staff. New questionnaires have been developed and are being constantly refined for the second phase of the study of VC motivation and morale.

From July to December 1964, 145 POWs, defectors, and suspects were interviewed. The composition of this sample, which included persons who had been detained for more than two years as well as very recent captives, is as follows:

	Persons	Per Cent
Southern Viet Cong POWs	52	36
Southern Viet Cong POWs who had been sent North after 1954 and then infiltrated back South	42	29
Defectors from the two categories above	31	21
Suspects arrested by the GVN for alleged VC activities	16	11
Northern Viet Cong POWs	4	3

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF VC ATTITUDES IN THIS SAMPLE

A fundamental question that must be asked is whether the VC attitudes described here are representative of the VC movement as a whole. This question must be considered in two aspects: the representativeness of the interviews as concerns all VC POWs and defectors, and the relevance of views expressed by any VC whom we could interview with regard to the attitudes of the VC in the natural state, who are not subject to the coercions and inducements that can be assumed to affect the attitudes of captives and defectors.

We are confident that our sample is representative of POWs and defectors, and we believe that the VC hard-core cadres in the natural state, roaming the delta, training and fighting, and so on, hold essentially the same attitudes

that are expressed here. The salient factors are the scope of the political indoctrination and the degree of conviction it carries in the recipient's mind. Here there is a spectrum that begins with the least experienced, indoctrinated and committed persons in the movement, i.e., the low-level couriers, peasants who occasionally assist the guerrilla sabotage squad to dig up roads or block the canals with bamboo staves, or people who participate in VC-organized public demonstrations or marches on local GVN offices to protest ARVN artillery and air attacks on villages.

At the other end of the spectrum are found the most experienced, indoctrinated, and dedicated VC, i.e., the ex-Viet Minh résistants who fought against the French, went North as "regroupees" in 1954-1955, and were infiltrated into South Vietnam as "returnees," beginning in 1959. In their five to ten years in the North, these men received intensive and systematic political indoctrination as well as additional military training. Thus, their commitment has developed with time and experience in the movement. It is fostered by combat and other experience and by the political indoctrination which accompanies such experience. Or, more accurately, the indoctrination interprets such experience and integrates it in the VC's perceptions. This obviously does not hold true for defectors or for a certain percentage of other VC who are hoping or planning to defect when a suitable occasion presents itself.

There is of course a continuum from the dedicated hard-core VC to the casual joiner or kidnaped village youngster. We observed meaningful regularities as we became better acquainted with our sample. Thus, given the intelligence of the subject, the length of time he has been in the

movement, the rank and responsibility of function attained and, particularly, whether or not he was regrouped to North Vietnam, we found it possible to predict with considerable reliability the range of political information and political values of the interviewees and their degree of dedication to those values. This is understandable. One cannot expect that a 17 year-old Southern village guerrilla who has been in the movement for a few months will know very much about the possible implications of the Sino-Soviet split for the DRV and ultimately for the Southern revolution. It is likewise quite predictable that even a Resistance veteran who went as a regroupee to North Vietnam but was siphoned off early into farm production or other "reconstruction" manual labor will give a relatively superficial description of the revolutionary movement as compared with the statements of a more intelligent and higher-ranking source.

In addition to the nature of his experience in the VC movement, another factor which bears directly on the reliability of a specific interviewee is his post-capture (or post-defection) experience and particularly the length of that experience. We found that some of our most recently captured prisoners (e.g., a few of those interviewed at Bac Lieu in the Mekong Delta), who had been taken less than two weeks before, tended to be poorer interviewees than many who had been in detention much longer. They appeared to be preoccupied with their wounds, the abrupt break in communication with their families and friends and the fear that these people might believe they had been killed, and, finally, dread of their future prospects of more forcible interrogations, brutality, and imprisonment in other jails probably even farther from their homes.

After the POWs had gone through a series of four or five such interrogations and prison transfers and after their cases had been passed on judicially, culminating in a jail sentence of a specific duration or even "preventive detention" that they realized could be prolonged indefinitely, they tended to feel that the worst was over and to "settle down" emotionally. They then appeared to talk more freely. And because they had been forbidden (formally, at least) to talk about politics in prison, some even appeared to enjoy what was to them a rare opportunity for discussing their VC experience and their revolutionary values and aspirations. A few of the most deeply dedicated VC seemed at times to be attempting to convert their interviewers to an acceptance of some of their views. It is not improbable that in stressing the positive and pleasurable aspects of their VC experience, interviewees were affected by the psychological phenomenon of "selective forgetting," and so tended to filter out some of their anxieties and doubts.

Another kind of distortion which undoubtedly crept into some of these men's stories was a type stemming from a similar kind of need, i.e., for quieting their own inner doubts and believing wholeheartedly that their sacrifices for the cause had not been in vain. This situation probably inclined some of our interviewees to portray themselves as more dedicated and optimistic toward the cause than they might have been before capture. The political doubts some of them may well have had tended to be weakened by the experience of living together with other VC POWs with whom they shared a common background of abuse at the hands of GVN jailers and interrogators. Cut off from political

and military news from the outside (except for some rather stale GVN periodicals) and in many cases not able to visit regularly with relatives because the latter lived far from the prison and could afford the trip only occasionally, these men seemed to experience a mutual psychological, social and political strengthening of their sense of membership in a community still serving the revolution by undergoing the deprivations of prison life.

It is a curious commentary on GVN pessimism regarding its possibilities of coping with the attitudes implanted by VC political indoctrination that only prisoners detained as common criminals receive from the GVN anything resembling anti-Communist political education and even this in only a rather superficial kind of "civics" course. This may explain in part why most interviewees in this sample were not as critical of the VC movement as the reader might expect. As discussed more fully in the section on motives for defection, those VC POWs and even most of the defectors who expressed dissatisfaction with their VC experience focused on personal rather than ideological factors, e.g., the physical hardships of the guerrilla life, long separation from home and family, and so on. Furthermore, most of them exhibited some sense of guilt over not having been up to the rigors of the revolutionary life. They seemed to remain convinced that most if not all of the goals of the movement constituted a just cause.

To leave the reader with a clear image of the nature of our sample, we wish to emphasize that approximately one-third of the interviewees were Party members and gave responses that could be considered "hard core" in terms of depth of indoctrination and commitment. Hard-core

status, for ordinary Southerners as well as the Southerners returned from the North, reflects the length and nature of experience in the movement, along with such personal traits as intelligence and energy.

We are therefore satisfied that our sample provides adequate information on the state of mind of those VC elements who constitute the steel frame of the insurgency movement and insure, short of major future setbacks to their cause, its perpetuation as an effective social organization. At this stage of our research we believe the less committed elements, although they form perhaps as much as two-thirds of our sample, are less significant. For it appears that once the Front was able to establish itself as a going concern, the less motivated VC recruits could be made into efficient combatants without necessarily having the same high motivation and morale as the hard core. Naturally, the implications of the present and future ratio of dedicated hard-core VC to less dedicated village recruits for the continuation and nature of the counterinsurgency efforts are considerable and require constant scrutiny.

II. WHO ARE THE VIET CONG?

The revolutionary fighters of Vietnam, the VC, are composed of two generations: those who are, say, over 30 years old, and those under thirty. The VC who was 30 in 1964 (when these interviews were conducted) would have been 20 at the time of the Geneva Conference in 1954 when the war against the French ended with the partition of Vietnam. This means that he, and his generation, probably came to the age of political awareness during the period of the French colonial regime, so that his thinking is indelibly marked by the spirit of nationalism that grew during that period. His younger comrade of the new generation matured after the French departure, growing up under the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

THE GENERATION OVER THIRTY: BACKBONE OF THE VC

The vast majority of the VC over 30 in our sample participated in the Viet Minh struggle against the French. They see themselves as Vietnamese patriots who joined a widespread popular nationalist movement to expel the colonialist rulers and win independence for Vietnam. We often found it useful to begin our interviews with the older VC by discussing their Viet Minh experience in the struggle against the French, for they are proud of their role and often seem to enjoy talking about it. This generation, because of its age, revolutionary experience, and prestige, unquestionably provides the crucial leadership of the current insurgency in Vietnam.

This Viet Minh generation followed two separate paths after the partition of Vietnam in 1954. One segment, composed primarily of regular members of Viet Minh military units, was ordered to North Vietnam by the Viet Minh High Command following the cease-fire. MACV estimates that some 90,000 Viet Minh troops were regrouped to the North, in this manner, and other estimates hold that some 40,000 civilians also went North. The other segment stayed in the South. Some remained under direct Viet Minh discipline while others simply returned to their normal occupations, believing that they were quitting their political engagement.

THE "REGROUPEES" (TAP KET)

The Viet Minh soldiers who were sent North tell stories that follow a pattern. Many, especially the younger, single men, report that they were pleased by the order to go North for it would give them the opportunity to see more of their country. Some expressed disappointment that, at the completion of their arduous struggle, they could not return to their villages and rejoin their families, but almost to a man they spoke of a solemn duty to obey their leaders. They all believed, in any case, that they would return to the South in 1956, for they had been carefully taught that the Geneva Agreements ensured elections in 1956, and that their side was sure to win. Thus the accords would delay for only two years the goal for which they had fought: a unified, independent Vietnam under Viet Minh leadership.

Some who sailed North on Russian ships said they were pleased to be transported by a powerful socialist ally in their struggle. Those who were taken by French ships reported that the Viet Minh behavior toward the French was under effective discipline, and that the behavior of the French personnel on the journey was correct. A few in our sample, located in positions in Central Vietnam, marched across the 17th parallel to the North. All these Viet Minh Southerners were deeply moved by the warm reception they received from their Northern compatriots. They recount that they were garlanded, embraced, and invited into local homes, where food and drink were pressed on them, and where gratitude for their courage and sacrifice was showered on them.

While waiting for the elections of 1956, when they expected to return South, they generally continued in the military service, often assigned to tasks of community development which gave them an added sense of service to the people. When it was announced that the elections would not be held, they were bitterly angry and sorely disappointed. Asked whom they blamed for the denial of elections, they generally responded unequivocally, "the Americans and Diem."

In the years after 1956, the tap ket either remained in the military, alternating between training and community service tasks, or were demobilized, especially after 1958 when the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) was professionalized and weaker elements screened out. Those who left the army took jobs in the civilian economy, particularly on the state farms. Those who remained in the army

generally continued to serve in units with fellow Southerners. The civilians, too, tended to remain in a Southern milieu. In general, they did not seem to be displeased with the Communist political system that was being consolidated in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). But they said they were distressed about the rigorous land reform implemented with maximum severity in 1955, and accompanied by many of the abuses and cruelties of its Communist Chinese model. Many of the regroupees in our sample reported that they were reassured when the regime backed off from the excesses of the land reform program and announced a "rectification of errors" campaign. Few spoke of political disaffection toward the North after 1956, but most retained pride in the South. For many the colder North, with its seasonal variations, was unpleasant compared to the South and its gentler climate. The Southerners now appreciated the greater abundance and ease of life in the naturally richer, agricultural South. They found the peasants of the North had to work much more diligently and live more frugally than those in the South. Some of our Southern respondents confessed that they found Northerners, especially the women, cold, severe, and straight-laced compared to the more easy-going, relaxed Southerners. Few of our sample married in the North. Besides the difference in customs and the limited availability of Southern women, they were handicapped by inadequate income and, probably most important, by lack of family connections to arrange a marriage and help to establish a household.

Many regroupees recalled their nostalgia for the South with a commonly used catch-phrase, saying they spent "Northern days and Southern nights." "During the day," they would say, "we worked hard and had no time to think of our families in the South. But at night, when we could relax, we would think about our wives, our children, our brothers and sisters, our parents, our homes.... We longed to see them." Most of the regroupees claimed that they were happy to be called up for training to return to the South after what the VC call the "uprising" in 1960.

Though our interviewees were apparently not aware of it, there is strong evidence to indicate that a decision was made at the highest level in Hanoi, probably sometime in 1959, to step up the insurgency in the South. Tap ket in the PAVN, now with more than five years' service in the army of North Vietnam, armed with the military skill and political indoctrination that this experience provided, were sent to special training programs that lasted from three months to more than a year, in preparation for infiltration to the South. Those released to civilian life, too, were recalled for training and indoctrination to serve in the Southern insurgency. All were taught that their fellow Southerners were carrying on a valiant struggle against the oppression of the Americans and their puppet, Diem, and needed and would welcome the assistance of the Southern Viet Minh patriots who had been ordered to the North after the Geneva Conference. Almost invariably, they spoke of a sense of duty to join this struggle, and many described joy, even elation, at the prospect of going home.

The story of their infiltration is familiar. Some came in groups as small as 15; others infiltrated in bands of more than 200. The long trek through the rugged mountains and jungles of Southern Laos and Central Vietnam took from one and a half to three months. (Only a few in our sample reported that they came from the North by sea.) They were well aware that they were marching through a well-organized infiltration system. Posts were established along the route a day's march apart. A guide met them half way from one post to another and conducted them to the next post, where they were instructed to bivouac for the evening. They were given rations and briefings about the local situation necessary for the continuation of their journey. They had strict security regulations, and were cautioned not to question the local guides or divulge information about themselves. They were required to take camouflage precautions against enemy air surveillance. Those who were ill -- it seems that a majority contracted malaria -- were given medicine and encouraged to stay with their group if they had the strength. Those who could not continue the march were taken for medical treatment and joined later infiltration groups when they recovered. Some infiltrators stated their belief that the more seriously ill were returned to the North. Few of the infiltrators reported fear of attack by either air or ground forces. The pattern of infiltration indicated by the infiltrators themselves was confirmed by several of our interviewees who served in the infiltration system either as guides along the personnel route or porters along the materiel route.

The infiltrators tell of their long, arduous trek with a certain pride. The march was tiring and often painful, since it lay through streams and heavy brush, and over steep hills and rugged terrain. When pressed for their personal feelings during this journey, many responded with a self-sacrificing stoicism: "It wasn't a question of liking or disliking the march; it was our duty." Others, who admitted fatigue, claimed that the morale of the infiltrators was high because they were returning South to liberate their homeland and to see their families again. Though none of our respondents put it into words, we drew the strong impression that these Southerners, who had lived in the North and walked back down over a good part of Vietnamese territory, had developed a sense of the oneness of their nation.

It is clear that the infiltrators were awaited by VC cadres not only along the infiltration route but also at the end of the journey. Some, especially the older and less robust of these "returnees" (hoi ket), were assigned at first to "farm production units," particularly in such food-deficient areas as the Central Vietnamese highlands and War Zones C and D of Southern Vietnam, or to clerical and administrative jobs. However, the more healthy and vigorous of the returnees were most frequently assigned as cadres for Southern combat units, as well as to special positions that required either the technical competence they had gained in the North or the leadership skills and experience they had acquired by revolutionary war service and continued training in the PAVN. Our interviews make abundantly clear that the returnees, at least up to 1964,

have provided the backbone of leadership and experience for the combat effort of the VC main force, and in part of the regional force in the South.

RESISTANCE MEMBERS WHO REMAINED IN THE SOUTH

The second category of the older generation of the VC comprised the *résistants* who remained in the South. Most of this group in our sample stated that they returned to their villages in 1954, after Geneva, hoping to live quietly with their families in normal, nonpolitical pursuits. A few admitted that they remained under Viet Minh discipline, with orders to return home, live quietly, and prepare for the elections of 1956 by spreading propaganda among the villagers. All of them described the period from 1954 to 1956 as a quiet one in the countryside. When the elections were not held, this group, like their Viet Minh counterparts who had gone North, became, as the reports indicate, angry and disappointed. They blamed the refusal of elections on the "My-Diem" (American-Diem) regime. In addition, they feared greatly for their future when elections were denied. They sensed that as former Viet Minh adherents they would be considered enemies of the state by the Diem regime.

These former *resistants* now claim that their fears were justified, since in the period from 1956 to 1959 the Diem regime, through its local officials, put unbearable pressure on them. Some in our sample with means -- a bourgeois landowner and a small manufacturer in a regional town, for example -- stated that local security agents, particularly the police and the *sûreté*, squeezed them for

bribes with the threat that they would be denounced as Communist agents. All of them felt hounded by village and district officials because of their past connections. Added to their fear for themselves and their families was a revulsion shared by the peasants against the style of the Diem regime in the countryside, with its petty corruption, spinelessness, and incompetence. They also disliked intensely Diem's family entourage that had consolidated itself in the Saigon palace. These résistants point out that they had no alternative but to turn back to the Viet Minh organization for refuge. Their anger at local conditions reinforced their antipathy for the Diem regime.

After 1959, returnees came in greater numbers to join their Southern comrades of the earlier resistance against the French in the continuing struggle against the Americans and Diem. By 1960, it appears, some of the Southern rural population was sufficiently alienated from the Diem regime to be ripe for VC mobilization. A Viet Minh network, composed primarily of the older revolutionary fighters we have described above, was in place in the South to tap into this discontent and to organize and encourage rebellion in the South. We stress the importance of this experienced revolutionary organization, which was available to exploit the widespread rural protest. This organization had dedicated, well-trained cadres from the region who drew recruits from the younger, peasant generation for training as new revolutionaries. The recruiting techniques of these Viet Minh cadres are impressive. They study family characteristics as well as personal and local grievances. They gather recruits, in good part, by

persistent face-to-face encounters. The training provided by the VC organization, too, is effective in developing a significant number of new, well-indoctrinated VC cadres.

THE YOUNGER VC GENERATION: THE RANK AND FILE

The generation of VC under 30, who comprise the bulk of the VC combat personnel, join the Front for a series of intertwined motives. Many come from revolutionary family backgrounds and find it normal that when they are of military age -- much younger in VC than in Western, or even GVN, practice -- they should follow the tradition of their fathers, or uncles, or older brothers, whom they regard as heroes for their service with the Viet Minh or the Front. Some in our sample were discontented with the lack of opportunity they found in their villages. We recall a particularly poignant case, that of a bright, 25 year-old former medical aide (male), with four years' service in the Front, who still had three slugs in his body when we interviewed him in Da Nang. He spoke of his frustration while living at home. He told us that he had finished primary school in his village and wanted to continue his schooling, but there was no possibility of that in his village. His family were poor peasants without the means to send him away to school. He plaintively described his family life as nothing but work in the rice fields, eating, and sleeping. "I didn't want to live like that," he said, "I wanted to go to school, to secondary school." He had told us earlier about his older brother who had been regrouped to the North in 1954.

One day in 1960, a VC recruiting cadre came to his house and discussed his grievances with him. When the cadre asked him if he wanted to follow his brother and go to school, he replied, "Wait, I'll go get my pants," and departed without telling his family, whom he did not wish to alarm. Instead of going to the North to school, as he was led to expect, he was taken with other youths of the district to a VC zone of security, where he received a six-month course of training to be a VC medical aide. He then served two years on combat duty, was sent back for another six months of advanced medical training, and once again returned to combat duty, serving until he was wounded and captured in 1964. We probed his reaction to his experience with a challenge: "They cheated you, didn't they? You thought you would be going to school. Instead they trained you to serve in combat. Why didn't you try to leave them?" He reacted indignantly: "How could I leave them? What alternative did I have? Where could I go? I couldn't abandon my duty like that. Besides, they did give me training.... I had a year of training as a medical aide." A number in our sample, especially those who had been in the North, were especially grateful for the opportunity for education and self-improvement in the Communist forces.

Many of our younger generation respondents spoke of their protest against the conditions in their village. They expressed anger at arrogant, corrupt, incompetent local officials. A significant number were especially indignant about the Self Defense Corps (SDC) or village militia, who had among them brutal, blustering types who

would steal, annoy the local girls, and treat villagers with insolence. It seems that after 1960, when the rural security situation grew worse and the climate of tension and suspicion increased, the police and sûreté, the local functionaries, and the SDC grew increasingly severe in their relations with the peasants. Many of our respondents registered their resentment against the rural relocation schemes, the "agroville" program of 1960, its successor, and the strategic hamlet program of 1962. They were required to quit their homesteads, abandon the tombs of their ancestors, their fruit trees, their familiar surroundings, and to build a new home, often at a painful financial sacrifice. They had to work at constructing these agrovilles and strategic hamlets, though they often had no enthusiasm for the finished product.

Young men nearing army age recognized that they would have to serve either with the Front or the government. For most in our sample, the great majority of which came from the poor peasant class, this necessity for choice produced little conflict. For them, the Diem side represented the rich, the landowners, the city people. The Front they believed, was for the poor. For some, entry into the combat forces of the Front appealed to their spirit of adventure. We found others who wanted to escape from unpleasant conditions at home such as family tensions, mistreatment by parents or step-parents, and unbearable adult pressure. Most found outlandish or offensive the suggestion that they might equally as well have joined the government security forces.

As the Front extended its control in and after 1960, it became the effective government in a significant area of the countryside. No longer can this be regarded as a jungle insurgency led by a small band of committed Communist cadres, but rather it must be seen as a war waged by an alternative government. This alternative government performs the normal tasks of any government: it administers and controls; it collects taxes; and it drafts young men into the army. From this source the bulk of our lowest level VC respondents came -- the village guerrillas, liaison agents, ammunition carriers, gatherers of the dead and wounded, road-destroyers, spike-trap planters. These were the most marginal and the least committed, but the most numerous element working for the Front. They were the most difficult to interview. They are the least articulate, and most fearful, and perhaps the most severely jolted by their unhappy life in prisons and defector camps. Many of this low-level group are limited in their perspective to their hamlet, even sub-hamlet. One young boy said that the only time he had left the limits of his hamlet was for one visit to an uncle who lived 15 kilometers away. Many of the young, uneducated, poor peasants give the impression that they respond to Front control in a traditional peasant manner: they obey authority. When asked what their activities had been, many of these young peasants replied that they served in "the army."

It is not a simple matter to determine the precise mix of persuasion and coercion that goes into the recruiting practices of the Front. It is evident that a number of

their best elements enter the movement voluntarily. The most articulate and committed Communist prisoners interviewed by us stressed the voluntarism of the movement and pointed out that you cannot make a revolutionary fighter out of a person dragooned into service. As one interviewee put it, "A man forced to join would be the first to lose his rifle." Certainly many are persuaded by the very effective recruiting techniques carried out by experienced cadres who discuss genuine grievances and appeal to legitimate aspirations. Some recruits are drawn into subversive activities by the local party organization in the village while they are still living at home until, as one youth put it, "you become an illegal man." Then, like this youth, they may leave home for full-time service with the Front, at first as a village guerrilla. Then, if their service is exemplary, they may be promoted to the local (regional) and main force units. In areas that have fallen under the effective control of the Front, the obligation for youth to serve the Front is made clear by VC functionaries, even to those unhappy about joining "the army." For all those taken into the military arm of the Front, through whatever combination of persuasion and coercion, there is a selection process that identifies those most apt for responsible revolutionary service, and a training and indoctrination process designed to develop promising attitudes and skills into the desired revolutionary mold.

In our sample were a few ethnic Northerners, between 18 and 25 years old, who were performing their obligatory military service in the North and were selected (in

several cases "to volunteer") for service in the South. Most of these Northerners did not find it unusual that they were sent to participate in a war they had learned was for Vietnamese national liberation.

III. WHAT ARE THE VIET CONG FIGHTING FOR?

Responses to a set of questions designed to gain an understanding of what revolutionaries are fighting for obviously vary according to length of service and indoctrination, level of responsibility, intelligence, and articulateness. The well-indoctrinated VC, generally those with the longest service, gave the most clear-cut, and most predictable, responses. Those with the shortest service, the low-level personnel operating at the village and hamlet level, frequently were fuzzy and confused about the goals of their struggle. The analysis that follows will be drawn from the responses of the more articulate and better indoctrinated members of the Front -- i.e., the hard core. In addition, attention will be called to the views and motivations of the hard core shared by the non-hard-core members of our sample.

The indoctrinated VC claim invariably that they fight primarily "to expel the American imperialists." The VC, especially of the older generation, see this as the continuation of a struggle, once against the French colonialists and now against the American imperialists, to establish independence for Vietnam. When asked how the Viet Minh differ from the Viet Cong, the great majority of our interviewees, including those too young to remember clearly the French colonial period, responded, "They are the same; only the enemy has changed. The Viet Minh fought the French; we are fighting the Americans and their lackeys." They regard the Americans as more formidable enemies than the French, recognizing the superiority of American material resources. The older generation imply,

too, that even the government of South Vietnam sees no difference between the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong. They recount how, as Viet Minh, they were regarded by authorities of the Diem regime as enemies of the state. On the question of reunification, all see the unity of Vietnam as desirable and necessary. Reflecting the official doctrine taught in the training sessions, the more responsible and articulate VC members state that the question of reunification must be settled at a later time by the Vietnamese themselves, after the departure of the Americans.

The indoctrinated VC see the American interest in Vietnam as twofold: They see, first, an American military-political interest in South Vietnam as a bastion against the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. Second, they see a U.S. economic interest in using Vietnam as a source of raw materials and as a market for American products. This view, derived from their Marxist political indoctrination, is reinforced when they see American articles, sent as governmental aid under the commercial import program, for sale in Vietnamese shops

In their struggle to establish independence, the VC, especially those of the older generation, see themselves as the legitimate rulers of an independent Vietnam. They look upon the Diem regime and its successors as puppets of American imperialism. They certainly do not regard the present war as a struggle between North and South Vietnam, or between Communists and anti-Communists, but as a struggle between the legitimate leaders of an independent Vietnam and usurpers protected by a foreign power.

Another fundamental set of goals for which particularly the hard-core VC fight can be summed up under the rubric social justice. They refer to the program of their cover organization, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, as follows: "We are fighting to end poverty. We are fighting to redistribute the land. We want to end unemployment." The Front fights for the poor; the government consists of and therefore protects the rich, the landowners, the bourgeoisie.

As we probed into the economic background of our interviewees, we found that very few of our large majority of poor peasants conceived the possibility that they would have a chance to acquire land of their own under the Diem regime. Class divisions deepened as time passed. As security in the countryside deteriorated after 1960, and the VC influence spread, those with means fled to the province towns and Saigon, leaving the poorer element as almost the sole dwellers in the countryside. The poor came under the control of the Front, and the war became in a real sense a class war. But in line with Communist "national united front" tactics, the most articulate of the VC would deny that they are fighting a class war, and would say that there is a place in the Front for members of all classes, including the national (as opposed to the reactionary) bourgeoisie, landowners, and intellectuals, as well as peasants. But the bulk of their ranks is composed of poorer peasants, who see the rich as their enemies.

A large component in the VC struggle for social justice seems to be a striving to enlarge the area of opportunity for the poor. They are particularly eager for more education. Regroupees who had the opportunity while

in the military service in North Vietnam to receive "cultural training" often achieved the equivalent of several years of high school education. They expressed their gratitude, and were confident that their struggle would open a future opportunity to others. The possibility of advancement in the Front even for those with little formal education was an attraction to the more intelligent and ambitious. Two senior VC captains from poor peasant backgrounds, with only a few years of village schooling, noted that they could never have achieved their rank on the government side, where officers must have at least a high school education and inevitably come, therefore, from the upper classes. Our findings give the lie to the old cliché, still frequently intoned by Saigon intellectuals, that all the Southern peasant wants is his "petit lopin de terre et qu'on lui fiche la paix" (little plot of ground and to be left alone). We found in our sample many poor peasants with no formal schooling who were eloquent in the expression of their aspirations for education, economic opportunity, equality and justice for themselves and, especially, for their children. They were equally eloquent in expressing their indignation at the injustices they knew.

The struggle for social justice aims also at putting an end to the abuses by GVN civilian and military officials. Members of the Front frequently refer to the venality and arrogance of the local government authorities, and compare the latter with the Front cadres whom they regard as honest, self-sacrificing, and gentle in their relations with the population. On the minds of nearly all of the prisoners we interviewed was a desire "to end brutality." They

pointed out that the Front operated upon the principle "lose an enemy and win a friend." Enlisted men of the government forces taken prisoner by the Front are indoctrinated for anything from a few hours to a few days and released. Officers from the government side, we were told, are indoctrinated over a longer period and at least some of them are released. Members of the Front are forbidden to mistreat their prisoners. This policy is confirmed in the debriefings of ARVN officers and men who have been captured and released by the VC.

A powerful theme for which all VC say they fight is peace. They say their hearts are heavy over the killings and devastation to which South Vietnam is subjected. Our interviewers confronted them strongly with the challenge, "If you would cease your hostile activities, there would be peace, wouldn't there?" Many were indignant at this charge. The warmongers, in their perspective, are the "My-Diem" forces. They see themselves as the defenders of peace, but peace with freedom. The profound war-weariness they sense among the whole Vietnamese population, they believe, will erode resistance to their liberation force, so that the Americans, even if they wish to hang on, will find no local agents to fight their war. Our respondents contended that the will of the Front would remain firm until the achievement of victory.

It should be stressed that not all members of the Front share an equally strong commitment to the foregoing objectives. There are soldiers in the Front, just as in any army, who fight primarily because it is their job to fight. Some soldiers, particularly regroupees who have been professional soldiers for more than ten years, leave

an impression that they came South because they were ordered to come and that they are fighting in the South because a good soldier obeys the commands of his superiors. Nevertheless, the goals just described are bound up in the revolutionary Communist ideology of the Front and are inculcated by an effective indoctrination process. Though all members of the Front have been much exposed to these ideas, those who have served the longest, or who learn the most quickly, are likely to make the VC ideology most completely their own.

IV. FORCES FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COHESION IN THE VIET CONG

THE PARTY

The People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam is roughly the regional equivalent of the Lao Dong or Workers Party in the North. Membership in the two is easily convertible, and service in the Southern Party is taken into account as part of the total Party membership time used to calculate seniority in the Vietnamese Communist movement.

Party members returning from the North appear usually to become members of the PRPSVN automatically, although in some cases they may reapply for membership simply to preserve the appearance of strictly Southern leadership of the Viet Cong movement.

Party members articulate the standard Hanoi line that the Lao Dong Party in the North aims primarily at the building of socialism whereas the mission of the People's Revolutionary Party is the liberation of South Vietnam from the American imperialists and their lackeys.

The PRPSVN, in this "national liberation" stage of the revolution, directs its appeal not only to proletarian peasants and workers, but also to the "national bourgeoisie," to intellectuals and to "progressive landlords" as well. Its qualifications for entry are therefore not so rigorous as those of the Lao Dong, and its appeal emphasizes "democracy, peace, independence, and neutrality" rather than socialism and communism.

The mass "feeder" for the PRPSVN is an organization called Liberation Youth. Its purpose is to prepare youths

between the ages of 18 and 25 for membership in the PRPSVN.

Our data indicate that nearly all the officers and about one-third of the troops in the main forces are Party members and that the percentage declines in lower-echelon units.

Membership in the Liberation Youth appears to comprise most of the remainder of the effectives in the main forces.

THE CADRE

A cadre appears to be anyone who has command or administrative responsibility. On the military side, this includes anyone from a squad leader on up, although some of our sources considered even an assistant squad leader to be a cadre. Most of the cadres are either members or applicants for membership in the Party or the Liberation Youth.

The VC image of the cadre, and especially the cadre who is a Party member, is a more heroic one than that encountered these days in Eastern Europe, and even China and possibly also in North Vietnam. There, a cadre is often regarded as tough and hard-working when he needs to be, but essentially opportunistic and arriviste. He gets larger food rations, has an edge over non-Party members in the competition for promotions, and often can guarantee his children better educational opportunities. In the VC, by contrast, the cadre, and especially when he is a Party member, is regarded as a dedicated person ever willing to endure hardships in return for a chance to serve the revolution. The relative youthfulness of this movement, still in a "national liberation" stage and permeated by nationalistic idealism, is of great importance here.

When the non-Party members among our interviewees were asked if they had hoped to become Party members they answered in ways that confirmed this heroic image. They usually said something like "No, I couldn't hope for membership; my 'cultural' level was too low. Party membership would only have brought me heavier responsibilities, and those I already had were difficult enough."

THE THREE-MAN ("THREE-THREE") CELLS

These are found in the military and are smaller and more intimate than the regular Party cells in civilian life. The 10-man squad breaks down into three of these "three-three" cells, but one of these cells may sometimes include four or even five men.

Such units were used earlier in the Chinese Communist army. The most politically mature and militarily experienced man is named cell leader. But in the natural process of a unit's expansion, the two ordinary members of a cell gain experience and tend eventually to become cell leaders themselves.

Members of a "three-three" cell "consider each other as brothers," "three for one and one for three," "inseparable in work, combat and death." They sleep in the same place but apparently do not necessarily eat all their meals together nor restrict their friendships to members of the same cell. They are supposed to confide fully in each other, and most of the kiem-thao criticism and self-criticism sessions (described below) are conducted in this small cell. Cell members appear to have explicit responsibilities for each other in the event of a man's falling ill or being wounded in combat.

KIEM-THAO SESSIONS: CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM

This term, an abbreviation for "verification and discussion," applies to a variety of sessions held at echelons ranging from the "three-three" cell all the way up to the battalion. Varying considerably in subject matter, the kiem-thao sessions feature criticism and self-criticism and are held daily whenever and wherever possible except among isolated farm-production groups and units engaged in combat. But meetings are held even during military operations if conditions permit.

Kiem-thao is most frequently held at the "three-three" cell and squad levels. The platoon holds such a session usually two or more times a month and the company about once a month. In North Vietnam and some areas of the South they are even held, though infrequently, at the battalion level.

The daily meetings, coming just before the evening meal, last for a half to three-quarters of an hour, or longer when special problems warrant. They cover the following subjects, not necessarily in this order:

(1) Spirit or morale of the unit in a general sense.

(2) Internal unity and solidarity of the unit, i.e., discipline and cooperation among members and between them and their superiors. The men are exhorted to search their hearts to see whether all sentiments of homesickness have been thoroughly rooted out.

(3) External unity or relations between the unit and the civilian population. Here the VC live by the tam cung or "three togethers": "eat with the people," "work with the people," "sleep with the people." Attitudes toward women are severely regulated as described below.

(4) Frugality. The men are urged to be careful with clothing, food and money, and are told: "We must not waste what the people have given us."

(5) Evaluation of work performed since the last meeting and an allocation of jobs for the next day (or other period).

Some political discussion is frequently included in these meetings, but systematic political study is undertaken only periodically, usually at special stages of a Front member's career, such as after his joining the movement and at various intervals thereafter, particularly as he moves up to cadre status or takes on propaganda or recruiting (civilian or military "proselytization") functions. Such regular political study classes usually are held over a period of days or even weeks. After presentation of the political text and interpretive comments by the cadre, the unit members are obliged to comment on their own and others' comprehension in the same method employed in the kiem-thao sessions.

Kiem-thao performs at least four functions with striking effectiveness:

First, it enables members of a unit to profit from each other's experiences, and lessons are drawn from both successes and failures. The Front conducts critiques before and after military actions, probing for positive and negative performance factors. The fine detail in these reports and the Front's eagerness to profit from mistakes are impressive.

Second, the kiem-thao process enables cadres to detect and cope with politically unreliable thought and attitudes in the group. Leaders of the kiem-thao sessions report

to their superiors after these meetings on morale and other problems in the unit

Third, it gets all unit members involved and participating actively in the critique. No one can sit and listen passively. Everyone must make some individual effort to comprehend and evaluate the subject under discussion and must, at the very least, express the group "line" in his own words and relate it to his own problems.

Finally, kiem-thao appears to be an effective means of reducing all kinds of psychological tensions arising in this style of life, so fraught with physical deprivation and focused so intensely on subordination of the self to the group. Our interviewees commented that it was difficult to bear a grudge against any comrade after these sessions, because open discussion of dissatisfactions and anxieties tended greatly to clear the air.

Our interviewees described a typical pattern of reactions to the kiem-thao. At first, there was personal embarrassment at being asked to express one's innermost thoughts and to criticize others and oneself. But after a while, the recruits got into the swing of the process and found it less difficult. Eventually, almost all of them said they found it instructive. Quite a number even regarded it as exhilarating. One main forces non-com reported his own reaction to the sessions, "I felt glorious. I believed I could solve all my own problems and help others to solve theirs too."

V. FACTORS AFFECTING VIET CONG MORALE

A slogan which recurs in our interviews is that the VC "lives splendidly and dies gloriously," because he fights for a cause. Materially, of course, their life is miserable. Most of the fighting men are given one or one and a half lon of rice a day, a lon being a measure of volume the size of an ordinary condensed milk can. Many units, particularly those outside the rice-rich delta areas, must supplement the rice ration with manioc. They may also receive a small vegetable ration daily or even less frequently, and a small amount of dried fish a few times a week. In the hills of Central Vietnam and in War Zones C and D, food is in such short supply that the troops must live largely on food grown by their own production units.

The VC usually sleep in hammocks in the jungle but sometimes are quartered on villages. Rest and sleep are usually inadequate because VC units ordinarily move and fight by night. Even in training and rest periods they frequently move to a new bivouac during the night just to impress on everyone the importance of continual alertness.

The VC interviewees often cite a slogan which goes literally, "backwardness is prohibited" (cam hu-hoa), but which actually refers to the prohibition against illicit (extramarital) sexual relations. Personal indulgence is viewed as backward and counterrevolutionary because it can harm the cause. Friendly relations with local people including women are encouraged, but no romantic activity with girls is permitted unless it is honestly intended to

lead to marriage and a family. VC soldiers are not allowed to flirt at all with montagnard girls.

When breaches of discipline do occur they are punished severely in accordance with the puritanical moral code of the VC. The usual penalty consists of extended criticism sessions and the assignment of the guilty man to a headquarters unit where he may spend up to three months on regular rations but relieved of duty and in complete disgrace. A stiffer punishment is to demobilize the soldier and return him in disgrace to his village, beyond the pale of further service to the National Liberation Front.

The VC help some men to find wives, if they believe they can take on family responsibilities. However, most men feel they cannot do so until the revolution is won. Here again, personal gratification is assigned a priority below that of the revolutionary cause.

The VC soldier's loyalty and emotional ties are purposely restricted as much as possible to the cause and to his unit. Numerous interviewees described their military commander as a father figure who insisted on good performance; but the political officer appeared as the "mother" figure, because he displayed an interest in personal problems and showed respect and affection for his men even if they made mistakes. He combines functions roughly analogous to those of the chaplain, supply officer, special services officer and T.I. and E. officer in our armed forces. (The lowest echelon regular political officer is the assistant company commander. In some cases, the same man acts as military commander and political officer, at least temporarily.)

In the picture of monkish solidarity which emerges here, celibacy is apparently made somewhat tolerable not only by constant exhortation but by meager food rations, strenuous physical exertion, frequent exhaustion, a daily regimen which gets the men up at 5:00 a.m. or slightly later, even when they are engaged only in food production or political or military training; and finally, the fairly high incidence of illness due to physical hardships and a paucity of medical facilities. (Illness, especially malaria, is very common among men being infiltrated into South Vietnam from the North, often via Laos.)

Although living conditions are harsh, they do not appear to have lowered Front morale appreciably. In fact, morale seems to have improved over the long run. One captured returnee commented that when he had first come to the South two years before, his unit had not had enough to eat. Gradually the supply system had improved to the point where they had not only enough food but regularly received pocket money to buy such articles as soap. A Front doctor who had worked with the Hre tribesmen said that when his unit first arrived in the Central Vietnam highlands after the long infiltration trek from the North, everyone suffered from a feeling of isolation and from the limited food supply. But after the slow build-up in the hills, the units pushed forward and, their spirits soared when, as he put it, "We could begin to see the plains below," which represented home provinces to most of them.

We found that most of the defectors we talked to had come out primarily for personal reasons rather than as a response to an attractive competitive political appeal

from the GVN. Even some of the old-time Viet Minh résistants who had gone North in 1954 and returned South have defected. Our data do not enable us to give a quantitative breakdown on motives for defection, but our impression is that most of the returnee defectors were moved by three principal factors, and again, largely personal ones, occurring separately or together in the situation of any given individual.

The first factor is social class background, i.e., a family of other than proletarian or poorer peasant origin. A farm of three hectares is not large by South Vietnamese standards, so when a young man from such a farm was regrouped to North Vietnam back in 1954-1955, he tended to be shocked at the harshness of the DRV land reform campaign toward owners of plots this size. More fundamentally, a man stigmatized as a "landlord" or a rich (or even "middle") farmer was politically suspect.

The second factor is the frustration of these returnees at not being able to visit or return to their native villages after years of separation from their families. Nearly all of them believed they would soon be reunited with their people when they "volunteered" to go South, but in some cases they had spent two years in the South and still had no firm prospects of visiting their relatives. (The VC allow such visits only when the family lives in a controlled zone or at least a contested zone. In the latter case, the Front often gives a man a small security escort for the trip to his old village. Quite a number of our sources had been captured in ARVN ambushes while traveling to visit families living in contested areas.)

A third factor in returnee defections is aging and physical debilitation. The high incidence of malaria and other disease, the physical strain of prolonged guerrilla activity and the deficient diet all tend to age a man prematurely. Several times we found men in their thirties, even the early thirties, who said, "I was getting old and still had no prospect of settling down to a family of my own." Or, some of these men tended to say, "I devoted my youth to the struggle and now I am old and worn out. I just want to return to my family and take care of it."

What about the defectors among the non-returnee Southerners, who are generally younger and have not been separated so long from their families? Here again, those whose class backgrounds are suspect appear to defect oftener. But perhaps the biggest factor is a shorter period of exposure to political indoctrination and political hardening through participation in the struggle. The results are less dedication to the cause and relatively less ability to endure the hardship and trauma of the life of a guerrilla fighter.

There is another type of defector found among the non-returnees -- a type which usually did not remain in the VC very long. This was the individual who had joined for highly personal, non-ideological reasons, such as to escape from his family or GVN authorities. Many in this category undoubtedly have stayed with the VC, become inured to hardship, and developed a regular political commitment. But we talked to a number of such defectors who, unable to bear the hardship, had decided after a few months or even sooner that this life was not for them.

In this category was a 21 year-old youth who ran off to the Front because he had been ordered by the court to pay a large damage settlement arising from a motorscooter accident. Another was a well-educated girl who was recruited while feeling sick and miserable over failing her baccalaureat examination for the fourth time. Even in these situations, of course, the VC recruiters stressed nationalist appeals, which made it easier for the subjects to construe the motive for their actions as patriotism rather than an avoidance of personal responsibility.

We did find some defectors who professed to have come out for ideological reasons, such as dissatisfaction with the VC's political emphasis on collective methods and goals, but it was difficult to tell whether these people had arrived at such views while still with the VC or later, as a result of attending GVN political re-education classes. Incidentally, such political training is given to those who surrender but not to VC POWs. The GVN is very suspicious of defectors and not entirely without reason, for the VC has on occasion sent in false "defectors" hoping to penetrate the Chieu Hoi Commissariat and other GVN organs.

Numerous cases which seemed at first glance to express some degree of ideological motivation for defection appeared on balance to reflect mainly a personal reluctance to face what seemed an indefinite exposure to hardship and danger in the VC.

In addition, there were numerous stories of a more obviously self-serving kind, calculated to win favor for the subject with the GVN and with us.

But defectors tend also to reflect a residual admiration for some or many of the values of the revolution and a certain amount of chagrin or guilt at not having been able to tolerate the rigors of revolutionary life. This attitude appears to be reinforced by their feeling that the GVN does not offer a strong and worthy political alternative to the Front.

To return to the subject of Front morale, we asked our subjects, "When was your confidence in victory greatest and when was it weakest?" The returnees often said it was weakest in 1956 because they had felt disillusioned about the postponement of the North-South reunification elections and also because that was a period of popular reaction against the excesses of the land reform program in the North. But the returnees subsequently had seen the North Vietnamese government acknowledge its fallibility in the so-called "rectification of errors" campaign. This appeared to convince them that the movement could profit from its own mistakes it gave them even greater faith in the movement's ultimate victory.

The POWs in our sample generally indicated that they had been most confident just before their capture because VC military units had become larger, more fully manned, and better armed, and had been winning more striking victories. But they did not envision a military victory. Although their own arms had been improving in quantity and quality, they believed they would overcome the ARVN with its superior weapons and its airpower by dint of their higher morale. They said, "ARVN troops fight as mercenaries and run when the fighting gets hot. We fight for a cause."

We asked how long they thought the war would last. Many said they thought it would be a long war, but some said, "It cannot last very much longer now." When we asked, "What do you think will be the outcome?" a frequent answer was, "The war will continue until one side becomes worn out." When we probed further, "Do you see one side getting tired yet?" the answer tended to be, "Yes, and it's not our side."

THE PROBLEM OF AIR AND ARTILLERY STRIKES ON VILLAGES

In discussing factors affecting VC morale, an important and controversial subject concerns the political effects of artillery and aerial bombardment on villages in combat areas. Our observations here are based on some data in our interview reports which deal specifically with this subject, on peasant interviewing done on earlier trips to Vietnam, and on conversations with ARVN and U.S. officers and GVN and U.S. officials.

Some VC interviewees maintain that when a village suffers artillery or aerial bombardment, it becomes a locus of hatred against the ARVN and the Americans. These VC claim that their troops generally withdraw from an area before the artillery or air strike materializes or that they have adequate shelter holes and tunnels to prevent losses to their own ranks from these strikes. They claim to reap in many areas the gratitude of the peasants for helping them or even compelling them to build shelter holes near their houses.

The VC say, "When one innocent peasant is killed, ten rise in his place; when ten are killed, one hundred

will rise up. First the relatives, friends, and neighbors of the victims are outraged; then the anger spreads to neighboring villages." They further maintain that the Liberation Youth organization in the village becomes markedly more militant and widely supported by the younger people, and that after a time, recruitment into the VC military units rises commensurately.

There are three factors in this situation which ought to be touched on here.

First, the peasant is domestically immobile. If his area is attacked, he may evacuate it temporarily, but he hates to move away from it for any length of time because he is deeply attached to his land, fruit trees, garden, and animals. It is generally very difficult to convince him that he stands to gain financially and in security by leaving his own village. The peasant's reluctance to make such moves was dramatized by the unsuccessful aspects of the agroville and strategic hamlet programs.

Second, peasants lack the financial means to go to "safer" areas under GVN control. Most, if not all, of them who could afford to move to district or provincial towns made such moves long ago. (Ngo Dinh Nhu used to rail at these people for taking the easy way out of a dangerous situation.) Those who move to the towns may have to obtain new identification documents, and this often requires considerable time and expensive "pay-offs" to local officials. Not only is it difficult to leave a region under tight VC control but once out a person must usually "rally" (go through the formality of turning himself in). Then he may well find himself sitting in a Chieu Hoi camp for a period of anywhere from several weeks

to a couple of years before government authorities decide what to do with him.

Third, artillery and air attacks on villages, as those in "free bombing zones," are not made in a political vacuum. The VC is on the spot, ready to exploit the damage and casualties for its own purposes. The ARVN, on the other hand, may appear briefly in a sweep operation, but only seldom these days do GVN authorities enter the area on a long-term pacification mission with a real capability of explaining the attack, launching reconstruction efforts, and establishing security on a systematic basis. And such follow-up activities are not undertaken at all in the "free bombing zones."

These are only preliminary remarks on a topic of the utmost importance with respect to the conduct of the war in South Vietnam. The available data do not permit firm conclusions. The second phase of the RAND VC motivation study will deal with these questions in much greater detail.

VI. THE VIET CONG'S UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNIST DOCTRINE

A sharp distinction must be drawn here between returnees and other VC because the former have been given long-term, systematic Communist indoctrination during their sojourn in the North. Most of the lower-echelon Southerners look simply to "democracy, peace, independence, and neutrality." Would socialism and communism inevitably follow a neutralist stage? They replied that they did not know just what would follow a coalition government embracing the Liberation Front and nationalist elements, but that its form would be determined by the "aspirations of the people." Religious organizations and religious freedom would in no way be threatened by these developments. This was the reply of even the most well-indoctrinated Communists who asserted that their own religious faith, if they ever had one, had been supplanted by the dialectical materialist view that religion is merely superstition. In fact, this assurance concerning religious tolerance was voiced by these hard-core subjects so consistently and carefully as to sound like a rote answer.

The behind-the-scenes direction and manipulation of the revolutionary movement by the Party was evident to our sources in varying degrees, but this did not arouse their suspicion. On the contrary, most of them seemed to feel that this was a fitting and natural trait of the higher authority they had been indoctrinated to accept. Indeed, the secretive and conspiratorial aspects appeared to them to be manifestations of the political sagacity and tactical shrewdness of their leadership.

All the VC interviewed wore a high gloss of nationalist

idealism over whatever degree of Communist ideology they had absorbed. Indeed, the central political theme of this movement, one which the VC preach convincingly to their supporters and the people generally, is that it is a revolution by, and for Southerners, with only some welcome assistance from Hanoi.

Our interviewees reflected varying degrees of comprehension of the role of North Vietnam in the Southern war or, in some cases, varying degrees of willingness to acknowledge the dimensions of Hanoi's role. When we asked, "Could Hanoi order a cease-fire in the South?" practically all the Southerners and a number of returnees answered firmly, "No, that is a decision the Liberation Front would have to make." And then the better indoctrinated sources added, "after consultation with Hanoi." But those returnees who were Party members and had served in regular PAVN units in the North tended to acknowledge that Hanoi had more authority than this in the direction of the movement. All of our interviewees, however, appeared to be strongly imbued with the precept that North and South were only component sections of the one nation of Vietnam and that regional suspiciousness or antagonism, as by Southerners of Northerners, was counterrevolutionary and puerile.

Some returnees had a fairly sophisticated understanding of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, but most non-returnees did not. To the latter, though, "socialism" appeared to be a good word. (Incidentally, it has a favorable connotation for a great many other Vietnamese one meets in South Vietnam, including intellectuals and government officials.) "Communism" was not a bad word to these non-returnee VC,

but many claimed in the interviews that they had not received enough political training to be able to discuss it in detail.

The attitude of our sources toward international politics was one of identification with the "socialist bloc," but in this they saw the Vietnamese relation to the bloc as important mainly for what it brought in the form of political succour and various kinds of aid. They did not seem to think much about it in terms of Vietnamese obligations to the bloc, present or future. Some of the better-indoctrinated tended to express their analysis of ultimate bloc victory in pragmatic terms. One returnee, for example said, "I was shown that before 1918 there were no Communist countries; now there are 13. And among the big number of neutralist countries there is a steady trend toward the Communist bloc. So it is clear that as time goes on, the Communist bloc will come to be much more powerful than the capitalist bloc, which is not unified anyway inasmuch as nations like France are challenging U.S. policy so strongly."

Concerning the Sino-Soviet split, a majority of our sources knew something, although the non-returnees' perception of it was usually vague. Some of them claimed to believe the rift was really just a ruse to deceive the capitalist bloc. In general, the better informed or indoctrinated sources regarded the split as a not very serious argument over means to achieve common aims, and they did not admit to any belief that bloc unity was seriously impaired.

With some subjects we discussed more specific implications of the dispute, including reported cuts in Soviet aid to Hanoi, the preponderance of Chinese aid, and the

resultant greater political leverage that this gave to the Chinese. A few were aware of reports that Soviet aid had been reduced, but such information did not budge them from the conviction that there was an underlying identity of purpose within the Communist bloc and that the DRV was capable of eventually restoring friendly and traditional relations with the USSR. Although the returnees minimized the effects of the split on North and South Vietnam, some, when pressed hard, acknowledged that it could possibly slow down the revolution in the South.

These interviewees refused positively to see any plausibility in the suggestion that the Chinese Communists might try to take advantage of the situation created by their aid to North Vietnam for purposes of tightening their political control over the DRV. To these sources, the Communist Chinese could be trusted because they had nothing politically in common with the "old, feudalistic Chinese" of the Chiang Kai-shek era. Hanoi was capable of looking after its own interests vis-à-vis the Chinese, these men believed. It would not take any action which could harm the cause of the Southern revolution, which, after all, they repeated, was a revolution of and for Southerners.

Even so, there were some indications in the interviews that the Front is fearful of a large-scale Chinese involvement in their struggle. It may even want to minimize people's awareness of such Chinese participation as already prevails. There were no strong signs of this, but the evidence, such as it is, includes the following kinds. A carbine of originally Russian design and later taken as a model for manufacture in Chinese arsenals in Manchuria is now being distributed to many VC units. It is marked

only with a triangle and a number, not with Chinese characters. It is popularly described in VC propaganda tracts as the "red-stock rifle," the "Russian rifle" or the "Czech rifle," but almost never as of Chinese origin. (Even the GVN usually refers to it as a "Russian rifle.")

At least one of our subjects reported that when weapons were distributed to his unit and questions were asked about their source, the cadre gave an evasive answer. The cadre himself may not have known the source, but in any case the VC appeared to regard this as a sensitive subject. Again, porters carrying weapons and supplies down the trails from North Vietnam to the VC were strictly forbidden to ask about the contents of their loads. Sometimes, however, the packages broke open or the porters even opened them out of curiosity and found materiel and medical supplies with Chinese markings.

The careful indoctrination reflected in our sources' responses concerning the actual or potential role of the Chinese in the Vietnamese revolution indicates also a strong concern lest the ancient Vietnamese fear of Chinese domination impair the revolutionary effort. That old fear traditionally has been much stronger among the Northern than the Southern Vietnamese, but the GVN's propaganda about the Hanoi regime's being a lackey of the Chinese has probably helped somewhat to implant that suspicion among some of the Southerners.

VII. QUESTIONS RAISED AND ANSWERED DURING BRIEFINGS

A number of questions were asked after each of the fifteen sessions at which the preceding briefing was given. Since they added depth to our presentation we reproduce them below together with the tentative answers possible at this stage in the analysis of the collected data. Some of the questions were asked repeatedly and our oral answers may have varied slightly, depending on the context in which they occurred.

Question: What are the VC's reactions to being interviewed by Americans? Does this experience tend to stimulate or inhibit their frankness of responses?

Answer: We had initial apprehensions about this, and so did Vietnamese and U.S. officials. But we were able to establish sufficient rapport with a good percentage of our interviewees to get them to talk to us about their VC experience and an even closer rapport with a certain percentage of them. The well-indoctrinated among them were reluctant to divulge information they thought could harm the VC cause, but their perceptions of what constituted this damaging type varied a good deal. They responded quite readily to numerous questions about factors that had affected their morale, for example, and also to questions concerning the effectiveness of their techniques of political indoctrination. But they were trained in the movement to preserve secrecy concerning their activities according to a policy of "compartmentalization of function" (phuong-cham ngan-cach) based on "need to know."

Our sources reacted to us (and our Vietnamese interviewers) in a more relaxed manner once they found that we were not interested in tactical information, which they feared could be exploited to the immediate detriment of their old unit and comrades in arms, such as names of comrades, unit weapons, etc. (Many GVN reports stressed such information in minute but apparently useless detail, useless because the names of VC riflemen, for example, could not be sent out anyhow to local security services capable of arresting these men or even to military units with a capability of rounding them up.)

We usually introduced ourselves as sociology professors studying social conditions in GVN and VC areas and the behavior of men under the stress of revolutionary war. We tried to convince them that we were interested in them in this sense rather than as individual security cases, and that we would treat any information they gave us as confidential so that it could neither help nor harm them in the eyes of GVN security agencies. (For carrying out this pledge a confidential code was devised to designate the interviewee and place of interview by symbols on the interview reports later distributed in Vietnam.) We addressed them respectfully and during the interviews offered them cigarettes, soft drinks, and sometimes beer, fruit and other foods. A considerable number of subjects would not take our cigarettes for the first hour or so, but even the most hostile usually did eventually.

Our better sources enjoyed the interviews to some extent because they were afforded an opportunity to talk

about their revolutionary aspirations and relive their VC experiences verbally, in marked contrast to their prison regime, which forbids prisoners to talk about politics and usually limits the number of men who can talk together about anything, as described earlier. In some cases our sources regarded the termination of the interview series with real regret because they had had a chance not only to express their ideas, but to get us to debate these ideas with them and try to answer some of their questions about the U.S. presence in Vietnam. A few appeared grateful for new insights regarding their own situation as viewed by an outsider.

The most hostile of our interviewees usually were those in the "suspect" category, persons from whom the GVN had been unable to elicit confessions of VC activity and concerning whom it lacked hard evidence of such activity. (Incidentally, this large group of suspects appeared to include many men and women who had not served the VC or had done so in only very marginal ways. Some of them claimed convincingly that they had been forced to sign false confessions of VC activity.) But even the most hostile suspects did not manifest their antagonism to us in ways more combative than non-communicativeness or occasional sarcasm. A principal reason for this may have been their fear of harsh punishment by prison officials for such behavior. But a more fundamental reason appeared to be their general preference for dealing with the enemy by persuasion and "sweet talk" when this was possible.

We were told by Vietnamese prison officials that the hard-core VC women cadres in some of the Rehabilitation

Centers were so aggressively hostile that they might have shouted or spit at us or made other attempts to embarrass us, as by trying to take off some of their clothes in our presence. We did interview some women suspects (not in the hard-core category) but never met with any such unusual reactions as these.

Question: What do your POWs know about the countries bordering on Vietnam such as Cambodia? Do they view them as a sanctuary?

Answer: We did not pursue this question in any detail but we did note that a document captured on one of our sources, a VC captain, and translated by MACV, stated that an area of Cambodia across the Vietnamese frontier could be used as a sanctuary. One VC document, perhaps that same one, stated that in the opinion of the VC writer (his identity was not disclosed), Sihanouk was unpredictable and "changed his mind too often."

Question: How do the VC feel about the use of a foreign territory such as Laos? Were they at all bothered by passing through Laos on their way from North Vietnam to the South?

Answer: Quite a number of infiltrators passed through Laos enroute to South Vietnam and knew they were in Laos. Usually they were told so and issued a small amount of Lao currency for miscellaneous expenses during the trip. The march discipline was such, however, that these VC troops had little contact with local peoples during the trip South or even their local guides -- they were not even authorized to ask them their names. One or more of our sources had spent three months or more as a combat soldier in Laos before being sent on down to South Vietnam.

Our data indicate that the VC who passed through Laos did so as a matter of course, after the need for such an itinerary had been explained to them by their commanders.

Question: Do the VC give their men any guidance on what they should or should not tell enemy interrogators if captured? Is there a VC vulnerability here which could be exploited by the GVN?

Answer: The VC tell their men only that they are likely to be tortured and killed by the ARVN if they are captured. There is no code impressed on them, such as "tell only your name, rank and serial number." The result of this is that captives expect the worst. Again, the GVN could probably reduce VC fear of capture, obtain more defections, and induce greater VC disillusionment with their own political propaganda if it treated the POWs more humanely so that their post-capture experience contrasted more sharply with the picture of social degeneracy they have been indoctrinated to expect.

It is conceivable that the GVN could exploit this situation in very specific ways. If POW treatment were improved, the GVN could possibly use officers and cadres among its VC defectors and POWs to persuade other POWs to cooperate with the ARVN by such means as divulging more accurate information more quickly. (Many defectors are disappointed that they have not been used by the GVN in more attempts to induce defections, as described elsewhere in this report.)

Question: Is there any evidence that the Front stresses the "good life" in North Vietnam for recruitment purposes?

Answer: A version of this appeal was used effectively with the Viet Minh *résistants* who went North in 1954-1955: "Come North! You see another part of the country and aid in socialist reconstruction. It will not be for long -- you will return after two years to a South at peace."

It is clear that quite a number of VC POWs have come to know something about life in the North and other "socialist" countries and to admire it. But this view is probably developed in them after their entry into the VC instead of serving as a recruiting appeal in the first stages of their involvement with the organization.

Question: Did the POWs have any heroes or did they discuss any leaders by name, such as VC generals, Ho Chi Minh or members of the DRV Politburo in Hanoi?

Answer: Ho Chi Minh appears to be a hero to anyone with any political background at all. The Southerners with relatively little time in the movement are very vague on other DRV leaders but may know some of the most famous, such as Vo Nguyen Giap and Pham Van Dong. The returnees from North Vietnam are better versed in the names of the leaders, but when we pressed a few of our better indoctrinated sources for more detailed lists of names of Politburo members, we rarely got more than four or five names.

These interviews give the strong impression that the VC are not bound together by dedication to a galaxy of national heroes. Their allegiance is rather to a revolutionary cause led by those men.

Question: What do the VC know about the American aid program, and what are their reactions to it?

Answer: Among other questions, we asked them if they had seen the clasped hands symbol of the aid program, and they generally responded that they had seen it on such things as the vehicles of GVN officials and on goods for sale in the stores. They didn't understand the commercial import program which had brought in these goods, and many wondered why the goods were considered a form of economic aid when the people had to pay for them in the stores.

Those interviewees who had some grounding in Communist doctrine regarded these consumer goods bearing the clasped hands symbol as evidence of a U.S. intention to expand its market in Vietnam by developing a taste among the Vietnamese for American products.

Many others remarked that the most obvious forms of U.S. aid they saw in Vietnam were airplanes, M113 armored personnel carriers, artillery, and other weapons.

In political terms, the VC saw the U.S. aid program as a means of buying off and manipulating its lackey, the GVN, to do its bidding and so keep up the war against the Front. Another aspect of this VC viewpoint is that the Americans are a shrewder and more formidable enemy than were the French. Americans are thought to be shrewder because by manipulating the GVN, they have been able to get Vietnamese to do most of the actual fighting and to take most of the casualties. And they are considered to be more formidable precisely because of this as well as

bec.ıse of the power of American industrial and military technology. (This VC evaluation of American shrewdness contrasts with the usual non-Communist Vietnamese view that the French were more sophisticated and shrewd in their dealings with the Vietnamese thar the Americans, who have had a comparatively short experience in the country.)

Question: What impact did GVN reconstruction programs have on the villages of these VC?

Answer: There was a great variance in the extent to which these programs reached down into the villages of our interviewees. In some cases, they reported very little in the way of reconstruction programs, perhaps only a simple log bridge or two. In others, a village school and road and permanent bridges were built. The most widely found and most appreciated type of GVN aid appears to have been the agricultural credit (NACO) program. Quite a number of our sources reported that their fathers or in some cases they themselves had received some of the smaller loans under this program, i.e., one thousand to about three or four thousand piasters. There are very few instances in our sample of families that had benefited from the GVN's land reform program, either by the improvement of rental contract provisions or by the acquisition of land.

Even in a village that had received NACO farm loans and other aid, however, the VC, after a certain length of time, were very frequently able to exploit some fund of local resentment, develop it into hatred, and use this in combination with other means to turn the village against the GVN.

Question: Do you see important differences or similarities between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists with regard to tactics and indoctrination and control techniques?

Answer: There are striking similarities in Chinese and Vietnamese methods of building loyalty, cohesion and morale in the armed forces. The Chinese introduced such techniques as the criticism sessions and the "three-three" cells in the squads in 1946 or earlier when the Eighth Route Army was relying on creative, imaginative methods in its campaigns against the Chinese Nationalists. (Alexander L. George and Herbert Goldhamer of RAND have studied these techniques by interrogation of Chinese Communist POWs in Korea.*) One aspect of these processes which is striking in both the Chinese and Vietnamese cases is the extent of egalitarianism and fraternity in the armed forces and their impact particularly on a man who has served earlier in the more traditional armed forces of the Chinese Nationalists or, in Vietnam, the ARVN.

The recruits are impressed by the lack of insignia on officers' and non-coms' uniforms and the fact that the officers live under the same hardships in the field as do the men. When the VC are asked if the officers in the South get favorable treatment, such as better food, they reply that the only apparent advantage is that officers do not stand guard at night. But all of them perceive that the officers' over-all security and other operational responsibilities more than outweigh a chore like guard duty.

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*Alexander L. George, Political Organization and Morale in the Chinese Communist Forces (U), RM-902, The RAND Corporation, July 1952, Confidential.

Peasants in the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist armed forces are impressed and flattered to a certain extent by the realization that the cadres "care so much about what I personally think" and take such pains to discuss political and military problems with the men and draw out their own reactions. The Chinese and Vietnamese Communist cadres possibly read their men into the tactical picture even more fully than is done in the U.S. Army and this makes for much greater effectiveness in their operations. It is clear that the Vietnamese kiem thao or criticism sessions described in this report do generate initiative and imaginative approaches to problem situations.

One obvious innovation in Communist armies generally which again impresses particularly those who have served earlier in traditionally oriented armies, such as those of the Chinese Nationalists or the ARVN, is the new disciplinary emphasis on persuasion and indoctrination rather than blunt authoritarianism including corporal punishment. ARVN soldiers are slapped and beaten, particularly by their non-coms, and some of the VC in our sample who had observed such incidents expressed shock at these methods, not only because they affront human dignity but mainly because the VC consider them ineffective when compared with their own methods.

The Chinese political control system as exemplified by the critiques in the squads and "three-three" cells evidently involved more voluntarism in the earlier period of the Eighth Route Army than it did later in the Korean War. This was so because the latter campaign involved the absorption of many ex-Chinese Nationalist troops

considered politically unreliable and therefore believed to require more forceful surveillance and indoctrination. Dr. George found that the ChiCom criticism sessions in Korea showed a good deal of what might be called "critique-manship" or nominal participation just to "get by." We have found some of this in the VC in statements of occasional sources claiming they did not like to participate very much in these sessions except to criticize someone else who clearly had infringed on the rule that criticism must be offered in an objective spirit devoid of vengefulness and spite. Generally, though, the VC problem of integrating ex-enemy troops into its own units is not comparable in difficulty to that experienced by the Chinese Communists who absorbed whole armies of ex-Nationalists. The VC are able to use more voluntaristic criticism techniques with great effectiveness.

Professor H. Franz Schurmann of the University of California, Berkeley, has noted the remarkable ability of Chinese Communist military units during the campaigns against the Nationalist forces to maintain discipline and adherence to over-all strategic and tactical plans among units, including small units, deployed at some distance from headquarters and operating under conditions of considerable autonomy. They were able to avoid tendencies toward excessive autonomy or "mountain-topism," as they called it, that might injure tactical coordination among these units.

Our observations lead us to wonder whether the VC may not out-perform the Chinese in this respect because of their ability to operate separately in small units,

under great hardship, and still coordinate their efforts in larger, over-all tactical and strategic schemes.

Question: Do the VC have land programs of their own in South Vietnam?

Answer: They have instituted some land distribution based on the principle that any family possessing more land than it needs to feed its own members should allow landless peasants to use the remainder. Several of our interviewees have said the VC made such land available to them or in their absence to their wives while they were assigned to VC military units elsewhere. They claimed the VC left it up to the landlords to decide if they wanted to participate in this program and that some landlords had not. As yet, they had not suffered any punishment for not sharing their land.

Question: How do the VC justify the use of terrorism such as assassinating village officials and laying mines under roads to blow up buses carrying civilians?

Answer: We probed for attitudes on this more strongly in the last phase of our research. We found that assassinations of local officials tended to be regarded as political actions which could bring negative as well as positive results. A defector recalled that the VC had killed two popular officials in his village and in so doing had deeply offended the local populace. This, said our source, represented a political "defeat for the VC." A year later the VC assassinated another official, this time one who was intensely disliked. According to this source, the peasants generally regarded the negative results of the first incident as having been canceled out by the positive results of the second.

In the Viet Minh period and in the early days of the Viet Cong there was considerable emphasis on terror. But as the movement has strengthened and gained in the control of more regular forms of administrative and police power in the countryside, it has tended to exercise its authority in more conventional ways. Our sources generally believed that such drastic action as assassination was taken only after persuasion, indoctrination and less violent means of intimidation had first been tried and ruled out as impracticable. They contended that in the more recent period, the VC have always tried first to talk personally with and attempt to persuade a local official to desist from his counterrevolutionary activities. If he remains intransigent, the VC attempt to warn him several times through agents in face-to-face meetings or, if these are too risky, by written message. Then, if he still refuses to cooperate, the VC may try to abduct him and subject him to political indoctrination. If this is unfeasible, alternatives such as assassination will be considered.

Concerning terrorism against innocent civilians such as the blowing up of buses, we found that numerous sources claimed to know nothing. Some civilian cadres who admitted to some familiarity with such incidents said they had had no contact with the perpetrators because military units were responsible for such tasks as mining roads and special units carried out such assignments as planting explosive charges and throwing grenades in theaters and bars. When we did get some of our interviewees to talk about this type of activity, they indicated, if only indirectly, their acceptance of the notion that in a revolutionary

war the side that is militarily weaker has to use such tactics sometimes. They still insisted, however, that terrorism was politically dangerous because it could so easily alienate rather than win over people suffering in any way from it.

One source, an assistant platoon leader in the main forces, said that the killing of innocent civilians was politically counterproductive and that it happened usually by accident. Sometimes, for example, through faulty intelligence a VC unit might believe that a given busload of people contained GVN officials or ARVN personnel in mufti. Or, he said, VC local cadres might act rashly and overzealously in ordering sabotage actions. In such cases, they would be criticized and disciplined by their superiors.

He said that if a bus carried a proportion of, say, 20 ARVN or GVN personnel to two or three innocent persons, the VC might decide reluctantly to sacrifice them in the interests of the many other people who would thereby be spared future suffering and exploitation at the hands of the GVN officials. But if it did this, it would be careful to obtain the names and home addresses of the innocent individuals and would send agents to their relatives to explain its decision and try to console the survivors even if this required visits to families in a number of provinces. He indicated that the VC considered this to be a kind of involuntary self-sacrifice demanded only with great regret by the revolution.

Question: How would you evaluate the GVN's Chieu Hoi (defector) program?

Answer: Hard-core VC say they are able easily to discourage VC surrenders by exploiting the contradictions between the amnesty publicized by the GVN and the program as it is actually carried out. They tell their men that anyone captured by or surrendering to the ARVN will be tortured and executed. Other captured VC say the Chieu Hoi leaflets dropped in their areas were attractive and appealing, but they dared not believe their promises. Still others say they would have surrendered if they could have found a propitious occasion and especially if they had known some route leading to a GVN controlled area and reasonably free of possible VC checkpoints and the risks of being shot at by VC or ARVN units.

The surrendered VC we have talked to in Chieu Hoi centers often believe that they are not trusted by the GVN and, invariably, they feel neglected. They think they should be given productive employment, at least, and returned to a more normal living situation outside the camps. Many of them are dissatisfied because the GVN does not make use of their experience by sending them into VC-controlled areas to tell their own stories to the people there and thus induce further surrenders.

Question: Do you have any idea how many more regroupees the VC still have in the North available to send South? How realistic is it to hope that if the war continues for some additional years, the gradual attrition of returnee cadres will dampen the insurgency markedly?

Answer: Our sources did not give us a consistent answer on the number of regroupees still available for sending

to the South but they believed that fairly large numbers of them were still living in the North. The only regroupees who will not be sent back fall into two categories: those who are too old or not in a sufficiently vigorous physical condition to stand the trip or the rigors of the insurgency in the South; and the smaller number who have worked up into important DRV administrative and other positions and are therefore not easily replaceable.

Our judgment is that the attrition of returnee cadres through aging, physical debilitation, and military action is not likely to pose any significant leadership problem because the Southern revolution has already attained a momentum that makes it less reliant than formerly on the returnees' contributions to organization and morale. As the nature of the war changes and more sophisticated weapons are introduced, however, technical cadres and instruction continue to be an important and continuing form of aid from the North.

Question: Why do you think the DRV is sending ethnic Northerners to the South?

Answer: We can only speculate on this, but it appears that many of the ethnic Northerners are being assigned to units in parts of Central Vietnam which do not have the population density and hence the recruiting potential of such areas as the Mekong Delta. The VC have been able to use these Northerners to advantage in the large build-up of its units in the Central Vietnam provinces, for although many men from these provinces were regrouped to the North and later infiltrated South as returnees, the build-up in the Center in recent months has been of such a magnitude as to require the extra manpower.

Question: How does the motivation of the ethnic Northerners you talked to compare with that of the Southerners?

Answer: We talked to half a dozen VC born and bred in the North and then sent South. One was an 18 year-old soda pop salesman who was sent South after only five weeks' political and military training. Another was a 23 year-old farm boy conscripted into the PAVN and given regular military training. Another was a 20 year-old farmer who had received no military training in the North but was given a week's training after arrival in the South.

The motivation of these men appeared to be less strong than that of the group having the highest motivation in our sample, namely the regroupees, or even of some of the ordinary Southerners. Some of these men had "volunteered" to come South in very perfunctory ways, e.g., their whole units had "volunteered" en masse.

Question: What kind of direct radio communication do the VC have with North Vietnam?

Answer: Units down to at least the company level have political officers who listen to Hanoi (or the "Liberation") radio stations by transistor radios and then pass on to the men some of the news and commentary. We know very little about covert communications with Hanoi. One of our interviewees was an intelligence officer charged with transmitting reports directly to Hanoi, that is, without sending them through Front channels first. (He was captured before he could set up his transmitting equipment.)

Question: Was there any recanting among the POWs? To what extent did they criticize or show disaffection with the VC?

Answer: There was significant recanting among a small percentage of POWs who indicated they had been considering defecting before their capture. There also was recanting, of course, among the defectors. But POWs generally appeared to be confirmed in their political faith by their prison experience, as we have noted earlier. Most of the defectors had left the VC for reasons of personal inability to tolerate the hardships of guerrilla life, as discussed in this report. We detected in most of them some chagrin and guilt over this, based on an underlying acceptance that certain, if not many, fundamental tenets of the revolutionary line were correct and represented in varying degrees the "just cause."

We believe the GVN is throwing away a golden opportunity to cause many POWs to become disillusioned with VC political claims by its present policy of making the post-capture experience humiliating and inhumane rather than educative and disillusioning. As the situation stood at the time of our departure from Vietnam in December 1964, this post-capture experience tended to confirm rather than refute VC political interpretations.

Expressions of disillusionment with limited areas of VC experience is more common than outright recanting among the POWs. But it is necessary to look for self-serving motives in cases of recanting, such as those found particularly among the defectors, and even in the more limited type of griping. One of the half-dozen ethnic Northerners in our sample was a 23 year-old peasant boy who was fulfilling his regular three-year military service obligation when his unit was asked to "volunteer" to fight in the

South. He had been captured in his first combat action, a small-unit skirmish, and his one complaint about his entire military experience was that after the other members of his unit had fled under ARVN fire, no one had dared to try to drag him to safety after he had been wounded. This young man was cooperating extensively with his ARVN interrogator and gave the impression that to justify such cooperation with the former enemy he had to find something wrong with the system to which he had owed his original loyalty. His criticism of being abandoned on the field after being wounded appeared to be something of a distortion of the real situation, for as he described his capture, there appeared to have been very little chance for his comrades to do anything but save themselves from capture or death in an engagement with a larger enemy force.

Dissatisfaction with very harsh living conditions, as in the experience of some units infiltrated from the North which gradually ran short of food and were harrassed by aerial bombardment, comes through clearly in some of the interviews. But even here, when disaffection might be strong enough to induce consideration of or attempts at defection, that disaffection tends to be expressed against the particular assignment and situation of the individual rather than against the VC movement or the aims of the revolution.

A strong kind of disaffection in terms of its capability of eroding long-term Viet Minh and VC indoctrination and commitment was that expressed by a few regroupee POWs and defectors who apparently never really adjusted satisfactorily to the prolonged separation in the North from

their families in the South. In some of these cases, their early and powerful disappointment at the cancellation of the 1956 elections seemed to have caused deep bitterness. Reinforced by later disappointments in their Northern experience -- which in themselves might not have contributed significantly to disaffection -- this tended to engender in them a cumulative discouragement. By and large, however, it must be pointed out here again, such periodic disappointments appear to have been dissipated very skillfully by the routine criticism sessions.

Question: Has there been increased VC recruitment recently and therefore does the Front include a higher percentage of younger, less-indoctrinated and less-educated types? Are most of the new recruits of the cannon-fodder, less-talented types?

Answer: Our data indicate that recruiting has been stepped up progressively to take in all available youths, including the talented as well as the uneducated peasant boys. We have some 15 and 16 year-old guerrillas of the latter type in our sample.

Depth of indoctrination is achieved automatically over time. A VC possessing reasonable intelligence and energy tends to advance in rank and responsibility as he acquires experience and indoctrination. Even though recruitment has been accelerated, a man who has been in the movement for only a few months experiences a considerable impact on his thinking and by the time he has been in for a year, his motivation and commitment are deepened commensurately.

Leon Gouré of RAND, in the second phase of the VC motivation study, has focused more direct attention on

recent recruits and will discuss this subject more specifically in his report.

Question: What weaknesses or vulnerabilities in VC organization or operating procedures have you found which could be exploited by our side?

Answer: We have already discussed two of the most striking weaknesses: (a) the harshness of living conditions and the longing for home and family, and (b) the vulnerability which probably exists in the form of Vietnamese suspiciousness of the Chinese role in aiding the Southern revolution. Instances of looseness in organizational control that might indicate further areas for exploitation are described below. It should be noted in passing that approaches seeking to utilize these must necessarily be piecemeal and relate only tangentially to the key proposition that many more VC's would defect if they felt there was a legitimate political alternative to support. Ideally, of course, this alternative would feature the establishment of a firm political authority at the center with effective agencies reaching down into the villages. This would raise the morale of local GVN representatives and give them the programs needed to pose a visible political alternative to the VC.

A defector described one instance of a type of VC organizational looseness that might be susceptible to a more piecemeal type of exploitation. This man in his early twenties deserted a VC guerrilla unit and anticipated correctly that, returning to his village less than 15 kilometers away, he would be able to spend about a month there before word of his desertion reached VC officials

in his village. Just before the month ended he defected to the GVN. Another kind of organizational looseness is reflected in statements by several sources who reported that weeks or up to two months were required to send official messages by courier over long distances within South and Central Vietnam.

Question: Is there any evidence that the heavy casualties we are inflicting on the VC are hurting their morale seriously?

Answer: The evidence suggests that although casualties may keep a unit out of action for a certain period, they do not seem to affect significantly the VC's faith in ultimate victory. They tend to respond to this situation with the familiar statement that "the GVN has airplanes, armored personnel carriers, and better weapons, but ARVN troops fight only for pay. We will beat them because we are fighting for the just cause."

For specific reactions of the VC to the rising casualty rates we refer the reader to the report that Leon Gouré is now preparing on the second phase of this study, for it will deal more directly with this subject.