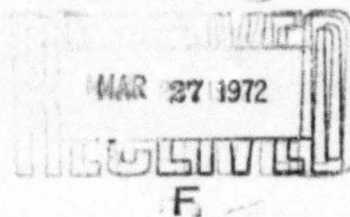


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MAY 1969

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THE VIET CONG STYLE OF POLITICS

Nathan Leites



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PREFACE

This Memorandum is one of a series of studies of Viet Cong motivation and morale undertaken by The RAND Corporation for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense

The author, a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago and a consultant to The RAND Corporation, has derived some of his ideas on Viet Cong techniques for persuasion and coercion from points made by RAND colleagues. To these he has added his own conjectures and formulations, which are frankly impressionistic. The Memorandum deals with kinds of VC behavior without regard for changes through time. The policy significance of the findings is implicit rather than explicit.

The study is divided into two parts. Part One, "Patterns," contains the author's analysis and comments together with a limited number of quotations from the sources. Part Two, "Illustrations and Elaborations," gives further illustrative selections from the sources and follows the sequence of observations set up in Part One.

The 328 sources of information analyzed by this study of Viet Cong devices for persuasion and coercion are listed in detail at the back of the Memorandum. They include captured enemy documents, interviews with prisoners of war and civilian and military ralliers conducted

by a field team of RAND analysts and interpreters, and interviews supplied by the Military and National Intelligence Centers.

However careful the procedures followed by the RAND interviewers, the responses they have elicited are sure to be influenced by the circumstances of the subject's detention, by his hopes, his fears, and his expectations. There is a natural tendency for the subject to attribute to the interviewer the power to influence his future. The statements of many persons, therefore, consciously or not, are bound to be self-serving or sycophantic. The author has tried to pass over all such suspect testimony.

SUMMARY

I. FORECASTS AND EXPECTATIONS AS DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL PREDILECTIONS

The Vietnamese Communists, even more than the Bolsheviks, stress the inevitability of victory. They dwell more extensively on the events, portents, and forecasts pointing to such an outcome than they do on the nobility of their cause or the nature of their goals. The author sees in this emphasis a survival of the Confucian concept that the legitimate authority possesses a "mandate from heaven" and thus the assurance of virtue. With a victorious course as evidence of legitimacy and with legitimacy implying righteousness, it becomes superfluous to affirm and discuss the merits of specific aims; the propagandist need only convince the people that his side -- in this case the Communist Party -- is winning. The certainty of victory is indeed the dominant theme in every attempt at persuasion by the Viet Cong, including all military and political instruction. Clearly afraid of what might happen if this certainty were shaken by the people's awareness of all the hazards of the war, the leadership attempts through silence or denial to divert attention from the distressing aspects of the struggle: the likely costs and dangers as well as the defeats, casualties, and damages already suffered. Historical accounts may omit entire periods of setbacks; the dead are carried from the battlefield at great risk to avoid the morale-damaging effect of their being seen; the death of a military cadre may be concealed even from his own

men. Where the admission of disconcerting facts is unavoidable, the recipients of the bad news -- be it the death of a fighter or the loss of land -- frequently are first conditioned for the resigned acceptance of their loss by an elaborate alternation of ominous rumor and hopeful reassurance. The well-indoctrinated military cadre is taught to avoid mention of anything that might endanger his men's morale, such as talk of families or of the enemy's weapons. At the same time as the VC tries to hide its own losses, it makes much of all damage caused to, and casualties suffered by, the GVN forces. Though the "hardships" that the Front fighters must endure are talked about, they are generally understood to be those inflicted by nature and by the men's separation from their families. Some potential threats to morale are so represented as to appear exhilarating rather than frightening; thinking about the "beauty of the jungle," for instance, is designed to make men forget its terror. Many of the Front members interviewed, loyal as well as disaffected, though aware of the deception that had been practiced on them, nevertheless accepted it as useful, some even said necessary, to the effective conduct of the war.

The heavenly mandate and the moral sanction it implies form a concept familiar to the Vietnamese, who expect it to be generally understood and accepted. Thus, some of those interviewed gave as their sole or main reason for joining the Front their conviction that it was the winning side, and others cited the reverse opinion to explain their rallying to the GVN.

II. ATTITUDES TOWARD AUTHORITY AND ITS BENEFITS

The attitude of the Vietnamese toward authority, and their historical experience with past rulers, help to account for the very "Asian" character of this Communist revolution, for it would be hard to explain the outbreak of rebellion in Vietnam, rather than in other parts of Southeast Asia, simply on the premise that poverty and inequality are the main causes of every revolt. In the Confucian tradition, good or bad conduct is associated with the authorities rather than with institutions, and the quality of those in power is measured more by their ability to avert damage and abuse to the citizens than by the active benefits they are able to bestow on the population. So long as the reigning authority makes few or no demands on the people, permitting them to ignore and forget the government, they are apt to see in this virtue evidence of the "mandate of heaven" and to be relatively patient, therefore, about their social and economic betterment (Indeed, some ask no more than that the authority refrain from abusing its subjects.) Only when the virtue, and thereby the mandate, is placed in doubt by the too-frequent intrusion of the "bad official," or the authorities' inability to protect the peasant from the oppressive landlord, will patience give way to intolerance. Once they are ready to question the legitimacy of the established power, people become susceptible to the arguments, social criticism, and promises of its challengers.

Several phenomena suggest that the leadership of the Front is not deeply concerned with establishing a new

order, or indeed with socio-economic ends in general. The supreme pronouncements of the Party tend to focus on large political concepts rather than on specific programs. And denunciation of the "bad GVN official," far more than of the basic social inequities, plays a large part in the movement's informal contact with villagers. To the sympathizers, supporters, and low cadres of the Viet Cong, the opposition between that movement and the GVN is not only one between attacker and defender of a certain social order, but also that between unworthy and noxious men in power and better men aspiring to replace them. (Numerous informants adduced misconduct of GVN officials as their single reason for embracing the Viet Cong; others cited the good conduct of the cadres as the only reason.)

Although the Party seeks to play on the peasants' experience of abusive authority and to incite their indignation to the point where they are willing to join or support the rebellion, its conduct vis-à-vis the peasantry since 1945 reflects its very modest estimate of pre-existing discontent, and in this respect reveals another, crucial difference between the Vietnamese and the Soviet revolution. Although Party spokesmen in Vietnam pay lip service to the Communist doctrine of the leadership of the working class, they themselves recognize the peasantry, rather than the workers, as the "main force of the revolution." Yet, unlike the Soviets, they have not catered to the land hunger of the poor by massive, ruthless expropriations of all landowners and the distribution of land to the peasants. The Party clearly does not favor such "instant" agrarian revolution, possibly because it regards it as too advanced a concept

for many peasants and too great an upheaval in their society. It attempts instead to limit agrarian reform to the confiscation of land of only very rich or politically undesirable owners, permitting the more acceptable landlords to stay on and collect rent much as before, and remaining vague in its promises of an eventual agrarian revolution.

Apparently the leadership believes that the loss incurred through the wrath of dispossessed landlords -- especially the many "middle farmers" -- would be greater than warranted by the degree of peasant discontent. Though one encounters some more radical views and occasionally measures that seem to depart from such a moderate course, they are, for the most part, attributable to overzealous lower cadres. Not until 1965, when the enlarged American effort and signs of the opponent's superior power created the need for a scapegoat, was there an outcry against the entire class of landlords, part of the short-lived, unsuccessful "turn to the left."

The informants encountered in the RAND sample bore out the Party's seeming estimate of the popular mood. Though eager for the promised land reforms, they were not unwilling to wait for them. Nor did most of them exhibit a strong sense of inequality, for it must be noted that in many villages the pyramid extending from the haves at the apex to the have-nots at the base is relatively flat, and there is considerable social intercourse between top and bottom.

Far more obvious was the indignation with which villagers recalled the acts and personal slights of bad officials. The resented government functionary is

representative of the deterioration in the relationship of the local Vietnamese community toward those governing it, a steady decline that began with the arrival of the French and continued under Diem. In earlier times, as various commentators have pointed out, the village notable spoke for the community and served as its conscience, and the village council was the community's powerful and respected executive body. Under colonial rule, the rural notables were withdrawn from public affairs, and the village councils, stripped of their original powers, were burdened instead with the execution of policies devised at the center and resented in the countryside. Authority, formerly vested in the village notables, passed to officials appointed from above and afar, poorly paid men who lacked public spirit and were not answerable to the local community. With the present challenge to the established system and its claim of a "mandate," the patient endurance of what had seemed the divine order of things has in many instances given way to the admission of pent-up anger and of a desire for change which VC cadres are able to exploit with the aid of their deliberate propriety and considerateness of conduct.

The testimony of VC prisoners and ralliers permits no doubt that people's moral and emotional needs are at least as strong a factor in their motivation to rebel as are their economic wants, and that either side in the struggle, if it is to solidify its authority over those under its control, must concern itself with their dignity as much as with their material welfare.

III. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST INDULGENCE

The Communists' insistence on clean, honest, and frugal living -- in contrast to the debauchery thought to be more typical of soldiers in time of war -- endows membership in the Communist ranks with some of the characteristics of a priesthood. It obliges cadres and party members to set examples by their disinterestedness, courage, abstinence from common indulgences, and indifference to the privileges of rank and position. In the view of a surprisingly large majority of informants, including defectors, most cadres do indeed live up to this impressive image -- reminiscent of some exacting and virtuous fathers -- causing men and even lower-level cadres at times to chafe under the onerous example of so much virtue. The cadres themselves carry on an unending struggle against what they consider to be their baser instincts (such as the fear of getting killed, greed, lewdness, and the pleasures of eating and drinking), and ordain heavy penalties and public humiliation for those who yield to their impulses. They distinguish between their own kind of "revolutionary liberty," which they present as orderly and noble, and that of the GVN, which they equate with unbridled indulgence. This holier-than-thou attitude toward the opponent is reflected in the statements of many prisoners and ralliers. The belief that GVN soldiers lack not only the virtues of the VC but any aspiration toward them is evident also in the fact that many ralliers explain their defecting by "unwillingness to go on enduring hardships." (Whether true or not, they obviously expect this to be deemed a sound

reason according to GVN ethics, though the VC would condemn it as unworthy) Moreover, the high moral standards set by the VC may serve to explain the occasional unreconstructed rallier, who remains essentially pro-VC, though, in a moment of weakness, he chose to escape from the hardships of that life or turned spontaneously against a superior.

The Party protests -- and by conduct tries to prove -- that it is nobly disinterested, whereas the enemy is basely self-seeking. Thus, while the ARVN pays to enable its soldiers to maintain families in their absence, service with the Viet Cong is unrewarded. Noncombatants are praised for sharing in the sacrifice of their fighting relatives and are compensated only for the most intolerable losses, while material rewards must await a future beyond victory.

Despite all such denials of self-interest, however, and the suggestive exaltation of Ho Chi Minh for his selfless service of the interests of others, the Party does not hesitate to appeal to personal considerations in its recruitment, selection, and training. (The coincidence of individual and Party interests at the lower economic levels is no doubt among the reasons that those strata yield the preferred recruits.) As the statements of informants show, pure dedication to impersonal goals is far less common in the motivation of fighters than is a combination of ideals regarding the country's good with concern for the welfare of one's family and the thought of personal advantage.

Renunciation of family ties is one of the sacrifices the Party exacts from its cadres, in the apparent belief

that there is a negative correlation between a man's interest in his family and his effectiveness as a fighter (best exemplified in the selflessness and dedication of bachelor Ho). The Front therefore makes every effort to keep fighters away from their families as much as possible. At the same time, it strongly discourages within its units any close personal friendships among peers that might serve to take the place of family ties. Looking on such private relationships as conducive to factionalism, it tries to cater to the need they are meant to satisfy with the institution of such "safe" associations as the three-man cell.

In addition to enhancing fighting ability and adding to the priestly image of the cadres, the separation from families and communities serves a useful political purpose: in a form of moral blackmail, the Front exalts this and other hardships assumed by its members and, by appealing to people's compassion and their sense of obligation toward the few who suffer for the sake of the many, uses them to elicit popular cooperation.

IV. "STUDYING" AND "ACHIEVING"

Among the virtues associated with service as a VC cadre are "peace of mind" (by which the Viet Cong understands the absence of strong negative sentiments, such as fear or dejection, that would interfere with a fighter's performance) and also such positive feelings as enthusiasm and camaraderie, provided the latter does not lead to exclusiveness. The cohesion and camaraderie of the VC unit, frequently stressed approvingly in the

Interviews, are strengthened by common hatred of the enemy -- the "traitors and aggressors" -- which the VC promotes, in doctrine and in practice, as the prerequisite to dedicated service. (In the words of an informant, who was asked to name the most important factor in VC propaganda: "They always promote hatred, because without hatred nobody would fight.") Having a legitimate target for their hatred also serves as a safety valve. VC members tend not to fight among themselves and can pursue common aims without internecine strife of the kind that plagues the GVN.

An additional outlet for hostility is the "mutual criticism session." Controlled by cadres, it drains off whatever quarrelsomeness may exist and provides Front members with a vehicle for both aggression and expiation. These sessions, moreover, serve to encourage disputation and inquiry, and in so doing further the all-important activity of "studying" as a means to attaining knowledge and certainty. The Vietnamese Communists attach the greatest importance to study and investigation. It means to them understanding doctrine, historical detail, and the decisions, documents, and directives of higher echelons; it is the way to "knowing the enemy." Their stress on the definition of attitudes, on categorization and classification, and on the utmost precision is part of the "scientific method" that informs Communist planning and action. But it is in harmony also with the Confucian tradition, and thus appeals readily to the Vietnamese. The lure of obtaining inside knowledge, of learning in advance of big decisions and likely events, is one of the incentives that informants name for joining the Communist Party.

Investigation and orientation are, of course, the prerequisites for action, and the stress on "study" is paralleled by insistence on "achievement." Action -- that is to say, experience -- itself the result of study, then becomes the subject of further analysis for the benefit of future action.

The great premium that the VC places on maximal achievement in the era of the cong ("common action") is reflected in the constant, unrelieved activity expected of its followers and in demands for physical performance that often reach the limits of their endurance. A concomitant of this exaltation of action is the use of forced inaction as an effective punishment.

Action, being geared entirely to the good of the movement, is accompanied by a constant fight against waste -- of ammunition, of "lives that belong to the Front," of money spent to excess on traditional ceremonies. (ARVN soldiers are self-righteously condemned for allegedly being slothful and for wasting valuable resources.)

One of the drawbacks of rigid adherence to the view that study and indoctrination must precede action is that it hampers improvisation, for any unexpected turn in a situation that calls for a change in conduct first requires a period of "reorientation."

V. VC COERCION AS AGAINST ALLEGED GVN "CRUELTY"

There are many comments testifying to profound differences between the conduct of VC cadres and that of GVN personnel toward the population, particularly in the

manner in which each side administers, and justifies, the damage, coercion, or injury that it inflicts, be it accidentally, deliberately, or unavoidably. In a significantly high consensus, the accounts, reactions, and interpretations of loyal and disaffected VC followers suggest that GVN personnel often indulge in seemingly senseless brutality and appear to take pleasure in trampling crops and gratifying personal resentments or the desire for private gain in still more painful ways. Even if resort to coercion might be explained as the unavoidable means of obtaining needed intelligence, the GVN soldiers' frequent failure to follow up on information forcibly exacted would invalidate such a claim. Some informants attributed the willful cruelty of so many of the GVN forces to their sense of frustration at the elusiveness of their enemy which, for lack of a legitimate target, makes them strike out at the people and their property.

The VC, by contrast, stresses propriety of conduct and denies that vindictiveness and other personal feelings ever enter into the damage it inflicts. It discourages and condemns the abuse of power by its cadres for their private gain or pleasure, concerned as it is not only about the likely popular reactions to patent injustices but also about the damage that such improper conduct might do to the spirit of righteousness from which the cadres draw much of their strength.

Because the Communist Party insists that everything happens as a result of laws and known norms, not through accident or impulse, the VC is apt to construct quasi-judicial contexts (such as the "people's tribunals") within which it seeks to justify its ruthless or violent

actions, though often the disguise is transparently thin. People's indignation being governed less by the magnitude of damage suffered than by the extent to which it seems to them inappropriate, arbitrary, and incomprehensible, the VC's violent acts are more readily acceptable for seeming explicable and justified by some known, intelligible standard. (Many GVN agents, by failing to demonstrate wherever possible that they are honoring and executing their government's laws, miss the opportunity to cater similarly to this human penchant.)

The conduct expected of VC cadres demands the constant exercise of self-discipline. Attested to by many informants, it is in most cadres the result of a long fight against the natural propensity toward violence. As part of their hard-won restraint, cadres are taught not to strike unless they have first stated their demands, followed by an explicit warning, and to stress clemency as well as punishment. In keeping with this precept, they dramatize and try to legitimize their more drastic punitive measures by issuing (or claiming to have issued) warnings to the offenders. They may also force an intended victim publicly to make a promise, the visible violation of which thereafter will make his punishment appear as just.

Informants describe the slow and deliberate acceleration of penalties by the VC (though a few striking departures from the rule have also been reported). First offenses may go unpunished, with only a warning as a reminder, and even threatened penalties may not be carried out if the offender repents and conforms. For the more serious violation, punishments range from admonition to

execution. When the VC first assumes power in a given area, it is likely quite suddenly to raise the level of its threats and punishments and execute a large number of people, intending by such a show of violence to render the population fearful and docile. Once the VC is firmly established in the locality, the penalties may lessen, or at least become more predictable and thus more easily avoidable. Conversely, where its control is weak or Front forces are few, the VC may intensify its efforts just to create the illusion of great strength and numbers.

As to damage it has caused and coercion used, the VC tries to show its good conscience and pure purpose by being frank, legalistic, and self-righteous about what it has done, in contrast to the GVN's tendency to be furtive on that score.

Generally speaking, the populace, which associates vague and sinister warnings, constant suspicion, and repeated minor harassment with the style typical of the GVN, prefers what it regards as characteristic of the VC, whose cadres try to confine themselves to clear threats and spell out, for the individual's choice, the consequences of compliance and noncompliance.

Coercion, a highly refined instrument in VC hands, takes many forms. The familiar one, by which a target is given to understand that his failure to cooperate could damage his family (a persuasive argument in a culture with strong kinship ties), can be extended to comrades and peers. Those who disobey VC orders may be punished or sent to exposed positions. Or they may be subtly compromised with the GVN, which is thus prompted to administer the penalty. One of the more obvious defenses

is to force a man into a loose or inadvertent association with the VC -- sometimes to seduce him with the promise of a personal advantage -- and then to convince him that he has thereby compromised himself with the GVN past the point of no return.

Every target of coercion is carefully chosen and his background fully investigated, documented, and classified. As a result, there appear to be few accidental victims and few cases of haphazardly inflicted damage, two errors of which the GVN is said to be frequently guilty and which are seen as evidence of poor intelligence and of the government's remoteness from "the people ". The VC has the advantage on both counts and is thus equipped to step in and exploit any resentments caused by the opponent's fumbling.

Cadres act on the principle that instruments of threat, persuasion, and propaganda become more powerful through repetition, and become still more effective if the manner of their application is varied. Thus, they may start with a long period of gentle pressure and low impact, and then raise these, gradually or by sudden spurts, after the moderate approach has served to dispel people's initial wariness and, in recently "liberated" areas, has accustomed them to the presence of the VC.

On balance, the author believes, the Party hurts the innocent less often than does the GVN. Where it does, or where it seems to inflict disproportionately heavy penalties (as for conduct coming under the general charge of "spying for the GVN" -- which conjures up terrible retribution), it frequently gives victims the option of sparing themselves such severe punishment by paying a price for their security.

Yet the cadres' relations with villagers are profoundly affected by suspicion. It is expressed most tellingly in the allegation of "spying for the GVN" (and people's fear of being suspected of spying) and, more generally, in the sinister construction that the Party places on innumerable phenomena of innocent appearance. Thus, anyone who has a girl friend may be accused of the kind of illicit relationship on which the Party frowns; minor criticism of policy or practice, even an innocent slip of the tongue, may cause a man to be labeled pro-GVN/U.S.; sick Front members are accused of being malingerers, and a "maligner" who coughs is sure to be signaling the enemy. Sickness is dismissed as being only in the mind and, if it affects performance, is thought to reflect wrong political thinking. A man's seeming misfortune (such as his losing the Party's money) is assumed to cover a deliberate crime (that of absconding with it). A person who conspicuously survives where others perish is suspected of being an agent deliberately spared; and anyone's poor performance is interpreted as the prelude to his defection. Ironically and inevitably, suspicions and accusations often provoke the innocent into the very disloyalty that the VC means to prevent. But the cadres apparently find this an acceptable loss when weighed against the deterrent effect they derive from their pervasive distrust and from people's awareness of the severe penalty they may incur through the smallest criticism or a seeming lack of enthusiasm and cooperativeness.

The relative predictability of the VC's expectations of conduct, and of the price one must pay for departing from the expected, is in contrast to the whimsicality of

the GVN, whose punitive actions appear to be the more strongly resented. Many complain, in particular, about the GVN's proclivity to penalize entire hamlets (rather than only the families of suspects, as the VC tends to do) for having "relations with" the Viet Cong, which often means no more than allowing its forces to pass through. People also complain strongly that the GVN treats the flight or the fearful as an act of hostility, and they are more indignant at the GVN officials' practice of extorting bribes for private gain than they are at the VC's open blackmail for the benefit of the Front.

In instances of inadvertent injury to individuals, the VC appears to make more of an effort than the GVN to allay the bad feeling engendered by the incident. If need be, the cadres will resort to elaborate lies, designed to strip the victim of the appearance of innocence and thereby to render his fate plausible. At other times, they may take the risk of admitting mistakes and offering compensation. In cases of collateral damage, they are likely to make the repairs, whereas the GVN has been reported to penalize the victims for even requesting compensation.

In contrast to their intolerance of nonconformance within their own ranks, the cadres may yield to popular criticism or displeasure, even to the detriment of the Party, particularly where such negative reactions are expressed collectively. (People's awareness that the Front may back down in the face of flagrant collective resistance may actually provide the hope that can inspire such resistance wherever there is a strong cause.) Even individual resistance to serving the VC will occasionally succeed if the cost to the Party is slight and the plea

seems reasonable (It is likely to be prompted only by such overriding self-interest as the needs of a sick child, or the demands of an otherwise neglected farm or medical practice)

VI CLOSENESS TO THE PEOPLE

The Cadres' conduct toward the population is in keeping with the Party's insistence on constant solicitude for the people's welfare, even in the face of initial distrust and hostility. The effect of their concern for such good relations is reinforced by the fact that in social and geographic origins, in dress, in behavior, and in standard of living the people identify themselves more readily with the VC than with representatives of the GVN. Whereas GVN officials and officers often seem to treat their underlings in the willful and authoritarian manner of many Vietnamese fathers, the cadres are taught to emulate their hero and leader, the gentle and modest "Uncle" Ho. Many informants testify, often approvingly and sometimes critically, to the "friendly," egalitarian ways of the cadres. Some, to be sure, talk about the easygoing, even convivial, ways of some ARVN soldiers, which they find more appealing than the self-consciously restrained and seemingly distant behavior of cadres who are conscious of their high status or afraid of not living up to the VC's rigid expectations. Yet there is little indication that the informality and friendliness of GVN troops imply solicitude for the people's interests. Nor, apparently, do they preclude such undesirable acts as petty thievery by the soldiers and the withdrawal of GVN protection.

Among the qualities that informants stress frequently as distinguishing most cadres from the typical GVN officials is the former's endeavor genuinely to communicate with the people. Rather than merely issue and enforce orders they will try to "explain" the context and rationale of actions, including the purpose of impending operations, the reasons for past setbacks, the need for burdens imposed on villagers, and even the harsh judgments meted out by the VC.

In fostering a close rapport between its agents and the population, the Front exploits the Vietnamese' profound fear of isolation. Part of the strategy of playing on this desire for closeness is the threat of popular (if silent) disapproval, of withdrawal of Front support, and, worst of all, of a man's separation from his family and close friends. It is always accompanied by the explicit communication of the price of liberation from such a prospect.

VII THE EFFECT OF INSULT AND THE ROLE OF "CRITICISM"

The high sensitivity of the Vietnamese to any form of insult causes them, among other things, to be keenly concerned for the sensibilities of others. In the gently stratified society of the village, where the classes mingle readily and are hard to distinguish by dress, appearance, and style of living, "arrogance" is as great a vice as cruelty, and serves to describe almost any abuse of authority. The arrogant may evoke memories of early humiliation by tyrannical fathers and elder brothers. Indeed, associations with a childhood overshadowed by fear of physical and moral abuse sometimes

become the overriding motive for joining a movement that forswears the humiliation of others.

So vulnerable a pride and ego may warrant drastic action, including the changing of sides in war, to undo injury to one's self-respect and restore dignity. The case of the man who burnt down his own house because in his absence his friends had abused it illustrates the extremes with which a Vietnamese is capable of reacting to a slight. The Viet Cong's injunction against fist-fighting and similar expressions of impulsively hostile behavior within the ranks is most frequently violated in response to an insult. And most revealing is this remark of a rallier about the alleged rudeness of GVN officials: "I wouldn't complain if they beat us if we said something that wasn't accurate, but I wish they would refrain from cursing us."

In its education of the cadres the Party spends much effort on curbing rudeness, shouting, and the use of bad language, and stresses the importance of restraint even in the issuance of threats. A considerable part of the cadres' training is devoted to cultivating refinement of speech toward comrades as well as civilians, and learning to refrain from all expressions of hostility and even from physical, albeit nonhostile, horseplay.

Many informants have described the alleged disposition of GVN agents to humiliate those at their mercy. Beating the weaker is said to be their most common habit, an extension perhaps of the tradition set by fathers and landlords. Though respondents admit that the VC, too, resorts to the practice, they appear to accept it more readily from that source, for a beating by the VC tends

to be related in the victim's or witnesses' eyes either to a tangible offense or to an immediate and necessary objective (such as prevailing on reluctant soldiers to fight)

One aspect of the GVN agent's characteristic habit of inflicting insult, in the opinion of many respondents, is his own violent response to slight. Front members who have offended a person, it is said, are likely to tolerate a hostile reaction (if not actually to make amends) as a way to evening and easing the relationship. They may even invite his criticism, or ask him to attend a VC self-criticism session

Being themselves opposed to the use of insult and violence in human discourse, the cadres are able successfully to exploit in their propaganda and recruitment the GVN personnel's known arrogance and lack of manners. To many, the VC's respect for others is the major reason for joining the Front, just as a single instance of a cadre's contrary behavior has been known to prompt a man to rally to the GVN

Against the ARVN's alleged practice of punishing an offense without explaining the nature of the offender's error, the Front is scrupulous about accompanying the penalty with such a critical explanation. Indeed, "criticism" may itself become the sole punishment. Though opposed to insulting any man and thereby diminishing his entire person, the cadres skillfully concentrate on the specific offense or weakness, and their power and readiness to expose and publicize it, thereby shaming the guilty in the eyes of family, community, and comrades (even if such exposure remains confined to the

self-criticism session) serves as a useful deterrent to transgression. The principle of preventing future infraction of the rules by publicizing those of the past is illustrated also by the practice of criticizing the dead; in one case the VC is reported to have expelled a man from the Party at his burial service.

VIII COERCING TO PERSUADE

The VC's avowed policy of receiving captives with clemency and welcoming anyone ready to be converted to its side, including even still-active GVN agents, is supported by its practice of forcibly recruiting enemies and re-enlisting defectors to the GVN. (The Front may even level trumped-up charges against innocent persons to make them appear as antagonists and thereby justify their forced recruitment.) The assumption is that the conditions of life shape a man's beliefs, and that, once he has been caught in the VC net, persuasion -- either in small, constant doses or in concentrated fashion -- supported by an effort to win his trust, will inevitably lead to his conversion.

Education, persuasion, and indoctrination are credited with powerful feats, and both the persuader and the persuaded consider them indispensable tools. In any contest of political wills, for example, it is understood that the degree of a man's political and general education can be decisive; the man who first runs out of arguments automatically accepts defeat and must submit to the view of the other.

A major part of the pattern of education for conversion is the enforced listening to the cadres' persuasion,

with the threat of disagreeable penalties ensuring attendance. In classical fashion, this indoctrination, like the criticism sessions, relies heavily on monotonous repetition, and any initial interest of the listeners is likely to give way to boredom. When boredom reaches the level of pain, compliance becomes the tempting way to end the ordeal, much as it does after prolonged interrogation. In an area newly controlled by the VC, to "volunteer" is known to be the only means of escaping protracted indoctrination, which, moreover, threatens to take place at re-education centers in the mountains -- a gloomy prospect, particularly for the people of the plains, some of whom liken it to forced labor. In sections where the Front expects to exercise only temporary control, it is less likely to invest in a major effort at indoctrination. It may merely try to win friends by providing entertainment and pleasing the population in other ways.

The cadres apparently are not unduly concerned about the dangers that may arise from people's resentment at having been coerced. Their faith in repeated exposure as a means of persuasion is summed up in this statement from a VC document: "After oppression, continued indoctrination should be maintained to let the POW. admit our oppression was right." They are prepared, however, for re-education to take time -- the more difficult the conditions, the longer -- during which period the target will remain inactive.

Persuasion may be used also in conjunction with plainly coercive devices (which actually leave a person no alternative to following the VC), so as to make him think, when he formally commits himself to the movement,

that he is freely yielding to persuasion rather than succumbing to force or trickery. In some, this illusion coexists with an awareness of the reality, as is evident from the accounts of informants who said that they had joined "partly because they wanted to and partly because they were forced "

Many targets of persuasion have expressed their fascination with the cadres' adeptness at what is known as "sweet talk." Some have commented on the disparity between this persuasive skill and the manner of GVN officials and ARVN forces who, with the exception of some special propaganda units, tend to have far less contact with the population and to make little attempt at persuasion. Emphasis on the art of "sweet talk" and people's susceptibility to it may help explain not only their general partiality to the VC but also the exceptional "productivity" of particular cadres.

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PART ONE: PATTERNS

I. FORECASTS AND PREFERENCES

SECULARIZING THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

Interviewers sometimes attempt to ascertain how interviewees feel about the possible outcome of the war. Responses to such queries often suggest that things are going well, that the movement's effort will be concluded successfully.

The usual answer does not seem to be that the South will have "socialism," but rather that the VC will win, whether the war be long or short, whether 1965 be decisive or, as any other year, simply "the year for preparations for the coming years."⁽¹⁾

One factor, I would surmise, which makes the Vietnamese Communists stress, even more than did the Bolsheviks, estimates of outcomes rather than evaluations of worth is the possibility of thereby infiltrating into modern beliefs Confucian ideas on the indicators of an authority possessing a "mandate of Heaven."

In this respect, however, the Party can hardly duplicate in the mid-sixties its performance of the mid-forties. It is the suddenness, rapidity, ease, and completeness with which one regime replaces another that raises the strongest presumption of Heaven's mandate's having been transferred. A case in point was the brief "August revolution" of 1945 that culminated in Emperor Bao Dai's handing over the Great Seal to President Ho. While the French conquest might appear to have some claim to legitimacy by virtue of the very weakness with which it was opposed, the French return in the fall of

1945 would surely seem wrong in view of what had occurred in the winter (the elimination of the French by the Japanese) and then in the summer (the effacement of both the Japanese and the Emperor by the Party). "Just as the Vietnamese had resigned themselves to our rule," recalls Paul Mus, "the rules of the game," as perceived by them, "required that we, in our turn, recognize the decree putting an end to it." Thus "our reliable friends of yesteryear turned against us when we reappeared. in 1945: they were indignant because we violated the rule which they had scrupulously applied."*

I have not been able to ascertain whether, twenty-two years later, a similar reaction does not obscurely subsist as numerous governments in Saigon, mighty France and mightiest America have been unable to subdue the authority born in the August Revolution.

Whatever role Confucian ideas play in the matter, those interviewed may overtly derive their choices from their predictions, as the cadres might expect them to do. Indeed, a direct connection between victory and possession of virtue may be proclaimed. "We will," resolves a VC agency, "educate these people, and inculcate in them the idea that the Revolution will surely win the final victory so that they may become good people "(2)

Thus a conclusion pertinent to operations emerges. The VC is not simply a movement devoted to good, however that value may fare in the world. To reduce the VC's prospects of victory is, therefore, to diminish the power of its ideas.

* Paul Mus, Viet Nam, sociologie d'une guerre, Paris, 1952, p. 251.

But, as Michael Arnsten has suggested, there may be a polarization in this respect. Cadres may link the fate of an enterprise with its worth: the just cause cannot lose, the Revolution cannot die. They may strengthen their belief in this by recalling how the Party, in the country at large or in a certain village, so often sank to near-annihilation, only to rise again.

APPREHENSIONS OF FEAR AND DESPONDENCY

Just as an ageing Vietnamese peasant may keep with him the coffin he expects to be buried in, VC fighters are supposed to repress or surmount fear of death, accepting the glory of falling in battle. At the same time the Party's leadership seemingly dreads what would happen if the cost and the vicissitudes of its "struggle" were fully faced.

"Each time my unit defeated the GVN forces," a prisoner recalls, "the people slaughtered pigs and cattle and prepared a big feast for us. But if we were defeated they...didn't like us one bit."⁽³⁾ Because the Vietnamese peasant's general beliefs may be determined to a very high degree by his private perceptions, each local and temporary reverse may put into question that overall perspective on which the Party so decisively depends. The same penchant, on the other hand, may have saved the Communist movement in the South from being as much damaged by events in the North as the West German KPD has been by the East German SED. Even a rallier hostile to the VC may declare to the interviewer questioning him on matters beyond his senses: "I don't know anything about the Communist regime in the North, not having lived there."⁽⁴⁾

"When things were calm," an informant recalls about the rural poor, "they liked the Communists a lot." But when government forces attacked the hamlet, "they cursed the Communists a lot."⁽³⁾ Such a high sensitivity of partisanship to damage may, at least in the estimates of the Party leadership, not be limited to mere sympathizers. Hence the effort to divert attention away from distressing subjects, to meet setbacks, even casualties, with silence and denial -- a device which many agree to be necessary if catastrophic reactions to the truth are to be avoided. Some truths are easier to bear if authority does not specify all their particulars. Thus "hardships," which one is proud to endure, concern nature and one's own side (e.g., separation from those one loves) rather than the damage one suffers from the enemy.

The potentially distressing may even become exhilarating! A young rallier of upper middle class origin recalls a "reorientation course" for VC cadres from the Delta who had to lead a life "full of hardships" in the jungle:

Before I joined, they had studied the beauty and the riches of the jungle in Vietnam to make the soldiers like living in the jungle. I myself found the jungle not beautiful at all. I only saw mosquitoes, jungle leeches, etc.⁽⁵⁾

The conclusion pertinent for operations has of course been drawn long ago: the reluctance of cadres to admit specific damage to particular people -- a reluctance masked by the proud and bitter insistence on hardships in general -- offers opportunities to opponents who can appear as purveyors of the stark truth.

II PROPER CONDUCT OF AUTHORITY AND BENEFITS BESTOWED BY IT

INEQUALITY, POVERTY, AND THE BAD OFFICIAL

It is often taken for granted that poverty and inequality have been the mainsprings of revolt in Vietnam, though it then becomes difficult to explain why the internal balance of power in that country has for the last twenty years been so much more favorable to the Communists than has been the case elsewhere in Southeast Asia or, for that matter, in the entire "underdeveloped" world outside the "socialist" sphere.

To be sure, there is probably a substantial measure of truth in the widely accepted belief that poverty and inequality were a necessary condition for the Party's rise and continued popularity. Poor farmers are, indeed, better disposed toward it than any other group in the population, and they receive favorable treatment from the cadres. It may be, however, that Vietnam's explosive mixture resulted from a combination of misery and exploitation with oppression, the beating landlord flanked by the beating official. (See Section VII.)

Poverty and inequality are not the most popular explanations among ralliers and prisoners of war. If, according to an informant, it is because of "the villagers that the Front has become what it is today," one must not forget that "the villagers didn't know anything about the Front." But "they were dissatisfied with the way a certain number of CVN officials behaved"⁽⁶⁾ and less displeased with the cadres they came to know. That is, what

may first come to mind when one undertakes to judge an authority is not its grand program but the behavior of its agents.

Of course many informants flatly affirm that the civilian and military agents of the GVN whom they had occasion to observe were of impeccable conduct and were liked by the people. While a significant fraction of such statements are made in good faith, many of them must stem from expedience -- in short from hypocrisy. The hypocrites together with the overt critics of the GVN may well -- this is my hunch, which as yet falls short of a testable hypothesis -- constitute a substantial majority of the informants expressing themselves on the matter.

In relating rebellion to the authorities' misconduct rather than to iniquitous institutions, the informants continue a Confucian tradition. "Where we say 'system,'" notes Paul Mus, "the Far East prefers to think of 'virtue.'"^{*} Confucianism, observes Lucian Pye, provides a clear-cut image of the model authority, but not of model "institutions."

Propriety of conduct on the part of those in power appears to be not so much a matter of conferring benefits (though, as I shall recall, this aspect is not absent from the conception of the leader of the village council) as of avoiding the infliction of damage.

It is in this context that I should like to restate the following guess: to the sympathizers, supporters, and the lesser cadres, the difference between the VC and the GVN is more than that between the attacker and the defender of a certain social order. It is also the difference between unworthy and noxious men in power and

^{*} Viet-Nam, p. 28

better men aspiring to replace them. (Had Vietnamese Communism been largely an expression of discontent with rural inequality, it should, as Bernard Fall has observed, have been weakest in the North and strongest in the South. The inverse relationship has obtained ever since 1945.)

Several phenomena might be adduced to support this view -- apart from Leon Gouré's finding that subjects who are generous in their praise of the VC frequently declare that they had little dissatisfaction with their socio-economic situation, or their hamlet or class, prior to joining the movement.

First, while the informants here quoted do not hesitate to voice their hostility to the GVN, it is rare for them to show much interest in a new social order. In my opinion one hears only infrequently that "there were some people who...liked the Front because the VC said that the Front would transform South Vietnam into a socialist state." What the term means to the speaker becomes evident when he refers to "...North Vietnam, where a citizen could at least finish the seventh grade, and the cadre could at least finish the eighth or ninth grade." (7)

Correspondingly, the supreme pronouncements of the VC accord little place to socio-economic matters. They focus rather on pure politics but avoid "revolutionary" overtones. Of course this moderation is studied. Perhaps discontent (as estimated by the VC) with the socio-economic status quo is not much more intense than the fashion in which the VC tries to exploit it.

While the theme of the bad GVN official is not especially featured in the pronouncements of the VC, it is of great importance in encounters between the movement and the villagers. The "denunciation of crimes" may well overshadow the complaints against the hardships that society imposes on the poor.

It is the Party's policies on land tenure, 1945 to date, which furnish the most striking evidence for its modest estimate of the available discontent.

The matter concerns the peasantry, that is "the main force of the Revolution."^{*} Has the Party recruited that "main force" by catering to the land hunger of the rural poor, by advocating and carrying out an instant revolution in the countryside, without any regard for the compensation of those expropriated? In other words, has it adopted the stance to which the Bolsheviks owed their ascent to power?

There are villages, or districts, perhaps even provinces, where this did happen. But in many other places, I have the impression that the Vietnamese Party, whenever not yet in possession of the State, has been more moderate than the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were in 1917. Take, for example, the foundation charter of the Front, the Ten Points of late 1960, which outlines (in point 4) a set of measures that in some respects go beyond, and in others fall short of those enunciated and in process of realization under Diem: "We will reduce land rentals....Farmers will be guaranteed the right to till their present plots...."

^{*}Vo-Nguyen-Giap, People's War, People's Army, Prager, New York, 1962, p 135

Land reclaimed will be guaranteed to those who reclaim it... Farmer ownership of land already distributed will be insured... By means of negotiation and by paying an equitable price, the State will purchase land from landowners having more than a certain amount of rice-fields, the amount to be determined according to the land situation in each locality. This land will be distributed to landless or land-lacking farmers. The farmers receiving the land will pay nothing and will not be bound by any conditions."

Even when drastic measures were taken, they might be incomplete:

Did the Front kill the landlords and the rich farmers in your hamlet? ..They did chop off one landlord's head, saying that the landlords oppressed the people. But I don't know whether that was the reason, or whether they took personal revenge against him. There were a few rich people still living who had a couple of acres (8) *

Behind this moderation is an assessment of the relative magnitudes of at least two factors: the cost to potential beneficiaries of radical measures (the "poor farmers") and the return to those who would be losers or made apprehensive of loss ("rich farmers," "landlords" and -- decisively -- "middle farmers") The Party leadership, often in the face of "ultra-left" mistakes committed by its underlings, has always concluded that the level of discontent among the rural poor was low enough, or their control by the Party firm enough, to make the return named exceed the cost quoted

* Emphasis added.

The Party leadership's calculation may well have been correct. Radical measures in the agrarian affairs of the South may have been motivated more by the doctrinal zeal of lower cadres than by the impatience of peasants

In my hamlet ..the Front said it would give land to the landless peasants. While I was in that hamlet, I didn't see any evidence of land distribution. I had heard about it, but I didn't see the Front implement it. The villagers said the Front had been cheating them for a long while now. (9)

More frequently, and with convincing implicitness, what is expressed is the willingness to wait:

What were you told about the aims of the Front?

They said that the aims of the Front were to liberate the South, drive the Americans out of the South, and distribute land to the people

What was the most important aim from your point of view?

I was poor, so when I heard them say that they would distribute land to the people, when the South was liberated, I liked it tremendously. (10)*

So ample and obvious is that willingness to see gains deferred that the Party may exercise candor about the estimated time at which the condition named will be fulfilled:

Did you tell the people when they would receive their land?

We told them that would happen when the country was unified.

Suppose they ask you when the unification will come about; what do you tell them?

When we have driven all the Americans out of the country. .

* Emphasis added.

Did the people ask you when you thought the Americans would be driven out of the country?

. We told them it might take five or ten or twenty years. It might continue to the next generation or the one after the next one (11)

If the potential beneficiaries of an agrarian revolution are that patient, the Party may dispense with all specifications of the moment at which it will gratify them, or even omit the promise altogether

Given the limits of the discontent to be faced, this may be just the right thing to do. "What appealed to me most," explains one informant about the VC, "was their land-to-the-farmers program. Every farmer likes to have land. They haven't yet carried it out, but it appeals to everyone."⁽¹²⁾ To be sure. But what the peasant may really want is not that the landlord disappear but that he be good, by choice or force; not so much to own land as to be able to work, at reasonable rents and with enough rice to show for his pains. There is, it seems, not infrequently a form of tenancy of land arising from its past use and limiting the landlord's freedom in disposing of it; and the VC may, instead of expropriating property of wealthy farmers, induce them to rent more of their land to poor villagers, for example by preventing them from hiring laborers

Under such conditions, the idea of an agrarian revolution may strike the Party as something to which the rural masses have to be brought slowly and painfully.

After all, the pyramid of income and wealth in the typical village is rather flat. When a rare outspoken conservative among the informants rejects VC equalitarianism, he illustrates it thus: "They said that later all

the wealth would be equally distributed; the families who had 10,000 plasters would have to share with those who had only 5,000 plasters." (13)

Such limited inequality and the failure of the "revolution of expectations" to arrive in the countryside -- at least prior to the massive appearance of Americans -- make for acceptance of poverty

Did your family have enough food?
Every year we lacked food for three or four months.

Why? Were you exploited? Were you dissatisfied.. ?

We didn't have good crops. No one exploited us. We weren't dissatisfied with anyone. Everyone in my hamlet was as poor as we. No one had much land (14)

Indeed, it took the American intervention of 1965 to make the Party leadership reconsider the worth of attacking "rich peasants" and "landlords." "In the country," reported an intellectual rallier in the fall of that year, "the VC have begun to exhort people to recollect the causes of their poverty and enumerate their hardships, to pave the way for a denunciation campaign against the landlords." (15) "Before my departure to Long An Province," a VC propaganda cadre who rallied in the late fall of 1965 reported about the early part of that season, "the chief of my section after a meeting with his superiors let his section members know the new line: 'After twenty years of fighting, the cadres and the mass can't help being bewildered . having erroneous ideas .. While the enemy is increasing air and artillery attacks, people hardly understand us when we say that we are strong and the enemy is weak. Because of this we must restore their

confidence and. .help them to have a clear view of their enemy. The mass knows only that the enemy is imperialism and the illegitimate authorities [GVN] They don't know yet that our enemy is among us -- he is the landowner ... Peasants have been fighting for land. We must overthrow the landowners and bring land to them "(16) Even then, not all landlords were enemies:

They divided landlords into many categories: the vacillating landlords...whose land they would borrow and promise to return in three or four years, and the cooperative landlords, whose land they would buy with bonds. (17)

However, the turn to the left of 1965 soon failed. "At the beginning of 1966," a cadre recalls, "the VC planned to suspend efforts to 'win over the rural population' because this campaign was designed to destroy the landlords and the rich farmers. This is why they had to switch to 'the three large-scale movements' [the name of the next campaign] which encompassed all social classes. The instructors [in a reorientation course] now urged us to invite the landlords and rich farmers to attend indoctrination courses, a favor of which they were deprived before. Landlords and rich farmers ..will be praised as benefactors of the Front, who have contributed a lot to its activities from 1960 to the present "(18)

You said that this campaign was a subjective error. Did the Party admit this after the campaign was over?

Yes. When the Province Party Committee and the District Committee met they admitted that at the present time the situation does not permit a campaign of "winning over the rural population." There must be a national revolution first.... (18)

"There must be a national revolution first": the Bolsheviks in 1917 invented this strategy. Then a revolutionary stance on land tenure made it possible for the Party to seize power; now it is the conquest of power which will render such a stance feasible. Locally, its premature adoption may even lead to loss of power. And when agrarian revolution is undertaken, it is, in Communist language, "from above," by a decision of whatever Party level, rather than in conjunction with initiatives "from below," by "the masses" themselves.

WHY SUCH INTOLERANCE FOR BAD AUTHORITY NOW?

Presumably the behavior of those in authority toward villagers has deteriorated since the beginning of the French conquest.

The discontent observed by Gerald Hickey in the late fifties may have become progressively rarer: "Wealth, in most instances, makes the villager a more responsible member of the society....The affluent are very active in the political life of Khanh Hou....They can afford the considerable time and the cost of participating in village affairs. He who holds office in the Village Council must be relatively free from farm responsibilities, and he also must have an outside income to permit periodic outlays of his own money. Public figures are expected to make impressive personal cash and food contributions to village celebrations and village projects, and they also must be able to support themselves during the recurring periods when there are insufficient funds for village officials' salaries."*

*Gerald Hickey, Vietnamese Village, Princeton, 1963, pp 236-239.

"There is much truth," Paul Mus affirms, "in the picture drawn by conservative Vietnamese nationalists of a situation in which the conscience of the village was expressed by the notables, under everybody's surveillance. ...Everything happened among people who had lived together for generations....The judgment in a suit brought before him involved the village judge fully; there was no distance between the community and him "*"

But the French and then Diem fostered the withdrawal of the rural notables from public affairs, reducing the powers of the village councils, and burdening them with the execution of policies resented in the countryside. In the hamlets and villages there multiplied -- also in response to the Party's activities -- officials appointed from above and afar, not responsible to their wards, not recruited from among them, of little public spirit, badly paid. And for these various reasons they have been less inhibited by conscience, shame, or fear from committing abuses, more driven to them by need, greed and lust, more neglecting and inflicting than caring for and bestowing, as the notable had to be. Thus, as Michael Arnssten has pointed out, Saigon's early reaction (after 1954) to the Party may have set in motion a vicious circle (for Saigon)

While officials were perhaps acting worse, villagers were probably becoming touchier; why, is far from fully known. The very improvement in rural standards of living (often noted by "regrounees" becoming "returnees") may have had this effect. The serious attempts of VC cadres to behave properly (see Section IV) are apt to have raised people's demands toward their (methodically denounced and even defamed) rivals. The reduction in the

* Viet-Nam, p 113.

legitimacy, power, and prospects of Bao Dai and his successors may have had something to do with changes in reactions toward their local representatives.

That connection can be exaggerated. "After each sweep operation by the ARVN," recalls an informant about his hamlet, "the VC cadres organized a study session. They used damage caused to the villagers so as to incite hatred against Americans and Diem, but not very successfully. The villagers didn't go far into the matter; they always blamed the units or the individuals for their acts. Sometimes they said the Americans and Diem didn't tell their soldiers to rob the people's poultry, only the soldiers behaved badly."⁽¹⁹⁾ More frequently, it seems, villagers will blame Saigon for the grievances they suffer at the hands of Saigon's representatives. On the other hand, as noted above, loss of respect for the center renders its local representatives more vulnerable, as Paul Mus noted during the war with the French: "The peoples moulded by Chinese civilization are in ordinary times [when the supreme authority appears to continue enjoying the mandate of Heaven] disposed toward coming to terms with abuses committed by local officials...though not without denouncing them: petitions for redress submitted to higher authority were customary... But when a virtue (Westerners would say, a system) seems spent, and another one is perceived as ready to replace it...intolerance replaces patience. Until then, everything was endured. Now nothing more can be suffered. This is how the civic morals of the Far East, usually more relaxed than ours

with regard to the abuse of power...suddenly become intransigent."*

From all of which a conclusion pertinent to operations follows: competing with a vigorous rebellion, a precarious authority should be concerned with respect for the people's dignity at least as much as with the level of their income.

* Viet-Nam, p. 27

III. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST INDULGENCE

"The predilection of some insurgent leaders for either brandy or girls," suggests Sir Robert Thompson, "can provide plenty of scope for psychological warfare experts and officers. One political commissar in Malaya made...the...remark: 'The only way to liberate women is to loosen their trouser belts!'"* A rallier might have given the opposite advice as he disconsolately recalls how "the VC told me that people living under the GVN regime had all become scoundrels, ruffians, and gamblers. Under the Front regime, everybody had to be clean, honest and hardworking ... Since I was a gambler, I was forced to work for the Front." (20) "When times are ordinary," Paul Mus points out, "disinterestedness, conspicuous poverty, an ascetic life and a physiognomy expressive of it have low propaganda value. The kind of virtue which in popular conception belongs to the cycle of fire, penitence and purification then yields to another system.. that of abundance and normalcy. In Viet-Nam the silhouette of power in a period of stability is the opposite of emaciated. The Chinese character yuan, meaning 'round'... designated things respectable, particularly the mandarins. But a contrasting virtue...presides over revolutions." Ho is opposed to Bao Dai as "the sharp angle of the flame" is opposed to "the 'roundness' and plenitude of water."**

"If a man had guilty relations with women, he would be punished. If we drank and sang, we would be

* R. K. G. Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, Chatto & Windus, London, 1965, pp. 94-95.

** Paul Mus, Viet Nam, p. 28

criticized."⁽²¹⁾ Thus runs a characteristic report of an informant about his VC unit, an account difficult to match from the files of the government's armed forces.

Fighters, it seems, not infrequently defend their right to pleasure loudly and elaborately, and to little avail.

And the cadres extend the fight against pleasure to the population at large. The question, "What were the village guerrilla's missions?" may elicit, in part, this answer: "They kept an eye on the villagers to see if they took to gambling for money or cockfighting, which had been prohibited by the Front "⁽²²⁾ In short, "the guerrillas acted as if they were fathers of everybody."⁽²³⁾ Infuriating, but also impressive.

Consciously the cadres do not admit that they may be seeking and imposing virtue when thwarting the senses. They rather allege, in the Bolshevik manner, the existence of a "Who [will annihilate] whom?" relation between work -- for the Party -- and the natural man.

The cadres seem -- on good and conspicuous grounds -- preoccupied with whether such a relation does not also exist between dedication to the Party and devotion to the family. The best fighter is the one who has no worries about how his family fares without him. Family will neither weigh him down with obligations nor lure him with comforts nor absorb his affection. Ho Chi Minh is a bachelor. Hence, what the Party desires, without always daring to press for it too hard, is a cadre's "clean break" with his family (which will, to be sure, ultimately benefit from his work for "the people"):

Why do you think your brother was fully indoctrinated?

Whenever he came home, he did not care about family problems. His thoughts were only for the work . of the Front. (24)

"Being in the Communist ranks," a rallier may recall with dismay, "is almost like being a priest....In the GVN people think of their families first before their country. I knew I couldn't live with the VC, because it is natural that a man must think of his family first." (3) But doing that, and, to boot, being concerned with what one's family thinks, may entail forsaking the Party:

Who convinced you to rally most strongly?

My mother... She argued that I had served the Front for years, and that it was now time to come back to the family. (25)

Hence the Party's attempt to have cadres renounce family, and its half-way effort to impede contacts between members of its armed forces and their families. In multiple and varying ways an attempt is made to find the point where the sum of damage from allowing such contacts and from obstructing them is at a minimum.

On the other hand, in the Party's ideal world the families who have members connected with it will become and remain devoted "VC families" (responding to the argument that their menfolk's welfare depends on their support to the movement):

Were they [the villagers] glad to see you [the VC] around?

Families who had children working for the Front often helped us; they gave us things to eat, for example. Families who had no one serving the VC were indifferent. (26)

But for all that, the children and husbands thus fondly remembered and indirectly helped should not be deflected from serving the Party alone. The cadres, I would guess, are preoccupied by the incidence of reactions such as that of the informant who, when queried, "What did you think of the local government officials?" responds, "In fact, my relatives hadn't been arrested or mistreated, so I didn't have any bad feelings toward the GVN." (27) It is the feared prevalence of such orientations which seems to call for a "clean break" with the family

But the worth to the Party of such a stance should not be reduced by the emergence, within the movement, of intimate ties between peers other than those fostered by the Party itself (mainly, the three-man cell). Close friendships, where they are not expected, have deleterious effects and are to be strenuously forbidden.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When a loyal subject of the Northern regime is queried, "What do you think about your Uncle Ho?" the immediate answer is that "he isn't working to foster his personal interests, but the interests of others." (28) And when informants respectful of the VC or even unconverted hard core talk about VC motivations, be it on upper levels or their own, it is not rare to find personal motives mixed with sheer attachments to the cause.

Correspondingly, the Party, in its recruitment, selection, and training by no means avoids appeals to personal interest. The rationale for preferring persons of lower-class origin over individuals from upper strata as cadres is not only that class determines consciousness,

but also that there is harmony between personal and Party interest in the former case, conflict in the latter -- where personal concerns are likely to win.

These, however, are aspects of the Party's conduct which it is eager to obscure. For "everybody's ambition," affirm two authorities on traditional Vietnam, "was to merit the title of quantu, that is, gentleman...and to escape the designation of tieu-nhan, that of a vulgar man seeking his own advantage in all matters."^{*} "In periods of crisis," observes Paul Mus about traditional beliefs in Vietnam, "manifest signs of one's being disinterested... carry great divinatory power [permit ascertaining that here are the future rulers]."^{**}

Hence the Party endeavors in a variety of modes -- by allegation, but also by conduct -- to present itself as nobly disinterested, and its enemy as basely self-regarding.

It is the VC which allegedly steels itself to, or even thrives on, hardships, which are stressed as much as damage is denied, and then used to justify demands on the population.

"The subject," an interviewer comments on a prisoner, (29) "said he would never work for the VC again, and he promised to move his family to a strategic hamlet when he is released. If life would be too hard there, he would have his 18-year-old son join the ARVN to support his family." Soldiering for the government may be a means for

^{*} Pierre Huard and Maurice Durand, Connaissance du Viet-Nam, I. M. Primerie Nacional, Paris, 1954, p. 85.

^{**} Viet-Nam, p. 339.

increasing one's family's income, while fighting for the VC is more apt to reduce it; it is for the future after victory that rewards are promised. There is no pay for the fighter which could be bestowed on the family, and no privileges enjoyed by the latter on account of having a delegate in the armed forces. There are only undertakings to compensate families for intolerable losses of providers -- promises often, it seems, unfulfilled -- and even additional burdens. The non-combatant members of a family should add sacrifices of their own to those of its fighters (e.g., paying taxes punctually and fully), so as to enjoy the informal honor of being a "Front family."

But what about the privileges enjoyed by those above the rank-and-file in the VC? "The guerrillas," one informant remembers, "had to mount guard so that the cadres could take tea quietly."⁽³⁰⁾ "You would be criticized for the least little thing if you were not a high-ranking cadre. I never saw a high-ranking cadre criticized "⁽³¹⁾ But statements of this sort are surprisingly rare. The majority view is that "cadres have to be the best men in their section by slaving all day to set a good example for the rest of the Front members. Only by slaving all day can they be in a position to criticize the other cell members and to force the others into working hard, just like a locomotive pulling the cars. . . Party members. . . die before the people, and enjoy fewer privileges than the people."⁽³²⁾ According to another rallier, "Party members. . . must know when to go ahead to sacrifice themselves for the good of the other men. They had to undertake all the difficult jobs before other men. Suppose a unit was engaged in a battle, the Party members had to go ahead and lead the men through the enemy's fire."⁽¹⁰⁾

When a cadre arrogates undue privileges to himself, it is apparently far from certain that he will get away with it:

Did the fighters in your platoon respect... the platoon's leader?

They didn't respect him because he was greedy...

Please explain.

During the march he always ate more than the fighters. He always wanted the best of everything. During the march, the moment the cook finished cooking the rice, he ate it. He ate it before us, so that he could eat more than his usual ration.... He was a cadre and yet he was greedy.... (33)*

There thus emerges an apparently widely held conception of the "interested" GVN and the "disinterested" VC, precisely what the Party has aimed at. When questioned about the conduct of GVN forces in his village, a rallier readily admits that "they were nice to the people," but adds that "most of them were very afraid of death. They said that they were just waiting to get paid each month, and that they were in no mood to fight." (3)

Both prisoners of war and ralliers apparently feel that it will please their interrogators if they express a dislike for the hardships of life in the VC, exalt the comforts enjoyed by the government's forces, and show a preference for abundance over austerity, for safety over sacrifice.

What were the reasons for your rally?

I could no longer endure hardships. I rallied in order to find better living. (34)

* Emphasis added.

The point, again, is not that these were "the reasons," as one would expect them to be for a large fraction of ralliers in any situation resembling the one in South Vietnam. The point is rather that this reaction, which the VC would condemn, appears to those who display it as one which will not shock or incur the prejudice of the GVN. They thus subscribe to the VC's holier-than-thou attitude toward its opponent.

As to ralliers in particular, there thus exists an important type of unconverted defector who has not substantially changed his view of the VC at large in an unfavorable sense. He has merely given in to what he himself regards as a weakness with regard to "hardships"; or he has acted from rage which a specific injury or insult inflicted by a particular superior has unleashed in him (see Section VII).

The asymmetry between conceptions -- realities? -- of the VC and the GVN which I have sketched finds striking expression in current images of the respective leaderships.

What did you think of the GVN...when you were with the Front?

I thought that the GVN leaders only think of their individual privileges.(35)

Having observed that in times of crisis manifest signs of one's being disinterested carry great divinatorial power, Paul Mus, speaking in the early fifties about Bao Dai's regime, notes that "this point works against our enterprise." For while the charge of selfishness against that establishment was widespread, "accusations of this kind have never been made against the enemy leaders." When

one considers "the country's characteristic sensibility,"
he concludes, "the import of this remark is fearsome."*

*Viet-Nam, pp. 339-340.

IV. "STUDYING" AND "ACHIEVING"

Asked to indicate whether GVN propaganda is effective, an intellectual rallier specialized in persuasion notes that the government's staffs, not being dedicated, "work not as cadres but as officials." (16)

A cadre transforms himself so as to change the world.

"I, the undersigned, Vo Van Be, 28 years old, probationary Party member," goes a characteristic application for full membership, "have the following strong and weak points:

"I. Strong points:

...Have always had a peaceful mind when accomplishing official missions..." (36)

"Peace of mind" is the absence of dismaying sentiments, such as fear or dejection, which would interfere with activity (see Section I, p. 3). "All [youth] group members," notes a VC document, "felt secure....As all of them had peace of mind, they achieved and overfulfilled requirements set forth by group resolutions....No comrade was depressed " (37)

But everybody was also "enthusiastic": "The relation between officers and soldiers," observes Giap, "between higher and lower echelons, between one branch [of the armed forces] and another, is...based on...class love....Our officers and men have loved each other just like blood brothers...." * But bonds of affection must never cross lines of organization (see Section III).

If fervor -- perhaps so as to make sure the overcoming of rancor -- be a necessary condition, for successful working

* People's War, People's Army, pp. 123-124.

together, "hate" too plays a role, as Lucian Pye has noted for the Chinese Party, and Douglas Pike for the Vietnamese Communists. Hating the enemy, I make sure that I do not hate myself, that I do not succumb to sadness.

"Since we both have the same ideal of exterminating the enemy," as the writer of a letter⁽³⁸⁾ puts it to a friend, internal bickering must be avoided. With the help, to be sure, of another outlet for hostility: mutual "criticism," confined to "sessions" and controlled by cadres; sessions which, on the one hand, drain off quarrelsomeness, and, on the other hand, may be used to combat it, as well as employed for settling quarrels, which have nonetheless erupted:

Our team conducted kiem thao sessions every day. I was often criticized for quarreling with the other girls. Tam Van presided over these sessions, and taught us to love one another.⁽³⁹⁾

Nor does the cadre conduct disputes within himself. "Avoid...expressions such as 'may or may not,'" recommends a VC document. "Doubt should be rooted out."⁽⁴⁰⁾

To the question "What did the fighters do when they did not have to fight?" the proper answer is: "They studied."⁽⁴¹⁾ A rather considerable amount of time is devoted by all kinds of personnel to "studying," which may mean anything from being put to sleep by the interminable drone of the instructors, to real specialized training and retooling.

One "studies" doctrine as well as details of the next, or the last, battle; one "studies" the decisions which have been "sent down" to one's level, and which it needs skill

to understand as well as to make understood. "He was very intelligent and talented," a hard-core lower cadre reminisces about his company commander. "He understood all the documents sent down from above and could summarize them for our benefit. When the high echelons sent down some directives for our units to follow, he was the man who explained them to the members." (42)

The cadre is thus the successor to the Confucian master, one of the big four (heaven, king, master, father) * who may reward virtue in a master's fashion:

Did you get any commendation while serving in the Front?

No. But a comrade in my unit got one for his high fighting spirit. He was rewarded by the platoon leader, who gave him a fountain pen and a notebook. (43)

-- which recalls "the four precious things" of the student in traditional Vietnam: ink-well, ink, paper, and brushes. **

Much pleasure is derived by new members of the Party from coming to know more -- through their superiors' disclosures -- and, particularly, learning about everybody's future earlier than people outside.

The rewards from "studying" are many. "Cleverness and flexibility," notes a VC document, "do not originate from genius but from reflection...; therefore we should constantly study," 44 progressively acquiring insight and, hence, skill from the intellectual treasure of the Party, "the most intelligent organization in the world,"

* Connaissance du Viet-Nam, p. 85.

** Ibid.

as a perceptive rallier notes.⁽⁵⁾ "When Party members go to study sessions, they are helped... The people respect them; the people... consider non-members as not very advanced.... If someone does something stupid, the Party member criticizes him."⁽⁴⁵⁾

Recalling that a "scientific method" is necessary to "make the Revolution," a VC document reminds its readers that "the revolutionary mission" consists of "five steps," of which the first is "investigation": "Before doing anything.. important or not, we should seek to understand the work we are going to do That is investigation." As the saying goes: "Know your enemies and know yourself -- one hundred battles, one hundred victories."⁽⁴⁶⁾ In fact, according to an informant, an ordinary man, "When the VC told you to do something for them, they had studied it. They knew you well."⁽⁴⁷⁾

Proper studying leads to precise positions. "They only had a vague idea about enemy and friendly forces," reports a VC document about a hapless unit; "therefore they were easily demoralized."⁽⁴⁸⁾ "So, please consider his case," a VC official urges a superior, "and take a clear-cut attitude toward him, because so far we do not have any definite attitude toward him."⁽⁴⁹⁾

Precision is obtained by classification, a powerful tool with a Confucian background. Speaking about hostile elements, a VC document characteristically declares: "It is our responsibility to classify them by type and to re-educate them accordingly."⁽²⁾

Classification, in turn, involves a whole series of sub-categories, whether they be the "five" steps of the revolutionary mission quoted above or the "four"

fundamental goals for 1965 (a full enumeration would furnish dozens of sets).

Investigation and classification prepare the way for planning. Affirming that "we have the necessary conditions to overcome all difficulties in our country," Truong Chinh in 1947 asserts that "we only require" a few things, among them "that our people establish plans for every task."^{*}

Proper planning results in quite specific objectives:

What did you do during the reorientation session [of 1965]?

I had to study the new mission of the Party Chapter....We were given specific objectives...for the next year. These targets were divided into quarterly objectives. For example, during the first quarter, the Party Chapter might be responsible for recruiting 100 youths for military service; or, in military proselytizing, it would have to plant five or ten penetration agents; or... it might have to destroy so many soldiers, and so on. There would also be directives pertaining to how many Party members would have to be recruited during the coming year, how many Association members, and so on. The Security Section would be told how many dossiers it would have to compile [sic].... After this...the targets for each hamlet would be broken down into targets for each settlement in the hamlet. (18)

To the question asked of a member of the Local Force, "Did your unit ever engage in an operation without studying or practicing it?" the answer is "Never." (12) "Generally speaking," notes a VC document, "we never conduct

^{*}Truong Chinh, The Resistance Will Win, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1960, p. 162.

unprepared attacks"(44) -- a refusal which, as has been noted, may transform into a virtue an incapacity to improvise when surprised.

Practicing, whether for an attack or a musical performance, can never be omitted:

What made you decide to rally, besides the shelling?

...I joined their [VC] entertainment group in order to have time to help my family make a living. But they kept making me practice my guitar. What a waste of time!(50)

The Party speaks of "the four 'quicks' and the one 'slow': advance quickly, clear the battlefield quickly, withdraw quickly -- and prepare slowly."

The length of time spent in preparation may lull the enemy into a false belief in one's weakness. "We are always taken in," notes Paul Mus during the war with the French, "by this alternation of vivid movement and seering passivity, false immobility. At the very moment when the crisis of December [19] 1946 in Hanoi was being prepared, ...one of our military experts affirmed to me...that after the 'lesson' of Haiphong [November 20, 1946] the Viet Minh had collapsed, that it would not react anymore."^{*} But what is happening during such a period may be merely another manifestation of the Party's resolve to avoid a traditional overestimation of one's own forces, combined with a reliance on supernatural help: "When a fortune-teller at Southern fairs, presenting himself as the celestial emperor Phan Xich Long, attempted an insurrection

^{*}Viet-Nam, p. 325.

in Saigon in 1916, he contented himself with assembling against us one hundred peasants armed with sabres, and another thousand equipped with arakets: the spirits of raging wind and torrential rain were to decide the battle.* But now, a VC document hints, it is to be the enemy's lot to destroy the effect of his being "strong" by becoming "careless." (44)

Careful action is conduct conforming precisely to plan. A propagandist recalls how he and returnee cadres used to enter houses in his village at night:

In every hamlet the returnee cadres did not operate by themselves, but had to work side-by-side with the local cadres like myself. In my own case the returnee cadres never talked to the villagers, but always let me do the talking. Of course, they always coached me on the sort of thing to be said to the villagers and I had to say exactly what they wanted me to.... They indoctrinated me until I could repeat their propaganda talk as fluently as they. I never told the villagers things that were even slightly different, for if I did, I would be immediately criticized. (51)

After all, is an ostensibly minor infraction, in the reality of the war and, even more so, in VC perception, not apt to have devastating sequels? "I was criticized twice since joining the Front," recalls an informant. "The first time happened when I attempted to escape, but was arrested right away. The political cadre criticized me.... The second time he criticized me for letting too much smoke go up in cooking rice; he feared that enemy

* Ibid., p. 258.

aircraft might detect the target." (52) Was the second misdemeanor not more dangerous to the Party than the first crime?

The new epoch is that of Cong, "which means common action. No more reunions for sacrificing to spirits," which have proved their impotence.* There must be a maximum of action.

"The troops," recalls an informant, "never have a moment to rest: study sessions, production of food and fighting all day long." (53) In the VC, says one of the few ralliers who have been placed in gainful employment by the GVN, "one day's work is one day's work; there is no such thing as working two hours a day and dreaming the rest of the time." (54)

"With the GVN," another informant remarks about doing duty in the place one lives, "each one took his turn to stand guard in the hamlet, so one could rest three or four consecutive days. With the VC one had to work every night. If it wasn't standing guard, it would be digging a shelter, and so on." (55)

Any delay may have fatal consequences and is a mortal sin:

We were told that if we were one minute late in our work, the sufferings of the people would last one hour longer. (56)

"If a man does not do his utmost," the cadres will demonstrate, and "the South Vietnamese people will have to shed more blood for the Revolution. For instance, a

* Ibid., p. 261.

Propaganda and Training cadre is sent to a district to convene a meeting of local cadres to explain to them the policy line of the Front. Since the local cadres live separately and far from each other, it takes the Propaganda and Training cadre six days instead of three [sic] to complete his mission. So, during the orientation sessions [one of the types of criticism sessions] this Propaganda and Training cadre examines what he has done, and admits that if he had gone to the house of each local cadre to invite them to the meeting [and given his explanations only once], he could have accomplished his task within three days. Then a member of the section specialized in training analyzes the cadre's action and concludes that... if he had accomplished his tasks within three days, the directives would have been forwarded to the district, to the villages and to the people three days earlier. This means he has wasted three days' labor and contributions of the people, and that the South Vietnamese people, because of this delay, have shed blood uselessly for three days. This kind of criticism could drive the cadre to tears." (32)

Hence rapidity is of the perfect cadre's very essence:

What was the morale of the VC troops?

They had good morale.

...what was the sign of good morale?

They walked fast and vigorously. They looked majestic [sic]. Even though they were barefoot, they walked very fast. They weren't slow and tired like those on our side.

Do you mean by this the ARVN soldiers?

No...I mean by that the way people like you and me walk.(57)

One must go to the limit of one's forces -- and beyond:

Some people were exhausted and fell asleep, while attending meetings. They were severely criticized. It had not been the same with the GVN, who, in such cases, allowed the people to go out and get a bottle of beer or something to drink. It's very hard to live with the VC!(58)

There is a reluctance to exculpate one who has failed.

When activity is impressively extolled, prohibiting it may become a punishment. "For three months," recalls a member of a VC unit, "I was under disciplinary measures. I was released from duty, relieved of my gun. I spent all the days doing nothing, just eating and sleeping."(12)

To execute a task is to achieve. "Today I write to you, and I wish you the best of health and performances, so as to attain many more achievements."(59) More specifically, "the purpose of this letter is but to wish you good health and that in the Front lines...you...will be the winner of the prize for killing enemies."(38) Perhaps you will succeed in "finding," as a VC document asks, "an effective way to score merits by killing the enemy":(60) you will be a combat hero.

Did the men in your village respect... the VC fighters for their bravery?

Yes, some young men in my village admired the fighting spirit of the VC because of constant VC propaganda on this subject. Whenever the Front won a battle, the VC organized a...meeting of all the people during which they pinned medals on the fighters. They...built up the cult of the...Combat Heroes.

Did the villagers hear about the heroes of the ARVN?

No. The young men in the village never heard anything about the ARVN heroes. (61)

After action comes "studying" one's "experiences," which takes much longer than having them. Here is a simple fighter, formerly with the Hoa-Hoa and Binh Xuyen:

What did you do after the battle?

We spent one month studying our experiences; that is, studying our strong points and our weaknesses. With the VC you had to study all the time. (62)

And here a cadre:

After each big battle, the battalion had to withdraw...for reorientation. If the battle had been won, the cadres praised the men.... If the battle had been lost...the men had to be educated for two months in military training as well as in political training. The leading cadres had to attend kiem thao sessions which lasted at least one or two weeks. Sometimes they lasted for three weeks, especially if there was a dispute between the cadres as to whose fault had caused the failure. (63)

The Party opposes not only a tendency towards taking it easy, but also a disposition to waste resources -- including oneself -- as well as a tendency to suddenly drop an enterprise in which one is engaged. Subduing such penchants, the cadre should, like the Confucian sage, be "constant in his sentiments...truoc-san (after as before)." * Such constancy, however, is owed only to

* Connaissance du Viet-Nam, p. 85.

the Party and its members, and not to just any ordinary human being. While "the sage must abstain from hating what he has loved, from harming those to whom he has been good,"* the cadre must in his conduct towards anybody be capable of any brusque shift which may be required in the Party's interests.

At the same time the cadre and the Party should be able to suffer any number of alternations between near triumph and near disaster:

When did the Front enjoy the most popular support in Hoi Cu village, and when did it have the least popular support?

From the end of 1960 to the end of 1961 the Front enjoyed the most popular support in Hoi Cu village....Each night there were demonstrations, and the villages that were close to each other resounded with the sound of drums and wooden fish. The people in these villages met every night, and shouted slogans and so on....Each night the people in Hoi Cu village felt all worked up and enthusiastic, because they could hear the sound of drums and wooden fish, shouts of demonstrators and gunshots in Hoi Thanh and Hoi My villages. Starting in 1962 the people's support of the Front began to slip. The Front movement weakened little by little....The GVN destroyed the Front forces, only five or six Front fighters were left, and they had to withdraw to the fields....In the middle of 1963 the Front regained its strength...[and] once more destroyed the GVN grip....The Front was strong until about June 1965. Now it is weak again.... The Front again lost its strength....(18)

* Ibid.

V. COERCION AGAINST 'CRUELTY'

GVN personnel are often accused of inflicting severe and wanton damage. This charge is seldom made against the VC. It may be that agents of the GVN inflict damage to assuage the frustration generated by their enemy's elusiveness. Allegedly the GVN -- this, again, is rarely advanced about its opponent -- may, sober or not quite that, strike, with hazy perception or blindly, just what is at hand, for the sake of striking. More frequently than for the VC, it may seem impossible to discern the GVN's motive for doing this. Anybody, so it may appear, might become a target right now (or never).

Even when the GVN's reason for violence has some merit, the action that one would normally follow in justification of the violence may not occur. Take this experience of Denis Warner's:

We had been going for twenty-four hours, when we sat down to dinner in the official residence of Colonel Le Van Thuoc, Chief of Vin Long Province in South Vietnam.... "You think now that we are brutal," said my Vietnamese host.... "You extracted information by brutality and did not act on it," I said.... Those among the tortured VC who said they had guns always insisted they had buried them back at the village. But no one thought of going back to look. It was too far, or too late, or perhaps just not worthwhile.*

In contrast, the VC seem eager to deny that their feelings have anything to do with the damage they inflict:

*The Last Confucian, New York, 1963, pp. 17 and 25.

How did they [the six hamlet guerrillas] behave toward the people?

Usually they had nothing against you and would let you live in peace, but once you did something they disapproved of, then they had to carry out the punishment. At the same time they assured you that they had nothing against you personally. (64)

For the VC seems to be more seriously afraid than the GVN of penchants to abuse power, which, of course, does not mean that the latter is entirely lacking in that concern, nor that the former is perfect. But asked "what did you learn in the political course?" an informant may pertinently recall: "We learned about the Worker," a figure which can be the more readily idealized the less present in the movement he is. "He does not abuse power; he does not think of his personal comfort." (65) Having already "learned" about the latter (in Section III above), let us here consider the former, which will recur in subsequent sections dealing with instruments of power other than the infliction of damage.

There are, of course, as I just indicated, reports about the VC such as this:

There was no such thing as justice in the unit. Some fighters were severely disciplined for a little mistake, while others could get away with a big crime, because they had connections with the high cadres. (63)

But not only are they rare, and not only does the Party leadership seem apprehensive of bad reactions by those unjustly damaged. I would also surmise that the Party fears to abuse its power lest doing so might affect

the very spirit (often masked by the insistence on viewing everything as a means to the end of total power) from which the cadres are drawing their strength -- a spirit of righteousness. Hence there has been much concern in the Party with "the principle of 'virtuous behavior towards the people.'"(66) (The question "Did you become a Party member?" might elicit the reply: "No, I wasn't admitted into the Party.... I often ill-treated my men.") The result has apparently been, until lately at least, to render prevalent in the country at large (those favorable to the GVN included) the belief that the VC's conduct is, on the whole, more proper than that of its domestic opponent, towards whom the VC might then adopt the stance of a moral mentor:

What did the VC do when they came to the village by night?

They came either to assassinate those who worked for the GVN, or to yell into their loudspeakers, and then disappear.

What did they say with their loudspeakers?

They asked the GVN soldiers not to behave wickedly toward the population.(67)

Of course an observer, having acknowledged that the cadres' behavior towards the people was "correct," might add: "They wouldn't dare to behave like the Militia. If they behaved like the Militia...they would have no place to live. They had to rely on the people to live." (4) But this might not make the ensuing difference much less impressive for those who suffered or benefited from one or

the other mode of conduct. The same might or might not be true in reverse, when the VC induces the GVN to improve its behavior, and then attempts to 'counteract the impact of that change by claiming credit for it.

"The VC did not rob, but what they did was not different from robbery," declares an informant. "The villagers were forced to 'contribute,' and if they didn't, they would be subjected to study."⁽⁶⁸⁾ (See Section VIII.) While this may well express the respondent's feelings, it is also probable that the VC, when levying against the population, are reasonably imbued with a sense of higher purpose joined to that of direct utility. Observing that the people "not only had to pay heavy taxes to the Front, but also had to feed the traveling cadres who passed through the hamlet very often, as well as feed the hamlet guerrillas"; that "these guerrillas had families in the hamlet, but preferred to eat in other people's houses to save their own rice," an informant adds: "The people had no right to refuse to feed them, because they claimed that they worked for the people unpaid."⁽⁶⁹⁾

In addition, the Party likes to believe that everything it does happens by virtue of general consent.

The VC invests perhaps more effort into constructing quasi-judicial contexts for its exercise of violence than the agents of the GVN care to expend on making it clear that they honor the procedures set forth in their government's statutes. Then "the people" can be made to do more than approve: they may request, turning those who employ the violence into mere agents. "The GVN officials who were cruel earned the hatred of the people," explains a

cadre. "The people...reported to us, and we assassinated them. In this way we didn't commit any error.... Since the people could not kill these officials, they asked the Front to assassinate them." (9)

Did the Front arrest or kill any persons in your hamlet or village?

Two people from the village have been killed.

Who were they and why did the VC do it?

The victims were village cadres [GVN officials] who had been disliked by the villagers who informed the VC. The VC killed them.

What did the villagers say about the killings?

They were happy they could get rid of them. (70)

As to violence which has not been asked for, the cadres seem to have learned that the population's unfavorable reaction to damage inflicted upon it depends less on the magnitude of the loss caused than on the degree to which that loss appears, to the victims, appropriate or incongruous, intelligible (with regard to the expected objectives of those who cause it) or wanton. "The villagers," recalls a rallier who had been one of them, "said that between the GVN and the Revolution, they liked the Revolution because it had never committed any crimes towards the people...because it wasn't cruel." (3) Committing a "crime" and being "cruel" in this context presumably refer not simply to the degree of injury, but to its lack of justification. Take this exchange:

Did the GVN...conduct...operations through your village?

Yes....When the ARVN came, the VC just fired a few shots and then took cover in their secret hideouts.... The ARVN burned down the houses of the families whose members were in the Front.

Did the villagers hate the ARVN for burning down their houses?

Yes, the ARVN stole the poultry belonging to some villagers and took their bicycles away, so the villagers hated them. (53)*

Or consider this observation made by a rallier:

How did the people compare the heavy taxation imposed by the Front and the stealing of poultry by the GVN troops?

They complained about the stealing of the poultry by the GVN troops....As for the Front-imposed heavy taxes, they were considered reasonable because they were serving the purpose of fighting for independence. (71)

As implied above, the unfavorable reactions may have been mitigated simply because the taxes served "the purpose of fighting," entirely apart from the fight's appearing to be justified on the ground of "independence."

The cadres' discipline in the use of violence has not come easily. To the extent that the VC has been able to direct destructiveness into what it considers to be desirable channels, it has done so only in a hard, unceasing fight against penchants towards murderous (and suicidal) rage; tendencies whose strength may be sensed when they become visible in violent quarrels within the Party.

* Emphasis added.

* * * *

Perhaps leaning over backwards against their propensity to violence, cadres try to reach their objectives by warning rather than striking, and to hit only to affect conduct. Recalling that "we must....teach the masses to comprehend the antiespionage policy," a VC document insists that "when teaching them this policy, we must stress the two fields: clemency and punishment."⁽⁷²⁾

Continuous infractions of a rule may, at first, and for some time, be met merely by an insistence that it cease. A severe one may provoke but a mild sanction, on condition that it not be committed again. The first few offenses of a certain kind may even go unpunished. While punishment inflicted for successive misdeeds of the same nature is, of course, apt to become more severe, it also may fail to, as seems implied in this observation about a famous unit:

People...were continuously deserting. If you caught them and brought them back, they would just desert again, and it went on and on like this. (A platoon leader in the 261st Battalion.)⁽⁷³⁾

The cadres' objective may not be so much to deter others as merely to make the violator do his duty by force or threats, and thus instill in others a belief in the futility of disobedience.

However, at other times, in other cases -- depending on factors unknown to me -- cadres may show the opposite of moderation and discrimination.

There may be a polarization between sanctions which are quite light and others stark indeed. "We were told," recalls a fighter, "that those who infringed discipline would be admonished, if it were not serious, or executed if it were."⁽⁷⁴⁾ "The prisoners accused of serious crimes," another informant remembers, "were executed. Those with light charges were released."⁽⁶⁶⁾

From time to time the level of threats and inflictions soars, unpredictably, above what is customary, which will perhaps for some time to follow increase compliance in response to the usual pressures. This is particularly so when such events reactivate the characteristic dread that cadres inspire in VC-controlled areas when they seize power. For it is the Party's policy to mark its seizure by a rash of killings, to make an initial investment in partially unpredictable and even somewhat incomprehensible violence so as to instill docility in the population. In fact, after such an introduction, the severity of the Party's responses is likely to lessen and the responses themselves become more predictable and hence avoidable. A state of affairs may then have been established where "the people were all very scared of the VC, although the VC did not threaten them."⁽⁷⁵⁾

While the GVN tends to be furtive about the damage it inflicts, the VC is apt to act brazenly and with a color of justice and legality. If, as a perceptive rallier points out, "the peasants are...robbed by both sides," the VC does it publicly "through their taxes and contributions," and "the Militia" with less display "through their stealing and harassment."⁽⁵⁾ Similarly, as to

violence. Political deaths are as clamorous as political words for the VC. "The VC came to the village, beating on gongs and lecturing over megaphones. They beheaded people and left the heads on the main road." (67)

* * * *

Searching for the right mixture of mildness and severity, the cadres have presumably not employed the classical way of coercing others by damaging oneself.

On the other hand, the Party uses the device of hurting or coercing an individual through his family, an effective device in Vietnam or any other society with strong ties among kin. The idea may be extended to peers, as in this incident during the long march south of a PAVN unit:

Do you think any of them [the members of the unit] may have pretended to be sick so as to be sent home?

I think that a few of them must have pretended to be sick because they were too exhausted to continue the march, and they thought that if they pretended to be sick, they might be sent back to the North. But their trick didn't work.

What happened to them?

Nothing happened to them. Those who pretended to be sick were ashamed of their action after some time, because they walked empty handed, while their comrades had to carry their personal effects for them.... They saw that their trick didn't affect the cadres, but their own comrades. (76)

Where the Party excels is in making somebody else do its punishing and threatening.

Nature, for instance. Having described the sanctions imposed on families living in a VC area but having members in the ARVN, a rallier continues:

If they let the Front oppress them, nothing drastic would happen to them, but if they opposed the Front...they would be forced to do dangerous and difficult work, such as building roadblocks, destroying roads and bridges, etc. The Front would make them do things which might cause their death.(9)

Or the enemy, of course, relying on what he is doing in any case:

Were the villagers who insulted the VC punished?

Those villagers...were invited to attend an indoctrination session....If they committed their errors once more, they would be taken to insecure areas or to areas which were frequently bombarded by airplanes....The Front took them to "death zones"....(9)

Making sure that the target will be vulnerable to the enemy:

They [the cadres] said that anyone who ..., would be sent to work at planting indigo trees...and that they would not lend him a shovel to dig foxholes; thus, he would be killed by air attacks.(77)*

Making sure that the enemy hits where the target is:

As to the areas where the people were against them or refused to do what they told them to do, the VC would create trouble for

*Emphasis added.

these spots; for instance, when the ARVN came, they would hide in these areas and fire at the GVN soldiers and then run away, thus provoking an attack on these areas. (78)*

Instead of threatening to place the target of coercion where the GVN is likely to injure him, the cadres may be content to induce in the target an exaggerated belief in the danger he is exposed to:

I was a draft dodger, and when I heard the VC propaganda that if I were caught by the GVN, I would be put in jail for six or seven years, I was afraid and joined the Front. (10)

And then there is the variety of ways in which the target can be "compromised" with the GVN.

An ostensibly nonpolitical contact might do:

When the VC want to force a villager to join them, they send a cadre who is an acquaintance of that villager to take him out for a stroll. On the way, the cadre pretends to entrust him with his rifle for a short while. At this very moment, as if by chance, they arrive in the front of the house of another villager whose relatives work for the GVN. As everyone knows one another in the village, the cadre tells his victim, "Since we are now in front of X's house, why not pay him a brief visit?" Later, when there is a GVN operation against the village, the VC tells the victim to follow them, threatening that if he doesn't do as he is told, he will be captured and killed by the ARVN soldiers, because the latter have certainly come for him. The other villager whose relatives work for the GVN wouldn't fail to denounce him, as he has been seen carrying a gun and strolling with a VC. (79)

* Emphasis added.

The target may be put into a situation where not complying with the cadres' demands is likely to lead to his being injured by nature, or by man, for reasons other than his apparent association with the VC. For example, he may be deprived of an important document (e.g., his identity card), the lack of which the GVN is apt not to countenance:

You stayed in Hue most of the time. When did you come back to your village to join the Front?

I came back to my village on April 11 [1965] and I joined the Front on April 16.

Had something special happened which made you decide to take this step?

The VC, a squad strong, came to my house to confiscate my birth certificate and all the papers necessary for my trip back to Hue. This obliged me to join them. (80)

Or there is the difficulty of identifying friend and foe in open country. An informant is abducted by the VC to a training camp in the mountains, escapes, but is brought back by Montagnards:

They tied up our hands and led us back to the training camp which we reached about noon the following day. To the cadres we declared that our intention had been to go home and visit our families for only a few days. The cadres told us that should we take flight again, we might get killed on our way home, but they did not blame us. (81)

Then there is the obvious resource of forcing the target into an association with the VC, calculating that he will, to say the least, be unsure of his capacity

to clear himself with the GVN, should that need arise:

At first I was afraid the VC would do me some harm, so I agreed to guard for them.... Later...I was afraid the GVN might get wind of my working for the VC and arrest me, so I decided to join the VC all the way. (82)

Or, again, the recently quoted informant -- a prisoner -- who has been abducted to a training camp in the mountains:

The cadres began by telling us that to spend only one day in the camp already constituted an illegal activity in the eyes of the GVN authorities. 'If any of you here left the camp to return home, he would be arrested and shot by the GVN. Furthermore, he would be killed before he reached his hamlet. Therefore, it is preferable for you all to stay here and follow the training course.' (81)

Even village officials can be coerced:

The VC had come into my village several times from 1962 to 1964....They had even controlled my village...from November 1964 to early 1965. Each time they left the village, they...took along with them a number of persons....There were [among them] ...men who had worked for the GVN, such as members of the Council of Notables or officials in other village organizations. Most of these village officials, after being forced to spend some time in VC controlled areas,...dared not return to the village for fear of being arrested by the GVN authorities. (83)

In contrast, there is the possibility of starting not with forcible action and not even with coercion, but rather with seduction: making somebody associate with another person for an advantage; and once he has

done so and the benefit appears inadequate or illusory, show him that he now better be concerned with limiting damage -- damage threatening him from the other side.

When the people first are contacted by the VC, they feel that they will gain much... from this war. Then, after they have accepted the VC, the VC tell them that the GVN will treat them as Communists and arrest them if they go into GVN areas [while they are at the mercy of the VC in the VC areas]. (84)

* * * *

"In one of the liberated villages where I was stationed," recalls an informant, "the curfew was set at 9 p.m. At 8 p.m. the guerrillas started shouting at the villagers who went around in the village...and threatened to arrest them." (85) And here is an informant expressing himself about a certain cadre whose target he was for a long time:

Did you like him?

No.

Why?

...He had a difficult personality. He often threatened me: "Take care of yourself! You have cooperated with the Nationalists!" (86)

"I was held under suspicion," another respondent recalls, "and I was followed everywhere I went and in everything I did. The VC never let me go anywhere. They always made threats to me. They accused me of being on the side of the Rangers, who carried out an operation in our hamlet, and since then I was always watched....I became afraid of the VC. I was afraid they would decide to kill me." (87)

In such cases the cadres engage in behavior which, I would guess, is in Vietnam today viewed as characteristic of the GVN rather than the VC.

The cadres attempt to limit themselves to threats which are clear: clear as to the conduct they want to discourage and the behavior they want to induce. In contrast, agents of the GVN tend to be indefinite in these regards. Needless to say, the population distinctly indicates that, if it is to be threatened at all, it would prefer such clarity as would allow it the choice between buying reasonable safety and incurring definite danger.

The incessant issuance of vague and sinister warnings may appear to the population as a crucial trait of the GVN.

Since people often went to the GVN area, the GVN men often threatened them. (88)

When an informant is asked how the people in his hamlet felt about the local GVN forces, say the SDC, he may answer: "Some of the SDC...snooped around families who had members in the VC,"⁽⁸⁹⁾ hovering over them in menacing fashion, intermittently and interminably. The village authorities, "when they spoke...threatened" and "warned they were ready to arrest you" (an informant quoted by John C. Donnell), presumably without its being made clear to the victim what they were waiting for, that is, how their hand could be stayed. 'Some' in his hamlet, recalls a rallier, "were dissatisfied with the GVN because the village council suspected them and made their life more difficult."⁽¹⁹⁾ Suspicion is particularly hard to bear. It is in this context that the following exchange occurs:

What do you imagine the best kind of life to be?

We would be free to make a living, and nobody would suspect us. To be suspected is the worst trouble a man could get into, he has to live in constant fear, and thus couldn't do anything right. (50)

He will lose his freedom:

I hadn't done anything illegal, but I was suspected.... I figured that, sooner or later, I would be put in prison. Once they suspected me of working for the VC, they would ask questions, and sooner or later I would be arrested. (42)

Watching is a prelude to killing:

As long as the GVN dogged their steps, sooner or later, those old Party members would be killed. (90)

Never mind who does the watching:

If a Front member quits working, he will be watched for some time and then killed.... Luong, a platoon leader in the 514th Battalion... got dissatisfied and quit. The VC kept watch over him, and then killed him. I only heard about his case.... (91)

An opposed, clearly less feared and presumably more resented expression of suspicious watching is an irregular and interminable series of moderate inflictions. This gives the target a sense of prolonged but inconclusive harassment:

Was your father a Party member?

Yes. He was a Party member during the Resistance....

Did the GVN arrest him because of his Party membership?

Yes. The GVN arrested him many times. He was jailed for three months, then released and jailed again for eight months. He was tortured, then hospitalized and after treatment confined in a concentration camp....(92)

As to the Viet Minh cadres in another informant's village after the end of the war with the French:

They were arrested and released by the local authorities many times.(93)

It can also be said about middle farmers in a respondent's VC-controlled hamlet that "they all stayed in the hamlet, but persistently opposed high taxes and were arrested off and on by the Front."(17)*

When practiced by the Party, however, such a device involves the application of the belief in the omnipotence of indefinitely prolonged pressure. To clarify 'the way in which Vietnamese interrogate fate,' Paul Mus chooses this pattern:

So as to predict the life of a male child, one spreads several symbolic objects on a mat; a brush, a piece of money, a little sabre or a miniature bow: will he become a scholar, a merchant, or a soldier? The infant's choice is observed. If his hand goes right away towards the brush, the family is overjoyed. If not, he is given another chance. If he persists, one settles the matter by laughing about him and pretends to attach no importance to the test any more.**

* Emphasis added.

** Viet-Nam, pp. 219-220.

The Party, of course, not only refuses to give up after a first try, it does not resign itself to failure even after further attempts. Rather, it presses on, confident that there is, for any desired result, an input of factors and a protraction of their time of application which will bring success. As in the traditional mode of slow execution (lang tri), the victim will finally die. Soi Noi, "repeatedly," is a locution which evokes the sense of assured success, as does lau dai, "protracted."

The cadres know that almost any instrument may need to be reapplied again and again if its potential is to be realized:

Some villagers called on my house....They advised me to join the Front...."If you refuse," they said, "your family will be chased out of the hamlet...." I did not believe they would carry out their threats, and so I did not escape. They came back again and [said]: "...If you do not comply with our orders [to become a singer for the Front], your family will be chased out of the village and all of your family's belongings will be confiscated." This time I discovered they were tough and resolute.... I resigned myself, and agreed to work as a singer for the Front, and told them to let me know what I had to do. They gave me... songs....The cadres authorized me to learn my songs at home and asked me to perform within fifteen days....They came back on the tenth day to verify whether or not I had been learning, and to exhort me to study. After the fifteenth day, they led me to their dwelling in order to listen to my rendition of the Front's songs, but I didn't yet know them all by heart. They scolded me....I replied that I was too busy helping my family to earn our living....I feared that they suspected me

and would accuse me of being a spy of the GVN, and that they would kill me. They told me to do my utmost to learn the songs by heart in a short time...because some high-ranking cadres were going to visit my hamlet. (94)

But the cadres also know that an instrument of persuasion, to be effective, ought not to be applied always in the same fashion:

How did the Party chapters deal with those families who wouldn't let their children join the army?

They divided them into categories: A, B, C. A was the category of those who had the most bitter reaction....The cadres...used relatives to talk to them...two or three times until their anger subsided, and then they [the relatives] would report this to the cadres, who would then come up and tell them [the A people] about what an honor it was....(18)

It may be useful to start with a long period of low impact, say, when entering upon the conquest of a hamlet:

Each night, we would usually go into five houses. We never stayed too long -- about five to ten minutes. (51)

How did the villagers feel about the VC when they first came?

Since they didn't interfere much with our work and our lives, we didn't mind their presence, and after a while the villagers had come more or less to accept them. Of course, the VC went into the villagers' homes and talked to them...but they never used threats, and would only talk to those who would listen to them. (95)

For years the cadres may carry on with moderation:

Were the people VC who made their appearance in your hamlet five years ago?

They came at night, and I could not see their faces. They came to talk to the people and then disappeared.

Did the situation change very much between five years ago and last February, when you left?

The situation did not change. The VC continued to come at night to say a few words to the people and then they would depart....They came at night just long enough for you to smoke a cigarette, and then they disappeared. (96)

The villagers may have expected a great deal more pressure even at the beginning. They may have been terrified by this prospect. The cadres' modesty assuages anxiety -- and disposes one to accept serenely, or even willingly, what one would have suffered with a shock had it come without preparation, instilling in one the sense that they are not as bad as one had thought:

Describe how the VC took over control of your hamlet.

They came at night and knocked at our door. We woke up and opened the door. There they were. Our blood ran cold out of fear.... We had never been awakened by GVN soldiers in the middle of the night. Once the door was opened, they said: "We are the Liberation Front of South Vietnam. We come to pay a visit to the villagers. You have nothing to be afraid of. Please have a seat and have a chat with us." I was still trembling and unable to speak for at least a few minutes. They asked me: "You are terrified, aren't you?" "Yes," I replied, "of course I am." They said: "Don't be afraid any more. We are just Liberation fighters. Sit down and enjoy the talk." I told them: "It is the first time that I have seen you. It is natural to be afraid of strangers, and please

excuse me." They said it was all right. They did not stay long in my house. This was their habit on subsequent visits too. They stayed only long enough to ask me to attend a meeting in the hamlet temple. (97)

The impact of the VC may increase gradually:

That year...they used to come once every two or three months, but later on they increased their visits. They began to come every month, then every ten to fifteen days. (51)

The Front began to become active in my village about two years after Mr. Ngo came into power....They went at night from house to house to make propaganda. At that time they did not ask for any contributions....At that time the Front did not force people to serve their military duty....We were required to pay contributions beginning about four years ago, and last year the Front began to force the young men to serve military duty. (98)

Or there may be a sudden rise in activity after a long period of quiet. In 1960 an informant recalls:

I was told to serve as a guerrilla, but I refused, arguing that I was too young....I stayed home....Now and then the cadres repeated their suggestions about my joining the Front. And then in 1962 a group of armed men...came and told me to follow them. (99)

But perhaps success may, and can only, be achieved by the indefinite protraction of low impact, the "silkworm eating mulberries." "The VC," an informant muses, "are very peculiar. They do not surrender, and yet they do not carry out an all-out fight. They drag on." (100)

In any case, whatever sequence the target expects, he may know that he will comply in the end -- and hence

decide to avoid the intervening cost:

To whom did you pay taxes?

To them.

What if you did not contribute?

They would persist until you contributed. (101)

* * * * *

"I arrested some underground regroupes in 1958," an informant remembers. "The VC weren't armed then....They tried to organize the former Resistance, and they collected personal information and made up files on those who served the GVN." (102) From the start the movement allotted much effort to the acquisition of targets. "Intensify the listing of 'target personalities' in liberated villages," a VC document prescribes years later, "classify the stubborn and cruel 'targets' into specific categories....Prepare their records...so that...we will have documents to repress them." (103) "You see," explains an informant, "the Front does not do anything without making a thorough investigation." (41) Combatting traditional dai khai, perfunctoriness, the cadres devote much of their "studying" to details about targets, in the service of nam dung, danh trung -- the cadres must aim at the right target and hit right on it.

Thus a high fraction of the VC's victims are point targets, du ponctuel, as the specialists in violence operating for the European rebels in Algeria used to say. Take the village described by Gerald Hickey. "Several times," this observer notes about one of the hamlet chiefs, Ong Hai, during the war with the French,

"he was forced to quit the village for short periods, and during one of these periods the French troops from the stockade in Ap Dinh-A [one of the hamlets of the village] entered Ap Moi [another hamlet] to raid the reported Viet Minh meeting in Ong Hai's house. They surrounded the farmstead and opened fire on the house, killing the sole occupant, Ong Hai's twelve-year-old daughter."^{*} According to Hickey's account, all the victims of the Viet Minh or the VC, unless I am in error, were intended to become just that. "While the VC were burning the hamlet fence," runs a characteristic tale from the present war, "the ARVN fired many artillery shells from the district town into the hamlet." (104)^{**}

And even when the GVN hits the target he is aiming at, his grounds for shooting at all may be defective. "When the Nationalists are in doubt as to the existence of something," a hard-core cadre observes complacently, "they don't try to find out or send someone to discover... they check on the rumors. Rather, they take other people's reports as the ultimate truth and act accordingly. Or they act though they are not sure, and even disclose this to their victims. It is according to a rallier that "the Rangers and the SDC...sometimes...asked people who went to the market: 'It's said that you are working for the VC, is it true?' Then they hit the person, or took him to the Security Office to question and beat him." (105)

Caring less for intelligence, finding it more difficult to procure it, being willing to strike with more uncertainty than the VC finds it useful to tolerate,

^{*} Vietnamese Village, p. 265. Emphasis added.

^{**} Emphasis added.

the GVN forces are more likely to hit the wrong targets. Thus they are likely to give substance to the VC's charge that the GVN specializes in harming the harmless. 'The people,' a rallier alleges, "blame the government troops. It was all right to kill people who worked for the other side, but innocent people should be left alone. What did they think the old women could do?"(106)

Do you know why other people in your unit became active in the Front?

...Most people joined because they were afraid of the GVN. An incident occurred in May 1963. Four or five farmers were working in the field, when GVN soldiers on operation saw them. The GVN soldiers thought they were VC and fired at them. The farmers were scared and ran. One of them was hit and killed....That operation...took place early in the morning, when the fog was bad and the soldiers could not see clearly.(107)

But that is just the point: For the several reasons mentioned above, the VC often manages to see more clearly before it fires.

If defective intelligence makes the GVN hit the wrong target, better information may enable the VC to exploit the bad feelings thus aroused. Replying to the question whether he had been "satisfied with his life" before joining the VC, an informant, son of a 'middle-class' farmer, declares that "I did practically nothing, and I had all I needed. My parents helped me a great deal, and I was on good terms with everybody. However, an incident took place which changed my life. One day I took a walk near the village market with many of my friends, who were all high school students. As we passed

by a military truck parked near the market, a policeman from the village suddenly appeared, arrested me, slapped me, and asked why I had thrown Front leaflets into the truck. There really was a package of leaflets thrown into the truck, but I was certainly not the one who had thrown them there. Fortunately an officer passed by... one of my father's acquaintances. He told the policeman that I was his nephew and that I was not a VC. If it hadn't been for him, I would have been thrown into jail for something which I didn't do. I was very much affected by this incident. A Front cadre, having learned of this incident, came to propagandize me and gradually led me to agree to work for the Front."(108)

Do innocents not suffer at the hand of the VC in precisely such ways? Of course they do; only, it is my impression, less so. Does the Party not hurt innocents more than the GVN in other ways? I believe that is the case, though the victims now to be discussed may not be "innocent" in the same sense, and might, to some extent, have a chance to avoid being hurt (at a cost), an opportunity which the GVN does not offer the unlucky people I have just evoked.

Whenever the cadres want to impose penalties that seem disproportionately severe, they are apt to declare that the victim's behavior indicates something more serious: "spying" for the GVN. (Sometimes, but not always, the action is one an agent would find useful to carry out, though even then, of course, only a minute fraction of those engaging in it are agents). That this is the meaning of the VC's many charges of "spying" is evident enough; sometimes the cadres admit it by clear

implication:

How did the people react to...[the] labor tasks [demanded of them by the VC]?

They were afraid of getting shot at... [the cadres] told the villagers that anyone who refused to go on missions for the Front would be considered a spy.(109)

The cadres may even become explicit about the matter:

What did the VC threaten to do to the villagers who refused to do labor tasks for them?

The Front military people threatened the villagers and accused them of being GVN spies. But then the civilian cadres went to see the people afterwards, and said the military people were only joking. The people were frightened nevertheless.(110)

In some cases the dangerous conduct can be avoided at little cost. One may eschew nonpolitical contacts with GVN personnel:

Tell me about the circumstances under which your father was killed.

My father never did anything, and yet the VC killed him. He used to go to the [GVN] post often to play cards with the soldiers, and the VC suspected him and killed him....After killing my father, the VC pinned a piece of paper on his chest. It said that my father worked for the GVN. But I am sure that...he only went to the post to play cards. He loved to play cards.(110)

People may ask themselves whether a journey out of their hamlet is really worth the risk -- a question they already may have had to answer under the Ngo brothers:

The people had to report to...officials when they left the village and when they

came back. We had to earn our living, and that demanded that we leave the village early in the morning and come back late at night. How could they expect us to report to them every time? And yet, if we failed to do so we would be accused of...working for the VC.(42)

Surely it has become a crucial question if one lives under the cadres, where even much movement within one's hamlet may provoke the fatal charge:

What did the Front do in your hamlet when it rose up?

The Front...killed two persons in my hamlet....The second victim...was a simple peasant, but he liked to move around at night looking for a drink. His frequent moves made the Village Committee suspicious of him. They thought he was a GVN security agent. The Village Security Section surprised him, and shot him dead while he was moving around at night.(111)

The lesson is learned:

Do you know how many people in your village [that is, in all the hamlets making up the village] have left to work for the Front?

I don't know the total number....As a stranger in the other hamlets, I could not visit them.

Why so?

If I did, the VC would accuse me of being a spy for the GVN.(4)

Apart from such circumspect ones, there were, as we have already seen, those who -- through ignorance, or carelessness, or by deliberate choice -- assumed a risk:

Have the VC killed anyone in your village?

Quite a few. The justified ones were those people who really worked for the GVN. The

unjustified cases were those who came out here [to a GVN area] to work for a living, and went back to the village every now and then for a visit. They signed the paper accusing themselves [of being GVN spies] because they had been arrested and kept in prison too long. (112)

"Security seekers" might also avoid words unpleasant to the cadres; though such conduct is unlikely to have catastrophic sequels, one just can't be sure:

In Hoi Cu [Village] Mrs. Ly and Nhan were charged with spying for the GVN, and were killed in front of the people, simply because they criticized the Front's behavior. Their execution took place in November 1965.... (18)

By bringing the charge of 'spying,' the cadres may warn the population that the penalty for an infraction has been sharply increased:

If a family refused to work for them, they would threaten that family. They would say it was spying for the GVN. (113)

Sometimes, however, the charge of spying is threatened or leveled for acts that almost anyone might find difficult to avoid, that is, without sharply reducing his income:

You told us your sister had been killed by the VC. Would you tell us why?

She earned her living by buying and selling goods. Every now and then she made a trip to the district town to transact business. This brought on her the suspicion that she worked for the government. The VC arrested her and killed her.

Miss Nguyen-Thi-Houng, a student of Nguyen-Hoang school in Quang-Tri...went back to her home on the coast every now and then to get

money for her expenses. Because of her frequent visits, the VC suspected her of being a GVN agent. They arrested her and killed her.(114)

The GVN is equally apt to exact a great price for actions that must be performed on pain of starving:

How did the GVN soldiers behave...?

...They were very suspicious. Young men working in the fields were afraid of them. When they saw young men working in the fields, they always believed that the latter were there to be able to contact the Front men.(115)

'When young people went into the forest to cut wood,' an informant remembers, 'the SDC would shoot at them, saying they were VC.'(116)

In more extreme fashion, the characterization of an action as "spying" by the cadres may be commanded by the coincidence in time and proximity in space of other events over which the victim has no control:

The villagers who had large orchards had to build cages for their animals, because if they let the animals roam to look for food, they might touch and trigger grenades. When this happens, if the GVN hadn't sent airplanes or troops to the village to fight the VC, then the VC wouldn't do anything to the owners of the animals. But if airplanes came to strafe or bomb, or if GVN soldiers came into the hamlet, then the owners would be accused of triggering the grenades as a signal for the GVN.(110)

The relevance of proximity in time or space may be more difficult to comprehend than in the case just quoted:

In Nam Lua, a teacher in the hamlet...was a neighbor of Tam Thao, a guerrilla. One day the Popular Force came into the hamlet and ambushed Tam Thao, who was killed. Since Mr. Nam Lua lived close by, he was suspected of being an undercover security agent. The VC arrested him and blindfolded him, and were going to shoot him in the evening of the same day. But Mr. Nam Lua succeeded in untying himself and escaped.(91)

If a villager went to the market...in a GVN-controlled area, and on the same day the ARVN conducted an operation in the village, the VC would accuse that villager of being a spy for the GVN.(9)

Similarly, and weirdly, for a fighter -- again, as if closeness to the enemy in certain respects of space and time were that necessary a condition for being an agent of his:

When I asked for permission to go and visit my family, I would be told at what time I should be back, and I had to be back on the dot. If they said that I had to be back at 1:00 p.m., I had to be at the camp at 1:00 p.m....Suppose they told me that I should be back at 1:00 p.m. and I wasn't. Meanwhile our camp was shelled or bombed. I would be suspected of informing on their position.(117)

Finally, "espionage" may be alleged on grounds over which one has no control:

Have you heard from your family since your rally? Did the VC do anything to your parents?

...I have heard that my family is now isolated and under house arrest. My parents are not allowed to go anywhere, not even to the market. This is what they always do to the families of the ralliers. They suspect

them of being GVN informers and keep watch over them. Whenever GVN troops come into the village and kill VC cadres or guerrillas, the other cadres accuse the families of the ralliers of supplying information to the GVN, and arrest them.(91)

All that has been said about the role which the allegation of "spying" plays in the cadres' relations with the villagers does not mean, of course, that they see spies everywhere. (In fact, as one might expect, such conduct is to some extent cynically used for personal ends.) However, the accusation of spying does express a dread of agents and leads to distortions of reality that give no chance of escape to the prospective victim:

A poor villager...had just bought a pair of water buffaloes, one of which was pregnant. He took much care of this buffalo. With a torch, he tried to burn the mosquitoes and flies swarming over the back of his animal.... The VC killed him, on the ground that he had made signs to the enemy with his torch.(118)

The cadres' dread of hidden hostility becomes even more evident through their reactions among themselves.

The VC shares the Bolshevik penchant for equating bad desire with wicked action:

What made you dissatisfied [with the VC]?

I hated them most for having invented the story of my carrying on illicit relations with women. In the Front, whether or not a man had a girl friend, he was still criticized for it. Criticism was designed to check us and give us a warning in advance.(66)

Superiors in the VC seem to feel under an obligation to ascribe the worst possible motives to those who disagree with them.

If you criticize such and such a detail of present policy, it is because you are on the enemy's side:

What did you like least about the Front?

I didn't like to draw "fat Americans with big noses" to carry on propaganda. I always told them...[that] we couldn't show those pictures to people in the cities, and finally we ourselves would be the only ones to look at them, which was very unpleasant to the eye. They said that I defended the Americans. (119)

Your slips disclose your real attitudes:

They began to investigate my past life because of a slip of the pen on my part in an article I wrote for the District newsletter, Liberation. I had wanted to write "only Laos and Cambodia can negotiate," and yet by a slip of the pen I wrote "only the South can conduct the negotiation." I was told that the South was not going to enter into any negotiation; the South had committed itself to fighting to the end....They said that I had pacifistic thoughts. (65)

You are not sick, you are malingering:

I had been [sick] four times during my stay in the Front. Each time I was criticized for trying to get away without working.... They said that I was lazy. (120)

When we showed some concern about the sick ones, the cadres would quickly explain that those people were afraid of having to fight, and that they weren't really sick....It had become a habit for the cadres to say... that the fighters were often sick with imaginary sickness, although the poor fellows were really dying. (121)

You are malingering so as to signal to the enemy:

I didn't even dare to cough when I was ill, for in such a case the Front maintained that the man feigned sickness and coughed to attract the ARVN. (122)

Your sickness is not of the body, but of the spirit:

I was sick, for about ten days, but I was given no medicine because the VC said that I was morally sick. (52)

Your sickness would not degrade your performance if you had right thoughts:

During the march one fighter was sick.... He was forced to continue the march. He was... criticized for not making any effort. He was told that if he tried, he could walk easily, since ideas determined everything. He lost consciousness, and still nobody took him to the dispensary. He still had to continue the march. Finally a few other fighters and I objected to his being dragged along, and he was taken to the...dispensary. (5)

Your performance is bad, not by virtue of human failings, but because of incorrect views:

During...battle, I used an automatic rifle which I had repaired. But it jammed, and I got so mad that I threw it on the ground and trampled it. I was criticized... for considering weapons as unimportant.... I was mad because my weapon jammed. To relieve my anger, I threw it on the ground. But that didn't mean that I thought weapons were unimportant. The cadres didn't understand me.... (123)

Your attention, feelings, performance are not proper because you are absorbed in bad thoughts:

On September 3, 1965, I was reprimanded by my squad leader for not digging my trench after we camped in a new place in the indigo

forest. He said to me: 'Why didn't you dig your trench? Is it due to your imperialist thoughts?'"(124)

If they [fighters] suddenly become sad and absorbed in thought, they will be immediately suspected of harboring devious thoughts. They will be made the subjects of a self-criticism session. They will be watched more closely.(53)

Perhaps your performance is bad, because you are a common criminal! Here is a secretary of a village economy and finance section, a prisoner, in whose record before the incident to be recounted there was (according to him) nothing untoward:

In August 1964 I lost 12,185 piasters... I told the Party chapter that on the day I lost the money the GVN forces...launched an operation, and that when I heard the first gunshots, the GVN soldiers were about 500 meters from me. I took the money with me and ran. I dropped the package containing the money....I looked for it, but couldn't find it. The Party chapter couldn't determine whether I had lost it or stolen it. Over a year later, in March 1966, the Party chapter concluded that I had really lost the money after keeping watch over me and investigating the case. The Party chapter knew that I had really lost the money, because there were no indications that I had more money than usual and was spending more than I usually did.(125)

Or rather, surely your performance is bad because you are committing common crimes:

One day I brought an amount of tax money to the office of the village secretary in the neighboring hamlet. No sooner had I gotten out of the hamlet than I encountered GVN soldiers on an operation. I jumped into the river to hide myself. A packet of paper

money fell into the water without my being aware of it. After the soldiers had gone, I noticed that I lacked 28,700 plasters. I told the Village Committee about the circumstances under which I lost the money. The cadres did not believe me, and said that I had given it to my wife. They arrested me. (126)

Your performance is bad because you are engaging in sabotage:

When I was working at the Province dispensary [as a medic] there was a fighter... who was wounded in the lung. His wound was infected and...I had to draw the pus out of his wound...and then inject antiseptics into the wound...Each time I did it, he moaned... and was exhausted. So one day I pitied him, and instead of injecting the antiseptics right into his wound...I injected them through a different spot. He nearly suffocated, but fortunately did not die from it. Bay Duc [a cadre] rushed to his bed and accused me of trying to kill the fighter....Bay Duc was hot-tempered, and used to treat his subordinates in a rude manner like that. (127)

You have survived, because the enemy desires to preserve his agent:

I was suspected of conniving with the GVN in one of...[the] sweep operations [conducted by ARVN against the informant's village]. I brought a tree branch with me for camouflage in running away, and since three guerrillas running with me were shot while I remained alive, the suspicion against me grew stronger. (128)

Your performance is bad because you intend to defect:

If I left the ammo around carelessly, they said I wanted to conceal it in order to desert.(129)

A woman medic reports how her morale in the VC sank because she could not get admitted to the Party, and how then an incident supervened:

Something happened which made me determined to leave the Front. One of the nurses in the dispensary...slept with a lot of men and got VD....I told her many times to stop sleeping with so many men, but, since I wasn't a Party member, she didn't listen to me. Instead she went around and told everyone in the section that I had been slandering her....This made me very mad, and I neglected my work....So my superiors asked me to submit an application to be purged [sic], which I did. They couldn't purge me, because I had not committed any grave errors; so if I wanted to leave the Front, I myself had to submit an application asking to be purged. Before I submitted this application, the X-12 section [the informant's medical unit] called a...criticism session.... A VC cadre from...[another] village was summoned to...attend the criticism session. He had to be present to guarantee that I would not rally once I got back to...[that other] village, something which I didn't think of doing at the time. But X-12 suspected that I neglected my work because I wanted to defect.(127)

Unsurprisingly, suspicions may provoke what they are consciously designed to stave off.

What are the reasons which prompted you to quit the VC forces?

My family missed me a lot. The cadre had constantly seemed to doubt my loyalty and faithfulness.(130)

Were you criticized by the Front for your marriage?

Yes, three nights.

How were you criticized?

...they said I lacked fighting spirit. This was one of the events which made me decide to return to the GVN. (131)

One of the most impressive hard-core informants is a rallier with a brilliant military record in the VC who indicates at the beginning of his interview that he defected because he had "lost his fighting spirit." The following clarification occurs towards the end of the conversation:

You said earlier that you did not want to stay in the Front because you had lost your fighting spirit. Would you comment about that?

...I was criticized and I felt it was unfair.

When did you realize the unfairness in the Front?

The day we went to Phuoc Long [in preparation for a major battle]. The leader of our group was a member of the Battalion Reconnaissance unit, while I was in the Company Reconnaissance unit....When we climbed the mountains, I couldn't go fast enough, and he said to me: "Why do you go slowly? Do you want to defect or something?" I did not think of rallying at that time, but since he thought I would defect, I did it to let him know I could do it. (132)

But the cadres presumably believe, or have been made to believe, that accusing their men at every turn of wanting to defect will deter most men from defecting even if it does drive a few others to do just that. An informant having indicated that "the first three months I was with the VC, I was very enthusiastic," the following exchange occurs:

What made you so enthusiastic for the first three months?

Because I wanted them to trust me, for fear they might send me to far away places. When someone doesn't show his enthusiasm, he is suspected of harboring ideas of defecting. He is then sent away to remote places.(11)

In contrast to such systematic distortions of reality, concerning both the population at large ("spying") and members of one's own side (the imputations just discussed), stand the GVN's capricious and brazen fabrications. These it would be difficult to regard as rules paralleling those of the VC, a circumstance that both reduces the potential victim's ability to escape punishment by conduct pleasing to those who otherwise would harm him and diminishes the acceptability of the penalties he incurs.

"The Front cadres," a villager recalls, "came at night....In the daytime the GVN soldiers would come. Suspecting that the people were having relations with the Front, they beat them, arrested them."(133)

Or:

The Front soldiers often passed through my hamlet. When they were gone, the GVN forces came along on mopping-up operations. They suspected everyone of having relations with the Front soldiers. They mistreated... everyone.(134)

In this fashion the GVN incurs a reputation for both impotence and for cruelty and confirms the VC's contention of its own inseparability from "the people." It makes hamlets responsible for their inhabitants, whereas the VC, with better sense, hold families responsible for their members.

Another proclivity of the GVN is to regard as an enemy anyone who runs away. "Some of the young men in the village," reports an informant, "heard so much VC propaganda on the ARVN that when the latter came, these young men got scared and ran away. The ARVN, mistaking them for VC, opened fire on them and killed them."

(Whereupon, to be sure, "the cadres carried the bodies of these young men to other villages...saying that the ARVN only killed innocent people and that they didn't kill any cadres.") (135) Wanting to run away from an authority whom one fears but fearing to do so is just one of the predicaments that people owe to their "oppressors." The cadres avoid this sort of thing, while the GVN furnishes ever fresh instances of its malevolence.

People are likely to flee belatedly, clumsily, visibly just because they are tied to a place by their humble condition. The cadres' hostility is reserved for persons -- disadvantaged while privileged -- within the VC itself. But the GVN does not seem to apply any corresponding restriction:

I had a chance to talk to an old man in Phong Dien District whose son was a second lieutenant in the ARVN. He was beaten up by ARVN soldiers on operations, because the Front had erected a welcoming gate in front of his house. (136)

When a grenade exploded as the troops marched across a road, a whole block of houses would be burned. Actually it was the guerrillas who set the traps and not the people in the block; yet, it was the people who got punished. (137)

The accusation of belonging to the VC, perhaps more often made than the charge of being a GVN spy, sometimes has blackmail rather than retribution as its purpose:

One evening young men had gathered in a house to sing and play folk music. The Civil Guards came and arrested them, saying it was a VC gathering. A few days later two of the young men were killed and the other released. The outpost commander said the two men had been killed because they had tried to escape. Actually, he had asked the victims' families to pay for their release....Two families had refused to pay, and their sons died from that. All told, eight men in my hamlet were killed by the outpost commander for having refused to bribe him. I was told that there were up to forty-one victims killed by the outpost commander in Khanh An village. (138)

In contrast, the cadres may engage in overt blackmail but on behalf of the Party and not for private ends.

Were there any [inhabitants of the hamlet] who refused to pay [contributions demanded by the VC]?

...Some...persistently refused to pay.... When a family refused to pay, [the cadres] abducted its head, confined him to a place unknown to that family. Then the victim was compelled to write home, exhorting his family to pay. After the contributions had been...paid, he was set free. At the time I rallied to the GVN, there were in my hamlet twenty persons who had been kidnapped, taken away, and still detained. (138)

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When the GVN has injured people it did not, at least according to its public stance, desire to injure, it apparently makes little effort to redress grievances. The VC makes more.

It may handle the matter simply by lying. "There were," a rallier reports, "a few cases in which a murder or kidnapping was done for personal reasons, or the target for an attack was wrongly chosen. When this happened, the Front explained [to its cadres] that if a cadre murdered an innocent person for personal reasons, the Front must never recognize the fact that one of its cadres hasn't adhered...to its policy and accuse him publicly. The Front must side with its cadres and tell the people that the murdered man was in fact a spy.... As for the guilty cadre, he will be secretly punished by the Front after he has been transferred to another place." (19)

Some trouble may be taken to make the lie more credible. "If a civilian was shot down in a market place," notes Douglas Pike, "a few hours later an organized rumor campaign would begin asserting that the victim had been a secret GVN agent."*

If the cadres recognize that they have arrested an innocent person, they may promise him better treatment if he confesses to "spying," in order then, his embarrassing appearance of innocence having been thus erased, to execute him:

* Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., p. 250.

Recently the Front killed two persons living in Anh Binh Dong hamlet. One was 41; the man was detained in the same jail as I was. He told me his story....He told me that he was innocent. But he had to plead guilty to the Front's accusations. He agreed, because he trusted the Security Section official who had promised to release him if he would admit that his arrest was just. The official explained to him that if he released him on the ground that he was innocent, he would hurt the Front's good reputation which till then had been known to be just. The official also told him that he would be severely punished if he persisted in claiming that he was innocent. The...man therefore admitted that he was a GVN spy, in the hope of being released thereafter. But he was brought to the People's Court. Realizing that he had been taken in by the Security Section, he told the entire truth to the villagers assembled there....Some days later, he was taken away.... (128)

Sometimes the lie doesn't work. "During an engagement at the post," a fighter recalls about a comrade, "the VC killed his father and brothers by mistake. After that the VC put the blame on the GVN, but later on my friend found that it was the VC who had killed his father and brothers." (21)

The VC might even "issue leaflets denying the killing of individuals and asserting that they were killed by bandits masquerading as NLF Army soldiers."^{*}

Admitting a mistake, the cadres might offer compensation -- a move which may, however, provoke mixed feelings in its potential beneficiaries:

^{*} Ibid.

Three or four days after Phuc had been killed, the cadres called a meeting with Phuc's family and all the laborers [of the rubber plantation] to whose team Phuc had belonged. The cadres confessed that they had made a mistake in killing Phuc. They said the guilty one was another laborer also named Phuc....The cadres asked Phuc's family if they wanted anything. But...everyone was frightened of the VC. Phuc's father...didn't dare ask the VC for anything....The case was closed. Some said that the cadres staged that meeting to test the reactions of Phuc's father. And, perhaps, knowing that, Phuc's father didn't dare make any demands at all. (13)

GVN agents apparently spend less effort than the cadres making amends for their errors in targeting. They may even exacerbate feelings by punishing those who suffer such mistakes.

When the cadres have caused collateral damage, they are apt to attempt "explanations" (see Section VI), perhaps after efforts to repair. "If a bus or a private car happens to be mined," tells a rallier, "then the Front will explain that the mine failed to explode when the military car passed by, and that the bus followed too closely." (19) "Attacks on churches and schools occur only when GVN soldiers are stationed there," says the same informant. But if an attack occurs after the enemy has already withdrawn "...the local Party chapters or the Front's units would afterwards mobilize the population to repair the damage, to visit the wounded, and bury the dead. A little while later, the Front would ask those persons whose houses had been damaged or whose family members had been killed or wounded to attend a study course. The GVN would be blamed for using schools and churches for its own purpose."

Again, the GVN appears not only less interested than the cadres in making restitution for the damage it occasions, but even compounds the injury:

Did the people who were wounded by shelling or fighting get compensated by the government?

No....Nobody dared to ask for compensation, because they were afraid that if they went to the district town to demand compensation, they might be fined. (109)

* * * * *

The situations in which the GVN finds itself probably cause it to inflict more collateral damage than would be the case with its opponent.

In any regard, it would probably be expedient for the GVN to engage in some considerable effort tending to encourage the belief that it strives to minimize injury to the population. This is perhaps not the predominant impression the GVN has created among those menaced by its fire. The following exchange might not surprise many Vietnamese:

How often was your village attacked by artillery?

Once every five or ten days.

Were there any VC in the village during the shelling?

They just shelled; there were no VC.

What did the villagers say about these casualties and damage?

They said they were shelled by mistake....

Were you shelled by mistake all the time like that? Were you shelled by mistake every five or ten days?

Yes, Go Noi [one of the hamlets of the village] was shelled very often. Even buffaloes and oxen were killed.

Did Go Noi have more VC than other places in the village?

Go Noi was near the river. There were many tombs. I don't know why it was shelled so often. (140)

In some instances, the GVN appears willing to accept a high ratio of injury to its people to damage to its enemy:

They [the Civil Guards] fired at random into the houses where there were celebrations at night, just because they suspected that some members of the family who had joined the VC might return at night to attend the celebration. (56)

And the population may fail to perceive (or is it the case of a cadre continuing, through lies, to be a persuader when he is in GVN hands?) a relationship between the VC's presence among them and damage to them:

People tended to avoid the VC because they were afraid of being bombed. But during the time when the VC troops weren't around, and the village was still bombed or shelled, people concluded that it wasn't because of the presence of the VC troops in their village that they were attacked; it was only a certain scheme of the GVN to annihilate the people. (137)

The cadres, on the other hand, go to some length to convey the point that their eagerness to obtain certain performances from the people is balanced by their aversion to inflicting excessive damage.

The cadres watch to see how much they are disliked

by the people and devise ways for handling this problem:

When the battalion left a hamlet, some members of the recon unit had to stay behind for a few more days to see what the people thought of the installation of soldiers in their hamlet. In case the number of people in opposition grew after the battalion had gone, we had the duty to bring this to the attention of the local cadres, so that necessary propaganda measures would be applied. If the number of people opposing the installation of soldiers increased by too great a proportion, the battalion would avoid going back to that hamlet. (6)

Attempting to impose a certain conduct divergent from that to which the population inclines, the cadres are apt to yield when encountering a determined and collective refusal. Even individual resistance, when it serves a supreme and legitimate private interest and only a moderate disadvantage to the Party, may win out. More particularly, a unit of the Main Force or of the local forces may stay in a village despite the inhabitants' wishes, but it is more likely to move out in these circumstances, even at considerable cost. In such contexts the cadres allow the people to express unfavorable opinions of the VC, if these opinions are widely held or seem justified. This is in marked contrast to the cadres' intolerance towards any lack of conformity within the VC itself. Beyond such tolerance for rage about past damage, the cadres may -- rarely, to be sure -- stay their hands.

VI. CLOSENESS AGAINST DISTANCE

To many on both sides and on all levels, the VC appear to be more like the rural population than do the GVN. And the higher ranks in the VC, too, are more like the lower ranks than is the case with the GVN. This is true with respect to origin (class as well as place, from region to hamlet), station in life, dress, and behavior. The VC's desire to reduce its visibility to the enemy and its concern for good relations within it and with the population both contribute to this. Also, presumably a large fraction of the numerous lower GVN personnel who come from "the people" are pleased with their new station precisely because they thus escape from it; while many among the uncharacteristic cadres who do not have proper origins attempt to make up for this lack by perfect (that is, highly favorable) attitudes toward the glorified nha khe, the simple farmer. Of course, the GVN, aware of the handicap thought to be entailed by the differences noted, has striven, with only limited success, to imitate its enemy in this regard.

Officials in the GVN often seem to perpetuate the disagreeable aspects -- real or unconsciously imagined -- in the relationship between Vietnamese fathers and their sons, and may incite their charges to behave, in turn, similarly towards others who are at their mercy. But the cadres have as supreme leader a mild and modest uncle whom they temperately revere rather than fulsomely venerate. And they exert themselves -- with some success -- to avoid, in their conduct, the manners traditionally associated with superiors. Questioned what the cadres did

"that you consider as good," the informant answers:
"They were friendly and on an equal status with people.
That's all." Similarly, when queried, "How were the
cadres in the army?", he replies: "They spoke to me
in a friendly and equal way."⁽¹⁴⁷⁾* "The VC cadres,"
another informant explains, "had very good results with
the members of the very lowest social class. I am a
member of that class....They were nice to the people
because they needed their support. Also, they treated
people as equals."⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ A rare opponent of such a state
of affairs confirms its existence:

Did you not like the equality in the
Front?

No. I saw that the high echelons and
the low echelons were on the same footing...
I did not like that. I wanted the low
echelons to respect the high echelons.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The Party enjoins the cadre to associate closely with
those beneath and around him. One of the principal de-
mands it makes upon its armed forces is that they practice
"the five 'togethers': Eat together, work together, play
together, sleep together, and help each other together."
It is a rallier who answers in this exchange:

Did the men in different levels
associate with each other informally?

This is one of the VC's policies....
In my unit the high and low echelon cadres
lived together and treated each other as
if they were real brothers.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

* Emphasis added.

As to contacts with the population, "some VC," reports an informant, "came to ask the inhabitants for a little tobacco or just to chat with them for a while." (149) It's in the day's work just as much as violence:

Did the VC come to No Cong often?

They went there every now and then.

What did they do when they went there?

They came to inquire about the health of the people and to snipe at the post. (150)

But, whether spurred by competition or not, the GVN may act similarly, though perhaps less often:

Has the ARVN ever gone through your village?

Yes....

How long did they remain in your village?

They only passed through, or remained long enough to take a rest, and then departed again.

How did they treat the villagers when they were there?

They were nice to us.... We used to converse. (151)*

How did the GVN troops treat the people?

They asked the people to cook rice for them, and then brought various condiments to eat together with the people. (152)

On the other hand, VC officials may display the same disagreeable characteristics as the GVN:

What did you think of your superiors...?

* Emphasis added.

The present Village Secretary is Sau Dong. He doesn't like to mingle with his inferiors....Whenever he was going to have a special meal of dog meat, he only invited the Village Committee members. (153)

The squad leaders did not regard us as equals. They only talked to one another. If we approached them while they were talking, they would suggest that we go play somewhere else. (154)

The cadres' fear of "spies" might produce the same result as their distaste for the untrained:

Whom did you [a PAVN private] usually talk to?

Only with the squad leader. I didn't dare set foot near the platoon leader, because I didn't have a responsible position; if I went near him, he might say that I was curious about military maps or about his work, and that would be dangerous. (155)

Of how much the cadres are apt to deprive their subordinates by keeping their distance becomes clear when the latter attempt to ward off their distress:

What did you think of the cadres in your unit?

Of course, the cadres stuck to one another, while the fighters were seen going around together. However, this was only natural, and I quite enjoyed the set-up. We sometimes mixed all together, such as on Saturday afternoons, for example, when we played football or Chinese chess; no distinction was then made between cadres and fighters.... (156)*

Thus the relationship between the modes of conduct

*Emphasis added.

adopted by the two sides may be the opposite to that usually assumed, which may also be an unexpected result of the well-known contrast between the easy-going GVN and the hard-driving VC:

They [the GVN entering a village] did not linger about and chat with the people, as the GVN soldiers did....They were very brief with the villagers when they visited them in their houses, and they never talked beyond the subjects they came for....For instance, they told the people, "There will be a meeting tonight and you are invited to attend." Or, "Beginning tomorrow, you people must go to work earlier than up to now...."(157)

What is done by the VC out of a sense of duty may be done by the GVN because of fatigue:

The GVN soldiers who came to my hamlet for mopping-up operations got tired. They sat down before the villagers' houses and talked with them.(118)

Though sometimes associating with the people, the GVN, apparently, often lacks solicitude for them -- a penchant expressed on the one hand in petty stealing or robbing by troops, if not more massive dispossessing of their wards by officials (a subject often treated, and on which I shall therefore not dwell), and on the other hand in the nonchalance with which the GVN may withdraw its protection from villagers, and the indifference to their interests, if not the willingness to begin damaging them, which it may then display. Here is a loyal Catholic's story:

Do you know why the post in Hau My agroville withdrew [in July 1965]?

I don't know why. I know the Captain commander of the Hau My post. A few days before the withdrawal, I had seen the Captain and he had told me he would be transferred to another place. I thought the Captain would be the only one to be transferred....Before they withdrew, the soldiers burned the village public house and a maternity clinic. They withdrew very quickly. Late in the afternoon of the same day, aircraft came and bombed the post.(158)

The Party, on the other hand, insistently makes the point with the cadres that "helping" the people is on a par with killing the enemy. "The Front troops," recalls an informant in a frequently heard assertion, "always gave a hand to the people, for instance to sweep houses, to carry water, to set everything in order, and so on."(159) "Being in the Communist ranks," remembers a rallier dismally, "is almost like being a priest. When we lived in the people's houses, we had to sweep the floors, clean the house, get water and cook rice. But we shouldn't tease the girls."(3)

Attempting to offset the many occasions when it is a hard master to the villagers -- destroying, for instance, prized facilities, such as schools or hospitals, given to the population by the enemy -- the VC tries to show that it is the people's servant:

We did anything the people asked us to do -- carrying manure, cutting down trees, building huts, and so on.(160)

Endeavoring never to forget that this, like everything else, is but a means:

When our unit came to a place, it had to carry out its civilian proselyting mission immediately. Each squad had to mow the grass around the house in which it was camped, to repair the house if need be, to fill up all the water containers in the house, to bring in firewood...."(161)*

The first returns might be neither intangible nor remote:

At the beginning, the people would not let us into their houses, so we slept in their gardens. We tidied their gardens, dug drainage channels, picked weeds, etc. Then we would ask permission to enter the house to mop the floor.(56)

And harming the villagers might increase the worth to them of being "helped." Recalling that "we had to carry out the civilian proselyting task, that is, to work for the people in taking care of their orchards or dredging the ditches," an informant observes:

At present there is not much manpower left in Binh Trung, and our help is much appreciated.(162)

To be sure, according to one informant "people liked the ARVN troops very much, because the ARVN soldiers helped people build houses, and distributed rice and medicines to poor villagers."(163) But it is a rallier who expresses the more frequent belief:

What caused more people to become active in the Front?

* Emphasis added.

The main cause is: In all their activities the GVN people lacked the spirit of service to the people. (164)

In short, and in the words of another rallier, the agents of the GVN are apt to "work not as cadres, but as officials." (16) It is yet another rallier who portrays a cadre she knew as living up to his exacting code, which is not likely to be said of a GVN official:

How did you find Tu Hien?

Tu Hien was a very virtuous man. He was close to the people, and was a simple man. He always went around dressed in farmer's clothes. The people liked him very much and his subordinates were also fond of him. (127)

* * * *

One of the ways in which the cadres express a desire for communication with those under them -- and to convey respect for them (see Section VII) as well as, of course, to persuade them (see Section VIII) -- is by "explaining." "The government officials beat the villagers up," alleges an informant, repeating a theme of the cadres, while "the Front cadres explained things to them....The cadres only talked to the villagers; they didn't threaten them." (165)

They "explain" so as to soften the blow:

Usually, what was the reaction of the people in the hamlet where an execution [by the VC] had taken place?

The cadres always began by giving explanations for their actions. (6)

Particularly, they "explain" why they impose burdens:

How do you explain the fact that the young men in your village preferred being VC guerrillas to becoming GVN soldiers?

...The GVN is satisfied with ordering all youths to complete their military service. The authorities in the village, in order to execute this order, forced the young men to join the army. Sometimes this is done with brutality, and never with explanations. The VC also use force to recruit their soldiers, but force is always accompanied by explanations. (166)

Having recalled that none of the units to which he had belonged "were specifically charged with the responsibility of protecting the liberated villages," and that "if they retreated in view of a stronger enemy force, then it was sound militarily," a rallier adds: "After the retreat, the Front always came back to organize a study course to explain it to the people." (14) It is another rallier who enunciates the belief in the high short-run productivity of "explanations":

Before a battle...we told the fighters what military and political consequences would result from the attack. We never led them to combat without explaining all these things to them. We had to educate them well in order to make them fight hard. (15)

The Party combats those in its midst "who have a tendency to rely only on military action" and "are unwilling to give explanations."*

"Sometimes," an informant reports, "the cadres wouldn't even answer the people when they asked them something." (167) And when people finally speak up,

*Truong Chinh, op. cit., p. 179.

it may only make matters worse:

On whose behalf did they force you to participate in this fighting?

I don't know. I recall that I asked... the Chief of the Military Affairs Section, when he called on me to draft me, the following question: "We are all Vietnamese. Why do we have to fight one another?" But Ba Be did not say anything about that. He only urged me to follow him away.

Did you ever put the same question to another cadre thereafter?

When I was forced to join the [famous] 514th battalion the second time, I asked my platoon leader the same question. But... Huyen scolded me and said: "You are only a child! How could you understand it? It would be useless to tell you why!"(168)

Or the cadre may come to resemble the worst sort of GVN official. When a hamlet had been once more shelled by ARVN, the cadres organized old women to walk to the district town to complain to the GVN authorities. "The group started from the hamlet with thirty-five women. Only nine got to the district town. The rest dropped out along the way." Then, "a cadre came to the house [where some of the women who had discontinued the march were to be found]. Standing like a general with his hands on his hips, he shouted [to one of them], 'Coward, why did you leave the group? Haven't you lived long enough?'" This approach failing to produce compliance, the cadre turned towards the informant, a disaffected and demoted former cadre of upper-class origin who lived as a semi-prisoner at the house of the woman addressed in the fashion just quoted. The informant then, faking or resuming model VC behavior, presented (in reality or

in his imagination) the degraded cadre with an image of his own past with its more effective devices:

I said softly [to the old women]:
"This war has to be fought on all sides. The people of different ages have different tasks. Every task has its own importance. This particular task could be carried out by our aged ladies, our dear aunts. We young people are unable to do the task ourselves. That's why we have to ask you to do it for us and for the country. Do not think that we are ungrateful for your effort...." The cadres were pleased. (69)

* * * * *

The intense desire of the Vietnamese to be close to each other and the horror of being forced to be alone are utilized by the Party:

What do you mean when you say a village is "under the control of the Front"?

The neutral will be isolated and forbidden to participate in the life of the village. (65)

In her description of Vietnamese childhood, Phan Thi Dac^{*} stresses the young child's dismay when left alone. The threat to isolate somebody who intends to perform an act which is legal but goes counter to popular sentiment is a major instrument for abrogating certain dispositions of law, e.g., that rendering the repudiation of a wife easy.^{**} And the Party has always stressed those parts of the Bolshevik code of operations concerned with

^{*} Phan Thi Dac, Situation de la personne au Viet-Nam, Paris, 1966, pp. 117, 126.

^{**} Ibid., pp. 20-21.

"isolating," as we have seen in its treatment of land tenure (intending to "isolate" the hostile landlords), or as one may perceive through the frequency and prominence of affirmations such as this:

To isolate the enemy in order to overthrow him is the common tactic of a class or of a nation that is determined to fight and to win.*

If "pressuring the holdouts" -- "...from then on they would not let us out of their sight," a hapless target may recall⁽⁶⁴⁾ -- does not work, one may, as David Elliott has noted, proceed to "pointedly ignore" them.

Before you became active in the Front, how did you feel about your life? Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with it?

I wasn't satisfied with my life then... because I felt my family's background had tied me up....As far as the Front was concerned, we were a GVN soldier's family....They always treated our family differently, and went away from us....They didn't visit us [when they came through the hamlet]. I didn't blame them for that, it only made me sad.(19)

And so the informant joined those whose silent disapproval was so difficult for anyone with an acute desire for status.

When withdrawing themselves will not work, the cadres may coerce the target's friends and associates into isolating him. This may happen even in the unlikely circumstance of an armed VC unit on the move:

The VC didn't like the stories I circulated....I was put in isolation for

*Truong Chinh, op. cit., p. 94.

three months. I was still in the unit, but I was not allowed to stay close to the other men. Whenever the unit moved, I also moved; but at all times I had to stay away from the unit....I had to sit by myself, away from everyone, all day. I couldn't talk to anyone; I could never say anything. (169)

Enemies fixed in hamlets are obvious targets for this device:

The Front cadres often said that the GVN cadres were traitors and that those who got in touch with them...were considered accomplices. That was why nobody dared to get in touch with them, not even to talk to them. (170)

A lesser degree of hostility toward the VC may provoke a similar sanction:

If the villager refused to enter one of these services [to join one of the VC forces], what would the VC do to him?

They would isolate him, prohibiting other villagers from communicating with him... quarantine him. (171)

Did something special happen at the last minute which made you decide to join the Front?

Even though the VC cadres had asked me to join the village guerrillas many times... I steadfastly refused. So they accused me of opposing the Front and of refusing to pay taxes to the Front. [In addition], at the time my mother went to the market [in a GVN area] very often to trade so as to increase our income. The VC...held a meeting in the hamlet and told the people that we were no-good elements in the village. We were isolated. (135)

But along with the pressure comes the suggestion of a

quid pro quo:

The VC pressed me...to join the Front. I thought that if I bowed to their pressure, my family would be in a less difficult situation, and that gradually my family would be raised to the level of a fighter's family. So I joined the Front. (135)

The burden of establishing and maintaining his isolation may even be put on the victim himself:

What happened to villagers who didn't pay taxes [to the VC]?

For the first time, they would be invited to leave their family and stay alone in a place on the outskirts of the village for six or seven days. (172)

This approaches a measure employed in the Northern "land reform" of 1955-56, when people who had been "classified" unfavorably were expected, on dire pain, to write a "letter with the blood of our hearts" cutting off "all relations with our families." (173)

So fearful is this infliction that the threat should suffice:

What would happen to...people who refused to participate in...demonstrations [organized by the VC, where a population would protest to GVN authorities against damaging acts]?

If someone refused to participate in these demonstrations, the VC...would isolate him, that is, they would not let anyone talk to him or hire him for anything. They would not confiscate his property or beat him, but he would be isolated from the entire village. It has never actually happened, because the villagers were very afraid of the VC. (174)

And if it happens, the very passage of time should insure success:

In case the policy [inculcated by the cadre into his wards] did not permeate some trainees' minds, what would you have to do?

...The last method was to isolate the dissidents by cutting off all relations with them, rescinding all missions with which they were entrusted, and leaving them alone.

In your experience, was the last method successful?

Of course it was successful. No one could bear it more than a month. (175)

VII. "CRITICISM" AGAINST INSULT

Vietnamese do not seem to take insults lightly.

Relations within the village, as described by Gerald Hickey, are such that sensibilities will be greatly spared.

As "practically everyone is directly engaged in agricultural activities," there is "homogeneity of... village life." In other words, "there are no peculiar styles of life, but rather...variations on a common style, which is the village way of life." While, to be sure, there is a "rich-middle-poor ranking," "there are neither discontinuities nor strata 'culturally recognized as qualitatively distinct.'" As to "the gentry," "while most of them rarely, if ever, work in the fields...they continue to consider themselves farmers." "Only a small group of villagers can be distinguished by their dress.... Women of wealthy families are little set apart in dress and appearance from other village women....White collar-less shirts, cotton trousers, and wooden clogs [are] the common leisure time dress for male villagers regardless of economic means."^{*} And "the laborers spend their voluntary leisure in much the same way as do the other villagers."^{**}

There is much consorting between the rich and the less well-do-do. "Ong Ke Yen, one of the wealthiest villagers, invites more than one hundred guests to the six death anniversaries he observes each year."^{***}

^{*} Hickey, op. cit., pp. 233-239.

^{**} Ibid., p. 247.

^{***} Ibid., p. 240.

And a generous distribution of honors. Thus, "in Southern Vietnamese society the Cult Committee encompasses that group of males most active in village affairs, and it invariably includes the village elite.... Between 1958 and 1962, the Ap Dinh-A [a hamlet] Committee membership ranged from 120 to 163, and the Ap Non Hau [another hamlet] Committee numbered about 110." Hence difficulties of a less than desperate kind for those with low income:

For the ordinary villager who cannot hope to move up to the higher ranks...membership is often a burden. One young laborer pointed out that he had had to accept the Huong Hao title in spite of the fact that the 200 piasters contribution he was expected to make...forced him to borrow from kin. A tenant farmer expressed the opinion that the 200 piasters donation was too high for a low-ranking title and, while it did carry prestige, he got nothing else for it. Should the burden of title become unsupportable, the accepted recourse is to present a convincing argument for resigning from the Committee. In a group gathered in a shop, a laborer drew nods of assent when he stated that he would go to the Council and talk his way out of his title.*

There are many other and more direct indications of how painful it is to be offended -- so much so that one usually prefers to call attention to the "arrogance" (a crucial word, on a level with "cruelty") of the one who commits the offense rather than to the pain he inflicts.

The first question raised by common people about an authority may be: Is it "arrogant"?

How were the new recruits treated by the VC during the march?

* Ibid., pp. 214-217.

The VC were all right. They didn't say anything which offended us.(176)

When the Front forces passed through your hamlet, how did they behave?

I did not hear them say any harsh or arrogant words in asking for asylum.(177)

Any misconduct of authority will be labeled "arrogance" (alone or with "cruelty"), as the following exchange with a rallier shows:

Before the VC took over your hamlet, did the Popular Forces [GVN] behave badly towards the people?

...The people hated them for their behavior towards the girls....The people said they teased the girls too much. The villagers said that the Popular Force soldiers were arrogant with the girls when they got paid....(3)

Drastic action seems to be needed to make humiliation cease and, to the extent feasible, undo the harm one has suffered. It may be in an effort to restore one's damaged pride that one joins or leaves one side or the other.

In part, insults are devastating because they throw one back into childhood. Questioned how he, as a Southerner, felt about the Northerners among the cadres, and recalling that "most of our fellow fighters in South Vietnam...always parried and thrust with those cadres who came from North Vietnam and who often underestimated them," an informant adds: "They [the Southerners] used to say: 'Don't think that because you come from the North you may behave towards us as our fathers do.'"(178) Recalling how a cadre "looked down on me and threatened me; there were things he should not have said," a hard-core

rallier (from insult) pursues: "From the time my parents passed away, no one has ever threatened me or looked down on me." (132) And here is a report by a rallier on the impact the VC may have on parents' conduct toward their children:

Has it happened that people in the villages you visited, infiltrated or captured were unfriendly or hostile?

The people were hostile to us very rarely.

What did they say?

They didn't dare ask us to leave, but they showed their dissatisfaction by beating or insulting their children. (19)

Perhaps the "arrogant" one typifies not only one's father but also one's older brother. Take this exchange with the hard-core rallier quoted above:

How did he [the cadre whose offense provoked defection] behave towards the others?

Others were older. I was the youngest in the group. I hated to be oppressed by the stronger. (132)

* * * *

"The SDC," recalls an informant, "addressed the old women [to whom particular deference is due] as 'mai, thao' [a derogatory term for 'you and me']....The villagers were most weary of the SDC and their arrogance." (42)

The village officials, according to another respondent, "used to shout at the people whenever the latter did something wrong." (10) It is according to a rallier that:

In the ARVN, the lieutenant would shout at the aspirant, the aspirant would shout at the sergeant, and the sergeant would shout at the private....Instead of telling the Master Sergeant gently that neglecting his duty was wrong and that he should never do it again, the Second Lieutenant blew his top...: "Is that the way you do things, you bastard, with shouting and cursing...?"(179)

What a rallier recalls about cursing:

I was...detained for three years in the ...[GVN] jail....I was...tortured....I was set free at last. When I came back to my hamlet...I had to present myself to...[the hamlet policeman], and his first act was to curse me.(180)

Each of these stories about improper language used by agents of the GVN, about their shouting, their cursing, stands for many others bearing on a variety of situations -- even Chieu Hoi centers. For defectors to the GVN may make the same complaint about Chieu Hoi officials. "The ralliers in the Binh Duong Chieu Hoi Center," one of their number reports, "often said that they hate most those men who came from Saigon to interview them...[who] were well dressed, but who talked thoughtlessly, who were ill-behaved, who pounded the floor noisily, etc."(181) "I wouldn't complain if they beat us when we said something that wasn't accurate," says a rallier pathetically, "but I wish they would refrain from cursing us. They use foul language....In the Front, when GVN soldiers were captured, no one would think of cursing them. If they were stubborn, we might beat them up, but none of us would use foul language with them." And, to the interviewer: "You are an interrogator yourself...supposing

that the first minute you came into this room you made a bad remark about me." (182)

But is this not the only way to get results? A rallier-cadre, recalling colleagues, may hint at that:

Chin was in charge of financial matters. He had spent five or six years in a GVN jail.... He was...gentle....He would not say anything, even if the people failed to pay their taxes. He only reported the matter to Ngoc. And it was only at Ngoc's shouting that the people finally agreed to pay. (183)

"The Deputy of the Military Affairs Committee was... jolly..." another rallier may recall with amazement. "He could get the people to work without cursing and scolding them." (184)

Of course, both types of conduct here sketched are to be found among the cadres:

Whom did unit members prefer -- the company commander or the political officer?

We preferred the one who didn't shout at us.

Whom did you prefer?

The political officer.

Did he ever shout at the men in your unit?

Very seldom.

How about the company commander?

He was quick tempered.

Did he shout at the unit members often?

Yes, he did.

Why did he shout?

When we did something wrong he shouted.

But while the GVN's disapproval of "shouting" and the acts allied with it seems limited to pious aspirations and admonitions, the Party spends considerable effort in a fight against rudeness. It is, of course, not wholly successful, but it gets enough results to make possible the following exchange:

Have you met any regroupées...?

Yes....

How did they behave?

As they were all cadres, they behaved properly. (185)*

The penchants to be subdued are powerful:

What was the cadres' most common shortcoming?

Many of the cadres were criticized by the fighters for their overbearing manner and short temper. (179)

What was your [a Southerner's]...impression of the Northern cadres in your platoon?

They spoke softly, trying to keep the men from leaving the unit. We were allowed to criticize the Northern cadres only during the self-criticism sessions.

What were they criticized for usually?

They were criticized most of the time for their irascibility. (186)*

Hence:

What qualifications should a man have in order to be admitted in the Party?

First of all, he must behave himself and he must use decent language....Some...

* Emphasis added.

couldn't become Party members because they were always swearing and using dirty words. (187)*

"In the Front," reports a rallier, "no one is permitted to use foul language....The most common curse, such as 'damn,' is banned." (65)

The following are faults, which may result in being purged from the Party: ... being obscene.... (188)

The training of a recruit stresses proper manners towards the population. This is an exchange with a rallier:

How were you trained after you joined the Cho Gau Local Forces?

They taught me how to speak politely to the people. (189)

Replying to the question, "What did you do during the first eight days [after the VC had asked you to join them]?", an informant recalls that "I practiced with a U.S. rifle and carbine. During the two days of political training, they taught that we should not take anything from the inhabitants...and that we should speak softly to them." (190)

Even when threatening, the cadres might speak with moderation:

Did the guerrillas threaten the people?

If we refused to give them food, they would say that we didn't support the Revolution. They said they served the people, and not their own personal interests. Then they used words which contained veiled threats. (191)

* Emphasis added.

Propriety of demeanor is compatible with any degree of damage inflicted:

The VC always talked very nicely, but they cut people's throats without wincing. (91)

The GVN's demeanor may be quite revolting even when it is much less severe.

The cadres are not content just to eschew foul language; they strive for perfect expression, particularly as to softness of voice (shouting is displaced onto slogans) and to form of address. Even within the movement:

Each cell had to conduct a kieu thao session after dinner, every day....We had to review our behavior towards our comrades-in-arms. There were two points which had to be reviewed: Our words and conduct. The first point dealt with our way of addressing one another...." (192)

"All VC personnel, both military and administrative," observes a study, "are trained to treat civilians as members of their families. Vietnamese familiar terms such as Me [mother], Bac [uncle], Anh [elder brother], Chi [sister], and Mem [younger brother] would be used by VC cadres to address the people they had to deal with in accordance with their age." (A study prepared by a member of the J2-MACV translation section.) (193) Thus, when a unit of the armed forces arrived near a village and the cadres entered it, "they introduced themselves," an informant reports, "as revolutionists, called the villagers 'fathers' and 'mothers,' and asked for food from them. They said, 'We, your children, are going without food. So please, fathers and mothers, give us

glutinous rice or whatever you can for us to take along with us. "(194)

Rudeness can be counterproductive:

Hai Trung was the Village cadre. He used to grumble at the people. When he called on the people to do labor work and if the people refused, he would come back and forth to their houses...to insist until they finally agreed to do it. The people hated him. Muoi Be...was the contrast of Hai Trung....He would address older villagers as his older brothers, the youngsters as his younger brothers, and did not hurt the feelings of anybody. When the people were dissatisfied with Hai Trung, Be would come to calm them down. (183)

* * * *

Not only are agents of the GVN supposedly apt to be rude, they allegedly tend to humiliate those at their mercy by forcing them to perform personal and menial services. When asked, "What do you mean when you say the village officials insulted the people?" it is a rallier who replies: "They forced the people to do work for them, such as building poultry cages, carrying water, and doing household chores. If the people were slow or late for work, the officials would call them names. The insults are too vulgar for me to repeat." (5) It is, again, a rallier who stresses that in the VC "an officer has no right to tell the soldiers to wash his clothes, or shine his shoes, or to send them out on personal errands." (179) And the cadres attempt to sharpen the contrast here implied by the self-conscious device of solicitously "helping" the population (see Section VI) rather than contemptuously burdening it.

Agents of the GVN seem disposed to inflict damage which carries a large ingredient of humiliation. The cadres are probably less inclined to this and more given to restrain the desire to degrade. It is in the "reduction of prestige" procedures adopted by the locally victorious cadres against their vanquished enemies -- open meetings in which the latter have to collaborate in vividly unfavorable representations of themselves -- that acts of humiliation play their greatest role. But even this ritual, if correctly executed, I would surmise, is more a matter of blaming than degrading.

What might easily happen in the GVN is illustrated by this exchange:

Have you been punished in the ARVN?

...a friend and I had returned late for the assembly hour, and were made to crawl around the assembled company.(195)

However repugnant to the Party's code, crawling can be used as a punishment even by the VC and thus illustrates the tendency of the cadres to become like their enemies. Here is an informant who deserted twice before he succeeded in rallying:

Were you recaptured both times?

Yes. The local population noticed me, and reported me to the local forces.

What did your leaders do to you when you were recaptured?

I was criticized during the self-criticism session; three hours for the first time, and seven for the second time. Also the first time I was required to stand by the flagpole for five hours; the second time to stand there for

another five hours, and to crawl around the flagpole ten times.(196)*

One mode of humiliating which plays a major part in Vietnam is beating -- a traditional and expected punishment which, nevertheless, seems to arouse much apprehension and indignation; in fact, whether it occurs or not may indicate, if not determine, whether an authority is bad or good:

How was Tam Kem's [a cadre's] behavior?

...His behavior was very nice. He did not beat anyone.(39)

The cadres may, of course, beat:

How did you happen to join the Viet Cong?

The Viet Cong came and abducted me. They...beat me up.(197)

But such responses are rare, and the informant is a Montagnard. On the other hand, the allegation would not be at all surprising if made about the GVN, which seems to have taken over the traditional role of the father who beats his children or the landlord who beats his tenants.

Beating by agents of the GVN is usually inflicted in routine fashion, in drunkenness or in anger, and is the unregenerated man's expected response to certain circumstances:

The [VC] fighters thought the prisoners captured during a fight would be beaten, because the enemy must be angry about their losses.(198)

*Emphasis added.

Would you tell me about your life in the ARVN?...How were you treated by the officers?

...In our daily contacts, the officers were sometimes too hot-tempered. When we did something wrong, we were beaten. (89)

The "wrong" may be big or small:

Before I joined the Front, I was hunted by the village officials, because I was a draft dodger. A few draft dodgers in the village, who were arrested, were beaten up.... Sometimes they [village officials] asked for our papers, and if you didn't answer immediately and clearly, they beat us up. (10)

The security policemen...harassed the people. For example, if any villagers came late for a meeting, they would be beaten up. (63)

It is, to be sure, the act of beating itself rather than any particular offense or target that may above all concern the beater.

After a few sips of wine, they [GVN officials] arrested and beat innocent people. (174)

According to a frequently encountered belief about the GVN -- already conveyed in some of the statements I have quoted -- its life is pervaded by beating; beating becomes its hallmark:

How did they [the militia] behave toward the villagers?

Some were good to the villagers, some weren't so good. They hit the people.

How did the villagers feel about them?

The villagers said that the government beat up the people. (165)

The matter of beating may furnish a prominent distinction between the two sides in the war:

What did you like the most [about life in the VC]?

I liked the fact that they did not beat people for mistakes made, but educated them instead.

How were you [a civilian prisoner] treated since your capture?

They beat me right in my brother's home. And they beat me everywhere afterwards, at...village, at...Sector, at the Provincial Police Service. (199)

The VC conducts an intense struggle against the urge to use one's limbs as tools for damaging other bodies, whether a live or dead. "Do not play with their corpses," prescribes a VC document dealing with "personnel killed and left on the battlefield by the enemy." Rather, "try to put them in order and together with their respective personal effects." (200) "The VC," recalls a rallier, "were not supposed to have fistfights with anybody. I was in the Front for almost a year, yet I never had a fistfight with anybody." For hostility, the mouth replaces the hands: "There were only criticism sessions." (3)

My platoon leader criticized me for not looking after the health of my comrades, because they got hurt after they played with me. If it had been a fight, we would both have incurred disciplinary measures.... If someone hurt his comrades in horseplay... he risked only criticism. (201)

You [in the VC] seemed to hate the Americans so much, wouldn't you give them a few kicks if you happened to capture one?

Never. We wouldn't dare....The VC directives were very explicit. If we went contrary to their orders, we would be punished. (144)

For physical punishment to be permissible, its damaging impact must depend on a detour through the soul:

The VC compelled the people to do collective labor three nights each month.... Those who evaded two or three times...had their eyes blindfolded for two or three days, and they were accused of....After such torment they usually lost the use of their eyes for some time. That is why people were so afraid of the VC. (98)

Of course, as already mentioned, the urge thus warded off will break through, apparently most often as fist-fights with one's fellows. But the strength of the defenses then overcome may render the very act of beating -- banal, it seems in the GVN -- shattering, particularly if the violence is unilateral and has a weaker member of one's own side as its target. A hard-core VC having explained his rallying by his having "lost the ability to fight," the interviewer observes towards the end of the conversation, "You still have not told me why you think you have lost the ability to fight," and receives this answer: "I think I lost my ability to fight because of my hot temper. I think I could have killed many persons in my unit, if they ever crossed me. I was afraid that if I stayed there, I might foul the whole thing up." The evidence? "On the battlefield, for instance, when I ordered someone to 'charge' and if that person was reluctant, I would beat that person up....

Once I hit one of the soldiers on the head with the stock of my gun."(132)

If there is to be any beating, let it be precisely of this type: for immediate effect and not, as so often is the case in the GVN, the result of an encounter:

I know of incidents...in which the cadres had beaten up fighters who claimed to be sick and who refused to go to the battlefield.(121)

"Those who remained in the village," recalls an informant about its young men, "were...beaten up by the Front, and as a result had to join the Front."(135)

Or let death be a quickly reached climax to organized beating:

Can you tell me about the SDC men who were sentenced to death?

Last year, at the end of the battle of Thuoc Binh...thirteen or fourteen SDC men were captured and brought to Hoa Phuong village. Two of them were sentenced to death before a popular tribunal....There wasn't any defense lawyer....

How long did the trial last?

Just one night.

Were the SDC men executed by shooting, by hanging, or by lynching?

They were beaten to death.

Who was in charge of the execution?

It was organized in advance, and those who beat the condemned men certainly had been appointed.(90)

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Given to insulting others, agents of the GVN are apt to be touchy themselves. "If someone looked at an SDC

intently in public places," alleges an informant, "he would be called out and beaten."⁽²⁰²⁾ "I think," muses a defector questioned about the techniques of passing from one side to the other, "if a rallier could show the GVN authorities a clean and unwrinkled leaflet [asking him to rally], they would be more favorably disposed toward him. They would think the rallier had taken good care of the leaflet because he respected it. But if he happened to show a dirty and wrinkled leaflet to a Ranger, he might get himself into trouble or killed, because a Ranger might think he had shown disrespect to the leaflet." The cadres, on the other hand, permit themselves -- it may not come easy -- to be insulted, if bearing insults makes for better relations with the people (see Section V).

When members of the Front appear to have inflicted a slight on people, they may make an effort to tolerate the reactions thus provoked, if not make reparation for their deed. Agents of the GVN are allegedly apt to add to the damage they have inflicted through the sanctions they impose if their conduct evokes resistance. In contrast, the cadres are supposed to encourage protest against themselves (of moderate kinds, to be sure) rather than to punish it. It is according to a rallier that "Front soldiers...would ask their hosts to tell them frankly what mistakes they had made during their stay, so that they could correct themselves."⁽⁷¹⁾ To the question, "among the villages you passed by, was there any which was hostile or unfriendly towards your unit?" a fighter replies: "Sometimes we knew about their [the villagers'] resentment, when we asked families to participate in a self-criticism session, before we left a place. They

criticized the men for breaking their chinaware, picking up their fruit, or making noise when they were resting." (186) Such behavior resembles the milder variants of the abuses usually attributed to the GVN; but the effort to make the victims complain is a part of what has, until recently at least, been lacking in the GVN, a serious struggle against one's penchant towards "arrogance."

* * * * *

And yet, that famous trait appears, in a well-known and widespread belief, as a major factor rendering the relationship between GVN and people less than satisfactory.

One day a villager said something which made me ponder. He said: "Among the [GVN] soldiers there was a good and amiable one. He even asked for water before drinking it, and then also said 'thank you' after he finished his drink." I said to myself, if all GVN soldiers behaved like that soldier, how could the Front have existed until today? (161)

While insulting words and humiliating acts do not kill, and the GVN's beating seldom causes lasting injury, such conduct may stimulate an inner revolt in which one acts out what one may have suppressed when faced with similar treatment in childhood. Joining the VC may be seen as a way to avoid the humiliation that children often suffer and resent:

What did Nam Tac tell you when he urged you to join the Front?

...I didn't pay attention to the Front's aims. All I wanted...was to be able to lead another life, to avoid being beaten and scolded by my father.... (203)

There are, as has often been noted, many stories and estimates according to which being insulted frequently furnishes the major conscious motive for moving towards the VC, where, at least, one is much less beset by humiliation:

After I left [for the VC] I could not visit my family, I had to endure more hardships than before, but nobody was nasty to me....There was nothing to be happy about except the fact that the beating and the cursing had ceased.. .(204)

If, in the end, the cadres turn out to be even worse parents, one may return home. In his adolescence, a rallier recalls, "I was frequently beaten by my stepfather," while "during that time...the head of the...village guerrillas induced me to join him. He said that if I joined him, I would be gayer and happier, that I would not have to bear the hardships of a buffalo herd who...was frequently beaten." As to his defection, "It was the incident at Hau My that made me determine to rally. That time, we were moving from Hau My to Hau Cu during the night of November 12, 1965. Long, a soldier, hit me in my face with his rifle butt and caused my gum to bleed....The whole story was as follows. During the movement [of the unit] I transferred reports from the rear to the front. Long walked in front of me. I reported: 'The rear reports that it has lost contact with its hind elements,' then added: 'It appears the front is also cut off from its forward elements.' No sooner had I finished the sentence than Long hit me in my face with his rifle butt and said: 'The front is not cut off, are you blind?' This incident

was the main reason that caused me to rally to come back to my family." (205)

Stressing the humiliations to which the GVN exposes both its own and the people is a major theme of the cadres. When the VC, following a routine of theirs, arrived in an informant's hamlet "around 4 or 5 p.m., and left for the forest at 9 or 10 p.m...they came into the village in order to make propaganda, saying that if the GVN happened to catch someone, they would beat him." (194)

Describe and explain when, how and why you became active in the Front.

I was subject to propaganda every day I worked in the fields. The Front cadres explained to me that life out here with the GVN was not living: I was despised and insulted [first], and my family was too poor to own the land they worked [second]. (204)

Recalling how he attempted "to arouse the villagers' hatred for the GVN," a cadre enumerates: "I would ask them who paid the militia and the police to...insult them, steal.... It was easy to make them hate the militia and the village council....I saw them [these officials] twist the neck of poultry reserved for ancestor worship, take rings and necklaces right from their owners, shoot at random at the farmers working in the fields, insult elderly people...." (206)

The cadres, in turn, might present their own world as a refuge from contempt:

The people were told...that life with the ARVN was better, but the ARVN soldier was despised by the population....They [those who joined the VC] would never be despised by the population. (207)

Driven away from the GVN by its supposed propensity

towards arrogance, one moves, in an often-heard allegation, towards the VC because of its good manners:

What do you think of the village council?

...everybody liked them because they spoke to the people very gently. (195)

A rallier:

What did you like most in the Front?

...The Front members were ever so gentle and polite. (65)

Another rallier:

How was the relationship between you and the cadres?

All the cadres were good to the fighters. They had good manners and virtue. We were friendly to each other. I missed them whenever I had to be away on missions. I liked them for their considerate manner. (208)

A "considerate manner" is apt to be productive:

When I was in...[a] combat unit, I took my squad to a rich family and asked for shelter. The man had a big house which could shelter an entire company. And yet, he refused to let one squad stay there. He drove us out. We couldn't find shelter anywhere else. If all the other families gave shelter to the other squads, why should one or two families deny room to us? We decided...we would stay in the courtyard. We endured the rain and the wind. The first day the owner said nothing. As for us, we treated him most respectfully. We cleaned up the place, and when we needed something, we asked him to lend it to us. When a mango fell right in our place, we took and washed it up and then put it on the altar. When the owner came back he asked, "Which one

of you ate my mango?" We replied, "We washed it and put it on the altar." He said nothing. He went into his house, lighted his incense sticks, and offered the food to his ancestors, then he gave it to us to eat. The next day he invited us to come in and stay in his house. He said he felt sorry for us for having to stay in the courtyard. Also, he explained, he didn't want us to stay in his house at first because he was afraid we would damage his possessions. He had plenty of good things, being a rich man. He had a tile floor and so on. He was afraid we would steal his things. But seeing how we behaved, he trusted us. He didn't know how the troops would behave. He thought wherever the troops went, they would break and destroy things.... Before we left we asked him, "Did we do anything to trouble you? Please let us know, so that when we go to another place we won't commit the same mistakes again. If you won't tell us, we won't know our weak points. If our faces are dirty, and if you won't tell us, we won't know it. But if you tell us, we can wash our faces and they will be clean." He replied that he hadn't been told how the soldiers would behave. Now that he met us, he knew. (42)

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While apparently, "in the GVN army there is nothing but punishment, and no effort is made to explain their own errors to the soldiers," (209) such "explaining," called "criticism," itself becomes a prominent mode of punishing in the VC, applied to major offenses as well as to those which may appear light to ordinary Vietnamese.

Insults, as practiced by the GVN, are directed against the whole self. The degradation they bring is all-encompassing and irremediable. But blame, inflicted according to the cadres' code, is addressed only to certain acts of the self, for a man is not all bad. "If the Party

members," explains a perceptive rallier, "have not yet accomplished what is required of them, they will be judged unworthy to be Party members, in order to make them work harder...in the future."⁽³²⁾ Finally, blaming should proceed intensely but for only limited periods of time. Admitting that "deep in my heart I was very mad at the criticism," an informant also recalls that "in the Army, after the fighters had criticized each other, there was no hatred between them. Their relations remained normal and they talked to each other as if nothing had happened."^(?10)

While probably much "criticism" in the VC does meet or comes close to meeting these standards, verbal attack, instead of being circumscribed in time, may become permanent and interminable:

During...[the Cai Be] battle, I used an automatic rifle which I had repaired. But it jammed, and I got so mad that I threw it on the ground and trampled it. I was criticized for many months.⁽¹²³⁾

Here is a "production worker" who had been working away from home, while expressing to his cadre his desire to go back to his hamlet, regardless of the sharply enhanced probability of death by bombing that this would, according to the cadre, entail:

How did the cadre treat you?

He didn't beat us up or anything like that. But he often criticized us.

Why were you criticized?

Sometimes we didn't get to work on time, and the cadre would say sarcastically: "If you don't work, go on home and be bombed to death, for all I care."

Did he scold you often?

He scolded me all the time. (211)

The sober, though sharp, characterization of the act for which one is to be blamed may be replaced by something close to the vehement obscenity apparently so frequent in the GVN -- but still for an immediate purpose. A student recalls how he was recruited:

At first they used honeyed words to try to convince me, but I turned down their request right away. Next day, they came again and this time they used coarse words to arouse my pride such as: "You...should not stay inactive at home to hide your face in a woman's skirt! You lie down there waiting for a piece of dung to go down your throat..." At that moment I was so excited that...I agreed to go. (212)

The penalty may be more than harsh words. One may have to perform an indignity -- as when, during one of the Viet Minh campaigns against illiteracy, the road leading to a market town was obstructed by a barricade with an aperture resembling a "dog hole," adorned with a banner carrying words to glorify President Ho. Those capable of reading the inscription would be hoisted above the barricade and could proceed; whoever was unable to do so had to crawl through the dog hole.* (Still, while subjected to contempt, one is made aware of the precise means by which to avoid it.)

The indignity might even seem irremediable:

What would happen to the soldier who had deserted [a PAVN unit during the march South],

* Ngo Van Chu, Journal d'un Combattant Vietminh, Paris, 1955, pp. 96-97.

when and if he succeeded in regaining the North?

He would be arrested and shown to everyone living in his hamlet as a deserter. He would be made to stand in the middle of the hamlet with a sign on his chest proclaiming he was a deserter. For days he would have to face shame for his act....Eventually, he would be put into jail.(213)

Opposed to insulting, the cadres thus wield as a major instrument the threat of indefinitely protracted shaming to be inflicted by the victim's entire human environment, or crucial parts of it:

What did the cadres do to those who violated discipline?

When we were in the North, the worst thing that could happen to any man was to have his bad record sent to his native town and village, and be publicized. The poor man would be looked down upon by others as if he was a criminal. His family would also suffer....(121)

Those who do the shaming may act out of fear of being themselves shamed if they don't:

In the North, when you have reached the draft age, you enter the army. There is no way to get out of that. No one forces you to go. No one goes after you. Up there -- excuse me -- if a man dodges the draft, he is looked down on by the weaker sex. They don't want to have anything to do with him. Excuse me for saying that, but it is true....If a man refuses to go to the South...no woman would want to marry him....I have a sweetheart in the North.... She saw me off at the station. She encouraged me on, but her eyes were blinded by tears. I'm sure that she would rather I remained in the North, but that would be out of the

question. Other women's husbands or sweet-hearts went South. How could she have faced them if she had asked me to stay in the North?(214)

When "criticism" within the Party or the organizations controlled by it is conducted according to the standards sketched above, it seems to arouse, as one would expect, less distress and more of an urge to correct oneself than does the sheer insulting so often attributed to the GVN. There are those, however, as one also would surmise, who react to blame -- and, even more, shaming -- as they might to insult. Self-criticism sessions are more severe than "heart-to-heart" talks because they are carried on in public, for which reason they may be becoming less frequent. However, not only does the man-to-man approach require more time and energy from the cadre, but the very harshness of the classical kiem thao may make the Party appreciate it as a deterrent.

VIII. COERCION FOR PERSUASION

"Make captives believe in our clemency," a VC document recommends, "allowing them to change their minds, not denying their desire for conversion."⁽²¹⁵⁾ Will not the radical change of becoming a prisoner entail a corresponding shift in a soldier's convictions?

Taking it for granted that one's condition in life determines one's beliefs, the VC leadership thinks nothing of forcing even its enemies to join.

Such individuals may be inactive at the time they are recruited; they may even have been connected with the VC, but then left it. Sometimes an interval between the end of one's career in the GVN and the inception of one's work for the VC is required by the latter for purposes of punishment and persuasion, or the cadres may permit a phase of inactivity. But one's efforts on behalf of the GVN need not have come to an end so as to make one eligible for forced recruitment into the VC. One's experience on one side may become one's qualification for the other.

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Apprehensive of the deleterious effects of impure life upon good beliefs, and confident of their devices' power to forestall, repair, and improve -- according to a famous Confucian text (The Book of the Three Characters), much studied in early school years, "all men, at their origins, are equal; education only makes them different."^{*} The cadres have always chosen to do more persuading than

^{*} Huard and Durand, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

the GVN. Both they and their targets are likely to share the belief that any desired change of feeling, belief, or conduct can be produced by persuasion, administered in small doses or in concentrated fashion. On condition, to be sure, that one be as intent on differentiated target intelligence as one ought to be for violence (see Section V), and that one face the target in an intimate context, approaching as much as feasible the ideal of man-to-man conversation.

When the GVN goes some place, they always go in big groups, never in small ones [as does the VC]. They were afraid the VC might find out, and they would be killed. On the VC side, it is the same story: If the GVN had found us out [when we approached the population in small groups] they would have killed us too. But the VC were more courageous.... In addition they trusted the people. (174)

A vicious circle is thus created for one side, and a happy spiral for the other: Fearing, one reduces intimacy with those whose proximity one fears, influences them less and thus gives oneself more grounds for fear; trusting (or risking) reverses the process.

The power of persuasion by the cadres is both shown and enhanced by their targets' belief in that power. Informants, for instance, are apt to present their beliefs as the results of the persuasion to which they have been subjected, enunciating them, as J. J. Zasloff has noted, in the formula "We were taught that...." (perhaps a carry-over of the Confucian student's eagerness to receive as much as possible of what his teachers propose to him).

What I thought before I was educated was, for that very reason, error; what I learned, by that very

circumstance, truth:

What did you think of the tax you had to pay [to the VC]?

At first I thought that the taxes were high, but then the VC educated me....After their explanation I felt that their tax rate wasn't high. (216)

One may even deplore that circumstances have not allowed one to be sufficiently persuaded. "I feel sorry for my fate," a fighter writes to a friend, "I hope you understand the things I wish to say. I am living in an area where education and political indoctrination is inadequate." (217)

Noting the improvement or even adequacy of one's attitudes, one will attribute it to having been exposed to sufficient persuasion:

When my unit first reached Gia Rai Province, our morale was very high because we were constantly indoctrinated and encouraged by the cadres. (218)

"As for me," notes a fighter in a letter to "dear brothers" -- "the more I think of you two," he confides, "the more I hate the enemy and am determined to kill the Americans" -- "thanks to the indoctrination by higher echelons and my companions, I have become a mature and good soldier." (219) Another letter chooses a slightly different variant of this set locution: "I have made much progress, thanks to the indoctrination by higher echelons and my comrades." (219)

Any conduct may be explained by the presence or absence of persuasion:

What did the fighters in your unit think of hand-to-hand combat? Were they afraid?

No, because the cadres stimulated our spirits....

Why didn't your family move South in 1954?

We were too poor to leave the North. Besides, we were not propagandized by anybody, so we didn't go South. (220)

"If their [fighters'] relatives had been executed by the VC for serving the GVN," alleges an informant, "the security men, rather than weeding them out, would try to find out whether they resented the Front for killing their relatives. If so, they would be sent away for further indoctrination." (221) Take this exchange with a PAVN soldier for whose family the "land reform" of the mid-fifties had been a catastrophe:

While in the North, were you dissatisfied with the DRV Government for treating your family unjustly during the Agrarian Reform?

When I grew up... I began to think a lot about this question. But then the Youth Organization, the Cooperative, and the cadres stimulated my spirit to make me less dissatisfied. (33)

In the beginning I was very hurt and angry with them for killing my father [a GVN hamlet chief]. Then they told me that my father had done wrong... They talked to me... in order to eradicate... [my] hatred of the VC. They talked to a point where I felt they were right.... I came to hate my father, even though I did not know exactly what he had done. (47)

I was not at home when my father was killed. I came home at 11:00 p.m.; my father had been killed at about 9:00 p.m. He was beheaded in front of the house with a sword.

The VC left behind the verdict of the People's Court saying that...he had perpetrated bloody crimes against the people, that he had exploited the people....My first thought was that he was innocent....After the killing, the VC often came to my house to educate me. They analyzed my father's crimes. They said my father was a lackey, paid by the enemy to harm the people. They said a lot of things; I cannot remember them all. Thereafter, I had no more hatred for the VC, because my father was guilty, and had to pay for his crime. I did not believe in his innocence any more, and I forgot about his death. (56)

Being capable of feats with which Westerners would hardly credit it, persuasion may seem indispensable. Here is "a polite...middle-aged man...sincere and willing to supply information" (according to the interviewer) whose village in the North was bombed before he went South:

How was their [the villagers'] morale after the bombing?

They were frightened because there was no air-defense system in the area. They said that if the planes kept bombing the village, all the people would die. The village cadres motivated their spirits and raised their spirit of resistance to a high level.

How did you feel when your wife and child got killed in the bombing?

I hated the Americans immensely, especially after the village cadres motivated all of us. (222)

* * * * *

If persuasion be that necessary and powerful, according to both operators and objects, this has little to

do, in belief or reality, with secret and subtle devices.

But informants frequently do express their admiration for the cadres' proficiency with words, and recall the pleasure of listening to their "lively conversation"⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ and their "shrewd...arguments"⁽³⁾ -- especially if one had been apprehensive before they arrived in the hamlet. An informant evokes those "first moments when everybody was frightened, and when the cadres...talked so well and seemed so attractive."⁽²²³⁾ "I believed what the VC said, because they were very clever."⁽⁶²⁾

Cleverer and more accomplished, it might seem, than the GVN. Perhaps closer to the mandarins who mastered language and hoarded knowledge: more fit to rule.

Without actually saying so, the cadres may attempt to gain acceptance for the rule that the one who runs out of arguments must agree with the other's view. Education foreordains the conclusion -- the submission of the people's mind to the new mandarins -- as an informant hostile to the VC explains:

How did the families of the dead react when they learned of their sons' deaths?

They said that since their sons had died because of the Front, they would no longer make any contributions to the Front, or go on missions for the Front. They failed in their struggle, however, because as simple citizens they could not argue with the Front's cadres. Since their level of education is low, they could not argue with the cadres who had six months political training....The families were invited to see the cadres who talked to them until they ran out of arguments and had to accept the cadres' point of view.⁽⁴⁾

In addition to that [several factors making for the informant's joining the VC], I had a well-educated uncle who was well-versed in the art of reasoning. He used plenty of arguments to urge me to do my duty. I was not good at debates and could not counter his arguments. (216)

How did their [the VC] way of treating prisoners compare with the GVN's?

...One couldn't argue with them [the VC]....They were clever, but they oppressed people....One couldn't find a way to answer them. Finally one was obliged to surrender and accept what one didn't agree with. (224)

* * * * *

That is one part of the pattern. There are other and contrasting components of it.

The cadres habitually force villagers to attend meetings which are likely to be lengthy, and may follow each other at frequent intervals. The cadres may do so particularly in the phase following their seizure of power in a locality, when they make a heavy initial investment not only in violence (see Section V), but also in persuasion. Attendance is enforced by a gamut of measures ranging from forcible action and extreme threat to a polite and urgent invitation issued by or in the presence of armed men on behalf of an organization that doesn't like being gainsaid:

They [the cadres] called people together into another meeting, but the villagers refused to attend. The VC had to threaten people. They would carry on a stretcher those who refused. (225)

What were the main problems you [a regroupée] found when you operated in the South?

...It was hard to organize a meeting, because the people were afraid of the GVN.... When we came to invite the people to meetings, the people would close their doors, and many times we had to use pressure to get them to the meetings.

How did you use pressure to get the people to come to the meetings?

We had troops come to accompany us.(1)

The choice may be between attending and doing unpleasant work:

If the people don't go to the meeting when they are invited, they will be forced by the VC to grow a thorny plant used to make a fence around the combat hamlet, or to scoop up mud from the canal....Each person who doesn't come to the meeting is forced to grow 500 thorny plants.(91)

Or one may be given the choice between attending a meeting near one's home and going elsewhere, usually to an open-air prison in the mountains. Leaving home entails a number of injuries and discomforts: One loses income, is separated from one's family, leads a life full of hardship in the jungle, which the Vietnamese, expanding southward through the coastal plains, have always avoided.

Our lives were very sad. There wasn't anything joyful about them. Everywhere we went we saw only trees.(226)

And the time spent listening to persuaders has a way of being trimmed in favor of hard labor.

One of the sufferings inflicted by forced listening to cadres derives from what seems to be the paucity of the points they have to make, and their urge to repeat them -- aspects of classical training:

Between the ages of eight and fifteen... copying, reciting and commenting the classical texts known as the Small Course was the sole content of teaching. The basic manuals...were The book of filial piety and above all The book of the three characters. At about the age of fifteen...began the Large Course...centered on the learning of the four canonical and the five sacred books. The four canonical books are...The large course, Sayings commented, The book of Mencius, The just and unvarying middle. The five sacred books: The book of poetry, The book of history, The book of mutations, The book of rites, Springs and autumns.*

-- a fare in any case richer than that which cadres themselves are now allowed, to the distress of a rare informant rendered sensitive by his upper-class origin:

During reorientation sessions, we spent weeks listening to lectures on the necessity of unity between cadres and fighters. (63)

Obviously, then, common targets of re-education will not fare better. Recalling his sojourn in the mountains, an informant remembers that "the cadre started to teach us how since 1945 the whole nation has revolted against the French colonialists and rich reactionary landlords for the right to work and earn a living. Now the Revolution goes on in the South. The Front fights against the GVN and drives the Americans out of the country, in order to bring the Revolution to its successful end, and bring happiness to the people. We were all traitors, since... we worked for the GVN and made ourselves American eyes and

* Huard and Durand, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

ears. That was about all the cadre told us. He repeated it almost every day."(227)

The cadres are forever saying the same thing:

What did you like most when you lived in the village under the control of the VC?

I did not like anything at all. They repeated and repeated the same stories.(228)

They repeat it in training:

What else did the cadres say during political training?

They just repeated the same things over and over.(229)

And they repeat it in "criticism" (see Section VII):

If a man and a woman appeared to be in love [in my unit], they were strongly criticized by the cadres. They would be criticized day in and day out. The cadres just kept telling them the same things for days on end, and could drive them crazy with such talk....When I was criticized, I was furious. Sometimes I thought, if the cadres kept on criticizing me for a few more days I would snatch a pistol and kill them.(5)

But the very pain induced by exposure to monotony makes for compliance, which will presumably bring an end to the torment. As words accumulate and recur, initial tolerance or even pleasure changes to boredom.

How did the regroupees treat the new recruits?

They talked very well. I liked to listen to them talk. However, they talked too much, and after a while I got bored while they seemed never to stop talking.(230)

After boredom, pain:

Were there any female fighters in your battalion?

Yes. There was one battalion composed entirely of women. If they met you, they would propagandize you until you were exhausted.(231)

Protracted persuasion thus comes to resemble the less novel procedure of prolonged interrogation:

The VC never beat up the villagers. If someone was considered guilty, they would let him sit down, and interrogate him. If one cadre got tired, another would take his place....They would interrogate him like that, without interruption, for two or three consecutive nights and make him lose sleep. Nobody could stand sitting up for two or three nights without sleep. Whether the man was guilty or not, he would admit he was guilty.(4)

Similarly, then:

Every time a youth ran away to evade his military duty, his father or mother would have to attend study sessions until the son came back....After ten days of studying, they were released for five or seven days to call their son back. If their son did not come back, they had to pack up and go to study again. This could go on indefinitely.(161)

Or be rapidly terminated by forcible action if that were feasible:

Did you meet the VC?

Yes....They arrested me and sent me... for two days of re-education.

What did you learn in the re-educational session?

I was told that it was the duty of all young men to join their forces. Then they

asked me if I wanted to join them or to go home. I said I wanted to go home, but I didn't know the way around. At noon they ordered me to join the army. (232)

Hence, why not comply right away, without incurring the penalties which one will suffer prior to ultimate capitulation?

In 1963...the hamlet chief [sic] ordered me to join the guerrillas, and threatened that I would have to attend indoctrination courses if I disobeyed himI thought I did not have any choice, since I would have to join the guerrillas even after undergoing indoctrination courses. (192)

Had they [reluctant young men] not volunteered, they would have been forced anyway, so they decided it was better to volunteer. (174)

The prospect of an indefinite re-education in the mountains is apt to elicit the same reaction:

How did the VC recruit new fighters?

In liberated areas, they went to the villages and held meetings with all young men invited to attend. These meetings were turned into study sessions, with the VC telling everyone what their duties are, that is, to join the VC and fight the Americans. The VC told the students that since they did everything in a democratic way, they would let the students volunteer for the service. Those who volunteered were set free. Those who didn't were told to attend more study sessions until they, too, volunteered. In this way, everybody volunteered in the end. (64)

While an informant, abducted and "re-educated," recalls having been asked whether he now wanted to

volunteer for service with the VC, he was also aware of the fact that "everyone must volunteer to stay with them. Those who didn't would be kept for another education course. A young man who had been at a previous education course told us that this time he would volunteer to enlist in the Front forces, because he had previously refused to do so and had been kept for the next education course, which was the one that I was in. So, at the end of the education course, when the VC asked for volunteers, I offered myself. There were some comrades who refused to do so, but the VC didn't let them go, and kept them for another education course. Later on I saw them in the VC ranks just like me." (12)

The threat of the mountains is particularly forceful in the plains:

What did the inhabitants of your village think of the VC cadres?

Everyone was afraid of being taken to the mountains by the VC to take a political re-education course. That was why nobody dared to contradict them. (83)

"The cadres," an informant recalls, "had the habit of repeating their explanations to the people each time they asked for contributions. But it wasn't because of those words that the people agreed to pay. The fact was that everybody was afraid of being sent to the re-education centers in the mountains." (223)

I didn't worry about being killed by the VC or anything like that. I was only afraid of being sent to too many education sessions, and that because of that I wouldn't have time to work. (233)

But any offense might be thus sanctioned, as a Rhetribesman concisely indicates:

What do the VC say when they come to the hamlet?

...They say that whoever helps the Diem-Americans will be sent away to study politics. (228)

The slightest (or so one may have misjudged) misdemeanor might have this sequel:

In my hamlet some people said: "If this situation continues, we must certainly go to My Tho to live!" And they were soon taken by the Front for re-education. (234)

Just as more important recalcitrance would:

When the day came to do collective labor, and I had tried to pretend to have a headache to dodge the work, the guerrillas would say to me: "If you do not like to do collective labor, then bring some food with you and come with us. You need a few days of re-education." They said only that, and I always had to join the collective labor. (23)

Do you know why people in your unit became active in the Front?

I don't really know. But I think that the men in my unit living in Front-controlled areas had to join its ranks, whether they wanted to do so or not. If they stayed at home...the VC would not leave them in peace. The VC would take them to attend an educational course...they would leave these men nobody knows where, so the men joined out of fear. (135)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If coercion through the threat and infliction of forced exposure to persuasion, in the ways in which the

cadres practice it, seems to be an effective device for securing compliance, how persuasive is the persuasion attempted in such contexts? Considerably, it would appear.

Believing in the unlimited power of appropriate exposure to persuasion, the cadres, implicitly, affirm that they may use coercion, to any required extent, in procuring such exposure, without thereby reducing its effectiveness. So far from apprehending such interference, the cadres rely on the ultimate effects of coercion to undo whatever negative impact it may have in the short run: "after oppression," a VC document advises, "continued indoctrination should be maintained to let the POW...admit our oppression was right." (235)

To be sure, the cadres will try to sweeten coercion with persuasion when confronted with the task of bringing a target to expose himself properly to the latter mode of influence:

I received a letter from my family calling me back to the hamlet, because the Viet Cong wanted to talk to me. I came back....No sooner had I finished my dinner than they came, and invited me to go out with them. When we arrived at a deserted place, they "borrowed" my ID card, and told me that I should assist in the fight against the ARVN to liberate the people, so that everybody would be well-fed and adequately dressed. They took me to various places; each time they stopped and talked for three to five days, then changed place again. All together I was lectured for ten days. After they released me, I asked the guy who kept my ID card to give it back to me. He replied that he had lost my ID card when the ARVN came to my hamlet in an operation, and told me to stay with them lest I be arrested if I went out without my ID card. (17)

While I was tending the family's water buffaloes, I met the cadres at the edge of the forest....They talked over and over again about joining the Front; they forced me to abandon the water buffaloes in order to attend the political training courses.(236)

Right then, the target may start believing -- or pretending -- that it is to the persuasion that he is succumbing. Similarly in case of deception:

When and why did you join the Front?

In 1963 a cadre named Nang gathered the village youths to motivate them to participate in a transport team for wounded soldiers....He explained to us that the work we would have to do was humanitarian work, and that by doing it we would achieve a good deed which we could be proud of. He also reassured us that all we would have to do was to carry the wounded soldiers down to the sampans at the river.

More than 20 youths were then led to Thanh My village. It turned out...that there was no fighting at all....

I was going to come back to my village when Thanh Bai, then the 514th Battalion Commanding officer, came to see me. He said to me that I should stay with the battalion rather than go back home, because the GVN officials would regard me as a Front follower as a consequence of the fact that I had joined the Front's civilian-laborer team. He added that fighting for the Front was fighting for the independence of the country, and that even if I was killed on the battlefield, my death would be a glorious death. I thought he was right and I volunteered to join the 514th Battalion right away.(237)*

Unafraid that a target coerced and deceived may

* Emphasis added.

become less amenable to persuasion -- the power of that device as well as of the new condition into which the target will have been brought will outweigh any resistance toward the rude manipulators now turned subtle -- the cadres also find it useful to exact declarations of "free intent" under duress. Even in the case of fighters:

Prior to each attack, we had to attend an indoctrination session....Each Party chapter signed a resolution in which the members swore that they would do their utmost in the battle. (218)

Please try to remember what principal shortcomings of the cadres were reviewed during the reorientation course [at the beginning of 1965]....

The main shortcomings during combat were that the cadres...were still afraid of the enemy. The conclusion was that the cadres should swear that they were no longer afraid of the enemy. (238)

During...[a] session prior to the battle [of Cai Be], the VC told us to swear that if one fighter got killed in the assault, the one behind him would replace him for the assault. In line with this oath, one wave of fighters after another assaulted the GVN post. (123)

In its insistence that persons subjected to severe threats -- which may of course, as in the cases just cited, be unspoken -- "volunteer" for this or that, the VC seems to be denying a useful but awkward piece of reality, as it also does when "monetary rewards" for defectors from the GVN are said in a VC document to "generate...incorrect tendencies," one of which "consists of using money in encouraging enemy troops to desert with weapons." For "this excludes knowledge [it is incompatible with the

position] that our basic point is that the people and the South Vietnamese troops are to be proselyted for the Revolution. We must not use money to win over people as our enemy does." (200)

These are denials, however, which the objects of such operations appear to some extent disposed to share.

As the cadres seem to expect, initial coercion need not prevent the target from later developing a sense of spontaneously recognizing the truth of what he was subsequently "taught":

What were the reasons which made you participate in the resistance against the French?

...The Viet Minh came down from the mountains [to the informant's hamlet], rounded up all the youths and took them to the mountains. I was among them....Although I was forced to join the Viet Minh, after being lectured on the duty of youth to fight against foreign domination, I voluntarily chose to stay with them. (34)

At first I didn't think of joining the Front, but the VC arrested me and sent me to a thought reform course. I was so frightened that they would kill me. They didn't, but I was taken by the education -- I joined them.... I was arrested and frightened that they might kill me. They also put me through a thought reform course, after which I promised I would work for them. (70)

"Before 1945," a raillier reports, "my parents belonged to the landlord class, but now we are categorized as poor farmers. The Viet Minh stripped us of our land.... I lived in the liberated area. If I wanted to acquire some knowledge, I had to attend their school [which the informant did]. In 1957 I offered my services to the GVN...in the

capacity of an intelligence agent....I had been working for ten days when a man...who had some grudge against my family and me accused me of working for the VC....I was afraid I might be in trouble, I escaped to Bac-Lieu.... When I was in Bac-Lieu the VC...asked me to join the Front. As I lived in their area, there was not much I could do but comply with their demands." And then, "after I had joined, I too, was taken by their propaganda." (65)

Initial revulsion may be recalled, but also its subsiding, as with this rallier:

What do you think about the fact that the Front sometimes forces people to join its combat forces?

When my brother and I were forced by the VC to join the Front, we were very angry with them. But in listening to their propaganda, we believed in their words and sided with them. (259)

Reactions to having been engaged by deception may follow a similar course. "In November 1963," an informant recalls, "I went to the forest [near his village] one day with two of my brothers to cut wood. Three VC came and invited my elder brother and me to go with them. They let my younger brother drive our oxcart home. They told us that we would be educated for a few days, then could go back home. They took us to their camp in the forest." However, "we were educated and at the same time did production work from November 1963 to March 1964." Now, "at first I was dissatisfied with being kidnapped, but after the education course, and from hearing them speak, I was no longer angry with them." When a few moments later the interviewer asks: "Why did you follow them?"

the informant answers: "They took me and had me educated."

The sense of being forced and that of being freely willing may even coexist. "They took me away, but I also volunteered to go away with them," an informant recalls about his entry into the VC. (3)

Why did you join the Front?

Partly because I liked the Front, and partly because I was forced to join. (241)

And here is a recruit in an ARVN training center on leave in his village:

When and where did the VC come to persuade you when you got home?

They came to the hamlet at about 7 p.m., and rounded up all the villagers to hear their speech. They said: ...The VC said this to the people on the front yard of the church. I was not there, but the VC sent two of their men to see me in my parents' house. They told me: "You must stay in the hamlet. If tomorrow comes, and we cannot find you because you have gone back to the Phu Bai training center, we will have all your family executed and you yourself will be executed when we catch you...."

What had you heard...about the aims of the Front before or when you decided to join?

They said nothing besides: The Revolution is liberating the country and is struggling for the well-being of the people.

How did this appeal to you?

I saw they were eloquent and their speech was appealing to me....If I had not followed them, they would have executed me. (242)*

* Emphasis added.

PART TWO: ILLUSTRATIONS AND ELABORATIONS

1 (Section I) THE DOMINANCE OF FAVORABLE FORECASTS IN
VC PERSUASION

Asked what he knows about the "aims" of the VC, an informant may recall that "we were told about the Party's policy and Uncle's policy. They said there was fighting between the VC and the GVN, and that they would surely win in the end "(243) Coming to an informant's village, as they "often" did, "to organize meetings," "the cadres usually told the people about the successes of the Front units." (20) Here is an exchange with a soldier of the Northern armed forces who infiltrated into the South to fight in the Main Force:

Where were you trained after you joined the Army?

I was trained in Ha Tinh Province.

What did you study while in Ha Tinh Province?

I learned how to roll on the ground, crawl, and how to aim. I also studied political subjects.

What did you study in politics?

I studied about the situation in the South.

What did you study about the situation in the South?

I studied that the Front in the South was winning....

What else did you study about politics?

Nothing...

What did you study while in Quang Binh Province [the next stage in the informant's training]?

We studied about the ethnic minorities in the South.

What else did you study? Did you study about the situation in the South?

Yes, we studied a little about the situation in the South.

What did you study?

The cadres talked about the success of the Front in the South. They said the Front had occupied four-fifths of the territory, and had captured many weapons and a lot of ammunition. They also said that the Front had inflicted serious losses on the Americans

What did you study in the military field?

We studied about the military situation in the South. We studied about the Front victories over the enemy. We were told that the Front had captured many weapons and liberated many of the people in the South.(244)

Even when one starts out talking about values, one may clinch the argument by affirming a future event. "After we had urged them," a VC team records a contact with the population, "to bear a feud against the My [American]-Diem regime and explained to them the policy lines of the Front, they were convinced that the My-Diem regime would be destroyed."*(245)

Many Vietnamese set great store by horoscopy. "As soon as a child is born," note Pierre Huard and Maurice Durand, "his parents want to know as quickly as possible what his fate is going to be." From then on, "there is a continued preoccupation with that matter on each occasion: examination, marriage, serious illnesses, important affairs." And "among the seers of the future are

*Emphasis added. And "regime," in such contexts, seems to connote an authority rather than its policies.

the geomanticist, the astrologer, the sorcerer, the physiognomist, the zoo-chiromancer."*

2. (Section I) THE POSSIBLE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL IDEAS ON "THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN"

Affirming, denying, doubting that the one or the other side "possesses the just cause," are of frequent occurrence among those interviewed. When a rallier -- he may be insincere, but his choice of lie not less significant for that -- is asked why he thinks that the GVN has "the just cause," he answers: "More people are living in the areas controlled by the Nationalists. Very few people live in the VC areas." (241)

3. (Section I) BASING ONE'S CHOICES ON ONE'S FORECASTS

Asked what was the most important single factor that made these young men join the Front, a cadre recalls that "the Front was very strong at that time. That was the main factor which.. made many join the Front." (246) A, fortunately, "somewhat stupid" (according to the interviewer) peasant recalls, when asked "Were there more Catholics or more Buddhists in your village?": "At the time of Ngo Dinh Diem there were more Catholics than Buddhists." (247) "It is because I thought the Communists would never win that I rallied," a defector declares with apparent ease. "If I had thought they would win, I wouldn't have rallied. If I thought they would win in Quảng Ngãi Province, I'd never have rallied." (3) When

* Huard and Durand, op cit , p. 84

queried, "Did you think the Front was winning when you decided to rally?" a simple informant appears bewildered: "If the Front was winning, why should I rally?"(220) But here is a rare subject from "the intellectual-bourgeois class" (comment by the interviewer) recalling the fall of 1963: "At that time, I was convinced that the Front had something to do with the overthrow of Mr. Diem, and I believed that the Front would achieve final victory soon. So I thought of joining the Front."(249)

4. (Section I) THE CADRES' EFFORT TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM DISTRESSING SUBJECTS

Could your comrades talk among themselves on all matters?

We could talk freely. But...it was forbidden to talk about. .subjects such as might affect the morale of men.

What are the subjects that might affect the morale of the men?

For instance, the men couldn't talk about their families, for this might make them think of them and miss them, which would have dampened their fighting enthusiasm. Nor could they speak of weapons used by the enemy, for this might make them feel afraid to die.(159)

"Dear parents," a fighter writes in this spirit, "be calm; don't think too much of us lest your health decrease."(225)

(Section I) SILENCE AND DENIAL WITH REGARD TO
IBACKS

In your unit, could the men learn about what was going on around them?

There was the daily newspaper, Ngai Phong [Liberation] published by the Front . . .

What were the successes and defeats of the Front units, according to Ngai Phong?

The newspaper never reported defeats. It only gave news on the successes of the Front units (159)

In Giap's account of the war with the French* nothing whatsoever is said about the early months of 1951 when he was being defeated by de Lattre.

6. (Section I) SECRECY AND NEGATION WITH REGARD TO CASUALTIES

According to one informant, VC newspapers did "mention the losses of both sides," though of course "those suffered by the Front units were always minor compared to those of GVN forces." (159) However, when another fighter is asked how many casualties the VC suffered in a certain attack in which he participated, he responds in a frequently (though by no means invariably) encountered vein:

No one would know. They kept it a secret, and not even the families of the dead were informed. (148)

"Even the losses of civilian cadres were kept secret." (170)

The well-known insistence in the VC that its dead be carried from the battlefield even at much cost and risk seems in part related to the leadership's desire to hide the level of casualties from the population.

* People's War, People's Army, p. 87.

In the suspect words of a rallier:

If the dead were left on the battlefield, and the people saw them, they would be demoralized... If the people knew, they would say that if the Front fighters died at that rate, they would not be so stupid as to join the Front (9)

"When the cadres talked about fighting between VC and GVN soldiers," recalls another informant, "they only mentioned the damage caused to GVN soldiers."⁽²⁵¹⁾ Of course, one will want to doubt such self-serving statements. But then one may recall the treatment by the Party's leaders of the famous events which occurred in and around Haiphong on November 20, 1946. Most observers speak of six thousand Vietnamese being killed when a French cruiser opened up its guns; Ngo Van Chieu in his Diary of a Viet Minh Fighter affirms there were fifteen to twenty thousand dead. But neither Giap nor Truong Chinh in their famous accounts of the war mention any casualties at all, preferring a denial of death to the indictment of assassins in a manner which Bernard Fall, commenting on Truong, mistakenly calls "restrained":

On November 20, 1946, they [the French] obstructed the collection of customs duties by our government [in the port of Haiphong], and fired on our security and customs men, while the latter were carrying out their duty. Our troops fired back in self-defense. D'Argenlieu and Valluy ordered the occupation of Haiphong . . .*

* The Resistance Will Win, p 98.

"It often happened," an informant explains, "that when a military cadre was just killed in combat, the men under his command were not told of his death. They were told instead that the cadre had been assigned to another unit. Everybody was forbidden to talk about the loss borne by his unit, even with other soldiers." (6)

This practice extends to the apparatus itself, as a lower cadre recalls:

The former chief of the Political Section [the informant's boss] and the chief of the Military Section of Province Headquarters were killed by GVN soldiers during an operation. The cadres told those who had worked under the dead cadres that they had been transferred to some other places. I learned about their death only four months later. (170)

Of course, the penchant for utter denial is not always unchecked; that is, regulations, as described by a loyal officer-prisoner, are not always disregarded, though surely not as respectfully treated as he alleges:

The death of a soldier is always brought to the notice of his family by mail. The letter bears on the envelope the words "Very urgent, Express" and a drawing representing two jet planes. It must be forwarded not later than three days after the soldier's death. If the dead man's family lives in a GVN-controlled area, where the letter cannot be sent, a cadre is sent there to inform the family orally. (152)

According to other informants, however, the Party has invented a compromise between the norm of immediate disclosure and the disposition towards definitive denial:

Before officially informing the families of the deaths [of family members in VC service], the local cadres told them they had heard

that their sons had died. They repeated this many times, making the families believe in the news, and then disbelieve in it. As time went on, their sorrow lessened. The cadres consoled them, and sent villagers to see them and console them. When the cadres saw that the sorrow of the families had considerably lessened, they gave them the letters from the Front units announcing to them the deaths, and explained what had happened. At this point the cadres gathered the people and conducted a commemorative ceremony in which they praised the deeds of the dead fighters, which consoled the families. Still, they blamed the cadres for not informing them immediately of the deaths. (135)

A deferred cost which, if not heavily discounted by the cadres, as it apparently often is, might have made this particular device seem inexpedient in the first place:

If a fighter was sent far away from home, it took the Front a long time to tell his family of his death. But even in the case of a fighter who operated near his home, his family wasn't told immediately of his death. Usually, the families were told about the deaths by the villagers themselves, who had heard rumors to that effect. The Front members never told the families immediately of their deaths, because they were afraid that if they did, the families would mourn their sons or husbands and become dissatisfied. If these families asked about the health of their sons or husbands, the Front members...said, "Your husband [or son] is now going on a mission in this or that area, and he will be away for that many months or years." They never answered frankly: "Your husband [or son] is dead." In this way they let these families' sorrow and anger simmer down. But then, when they [the families] found out that their sons or husbands had died, they...hated the Front....They said, "My son or husband joined the Front and sacrificed his life

for it, and yet you didn't even bother to tell us when he died." They were very sad (66)

Yet, in other conditions, or according to other observers, the device works, even though deception is even more blatant:

Were the families informed of the deaths [of fighters]?

No, they knew nothing about the deaths. If they found out about the deaths, it would be about six months later.

How did they find out? Through rumors?

If the families learned of the death through rumors, the VC would send their village cadres to see the family, and console them by saying that the rumors were false. Only about three or five months later did the VC inform them of the death. By then, their sorrow and their anger against the Front had been dissipated. (123)

The VC belief in the expediency of at first deceiving a target about the full extent of the damage to be imposed on him seems to be acted on in a variety of situations.

"The Front," recalls a Party member and cadre who has rallied, "took three mau of ricefield and three mau of orchard from my family. The cadres... tried to appease him [my father] by promising that those who would till his land would share the crops with him. But... the farmers did not give him anything later on... Comforted by the cadres' promises, my father was not then greatly depressed, because he continued to believe that he had not lost his property. He realized thereafter that he had been fooled, and complained endlessly about his losses." (253)

Asked to "describe the circumstances of your being drafted," an informant recalls how "that day, in January 1965, when I came back home from the ricefields, three guerrillas called on me. They told me that I had to follow them for a sabotage mission near the village. I had to go, and they led me to the 'new recruit training camp' in Hung Thanh My village "(254) Queried "how did you become active in the Liberation Front," another person interviewed remembers that "I was out of a job ..and had to earn a living by fishing or by gathering wood. The VC came to my house and said, 'Why don't you make use of your profession as a goldsmith? We know a place near the [Cambodian] border which has a big market set up by the regroupees and their wives, and those wives are all fond of jewelry.' When I heard them talking, I was dizzy with joy " However, "the trip lasted six days and nights. During the day I was subjected to lengthy propaganda sessions. On the sixth day the VC told me the truth. They said that my profession as a goldsmith was very precious to the Revolution and that I would be needed. to produce weapons.. I was very disappointed, but as I thought they would not let me go, I dared not refuse. They led me to. an arms factory ..in the jungle...."(255)

7. (Section I) THE TARGETS OF THE REFUSAL TO ADMIT BAD NEWS MAY AGREE THAT THE DEVICE IS NECESSARY

Among the many informants who report the VC conduct in question most seem to view its adoption as clearly unavoidable. Asked, "Were you told about the losses of the

Front?" a PAVN infiltrator recalls that "they only told us about victories. They never talked about the losses, because if they did, who would dare come here [from the North to the South]?" -- though this informant, as well as others with similar records, correctly and obviously indicated that if one is ordered as a PAVN soldier to go South, one has little choice. Again, the words may be insincere, and yet the choice of this particular pretense is significant -- just as when the same informant repeats it in answering the question "Why does the Front keep on fighting?" "They only talked about victories, because if they talked about losses, no one would have the heart to fight." (155) These explanations by an informant displaying disaffection toward the VC are close to those which a fighter loyal to it may offer:

If your unit had a reverse, did you tell it to someone in another unit?

I didn't, since that would have a bad effect upon both units. (256)

8. (Section II) WHY HAS THE PARTY, EVER SINCE 1945, BEEN SO MUCH STRONGER IN VIETNAM THAN IN THE REST OF THE THIRD WORLD?

Undertaking to "compare the situation of our country with that of a number of countries in Southeast Asia," Giap observes that "in the same month of August [1945, when the Vietnamese Party seized power] and under the same favorable conditions..., not only did the Revolution in these countries not win great success, but it even met with setbacks,"* a difference which this author

* People's War, People's Army, p. 87

leaves, as one might expect, unexplained, but which "bourgeois" observers also have hardly succeeded in elucidating

9. (Section II) BEING FOR THE VC "BECAUSE" OF GVN MISCONDUCT

Asked why "the people" were "for the Front" in his village, an informant furnishes this "main reason": "Everybody was oppressed and mistreated by the Civil Guardsmen stationed in the outpost located on the other side of the river "(138) "Generally speaking," notes another witness, "the villagers were VC sympathizers because the SDC [Self Defense Corps, though largely recruited locally] stole their chickens and shot down cocoanuts to eat the fruit " Asked later in the interview why the GVN doesn't have the people's support, he responds: "Because the SDC often burns the villagers' houses and rapes the women." (257)

10. (Section II) BEING FOR THE VC "BECAUSE" OF THE CADRES' PROPER BEHAVIOR

What parts of the Front's program and what aspects of the Front behavior did you think were ..good?

They behaved well. They did not steal from the people; they did not flirt with girls; they did not threaten the people....

Did you think the Front had a sound program?
I don't know. (258)

Conversely,

Why did the people in your village hate the VC?

They hated the VC because they didn't like the VC cadre who was in charge of that hamlet. (259)

11. (Section II) THE GOOD AUTHORITY IS THE ONE WHICH LEAVES ME ALONE

To the question "What do you mean when you say the local officials were 'all right'?" an informant responds: "They minded their own business and only carried out the orders they received from the government." (243) Orders, it is understood, which happily impinged but little on one's life. "I never heard the people complain about the ARVN," affirms a witness wanting to award that body high marks. "They never caused trouble to anybody." (135) Asked how the six guerrillas residing in his hamlet used to behave toward the people, an informant, in praise, this time, of the other side in the contest, avers: "Usually they had nothing against you and would let you live in peace." (64) Such a guerrilla himself affirms: "We minded our own business. We did not interfere with the people." (243)

Perhaps the best authority is the one which I can forget:

What did you think about the GVN, the hamlet chief, the village council, the district chief, etc.?

I didn't pay any attention to them. They didn't do anything that would make people complain. (260)

Were there any armed forces in your village?

Yes. The village had from forty to fifty militia. They went on operations against the VC in the area

How did they behave?

They were perfect. They did not bother the population. They rarely came to my hamlet, because it was situated far from the village council. (195)

12. (Section II) IF AUTHORITY DOES IMPINGE ON ME, ALL I FREQUENTLY ASK IS THAT IT AVOID BEING ABUSIVE

Beginning to indicate what he thinks (or what his interlocutors should think he is thinking) of the GVN officials in his village, an informant affirms that the members of the village council "were good to the people " He then goes on to explain that they "didn't do anything which dissatisfied the people." (230) A PAVN soldier setting out to discuss the cadres in his Northern village similarly declares that they "behaved nicely toward the people," and then renders this praise more precise by reporting that they "didn't do anything which might make the villagers dissatisfied....They didn't wrong anyone " (147)

13. (Section II) "I WASN'T DISSATISFIED WITH ANYTHING WHEN I JOINED THE VC"

That this is sometimes a protective lie becomes evident when sarcasm appears, as in this interview with a cadre:

How did you feel about your life [prior to joining the VC]?

I was poor. We didn't have enough to eat. . . We had to borrow to live until harvest time, then had to pay back what we had got through borrowing. We had no means to go and live elsewhere. I wasn't dissatisfied with anything. (261)

14. (Section II) THE SUPREME PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE VC
FOCUS ON PURE POLITICS

Take the famous Ten Points of late 1960: For a coalition government (1), for democracy (2), for armed forces of a new type (6), for the rights of minorities (7), for nonalignment in foreign policy (8), for reunification (9), for peace (10) There remain three points of socio-economic reference: Economic development (3), land reform (4), and education (5) Similarly, the Eight Demands raised after the coup of November 1963:

(1) against strategic hamlets, (2) for the release of political prisoners, (3) for democracy, (4) against dictatorship, (5) against repression, (6) against the many organizations created by Diem (7) against conscription -- and, finally, (8) "Cancel all kinds of unjustified taxes "

15. (Section II) THE THEME OF THE BAD GVN OFFICIAL IN
ORAL PERSUASION BY THE VC

"At Tet [the long celebration of the lunar new year], when [GVN] soldiers come to their villages," advises a VC document in characteristic fashion, "organize meetings with the families. .point out to them that when they are in the village, they are oppressed and extorted...when they are drafted, they are scorned and bullied by their officers."^{*}

What did the VC say in their propaganda?

They said that wherever the GVN went, the people's property would be stolen and the

^{*}Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, p. 262. Emphasis added.

people themselves would be arrested and beaten up. They said the Front never arrested anyone . . . They never stole anything from the people. (262)

16. (Section II) IT IS THE PEASANTRY AND NOT THE WORKING CLASS WHICH IS "THE MAIN FORCE OF THE REVOLUTION"

To be sure, in obeisance to venerated words, Giap alleges, before coming to the obvious and capital point just made, that "the working class" is, in Vietnam, too, "leading the Revolution."* And an unusual VC document concerned with "proselyting" among workers starts out with claiming brazenly that "the workers. .are the strongest backing of our party," but admits that "there exists no firm control of the workers [by the Party] . . . There is a retardation of the workers' movement... The degree of political awareness on the part of the workers is weak, and the Party's goals and policy are not deeply instilled among the workers ...The workers have no confidence in their abilities to liberate themselves, they still falter and depend on the effort of the rural class and of the North to send its army into South Vietnam and destroy the enemy . . . The workers...still have not recognized their role ...still have no confidence in their strength . . . , not having been indoctrinated in great enough a number, depth, breadth." While the VC has for years used to great effect "liberation associations" for major categories of the population such as youth, women, and farmers, the document (undated, but apparently rather

* People's War, People's Army, p 94

recent) speaks about "the future" Liberation Labor Association. One only need compare the crucial role played by the workers of Petrograd in the Bolsheviks' seizure of power with the present insignificance, for the VC, of those of Saigon-Cholon to realize (even if the difference in degrees of development between the Russia of the teens and the South Vietnam of the sixties is taken into account) how "small" the party is; how much, in the result, if not in the process, its failure with the urban proletariat reproduces that experienced by the Chinese Communists almost two generations ago. "The workers in the arms factories," claims Giap when recounting the war with the French, and no doubt desiring to feature at least one exploit performed by workers, "raised to new heights the spirit of the Vietnamese working class": So far from the revolutionary working class secreting the party, it is the latter which creates the former in the previously primitive "liberated areas."

17. (Section II) THERE HAVE BEEN LOCAL SITUATIONS WHERE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION PLAYED IN THE VC'S SEIZURE OF POWER THE ROLE WHICH IT HAD FOR THE BOLSHEVIKS IN 1917

What was the villagers' attitude towards the Front when it rose up?

Because of its promise to give land to the poor, all the poor farmers gave it their full support (253)

18. (Section 11) THE PARTY'S CALCULATION FORBIDDING
INSTANT AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

At the time of the "August Revolution," "the Indo-chinese Communist Party...left out of its program the watchword: agrarian revolution. .with a view to making a differentiation between types of landlords and winning a number of them over to the anti-imperialist cause "★ Early in the war with the French, "there are," according to the same leader, "some friends who think that while the colonialists are being fought, land must at the same time be taken from the landlords and distributed to the tillers. We say to them: .at present we shall limit ourselves to the confiscation of land belonging to Vietnamese traitors. This does not mean that we shall . not carry out land reform during the course of the Resistance War. But it must be undertaken step by step in such a way as to differentiate among the feudalists and isolate the French. .aggressors "★★ "The term 'traitor,'" notes in 1961 a directive to cadres on the district level, "was too loosely applied during struggles within villages. . There was no distinction made between landowners; all were regarded as enemies of the Revolution, without taking into account their political concepts, not distinguishing between good and bad landowners "★★★ "With regard to rich famers," orders another document of the early sixties, "continue to protect their economic interests, using

★ Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, N.Y., 1962, p. 21

★★ Truong Chinh, The Resistance Will Win, N.Y., 1962, p. 109.

★★★ Cited by Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, p. 98

indoctrination to lessen their apathy for our cause. . . .
With regard to landlords who are not wicked agents of the enemy, we will continue to recognize their right to collect rent, but will force them to reduce rents."*
More generally, "our Party applied itself to making a differentiation within the bosom of the landlord class by providing. . .for different treatment for each type of landlord according to the latter's political attitude"**. That is, good conduct toward the Party (including the act of staying in one's village, while many of the rural "rich" were leaving for the cities) should buy freedom from expropriation.

19. (Section II) THE PARTY MAY PROMISE AN AGRARIAN REVOLUTION WITHOUT ANY SPECIFICATION AS TO WHEN IT WILL REALIZE IT

In one informant's hamlet, "they have not distributed any land, but they kept saying they would take the land from the rich to give it to the poor."(242)

Did the Front promise to carry out a land reform in the future?

Yes, but they didn't say when. They did tell the people that it was too early to talk about the distribution of land. They weren't about to take the land from the landowners and give it to the poor farmers yet.(117)

*Quoted by Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, p. 278.

**Giap, People's War, People's Army, p. 32.

20. (Section II) THE PARTY MAY NOT EVEN PROMISE
AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

Even though the Front has not distributed land in your village, did the cadres promise the people that the Front would soon do that?

No, the cadres haven't mentioned anything about land distribution. (109)

21. (Section II) PEASANTS MAY ASPIRE TO LIMITATION
RATHER THAN ABOLITION OF RENT PAYMENTS

What did you think was the most important aim [of the VC]?

To fight off the landowners was the most important aim. And it appealed most to the people of my village who were.. oppressed by landowners.

How were they oppressed?

By having to pay high land rent

Did the people of your village have to pay taxes to the VC?

...The VC took the land from absent owners and distributed it to the farmers; in return, they collected 15 bushels of paddy a year from them. This arrangement was very good; the farmers used to have to pay the landowners 25 bushels a year. (102)

22. (Section II) THE PEASANTS' ASPIRATIONS MAY CONCERN
INCOME RATHER THAN PROPERTY

Were those who received land from the Front afraid that the land might eventually be taken away from them?

No, they were not afraid. During the War against the French, the Viet Minh had instituted land distribution too, and when

1

Mr. Ngo came back to build the outpost, the land was given back to the owners without any trouble. Therefore in the present war those who received land were not worried. They would give back the land to its owners and the latter would create no trouble for them. The landowners knew from past experience that it was better not to sue those who took their land because, if they did, the Front might come back in the future and kill them. (98)

23. (Section II) THE IDEA OF AN AGRARIAN REVOLUTION
MAY APPEAR TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP AS TOO ADVANCED FOR
MANY PEASANTS

Did the Front carry out land distribution in your hamlet?

We had not yet been granted the right to do it. We kept the present status unchanged because my hamlet is still a contested area. The land distribution policy has not yet permeated the villagers' minds. (175)

Did the Front carry out a land distribution in your village?

The Front, so far, has not carried out a genuine land reform. The Front recognized that the land distribution created turmoil inside each village and generated discontent. (180)

24. (Section II) IT IS THE PARTY'S SEIZURE OF POWER
WHICH RENDERS RADICAL CHANGE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE POSSIBLE,
RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND

Did the cadres talk of the...Front's agrarian policy?

No. In areas where the liberation movement is still very weak, such as in Vien An and Dien Toan [the informant's hamlets], they only touched on the question of conquest by

the Americans and of the Americans' lackeys fighting their own people... They only talked of the agrarian reform policy in liberated areas (239)

25. (Section II) PREMATURE LAND DISTRIBUTION MAY PROVOKE CATASTROPHE FOR THE PARTY

Could you retrace the fluctuation of the Hoa Dinh villagers' and cadres' morale from 1960 until now?

The Hoa Dinh villagers' morale has changed three times... The second period in which the cadres' and villagers' morale was low lasted from February 1962 until November 1963. It was the time when [the cadres] carried out a land distribution in Hoa Dinh. They divided the overall surface of rice-fields to [sic] the number of Hoa Dinh villagers. This made the middle farmers angry... This also [sic] created resentment among the Hoa Dinh villagers [at large?].... The dissatisfied villagers started to take revenge on the cadres, and they began bringing out information to the GVN authorities. The ARVN conducted a...sweep operation... and set up a military post right in Hoa Dinh. The village cadres had to flee.(263)

26. (Section II) AGRARIAN REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE

While the account to follow may exaggerate the peasants' passivity, it may correctly locate initiative within the Party:

Did the Front carry out land reform in your hamlet or village?

Yes.

When did it do so?

At the end of 1964

What did it do?

The VC called a meeting of all the villagers, and then told them that the rich should share their land with the poor.. Then they took the communal land and distributed it to the landless farmers

What did the villagers think of the Front's land reform?

The VC called the people together and talked to them, but I don't know how the people felt about it. (144)

27. (Section III) THE UNENDING STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPULSE

What was the composition of your Party group organization?

There were thirteen of us and we were all cadres in charge of the training school [of a unit for the armed forces].. We met once a month..

Would you tell me your group's resolutions for the month before you were captured?

Our group's resolutions would concentrate on whatever aspects of our unit fell short of the ideal. For example, if the members were afraid of getting killed, or if they took pleasure in eating or drinking, then our group's resolutions would be concerned with the elimination of these bad faults. The cadres would make a resolution that they would set up good examples for the fighters to follow, emphasizing the two bad thoughts I mentioned before ...The month before I was captured our resolutions dealt with the problem of greediness and lewdness. Some bad incidents had happened in the unit, and so the cadres resolved to concentrate their leadership on these two aspects

Were your group's resolutions six months before you were captured different from those your group made recently?

... there weren't any changes in our resolutions. (42)

28. (Section III) THE CADRES MAY EQUATE LIBERTY WITH SINFUL INDULGENCE

"Political cadres," an informant recalls, "explained the word 'liberty': GVN liberty, and revolutionary

liberty They explained it as follows: GVN liberty means to be free, completely and limitlessly; to be free to gamble, to indulge in debauchery, and to watch immoral movies.. Revolutionary liberty is orderly and in line with human values "(212)

29. (Section III) FIGHTERS DEFEND THEIR RIGHT TO PLEASURE

"The squad leader," an informant recalls, "was serious and used to criticize us for amusing ourselves We retorted: 'Should we weep?' . The platoon leader was even more serious "(264) "I have most often been criticized," a cadre remembers, "for smoking cigarettes and drinking beer. I defended myself by saying that members in other units smoked and drank also Others joined in the discussion and they argued very excitedly that they joined the Revolution so that they would live happily, that the revolutionary gains we have achieved...give us the right to enjoy ourselves to an equivalent degree by smoking mild cigarettes and drinking beer "(238) "The cadres said," recalls another former combatant, "that we should not smoke deluxe cigarettes or drink. That made the fighters mad and they tried to struggle against this regulation, but to no avail. The fighters told the cadres: 'You know that we fighters can die at any moment. You should allow us to smoke and drink and enjoy life a little, because we never know when we are going to die ' The fighters' attempt was unsuccessful So, from then on they just sat silent and listened to the cadres talk "(135) There was only one device offering some chance: to present one's own ends as means for their goals. "I had to say during the self-criticism sessions," an ingenious rallier recalls, "that I spent all my money on food, so that I could have good health to serve the country." (265)

30. (Section III) THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF WORK AND PLEASURE

"If a male clerk typist falls in love with a female clerk typist," recalls a rallier from the Propaganda Section of the Saigon-Gia Dinh Special Sector, "and the girl denounces his attitude to the superiors, a self-criticism session will be held...with the participation of the man and the girl and the superiors only. They will tell him that his attitude might damage the reputation of the Front, and that his mind will be influenced by his emotions, and his work for the Party will suffer from it. We have to show him all the far-reaching consequences of his attitude to make him put an end to it. We tell him, for example, that if he is rejected by the girl, he will become broken-hearted and he will rally to the GVN "(32) "The Front," reports one of its veterans

1 In a similar vein, "was very afraid that its members were involved in love affairs, because if they were, their minds would be preoccupied with thoughts of love, and they would not be able to carry out their tasks. Every day they raised the question of illicit relations with women in the criticism session, and said that they considered guilty love affairs as the basest and lowdest thing a man could do."(66) Ostensibly, the most dangerous for his productivity to the Party:

What have you been doing for the Front since 1963?

I worked as a hamlet guerrilla until April or March, 1963. I was discharged because I had a mistress besides my wife. They said: 'You cannot work when you have two wives.' In March

or April, 1965, they called me to return to the hamlet guerrilla force. I had left my mistress in July or August, 1964. (266)

Among the enemies of the Party-ridden people there are, prominently, the impulse-ridden ones. "A number of...villagers were blindfolded," a cadre recalls, "and led to the meeting of the people, where they were publicly humiliated. These villagers belonged to the drinking and gambling crowd. The VC suspected that they might become informers for the GVN one of these days," a suspicion strengthened by the fact that the VC's hostility to impulse ensures that these impulse-oriented people will be hostile to it: "These people...spent their time drinking and cursing the cadres." (267)

Confronted with the dogma of work and pleasure being incompatible, Party members may find no other resort than (feebly) threatening to go on strike unless gratifications are granted. "The majority of the platoon cadres," one of them recalls, "were young...they liked to wear good clothes, to eat and drink, to have a fancy hair-do, to play and joke. So they protested vehemently when they were forced to observe the Party's strict discipline during the political reorientation course [in 1965] which forced them to live like old and worn-out men.... They demanded...that they be allowed to enjoy the good things in life. They said that if they were allowed all these things, they would be willing to fight until they died." (263)

31. (Section III) THE NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN
INTEREST IN FAMILY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN FIGHTING

What was the percentage of men in your [PAVN] unit who felt really enthusiastic about going South?

About 30 percent in my company were enthusiastic.

What made these men enthusiastic?

They were men who had no worries about their families, single men, who were excited by the cadres' propaganda. (226)

"The Front," an informant observes, "was very afraid of women. If a fighter fell in love and then got married, the unit might as well forget him, because, when he had a family of his own, all he could think of was raising it. Most of the married fighters were bad soldiers." (221)

Did you get news from your friend?

No. We haven't exchanged a word in nearly two years. I've stopped thinking of her...I asked permission to get married...but my request was turned down.

Why weren't you allowed to get married?

I was told that the responsibility to help the people in the South [as a Second Lieutenant] was heavy enough a load for any man to bear. We shouldn't add family responsibilities on top of it. Family sentiment would reduce our effectiveness. Therefore, all bachelors are urged to postpone their marital happiness until our duty was done. (179)

32. (Section III) HO CHI MINH AS A BACHELOR

What do you think of Ho Chi Minh? What did other people say?

I think that Ho Chi Minh is a sincere man. Being a bachelor, he has no children or wife to care for and, therefore, if he works it is for the people only, he being already old. He does not want anything for himself, but only for the people. If he had a family of his own, then the people could question his sincerity, but in this case nobody could say anything discrediting to him as far as personal interests were concerned. (213)

33. (Section III) THE HALFWAY EFFORT TO IMPEDE CONTACT
BETWEEN FIGHTERS AND FAMILIES

"When I was in the Front," remembers an informant, "if I happened to pass by an area which was close to my home and see my sister standing near the road, I would not dare to ask her how everybody in the family was doing. If I did, I would be criticized by the Front. Or, if I passed by my house on operations, I would not dare to drop in to say hello, either. The Front is afraid that if the cadres keep seeing their families, they will not concentrate their minds on fighting and will want to go home" (191) -- an apprehension for which there are solid reasons. On the other hand, the desire for reunion with one's family is so strong that the VC often sacrifices its penchant towards rigor on behalf of prudent accommodation, at least for elements judged rather reliable. While, according to one informant, "about nine or ten fighters in the battalion did stay home after they went to visit their families" (268) another one reports that "when they [VC troops] missed their families, they wrote home and asked them to come to a rendezvous point where they could meet them for one or two days." (4)

Were the soldiers of your unit sometimes allowed to go home to visit their families?

When a soldier's family lives in a liberated village, and his unit settles in this village, or in a nearby village, then that soldier can obtain permission to go home to visit his folks. (252)

And here is an exchange with a cadre:

How often did you get to visit your family?

Every now and then, when I went on a mission which was close to home, I would stop over for a few hours....Every year, those who were separated from their families were allowed fifteen days off to visit their families. (65)

-- a doubtlessly excessive generalization. And it is probably in the restrictive practices first reported that the VC's first preference is expressed.

34. (Section III) FRIENDSHIP IS FACTION

"When you are young," explains a cadre, "you want to have friends. The Party said that we were forming cliques and factions when we had close friends....The men in my group -- composed of myself, Chau, Cau, Bay and Ba -- were very close to one another. We went out together and did everything together. None of us is now with the Front. Chau has died [executed by the Front], Cau is still detained by the VC, Bay and I have rallied, and Ba has fled...it was because we were close to each other and stuck together that we were accused of forming a clique to oppose the Party. In reality we always made small talk when we were together, and we never had any plans to oppose the Party." (269)

35. (Section III) THE RARITY OF PURE DEDICATION

The frankness and ease with which personal interest is introduced when one explains one's attachment to the VC may be illustrated by an informant who comes from a "poor" family and had, on that count and to his grief, to discontinue his education in adolescence:

Of all the Front's aims, which appeal to you personally the most?

What I liked most were the promises that poor students would receive assistance to continue their schooling [first item] and poor people would....[second item].

Which of the Front's aims appealed to you the least?

As far as I am concerned, land reform appeals to me the least, because my family lives in an urban area.

Would you describe the circumstances of your joining the Front?

...I met a middle-aged man....He introduced himself as a Front cadre....I liked him because he showed an understanding of my situation -- my family was poor and I had to discontinue my schooling. (35)

When a hard-core cadre is queried, "Which reasons do you think are the most important ones in persuading Front fighters to fight?" he explains that "they are fighting for themselves, not for anyone else....They are doing the fighting for themselves, for their families, and [sic] for their country." (42) "They realized that when the Revolution would be successful, they could benefit from the service they had rendered to the Revolution," observes another hard-core cadre about his predecessors

in the war with the French. To be sure, "not only those who had served the Revolution could benefit from it, but all those who had done nothing for the Revolution could benefit too. Still, those who had joined it would receive more privileges than those who just contributed money, and the latter...more than those who did nothing for the Revolution....I was told that the Revolution was about to break out again." The point is that it is "when you do something for yourself" that "you will put all your energy into the things you do. We are not fighting for someone else, we are fighting for ourselves. We aren't fighting for the Chinese or the Russians. Take you, for example. If you do something for your own family, won't you concentrate all your energy on the things you do?if you are working for your own family, you will try the best you can, because you know that you will be the beneficiary in the end. For me, the Revolution is a just cause." (270) And thus ideals, the country's interests, one's family's welfare, and one's own advantage are blended.

36. (Section III) THE PARTY'S RELIANCE ON PERSONAL INTEREST, EVEN ON HIGH LEVELS

Please tell me about the Party reorientation in 1965.

The aim was to ensure that the leaders in all key organizations of the Party belonged to the single "leading class" -- that is, those in the worker-farmer class who are most exploited by the landlords and capitalists must be chosen to lead the people in fighting the war....No matter what difficulties and dangers to their lives they encounter, they will think of their

personal miseries and humiliations and they will...overcome all these difficulties and dangers.

Hence in the course of reorientation "the cadres and fighters whose families have been servants for three generations, or who personally were servants, must tell about their own and their families' miseries and humiliations in detail." (263)

37. (Section III) THE EXALTATION OF HARDSHIPS ASSUMED BY THE VC

"In the Front," a hard-core cadre affirms, "the members went hungry and yet they didn't complain, while in the GVN the soldiers could not endure even one day without a meal." (1) "The villagers," a rallier appears to confirm, "had the habit of comparing the behavior of the cadres to that of the Militia and the GVN officials. The latter, even though they were paid by the GVN, tried to extort money from the villagers, while the Front cadres, who were not paid for their work, didn't try to take anything from the villagers." (108)

38. (Section III) MORAL BLACKMAIL BY HARDSHIPS

"The VC...used 'emotional tactics': they pleaded with the people, telling them they were suffering for the sake of the nation....The people were touched....Seeing the ragged and starving VC, the villagers pitied them and helped them." (164)

39. (Section III) USING THE ALLEGED ABSENCE OF PRIVILEGES
TO STRENGTHEN THE POPULATION'S SENSE OF OBLIGATION TOWARD
THE VC

"They," a cadre recalls about villagers, "couldn't refuse to pay their taxes, because the cadres set a good example by paying theirs....The cadres said: 'We are making sacrifices in order to carry out our mission, and yet we are also paying our taxes. You are simple citizens, and you don't have to carry out missions, why aren't you paying your taxes?' For this reason the villagers couldn't refuse to pay their taxes." (271)

40. (Section III) THE NEGATIVE PRIVILEGES OF CADRES

Were fighter Party members criticized more or less than cadre Party members?

In the case of cadres, they were more severely criticized than the fighters. If the same fault was committed by both cadre and fighter, the cadre would always be more severely criticized. (156)

The positive correlation between status and sacrifice may be alleged to be a factor making for inactivity as a defense against promotion:

The Farmers Association in 1965...didn't accomplish much of anything...for the following reason: if the members were active, they would advance quickly...and hold responsible positions. But this would mean that they would have to set a good example in everything: sending their sons to combat...duty,...paying first and in full all their taxes, and so on....This is why the majority chose to be inactive. (267)

41. (Section III) WHEN A CADRE ARROGATES UNDUE PRIVILEGES
TO HIMSELF, IT IS APPARENTLY FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT HE WILL
GET AWAY WITH IT

Did the men often have rows with him
[the platoon leader]?

Once the men criticized him for not
carrying heavy loads as the rest of them
did on operation. (155)

They [the men in a platoon] criticized
me [the platoon leader] about my personal
life. I had some personal money on the side
for personal use. They accused me of not
following closely the people's living
standards, of living above the common
level. (114)

Did the cadres and the fighters in your
unit ever have arguments with one another?

The most serious fight occurred in 1963.
After the battle of National Highway 4 in
that year...my platoon was given pork and
poultry by the people as gifts....The platoon
cadres took all the meat and asked the people
to cook it for them. Then they had a feast
by themselves. Ban [a fighter] cursed the
cadres terribly....Ban and the platoon cadres
were summoned to the company office....The
platoon cadres were found guilty, and so was
Ban for cursing them. They all promised to
overcome their errors. (272)

The dissembling cadre may be punished by losing his
authority over those who have discovered his hypocrisy:

The men were forbidden to smoke such
luxurious cigarettes as Ruby Queen. Some of
them contemptuously smoked these forbidden
cigarettes in front of the cadres who they
knew had done the same in secret. (63)

42. (Section III) BOTH PRISONERS OF WAR AND RALLIERS
TEND TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE VC'S HOLIER-THAN-THOU ATTITUDE
TOWARDS ITS OPPONENT

"Sometimes," one informant recalls, "we went on operations without sleep for three or four days, and without food for two or three days. Rain or shine, we had to go. On one side, I saw the GVN and happiness; on the other, the VC so poor, so miserable, without allowances. Therefore I had to make a choice." (107)

What will your friends in your unit think of your action [rallying]?

They will call me a security-minded guy.

Did anyone in 261 [the rallier's unit] believe the Americans were exploiting the people?

Those who were security-seekers did not believe in the alleged American aggression. Those who were not security-seekers believed the Americans were committing aggression.

Why did those who were not afraid of danger believe the Americans were evil?

Because they were still enthusiastic.... (273)

43. (Section IV) A VIETNAMESE PENCHANT TOWARDS "SADNESS"

Informants speak of themselves as being "sad" or "disappointed" in situations in which Westerners would likely speak of being "angry." They may, of course, be only pretending, but even then the choice of facade would be significant.

I was insulted by wounded GVN soldiers who were admitted into the same hospital as I was. There were moments I felt a bit sad, but I thought that the fact that they had been wounded by people in the Front naturally rendered them less indulgent to me. (274)

Were you well treated?

Right after my capture, I was beaten, and I felt very sad about this mistreatment. (275)

An informant's father having been killed by the VC, and the informant having received the explanation that "my father resisted the arresting cadres, attempted to run away and, therefore, they had to kill him," this is his reaction: "I did not believe that my father had assaulted the cadres....I was sad and disappointed...." (276)

44. (Section IV) WITHOUT HATE, NO EFFECTIVENESS IN CONFLICT

"We should," observes a VC document, "promote the hatred towards the traitors and aggressors in order to motivate the destruction of the enemy." For "this is the source of activeness, positiveness, tenacity, shrewdness, discipline, endurance, spontaneity, promptness, accuracy, solidarity, coordination and secrecy preservation for the sake of insuring victory." (60) Informants indicate that such instructions are executed:

What were the most important factors in the VC's propaganda?

They always promote hatred, because without hatred nobody would fight. (277)

An informant having recalled that "I was accepted into the group [the Labor Youth Group, the Party's organization for the young] by a Party member when he realized that I had reached enlightenment," the following exchange develops:

How did he know you had reached enlightenment?

You reached enlightenment when you had deep hatred in your heart. (206)

-- one of the less gentle modifications of a religious tradition.

The Party's apparatus and rebels against it may agree on hatred being indispensable for action in conflict:

Were you ever criticized?

I was criticized very often, because I always had an argument with someone or other.

Why?

I didn't want to stay in the Front, so I had to build up my hatred, in order to have enough determination to leave the Front.

Why did you have to build up your hatred towards the Front in order to defect?

I thought that if I didn't hate them, I would never be able to steal their weapons or kill some of them in order to escape. If I didn't hate them, I would always feel attached to them and I could never make up my mind to leave them. (66)

45. (Section IV) FIGHTING THE ENEMY RATHER THAN EACH OTHER

It is a rallier who, when asked, "What did you like best about life with the Front?," answers: "I liked best their cohesion. They never fought among themselves." (278) Another respondent is more fulsome upon hearing the same question:

What I liked best was the unity of action at every echelon....If they had an emulation program for 1965, it would be communicated to all officials at all echelons and to the people. Everybody would study the program, which would be thoroughly explained. This holds true for all Front programs. (7)

More soberly a VC document, presenting an audit on a unit: "Regulations on behavior and attitude were... observed. No personal dispute resulting from jokes was noted among the comrades for the last period." (37) "The Party member never quarrels." (173) Or rather, not all the time:

In 1964...[the Front] network covered the whole village. It encountered many difficulties in its activity, however, because the people in the area liked to eat and drink and gamble, and they fought with each other a great deal. The cadres themselves committed the same errors. (267)

-- which shows how several barriers against impulse may hold or yield together.

46. (Section IV) THE DELIGHTS OF KNOWING EARLIER

Tell me about the circumstances of your being admitted in the Party. Describe the initiation ceremony and your reaction during the ceremony.

I raised my hand and made the oath of allegiance. I felt very happy and proud. I was proud, because from then on I would know everything in advance of the non-Party members. I think...everybody wants to know more things than others, and everybody wants to know about things in advance of others.(187)

Expectations in this regard may be specific:

What made you want to join the Party?

I wanted to join the Party, because I wanted to attend the Party Chapter meetings, to study secret directives, to know about attacks in advance, to get promoted fast, and to have the right to lead the people.(267)

A hard-core informant may not be discernibly different from this rallier:

What privileges did you think you would get if you joined the Party?

As a Party member, I got to know before the non-Party members the decisions that were sent down from the high echelons. I got to study the Party's resolutions before the non-Party members were told about them.(42)

Even a small degree of precedence in time may matter, as a cadre of a famous battalion conveys:

What squad of the 514th Battalion were you assigned to?

I was assigned to the sixth squad, second platoon, second company. My platoon was the assault platoon of the company. I was selected to join this assault platoon because of my good health and my nimbleness....

Were the soldiers of the assault platoon well regarded by the Company Commander?

They were. Three privileges were reserved for the assault platoon:

(1) It was allowed to be informed of the date and the place of the upcoming battles two or three hours before other soldiers;

(2) (279)

Consider, on the other hand, the predicament of a military cadre expelled from the Party for "immorality":

Whenever an operation was decided upon, Party members were always the first ones to be informed. And, so you see, although he was the Assistant Company Leader, he was not entitled to know about the coming operations, because he was not allowed to attend the Party group's meetings during which information of that kind was released.... Party members were informed of important news before everyone else, and if you were a high ranking officer, but not a Party member, you would hear of the news after your soldiers had been told about it. You would then feel very ashamed. (156)

And here is how a hard-core cadre describes the inferior status of non-combat units:

Any directives that come from above always reach the combat troops first....We [a training unit] were second in line....Our knowledge of any new line of policy was always late. The troops were always told one month ahead of us. (42)

47. (Section IV) DIFFICULTY IN IMPROVISING

The VC could only fight when there was a plan. When they were attacked by surprise, they wouldn't put up a fight even if they outnumbered the enemy... Once our whole battalion had to hide from a squad of GVN patrol troops, because if we had opened fire, they would have called for reinforcements and we had to plan [that is, we did as yet not possess a plan] to fight them at that time. The men wouldn't have known what to do, and that would have meant damage to our side (63)

Any change of conduct, therefore, requires a high degree of effort "to provide indoctrination on the new situation," as Party language has it -- effort which may entail the reduction or even cessation of activity for some time, during which energy is focused on "reorientation," preferably, for cadres, in elaborate "courses."

48. (Section IV) THE RELUCTANCE TO EXCULPATE ONE WHO HAS FAILED

Here is a secretary of a village economy and finance section, a prisoner, in whose record before the incident to be recounted there had been, according to him, nothing unfavorable:

In August 1964 I lost 12,185 piasters .. I told the Party Chapter that on the day I lost the money GVN forces...launched an operation, and that when I heard the first gunshots, the GVN soldiers were about 400 meters from me. I took the money with me and ran. I dropped the package containing the money....I looked for it, but couldn't find it....I was accused of carelessness, and ordered to find the lost money. I was purged from the Party, and I was no longer the secretary of the finance section. I had to work as assistant secretary....

In the informant's view or pretense, "the Party Chapter's decision was fair...I myself have asked the Party Chapter to punish me in that manner, and the Party Chapter approved my request....I was to blame for the loss of the money." (125)

It should be added that for a year and a half, prior to the sanction imposed, the authorities suspected the cadre of having stolen the money, observed him, and then

inflicted the punishment mentioned only after their suspicions had abated.

49. (Section IV) THE FIGHT AGAINST WASTE

"Tonight...31-12-64," writes a fighter in a diary, "we do not have any celebration for New Year's Eve. We just lie down and listen to the enemy celebrating New Year's Eve by shooting wildly in the air." (280) (But the letter-writer's implied contempt for an enemy indulging in the moment's pleasure would be applicable also to some on his own side. "Another subject for frequent criticism," an informant reminisces about his Party Chapter, "was the habit they [members] had of opening fire anywhere and at any time. They used to shoot their guns at anything and anyone." (156)

When the fighters in a Main Force Unit criticized an informant's group leader, the latter "admitted it was wrong to force me to continue my march when I was sick, because he might waste one human life which belonged to the government." (179)

The cadres were always invited whenever there was a religious ceremony held at the village communal hall or shrine. But they never went: they excused themselves by saying that they were busy....According to the cadres the religious ceremonies...were a waste of money and labor....They were of the opinion that if the time spent on these ceremonies were spent in producing food, it would be more profitable. (125)

If one does not feel like abolishing traditional waste, one might at least reduce it:

Were the traditional customs in wedding ceremonies and so on observed in Hoi Cu Village?

The Party and Labor Youth members no longer observed these customs, because they thought that they should simplify these matters.... When a Party member or a Labor Youth member got married, all he had to do was to have a presentation ceremony.... They asked witnesses to come to a certain place on a certain day and at a certain time to hear them declare their marriage. If they had money, they offered tea and cakes. If they were too poor even for that, they offered tea only. They no longer had to attend two or three ceremonies in a row, to offer betel leaves and nuts to the family of the bride, to wear the traditional costume of long tunic and a silk hat, and to kow-tow to the guests. The Party members and Labor Youth members had done away with all these elaborate customs. But the people...still observed...the customs. (125)

Another instance of the fight against waste (to be indicated in a moment) recalls the following point: where calculations of expediency point mainly one way -- as with regard to politeness towards the people -- the VC is apt to put much effort into inculcating the proper reactions, and to achieve noticeable success in establishing them.

However, utility may suggest contrasting conduct. In the treatment of its dead, the VC has largely been guided by awareness of the population's interest in proper procedures concerning corpses and the dead. "If the ARVN soldier dies," goes a VC recruiting theme reported by an informant, "he is forgotten forever. But if a Front soldier dies, his name will be written in the Golden Book" (6) In fact, the VC has developed a prominent and

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elaborate set of standard operating procedures with regard to its dead, burdening survivors with much risk and effort on behalf of corpses to be safeguarded or recaptured, and then honored. "Before any battle," explains, for instance, a rallier, "the unit involved will always discuss the problem of carrying off the dead and wounded with the local Party Chapter. In case that unit is forced to withdraw without being able to carry off its dead, the local Party Chapter has the responsibility of finding out where the GVN has buried those bodies, unearthing them and carrying them to the liberated area, so that a ceremony can be held in their memory. Usually, in big battles...each unit will leave behind one of its members so that, together with the local Party Chapter, they can find out the GVN burial location and carry off their dead." (19)

On the other hand, the demands of war may lead the VC to curb its solicitude for the dead. "I thought," confides a defector, "that even if I died one day after I rallied to the GVN, it would be worth it, because I would be buried in a coffin. In the Front the dead were buried naked. After they were buried, the VC just leveled off the ground. They weren't even wrapped in mats. If the dead man wore ragged clothes, he would be buried with his clothes on. If he had good clothes...the VC would strip him of his clothes and give them to someone else." (3)

50. (Section IV) THE TENDENCY TO DROP SUDDENLY AN ENTERPRISE IN WHICH ONE IS ENGAGED

Were any Party members criticized at the meetings of the Party group?

Of course....

What were the most frequent criticisms?

Party members were criticized for many things. However, the most frequent subject for criticism was the "freedom illness." I mean to say that most of them liked to have freedom in their movements and their behavior. They used to take off and go wherever they wanted and whenever they wanted to. (156)

"The deputy platoon leader," a cadre recalls, "had an argument with Hien [another cadre] and then, out of dissatisfaction, he quit and went home to live with his wife and children....Chau Bon, a squad leader...one day... went on mission with his men. But after laying a mine he didn't want to go on with his mission, so he ordered the fighters to pull out the mine, and they all left. He did that because he had had an argument with Tu Hien." (187)

51. (Section IV) SWITCHING HUMAN FEELINGS (OR THEIR
PRETENSE) ON AND OFF IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PARTY

How did you come to join the sub-group 67?

It was Bay, one of my old classmates, who induced me to do it.

At what school...did he study with you?

We went to...elementary school.

That is before you were eight?

Exactly.

After you had left your native village when you were eight, did you see him again at times?

No, I didn't.

Then how, without seeing him for so many years, could you recognize him?

It was he who recognized me first....

Will you tell me...how he recognized you?

It was in September 1964. He came to the place where I worked...and on seeing me called me by my name. Whereupon I realized that I must have seen him somewhere, but I couldn't say exactly where. He then asked me to go and have coffee with him at a little bar next door. Here we rambled on about our common memories and I recognized that he was my old classmate.

Did he return to see you again?

Yes, he came to see me nearly every day. Usually he called at the workshop late in the day to fetch me. He often took me to little restaurants for drinks and the like. Once he invited me to the Kai Luong [the classical theater].

How did he persuade you to work for the Viet Cong?

He explained that it would be in my interest to work for the Front.

....

Did Bay tell you what you must do for the Front?

No. I asked him once about it, but he just said that I had to meet the "responsible comrades" first.

How did you meet those "responsible comrades?"

We cycled to....Here we took a bus for.... When the bus arrived at..., we got off...(and) reached a cluster of thatched houses....In one of these houses I was introduced to the "responsible comrade" named Ba Duong (a few days later I learned he was the leader of Group 67)....Ba Duong began to speak of the general situation.... Later he made me follow a training course.

Was Bay with you?

No. He left immediately upon introducing me to Ba Duong. (281)

52. (Section V) GVN PLEASURE IN THE ACT OF INFLECTING
DAMAGE

How did the ARVN behave when they passed
through a village?

They stepped on the crops of the people. (265)

Speaking of how a commander of a GVN Marine battalion, Major "Laughing Larry" Luong, complained that the Buddhist agitation in the spring of 1966 was keeping him away from meals at home -- and "my wife is angry with me" -- Charles Mohr adds: "Major Luong got his Americanized nickname for reputedly laughing as he shot Viet Cong prisoners."* "The District Rangers' section and the Self Defense Squad stationed in the village," notes an inhabitant about the local GVN forces, "liked to cause damage." (19) And here is a rallier's atrocity story:

At the end of 1962, at Thanh Hoa Village, Cai Lai District, two soldiers -- I do not know to which unit they belonged -- bet each other, with a pack of Ruby cigarettes, who could hit a little child who was then sitting on the back of a water buffalo. They carried out their challenge and the little child was killed....At the end of 1963 at Thien Ho Cay Be District, three girls were cutting down rice stalks. The soldiers on the post challenged one another that whoever could hit the girl in the middle would be entitled to a package of cigarettes. They carried out their challenge, and the girl in the middle, seventeen years old, was wounded in the chest. She died on arriving at the hospital. (238)

* New York Times, Paris edition, May 28-29, 1966.

53. (Section V) GVN FORCES, IT MAY BE BELIEVED, ARE APT TO INFLICT DAMAGE SO AS TO ASSUAGE THE FRUSTRATION GENERATED BY THEIR ENEMY'S ELUSIVENESS, AND SO AS TO PLACE THE VIOLENCE THEY HAD IN STORE FOR HIM ON SOMEBODY ELSE.

"A few [villagers]...said," according to an informant who perhaps politely understates their number, "that the ARVN only destroyed the people's property because they couldn't do anything to the VC."⁽⁶⁶⁾ "When we came into a village," concurs another, "the people...said to us: 'Government soldiers come here to look for you everytime after you leave. When they cannot find you, they get angry and they beat us.'"⁽²⁸²⁾

54. (Section V) GVN FORCES MAY, WITH HAZY PERCEPTION OR BLINDLY, STRIKE JUST WHAT IS AT HAND, FOR THE SAKE OF STRIKING

In the hamlet of one informant's uncle, "some SDCs who were drunk shot at a young boy who was washing cups."⁽²⁵⁷⁾ "The SDC," reports another, "caught and beat youngsters who strolled around in the evening."⁽²⁰²⁾ "In November of last year [1964] the Militia in the outpost got drunk," recalls an inhabitant, "and radioed to the warships that the VC were in these two hamlets. These hamlets were shelled. About eight villagers got killed." The damage was presumably not completely atoned for when "the villagers protested" and "the post radioed to the ships to stop the shelling," or even when "the next morning the post commander was thrown into jail."⁽⁴⁾

55. (Section V) IT MAY SEEM IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCERN THE
MOTIVE BEHIND INFLICTIONS COMMITTED BY THE GVN'S AGENTS

The SDC...beat people without reason
at all. (283)

What a rallier remembers:

The GVN troops moved in from the direction of the sea....There were no VC troops in my hamlet at the time. All the cadres and guerrillas had run towards the mountains, when the GVN troops first fired into the hamlet from the sea. All the men also ran into the mountains....About 40 percent of the fishing nets of the people were burned by the GVN soldiers. About half of their fishing junks were also burned....When the troops set fire to the fishing nets and junks, the women came out and begged them not to do so; but the soldiers didn't listen to anybody, they went on setting fire to the things. (208)

56. (Section V) ANYBODY, SO IT MAY APPEAR, MIGHT BECOME
A TARGET FOR THE GVN, AT ANY TIME (OR NEVER)

According to a rallier:

When the VC got into a hamlet, the children would run for them, because the VC's manner was correct towards the people. But when the ARVN came, everybody was frightened and stayed away.... On the GVN side, the soldiers are free to beat anybody, kill anybody. (10)

"When the fighting is over," alleges a hard-core cadre, "the Nationalist troops fire at random. They get tired of firing in the orchards, they go to the fields to fire." (42) The corresponding assertion about the VC might be: "The VC fired at random, pretending that they were everywhere." (284) Even the pleasure of acting at random can be channeled to a purpose; all conduct suggested by impulse can be put in the service of ulterior ends.

57. (Section V) THE PARTY LIKES TO BELIEVE THAT EVERY-
THING IT DOES HAPPENS BY VIRTUE OF A GENERAL NORM

"During the first period," recalls a VC document with regard to the captivity of an American called Krause, "some duty attendants and guards thought that giving Krause good feeding would risk their viewpoint....Some others had different attitudes with regard to conduct towards him, in accordance with their own feelings....This maybe made him think that he might be liked or detested by one or another, at a certain time or at other moments; [and that] all was due to this individual or the other, not to the application of general policies. [However] even when the POW committed a fault and we oppressed him, this should follow from the policy 'oppress for indoctrination'; it should be based on the framework of the policy concerning oppression."⁽²³⁵⁾ Just as, in Western fashion, tax collection should be based on tax assessment:

When the Front members collected...taxes, they would force the people to pay the exact amount. For instance, when a family had to pay 20 gia, and they had only 19 gia, the cadre would not reduce the amount of taxes for that family.⁽⁶⁵⁾

In contrast, agents of the GVN may derive pleasure from changing rules without grounds or warning so as to have a pretext (an agreeably flimsy one) for inflicting damage:

How did you find life in the strategic hamlet before it was taken over by the VC?

There were not many difficulties. The most difficult thing was that the ARVN forces in the hamlet...opened and closed the hamlet

gate whenever they felt like doing so. If any villager came back to the hamlet after the gates had been closed, the ARVN forces would cause him lots of trouble. Once I went fishing outside the hamlet, and came back after the gates had been closed. The Rangers beat me up. One of the Rangers, who was a little bit crazy, wanted to kill me....After they had beaten me up, they grabbed me by the legs and threw me into the moat [surrounding the hamlet.](285)

58. (Section V) THE VC TENDS TO ELABORATE QUASI- OR PSEUDO-JUDICIAL CONTEXTS FOR ITS EXERCISE OF VIOLENCE

"On September 30, 1961," records Douglas Pike, "a band of ten armed guerrillas kidnapped a farmer named Truong Van Dang [of Long An hamlet, Long Tri village, Long An province], and took him to a nearby jungle clearing where, in the presence of about fifty villagers, he was 'put on trial' before... 'a people's tribunal.' He was charged with purchasing two hectares of rice land and of ignoring NLF orders to turn the land over to the tenant who had been working it. He was condemned to death, taken to the rice fields he had purchased, and shot."*

When the GVN official was reported as being rude to the people or as an extortionist, we would throw a letter into his house at night asking him to change his ways and to resign his position. He was warned only once. If he continued to be arrogant, he would be considered as refractory, and when the strategic hamlet was taken by the Front forces and the people gathered, he would be led in front of the people,

* Op cit., p. 247.

the verdict of the People's Tribunal would be read aloud, and then the sentence would be executed by firing or beheading....The decision of the people's Tribunal was stuck upon his stomach. The decision...was explained thoroughly to the people.(207)

Of course, as has often been noted, the facade of justice hardly conceals the violence lying behind it:

[In Hoi Cu village] the security section in 1965...killed two people....The second person that was killed was a 27-year old youth by the name of Ba Tat. He belonged to the poor farmer category. He was arrested by GVN troops on operation and was taken to the district town, where he had to work for the GVN for seven days. After that he was released, and went back to the village to make his living. The VC suspected that he had been sent back to the village to act as an informer....He was arrested and sent to the district where he was jailed for two months. During this time he was interrogated...but he didn't admit anything. The VC district level...sent him back to the village, and ordered the village authorities to kill him. He was brought to a meeting of the people, but the head of the Security Section forbade him to plead to the people. A number of cadres sat among the people, and when the presiding cadres asked whether he should be killed or acquitted, the cadres who were in the audience shouted that he should be executed. He was immediately led away by the VC. The cadres said that he was tried by the people.(267)

59. (Section V) THE VC MAY GET THE CREDIT FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE GVN'S CONDUCT

"Some years ago," tells Takashi Oka, "an American friend of mine was visiting the district chief of Ban Cat. A large number of village women came marching up the road to the district chief's house, demanding relief from what

they called unjust taxes. My friend noted...that instead of chasing them away or arresting them, the district chief went out on his porch to talk with the women, to explain how taxes were levied, what the government was trying to do....The women seemed to be satisfied with this explanation and left. 'Those women were from a Viet Cong village,' the district chief told my friend. If he had talked to them harshly or had arrested them, the communist...cadres in the village would surely have extracted propaganda mileage for their cause. The American left, feeling pleased over the way the district chief had handled the situation. A year later he happened to come across captured Viet Cong documents relating to the same incident. The documents say that after the women returned to the village, the political cadre gathered the people together and asked, 'Has the district chief ever come out on his porch like that to talk to you personally before?' The people answered, 'No.' 'What made the district chief do that? It was the fact that you were not just one or two persons, but an organized mass. Now you see what power you have when you unite as a mass. The next time you will go and demand that the government stop bombing and shelling our homes.'*

60. (Section V) CADRES' ANGER TENDING TOWARD VIOLENCE

When one is very angry, thoughts of immediate and extreme violence are apparently acceptable.

* Institute of Current World Affairs, February 6, 1966.

Having said that "the men in my group -- composed of myself, Chau, Cau, Bay and Ba -- were very close to one another, we went out together and did everything together," a cadre recalls how he reacted in a crisis:

The meeting wasn't held until 4:00 p.m. The higher ranking cadres...declared that Chau and Cau had been purged from the movement and... were going to be arrested. Guards pointed pistols at them, and they were led away accompanied by five or six men armed with carbines. I was furious, and if I had had a grenade, I would have thrown it at them right away.(269)

"In the end, Nam Vo wanted to tie me up," a woman medic remembers about the cadre who was criticizing her, "and I told him: 'You can go ahead and do that. As far as I'm concerned, you have no authority over me, and you are not a genuine Communist.' Nam Vo said that I dared talk back to him, and threatened to shoot me. I got mad and cursed them all. I said: 'If you don't shoot me, I will shoot you myself....'"(127)

Urges may lead to actions:

One day I got drunk and quarreled with another cadre. In my anger, I took up a rifle and intended to shoot him.(286)

Did the various cliques in the Party Chapter criticize each other very harshly?

Yes....Sometimes they got so mad...that they almost came to shooting each other.... When Tu Tan was still alive, he formed a clique with Ut and Tuoi. Sau Duong had his own clique....During many Kiem Thao sessions, Sau Duong accused Tu Tan of embezzling some of the tax money he collected....Tu Tan wanted to shoot Sau Duong....Tu Tan should have been appointed Party Secretary instead of Sau Duong because he had been working for

the Front since 1960....He was in charge of a hamlet in the village. ..Tu Tan wanted to maneuver Sau Duong out of his position in order to replace him. They were always fighting.... Sometimes they got so mad that they loaded their pistols and were about to shoot each other, but they were stopped in time by the other cadres. (91)

61. (Section V) THE VC MAY WARN BEFORE IT STRIKES

"When the Front took control of the village," recalls an inhabitant, "one of the first things they did was to arrest the hamlet chief and kill him. They explained to the population that they had ordered him to cease working for the GVN, but he had not complied with the order." (287) A typical "death notice" pinned to the body of a man assassinated by the VC will read:

In consideration of the fact that this man was a lackey of the U.S.-Diem clique, had been warned and educated twice by us, continued to work for the traitor Duong Van Minh...we, the Liberation Forces, have punished him, as we punish anyone who...continues, after having been warned and re-educated many times, to...*

"We compiled a detailed dossier of the various local despots," recalls a cadre interviewed by Wilfred Burchett. "If someone merited the death penalty we...sent a group to deal with him. ..We posted names of other tyrants who would be dealt with if they did not cease their activities."**

Before striking, the Front may even exact a promise from the target to cease and desist. "If GVN cadres,"

* Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 248-249.

** Ibid., p. 248.

recalls a VC cadre, "in spite of our repeated warnings, continued to work for the GVN, we would gather the people and force these GVN cadres to come up in front of the people and promise that henceforth they would no longer harm the people"(288) -- a ceremony which renders a harsher treatment of any subsequent violations acceptable.

62. (Section V) A CONTINUOUS VIOLATION OF A DEMAND MAY, AT FIRST AND FOR SOME TIME, BE MET MERELY BY AN INSISTENCE THAT IT CEASE

Bay Ninh, the Party Secretary, was married and had seven children. He used to stay in the house of Mr. Cao Van Nguyen, paying the latter for his room and board. Mr. Nguyen's daughter, Cao Thi Tai, was a widow with two children. Bay Ninh and Tai fell in love and lived together like husband and wife. Their affair lasted from 1962 to date, and they had two children. Bay Ninh was criticized many times by the Party Chapter, but he didn't keep his word. So he was purged in 1965 (125)

63. (Section V) A FIRST INFRACTION, EVEN IF SERIOUS, MAY PROVOKE BUT A MILD SANCTION

What happened to the two fighters [deserters] who were caught by the guerrillas?

From what I understand, according to the VC policy, these two fighters must have been criticized and re-indoctrinated. I don't think anything else was done to them. . . . Since they committed this error for the first time, they were re-indoctrinated and forgiven. If they committed the error a second time, they would be punished. (218)

A man who had been accused and publicly convicted of giving information to the Government that led to a mortar attack on a Viet Cong

village... instead of being put to death would be... asked to write out a confession. If he relapsed again, he would be executed. (289)

64. (Section V) THE FIRST FEW OFFENSES OF A KIND MAY GO UNPUNISHED

When, in one hamlet, "some families kept refusing to lend their dwellings for VC encampment.. the older members of the household were blindfolded, taken elsewhere for re-education, and allowed to return two or three days later" -- but all this only "if they had refused more than three times "(186)

65. (Section V) PUNISHMENT INFLICTED IN RESPONSE TO SUCCESSIVE MISDEEDS OF THE SAME NATURE BECOMES MORE SEVERE

Has it ever happened that the VC fighters who were allowed to return to their village refused to go back to their units?

Yes, many of them did ...

What happened to these men?

Sometimes they were taken away to some place which was close to the village. The second time they were taken a little farther away. The third time they would be taken very far away from their native village. (4)

If a man committed a mistake for the first time, he would be criticized. If he did it again, he would be warned. If he did it for the third time, he would be demoted, if he was a cadre, or purged from the Party if he was a member. If he still did it again for the fourth time, he would be sent into exile and be educated. (179)

66. (Section V) LITTLE INCREASE IN PUNISHMENT AS VIOLATIONS ARE REPEATED

"When I argued back to the cadres," an informant recalls, "they criticized me for days on end. Many times they forced me to eat rice without salt. They told me: 'We are not giving you any salt to eat with your rice, because you are always... refusing to obey orders.'" (191)

One of the six men who deserted from an informant's platoon "raped a girl, introduced himself [to people] as a platoon leader and ate the people's chickens. I received orders from the Province Military Affairs Committee to bring him back twice, but he refused. The third time we tied him up and brought him back. He was severely criticized. He was very dissatisfied about that and deserted. Once more, he was captured, tied up and brought back to the unit; but he escaped again." (19) "I have tried to quit my unit five times," an informant recalls, "but always in vain. On the first two occasions -- in August and October of 1963 -- ...I slipped away unnoticed. But no sooner had I gone two kilometers than I was arrested by the guerrillas of the hamlet I passed through, because I was not supplied with the necessary papers. I was therefore brought back to the unit and subjected to severe reprimand. On the third occasion, in February 1964, I was also arrested and taken back by guerrillas. That time I had to attend a re-education course for ten days. At the fourth occasion, in July 1964, I left my unit in the dead of the night, bringing along...two grenades. But I was unable to get out of the hamlet where my platoon camped. I was arrested by the guards. I told

my platoon leader that I had asked several times for a few days' leave to go home and to see my parents. Yet it had never been granted to me. That's why I had been compelled to go without his knowing. I had wanted to go home for a few days only. After severely taking me to task, the platoon leader no longer allowed me to carry a rifle. At the fifth occasion -- January 1965, shortly before Tet -- I requested the platoon leader to let me have a few days leave to spend Tet with my parents. I told him that if I was refused the authorization, I would return all my military effects and go home all the same. He then sent me to the Battalion Commander and said that sooner or later I would have my leave. I had no longer the right to carry my rifle, and I was assigned to dig trenches. One month later, in February 1965... I was again allowed to carry my rifle. But," concludes the unreconciled man, "until my capture, I had not been able to get that promised leave." (290)

Punishment for successive violations may even fail to increase in severity in the face of dire threats to the contrary. "When I was in the production unit," an informant recalls, "I once asked the cadres' permission to return home for a few days to see my family. My request was rejected, so I made up my mind to escape.... I... fled.... While I was looking for the way leading to my village, I was arrested by VC guerrillas who took me back to my production unit. There I was severely reprimanded by the cadres, who warned that if I made another try I would be sent to a re-education camp, and on the third attempt I would be shot. . [The informant does make another attempt.] This time I... arrived home, at

5 p.m....On the third day, three VC, two of whom were armed with rifles, called to order me to rejoin my unit. As I refused to do so, they got hold of me, threw me onto the ground, tied me up, and took me back to my unit. Again the cadres reprimanded me. I told them I had only wanted to see my parents. Nothing happened to me."(130)

67. (Section V) MAKING INFRACTIONS CEASE RATHER THAN PUNISHING THEM, AND NOT EVEN BEING IN A PARTICULAR HURRY TO TERMINATE THEM

Has it ever happened that the VC fighters who were allowed to return to the village refused to go back to their units?

Yes, many of them did. ..If they remained in the village with their families, the VC would let them stay at home for half a month or a month, and then they would take them away again.(4)

"I handed in my resignation," having gotten into a conflict with superiors," reports a platoon leader. "The cadres said a Party member had no right to resign. They asked me to stay...and wait for some arrangements. I stayed...for one month. Then...I left for home....I spent several months at home. During that time I received four or five summons from the Provincial Committee, but I refused to rejoin. In June 1965 [the informant had deserted at the end of January], several armed men were sent to my home to invite me to return to the Provincial Committee. One of them, an acquaintance of mine, told me, without his comrades knowing, that the order was to bind me and take me away by force if I refused to go with them. I was therefore obliged to do so."(22)

The unpleasantness inflicted on the violator at the moment of his forced return to compliance may be brief and moderate:

How was the morale of unit members who were Northerners compared to that of regroupees?

I think that the morale of the Northerners was lower than that of the regroupees. . . Some of them had escaped and tried to return to the North. . . All of them were captured.

Were those who had escaped and had been captured punished?

They were only briefly criticized. The cadres gave them explanations and allowed them to resume their activities. (291)

Or there may be no reaction whatsoever by the cadres, once violation has been terminated:

Some of the men who ran away were caught by the VC and sent back to the unit, where they were treated as if nothing had happened. (221)

68. (Section V) FROM TIME TO TIME, THE LEVEL OF THREATS AND PUNISHMENTS RISES FAR ABOVE WHAT IS CUSTOMARY

The contributions [demanded by the VC] were very heavy for the inhabitants of my hamlet, who were all poor. But the VC had warned us that those who refused to pay would be sentenced to death. (149)

According to the cadres' threats, a person who left the village without permission would see his family members arrested and executed. If he himself were caught, he would be buried alive. (287)

Once after the VC had dropped leaflets and left, a man commented that the leaflets were good for toilet use. . . The VC learned about

his remarks, came back two days later and shot him to death. (292)

Once I saw [sic] a man killed for having shown his disagreement with the cadres.... That man lived in a neighboring hamlet. One day, it was at the beginning of 1965, the cadres compelled the women in the village to go to the Cai Be market to demonstrate against the shelling of the villages. Many women were arrested, and his wife among them. When he discovered this, he came to the cadres, and shouted out his disagreement and his anger. In the evening of the same day, he was arrested and shot. (293)

On November 12, 1964, at 6:00 a.m., armed VC went from house to house in my hamlet and forced everyone to go and meet in _____ Hamlet, 1.5 kilometers from my hamlet. When I arrived there, I saw at least 3000 people, most of whom were from my village. There were some 30 VC, half of whom were armed with rifles. One VC stood on a table and harangued the inhabitants. He said this in essence: "I call on you all to draw up in lines and go to the District Chief's town [Song Cau] to ask the GVN authorities never to shell your village.... Those who refuse to take part in the demonstration... will be executed." Then he said there was a man in the GVN's pay who opposed the organization of the demonstration. The Front had sentenced him to death and he was going to be executed. Then the VC brought forward a man, tied him two hundred meters from the spot, and killed him with a gunshot before the crowd's eyes.... Everyone... put himself in line and marched in the direction of Song Cau. The VCs marched outside the line on either side of the road. (294)

An unexpected rise in severity may appear to be unjustified -- and perhaps be intended by the cadres to be thus experienced -- because of its marked contrast with the Party's usual demeanor, which may then come to be felt as a dispensation of grace.

69. (Section V) WHEN THE PARTY SEIZES POWER IN A LOCALITY,
IT LIKES TO MAKE AN INITIAL INVESTMENT IN PARTIALLY UN-
PREDICTABLE AND EVEN SOMEWHAT INCOMPREHENSIBLE VIOLENCE
SO AS TO INSTILL DOCILITY, AFTER WHICH THE LEVEL OF
PUNISHMENT MAY SINK, AND ITS PREDICTABILITY RISE

The Front...no longer kills as many people as it used to. When the Front had just destroyed the GVN, it used to shoot people for the slightest crime. But now the Front has a policy which puts emphasis on indoctrination and re-education. ...Before its motto was "It is better to kill someone by mistake than to release someone by mistake." (109)

What did the Front do when it first took over the hamlet?

They beheaded the hamlet chief.

How did the hamlet chief behave toward the villagers?

He behaved very correctly.

How come he was beheaded?

That was the Viet Cong style. When they came, they would kill whoever was the hamlet chief. (154)

Informants may as a matter of course refer to "violence as it had been used during the destruction of the oppression campaign." One of them remembers:

In 1959 the Front rose up in my village. They killed about nine villagers in my own hamlet, explaining that they had destroyed the GVN's oppression by killing these men, whom they accused of being GVN secret police agents. Most of them had their heads cut off with a machete. These...killings made the villagers very afraid. (254)

Perhaps the sequel was that observed by another informant about a different place:

- 1 The killings stopped after the cadres had taken over control of the village.(139)

70. (Section V) THE PARTY FLAUNTS ITS VIOLENCE

"On August 23, 1961," Douglas Pike reports, "two school-teachers...were preparing their teaching lessons at _____ [the home of one of them] when two guerrillas entered the house and forced them at gunpoint to go to their school... There they found two men...to whom the guerrillas read an execution order. Oanh [one of them] was then shot, and Van [the other] decapitated. Although the teachers were not certain why they had been forced to witness the executions, they assumed it was an effort...to discourage them from taking a pro-GVN attitude toward their students." In fact, "such incidents were recounted freely in the NLF media, where they always took on a moralistic tone."* When, "at the beginning of 1960, the Front...gained control of the village," an informant recalls about his experiences in his native place, "they arrested all the Republican Youth members and the hamlet chief. Some of these persons were beheaded by the Front in the presence of the villagers during meetings."(135) When GVN elements "tried to infiltrate at night" into a VC village, they were, the next day, "judged in front of the people, condemned and then executed in the presence of the people."(66)

However, attention may be called to the punishment when its infliction has not been preceded by even a semblance of justice:

* Viet Cong, p. 247

In one case during 1960, two villagers were beheaded in the public square at midnight, and early in the morning women coming to the market found the two bodies lying in pools of blood. Everybody in the village came to look at the dead men, but the villagers did not dare say anything, because they were afraid of the Viet Cong, although at that time, the Viet Cong were still weak. There were just a few guerrillas then, and they did not come to the village often (295)

At Ngu Yiep.. twenty spies had been murdered.. since the beginning of 1965. They all had their heads cut off and their bodies thrown into the street. On them were pinned the charges written on a piece of paper.(19)

The victim's exposure is ensured through threats made plausible by fearful example. "A Dich Van group [the VC specialists in assassination]," reports Bernard Fall, "will capture the mayor of a recalcitrant village and leave his head dangling from a bamboo pole in the middle of the village (with a note attached to it, warning that anyone who takes it down will suffer the same fate)."^{*}

There may be a negative correlation between the VC's capability to punish and the publicity which it desires to give to a certain act of violence. (It is the penurious commander who has the same unit march in and out of diverse entrances and exits to increase the impression produced by his show of force.) "In 1960 and 1961," an informant recalls, "the Front forces were insignificant... [but] a corpse thrown into the river could be seen by people of many villages.. Starting with 1962, perhaps,

^{*}The Two Viet-Nams, New York 1960, p. 137

the cadres no longer found this necessary That's why they buried the bodies."⁽⁶⁾

71 (Section V) THE CLASSICAL MODE OF COERCING OTHERS
BY DAMAGING ONESELF

Nam va (literally, to lie down so as to put another into the wrong) was a typical scene in Viet-Nam . Pretending to be the victim of an injustice, the person in question would arrive in the courtyard of the Dinh [the hamlet's communal house] or at some frequented spot, and loudly incriminate those he held responsible, beat himself, tear his clothes, provoke, if need be, a fight, thus in one way or another, finally acquire some bleeding scratches, lie down and remain immobile . . . He might continue thus for one or two days . . . until public opinion gets aroused. . . One attempts to give him a small measure of satisfaction, for one does not want to risk his letting himself starve to death

Those truly oppressed . . . know in advance how futile such a conduct would be, for . . . the guilty ones won't give in. Only two solutions for them: leaving the village for good, or committing suicide . . . The desperate person is apt to hang himself from the door of his enemy's house . . . *

72. (Section V) SEDUCE SO AS TO COMPROMISE

What did you [now 17 years of age] think of the local government officials?

...I do not know whether the GVN was good or bad. The VC invited me to go see some dances for five or six days; afterwards I was afraid to go back to my hamlet.

* Phan Thi Dac, Situation de la personne en Viet-Nam, Paris, 1966.

Where were the dances held?

I do not know. They took me with them at night, and the next day I watched the dances. Then there was another dance held at another place, and they took me there too. But I do not know the names of the places.

How did you get to go to the dances?

They invited me and took me with them.

Who were they?

Tam-Dao. He was the leader of the Village Military Affairs Committee.

Did you know him well?

I did not know him before I joined, but...he pretended as if he had known me....

• What do you mean when you say he deceived you?

He said: "Come to the dance; it is very interesting." I was excited....

Why were you afraid to go back to your hamlet?

After that first dance I spent the night there. Then I went to see other dances held at other places; four different dances in all. I had been away for five or six days. I did not dare go home, because I was afraid the GVN might arrest me. Then I stayed with the VC.

Did Tam-Dao stay with you all this time?

He took me to the first dance. Then he gave me to someone else, and asked that person to take me to the other dances. After four or five days, Tam-Dao told me that if I came back, the GVN soldiers would arrest me and beat me to death....So I joined the VC.

What did you like best about the Front and your life in the Front?

I liked the dances.

Did the VC take you to see other dances after you had joined them?

No....

Is it perhaps true that you left for the dances because your parents had scolded you?

That day I left my work to go fooling around with a few friends of mine. We picked fruit and played Chinese chess. Afterwards my parents picked on me, saying this and that. I felt sad, so when I was invited to see the dances I left. (296)

73. (Section V) ONE'S LOCATION IN SPACE APPEARS TO THE GVN, TOO, AS A CRUCIAL INDICATOR OF WHERE ONE STANDS IN THE WAR

Did those people whose houses had been burned [by GVN forces] have family members working for the VC?

They either went to the market or went somewhere to earn a living. When they heard that an operation was going on in their village, they got scared and stayed away. The GVN soldiers came, found no one in the houses, and burned them down. (297)

74. (Section V) THE CHARGE OF "SPYING" AND THE PERSONAL ENDS OF CADRES

The account thus settled may be a private one, as allegedly in the case of "Mr. Phan Bao... a duck breeder. One day he went to a neighboring village to buy food for his ducks. When he returned to the hamlet, he was arrested. The Front men said he had gone to pass information to GVN agents, and they condemned him to death for spying."

Was that duck breeder really a GVN spy?

Not at all. Usually after harvest time a lot of paddy grains remained scattered

in the ricefields. Duck breeders... liked to bring in their ducks and let them pick up the paddy grains. In the case of village-owned ricefields, one had to pay taxes. Thus each year there was an auction. The person who offered the highest tax was able to use these village-owned ricefields to feed his ducks. This year Mr. Phan Bao won. One of his defeated competitors, Mr. Vo Ho, had two brothers, serving as Front Cadres. The inhabitants whispered that to get revenge, Mr. Vo Ho had induced his two brothers to stage the murder of Mr. Phan Bao. (287)

Or the victim may have an all too good point against some cadres.

The village cadres became jealous of my brother-in-law, and asked him to give back one hectare [of his two] to the poor cadres. As he didn't agree, he sent a petition to the District Committee, which in turn blamed the village cadres. Then those people tried to get revenge by accusing him of buying for the GVN. They took him away and liquidated him. When my sister asked them about her husband, they said he had committed suicide and never showed her his grave. (172)

Denying one's violence is more characteristic of the GVN than of the VC, as is perhaps the entire device.

75. (Section V) THE GVN'S PENCHANT FOR COMPOUNDING
OBJECTIONABLE USES OF VIOLENCE

Recalling that "each time there was a sweep operation by ARVN, the villagers lost their poultry and food," a rallier adds: "When the District Rangers' section or the former [village] Self Defense squad [which had been forced to evacuate the village] were asked to pay, they would threaten or beat the villagers." (268)

In general:

How did the people feel about this bad behavior [by the GVN]?

They were unhappy, but they did not protest for fear of being beaten (104)

Or for fear of something worse. Remembering that "when I was still in the hamlet, there was one Special Forces platoon," and that "whenever they went on an operation, these Special Forces soldiers entered the people's houses and stole everything they found," an informant continues: "The people could not protest, because if they did, the soldiers would beat them up or have a grudge against them and shoot them." (9) "A man who had all four of his oxen taken away [by GVN soldiers]," an informant alleges, "followed them to beg them to return the oxen he needed to till his land. One kilometer from the village, the soldiers shot him dead." (134)

More particularly, doing anything but resigning oneself to a GVN official's abuse perpetrated at one's expense entails incurring the risk of being labeled "VC." "Before the liberation of the village [when he was publicly executed by the VC], the first notability," a rallier recalls, "gathered paddy for the district magistrate, who owned two thirds of the ricefields in the village, but didn't live there. The first notability ... was his representative. He obliged his tenants to contribute more than they would have had to pay the landlord. For example, if a tenant had to pay twenty gia to

the landlord, K. asked him to pay five gia more to himself." And, to come to the point here discussed, "those who didn't obey him were accused of being a suspected [sic] VC, had their identification cards taken away, and were threatened to be sent to the district." (19) "In my village," remembers another rallier, "there was a large area of unpopulated land. The GVN had authorized the poor villagers to clear it and transform it into rice-fields. The first occupants had right of ownership.... A villager from my hamlet whose house was near mine had already begun to clear a portion of this land. Since this portion was the best, the head of my hamlet seized it....The villager threatened to complain to higher authorities. So the hamlet chief said in a report to the district chief that this villager had contacts with Front members, thereby causing the arrest and imprisonment of the villager." (108) "All...these village fathers," another informant sums up, "after some years built [good] houses....If anybody said anything, he would be arrested...the authorities would claim he was pro-VC." (298)

76. (Section V) ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE A CERTAIN CONDUCT
DIVERGENT FROM THAT TO WHICH THE POPULATION INCLINES, THE
CADRES ARE APT TO YIELD WHEN ENCOUNTERING A DETERMINED AND
COLLECTIVE REFUSAL

"The GVN conducted two operations in my village, one in April and one last month [November 1965]," an informant recalls. "The first time all men from 16 to 45 years old obeyed the cadres' orders by getting out of the village. But the second time nobody agreed to leave the village, except members of the village and hamlet [VC] committees and guerrillas. The cadres had told the villagers that the Americans would disembowel all men. Then they threatened to kill those who refused to run away. But all that didn't have any effect. Some villagers even told the cadres: 'We'll stay here even if the Americans disembowel us all. At least we will die at home...and we will be buried by our wives and children. If we follow you to the mountains, we will certainly die and our bodies will never be found by our families.' It was very dangerous to tell the cadres so. But people still said it."⁽²⁵¹⁾ And they apparently got away with it through what seems to be a characteristic abstention by the VC from executing a threat of collective reprisal against a collective resolve by a hamlet to stay, or (more frequently), to leave.

Before joining the Front, did you know anything about life in the Front?

No, there was no way in which I could find out how life in the Front was. If they told us that life in the Front was difficult... nobody would care to join the Front. If the men who were forced to join knew that life in the Front was full of hardships, they would

oppose being taken away. If this happened, the VC would not dare to kill them. If they killed 50-70 young men, their policy towards the people would be severely damaged. (4)

Not everybody, though, is as confident:

Before you became active in the Liberation Front, how did you feel about your life?

Life in the hamlet was happy. I thought of staying in the hamlet, but the VC took me away by force. They threatened us, saying that if no one would come, the whole hamlet would have to die. (299)

But it might not have had to. The threat may not have been serious, as several accounts, apart from the one already quoted, suggest. Replying to the question, "How were the new recruits treated by the VC during the march [from their homes to their first base]?" a fighter recalls that "the VC were all right." In fact, "the new recruits sometimes objected against having to walk too long a distance. It happened that we would just lie down on the ground and refuse to go any further. The VC didn't dare beat us up or do anything. They just begged us to get on our way." (176)

Were there any people from your hamlet who have been isolated by the Front?

There were a lot of them from my hamlet.... The village committee gathered the villagers, pointed them out, and forbade the villagers to have anything to do with them. But the Village Committee's prohibition was only honored for a while. A fortnight or a month later, the villagers resumed their relations with the isolated men, and the Village Committee had to resign itself to it. (153)

Obviously, flagrant resistance is riskier for a few:

In my hamlet, two brothers refused to join the Front units, and said to the cadres: "We don't dare fight on the battlefield. You would do better to kill us than to draft us." The cadres tied them up and shot them dead right there. (254)

Risk, however, may be greatly reduced if to a but slight increase in the number of those who resist is joined what may seem to the population a much better case for doing so:

In April 1965 in Binh Minh village...the [VC] District Council...and the village authorities got together to chase and capture 33 youths whom they put in jail [so as to draft them]. At night these youths fled, and the VC fired many shots and succeeded in capturing six of the youths. The people protested against this, and the six youths refused to join the Front forces, asking why they were forced to join while the other youths weren't. They...said that they would rejoin, when all the other youths were recaptured. In the end the Front had to let these six youths stay home. (263)

77. (Section V) INDIVIDUAL RESISTANCE TO THE CADRES' DEMAND, WHEN IT SERVES A SUPREME PRIVATE INTEREST AND ENTAILS BUT MODERATE DISADVANTAGE TO THE PARTY, MAY WIN OUT

Having left the VC, dissatisfied, and having set up a flourishing private practice, refusing demands of the VC that she go back to them, a woman medic allegedly finds herself in this situation: "As I continued to treat the local people, the VC were afraid that I would not resume working for the Front if I had such a lucrative business.

So they forbade the villagers to come to me, and said that I was a bad element who had contacts with GVN security agents." However, "the villagers still sneaked to my house for treatment. One day the VC stopped a woman in labor who was being carried to my house, and told her relatives to take her somewhere else; but they refused and carried her to my house. Another time the VC forbade a villager to take his child who suffered from whooping cough to see me, but the villager said he didn't know anyone who could do a better job than I, and took his child to my house all the same." (127)

When the cadres attempted to draft farmers who, after the flight of their families to GVN areas, were alone in cultivating the family land, they would hear this: "My parents have left. How could I join the Front? If I joined, who would take care of the ricefields and orchards? I will join when my parents come back." If the cadres insisted, [the farmers] replied: You do what you want. If you want to shoot me, go right ahead and shoot me right here. I can't join the Front forces." They argued and fought for a long time, and at the end the cadres had to let it go at that (300)

78. (Section V) A UNIT OF THE MAIN FORCE OR OF THE LOCAL FORCES, WHEN DESIRING TO SOJOURN IN A VILLAGE, MAY OVERRIDE THE VILLAGERS' REFUSAL, BUT IS MORE LIKELY TO HEED IT

As to VC elements from outside a hamlet finding shelter and food in it, there are, to be sure, cases in which the villagers' preferences go unheeded. Easily so, perhaps,

when they are not Vietnamese, as the following exchange with a Rho suggests:

Did the people ask the VC not to come into the village?

Yes, they asked them not to come, but they came just the same, and told the people not to worry and to dig trenches and go underground.
(228)

But not only in the case of Montagnards. "The people," recalls an informant, "asked the Main Force men not to stay in their houses because it would bring death to both of them. But it was in vain. The Main Force men refused to go and stay in the forests, and they kept on staying in the people's houses." Even when "the people said to the fighters: 'Well, if you want to stay here, it is all right. My family and I will move elsewhere during that time,' the fighters did not agree to that and they ordered the family to stay with them."⁽²⁹⁾

Were the villagers willing to accommodate you [a unit of the Main Force] at night?

Most of them refused to lodge us for fear of being strafed by aircraft....But...the tactic Hai Lao [the chief of the village Military Affairs Section] often used against them was to threaten to camp in their courtyard, and to shoot at any aircraft flying by the next morning. [Then] the villagers had to agree to lodge us. (301)

But it is more likely -- depending on factors unknown to me -- that the refusal even of individual villagers will be heeded.

This may happen though the VC are clearly told how little the people in question are attached to them. 'The VC cadres," a rallier recalls, "asked villagers to cook meals for them, and the latter invariably declined with such excuses as being busy with farming or fishing." (302)

The grounds offered for refusing may obviously be pretexts, and flimsy ones to boot:

Some of the villagers refused to let us sleep in their houses on the grounds that there wasn't enough space, or that their wives or children were ill. (9)

Some families were nice to us. They would let us stay in their houses. Others would refuse, with the excuse that their houses were too crowded, and that they had many young children, and their children might inadvertently swallow our bullets. (89)

The reasons for refusing might even be overtly complimentary to the VC:

Did any villagers ever refuse to let you and your friends spend the night in their houses?

Yes. They said many VC cells who had come to their houses had been too careless and caused the ARVN to fire into the houses where the VC were staying. (9)

Even the wishes of those who ran the greater risk of being denounced by the VC are not always disregarded. "As for the people," an informant reminisces about the early sixties, "the majority...liked us, but some hated us. They were middle class farmers, whose land had been seized by the Front. Sometimes when we came to their houses to ask them to accommodate us for the night, they refused, and we had to sleep in the fields." (135)

The cadres may accept refusals not only of initial requests, but also of subsequent entreaties:

Did the villagers sometimes ask your unit to leave because they feared possible attacks on it?

They sometimes did tell us not to stay around and to move out into the woods.

What did your cadres do when they were requested to leave the village?

They entreated the villagers to let them stay, and if they were unsuccessful, they took the unit out into the woods. (171)

Though complying with the population's refusal may entail hardship:

What caused you the greatest hardship [in the VC]?

The greatest hardship was moving at night, even in the rain. In the part of the village we were stationed most of the time, the villagers did not allow us to stay with them in their houses. (303)

Or disaster:

Would you please describe how you were captured?

On June 21, 1965, at about 9 or 10 a.m., my cell, which comprised four people, was in a villager's house when we heard the sound of helicopters. The villagers feared that they would be implicated. They expelled us and therefore the GVN troops, carried by helicopters...fired at and killed one of us. I was captured with the two others. (304)

79. (Section V) THE CADRES MAY SUBMIT TO NEGATIVE REACTIONS, IF THE REACTIONS ARE COLLECTIVE, OR IF THEY SEEM JUSTIFIED, ACCORDING TO POPULAR SENTIMENT, BY WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THOSE WHO CONVEY THEM

Were people in the villages you visited ever unfriendly or hostile to you?

Villagers...showed their hostility openly. When we arrived, they wouldn't greet us; when we asked them something, they wouldn't answer, they would give us dirty looks and turn their back to us.... When we needed something and asked them for it, they said they didn't have it, or they wouldn't show us where we could find it. We knew we weren't welcome, but we had orders not to antagonize them further. (64)

What did the villagers do whenever your unit came through their hamlets?

They often said to us that we were incapable of doing anything, and told us to go away....We could not argue against them. (305)

Were the ones who complained criticized?

No....Because many people had said the same thing. (17)

The people may be allowed to express -- within limits -- undeniable, though disagreeable truths:

What did the people think of the village guerrillas who ran away when the GVN troops came?

They said that when the enemy was not there, we boasted of ourselves as heroes, but we ran faster than anybody when trouble came.

Did they really say that?

They said it to our face.

What was your reaction to their criticism?

We were easy-going people. We just accepted the truth and let the security people handle the matter [sic]. However, if anyone repeated himself too many times, he would be asked to attend a reeducation course which lasted for seven days. (112)

If the criticism is a just one, it may even be edged with ridicule:

Usually, when the ARVN went on an operation in the village, did the guerrillas try to stop the ARVN?

When the ARVN came, the guerrillas...fired a few shots and then ran away.

Did the people make fun of them, when they didn't dare oppose the ARVN?

Certainly, when they ran away, the people laughed at them and hated them for it, because when they fired a few shots at the ARVN and fled, the ARVN returned the fire and wounded the people....The people laughed at them and said, "If you are so good and courageous, why don't you stay here and stop the ARVN? Why did you fire at the ARVN to make them fire back and wound the people? You only bring misery to the people."

What did the guerrillas say?

They didn't dare to say anything. They were too ashamed to find something to say back to the people. (191)

When the people have been injured by obviously inappropriate conduct of the VC, they may with impunity show their rage:

During the last month of 1963, we were nearly completely deprived of rice. We were so

hungry that my Company Commander authorized my platoon to go as far as --- village...four hours march from our camp, to find something to eat. We had intended to gather breadfruit seeds thrown away by the inhabitants. Hardly had we arrived in the village, when two aircraft appeared, strafing and bombing....Only after the bombing did we learn the cause: a VC soldier leading a horse carrying manioc had been spotted by planes. The result was that the horse was killed, a village guerrilla and two young buffalo were fatally wounded. Besides, ten houses were burned....[The villagers] were outraged. A woman came up and said, "You've come in great numbers, and yet you don't take the trouble to hide yourselves from planes. Do you want us to die so you can have our rice, or do you want our houses to be burned down, so we can go and live in the forest?" We had nothing to say to that woman. We contented ourselves with leaving the village. (130)

The VC may, in such situations, let itself be beaten.

"Recently," alleges a rallier, "I saw the people beat up the Communist troops that were marching through a village, following an ARVN air operation. The villagers caused them head injuries and said: 'Because of whom are we so unhappy? Because of whom have so many of us died?' The VC fighters didn't dare to fight back; they just ran away," and of course justified such conduct by considerations of expediency: "The Front troops... said that no side was as strong as the people, so when the villagers beat them up, they just covered their heads with both hands and ran away. They did this for political reasons. If they fought with the people, they would never again be able to live among the people." (3)

The victims' kin are allowed to berate their tormentors:

What was the usual reaction of families whose children had died in action [for the VC]?

Such families...insulted the cadres....
(138)

Parents desperate to prevent sons from becoming casualties are not always punished, or may even be disregarded:

What did you think of your task of recruiting youths for the Front forces?

....once I was beaten and cursed by the youths' mothers. All of them stated that the Front is not right in forcing the youths to go to the battlefield. (306)

An old man whose son was recruited by the Front armed himself with a stick, went up to the cadres and said: "You always criticize the imperialists, but you are even worse. I want my son back." He... threatened to beat the cadres and ordered his son to go home. His son left. The cadres did not say anything. (307)

80. (Section V) THE CADRES MAY PERMIT THOSE FEARING
INJURY FROM THE SEQUELS TO THEIR ACTIONS TO STAY THEIR
HANDS FORCIBLY

Did aircraft come to make broadcasts in your village?

Yes, but they were fired on by the guerrillas....Sometimes, when the guerrillas fired at the aircraft, while they were standing on the road in front of a villager's

house, that villager chased them away with sticks or machetes. I myself saw Mr. Ba, a neighbor of mine, chase the guerrillas away. That day an airplane came to broadcast, and the guerrillas fired on it. Mr. Ba got mad and chased them away with a knife. He cursed them....

What happened to people like Mr. Ba, who treated the guerrillas that way?

The VC couldn't do anything to them because the people were...protecting their belongings. The majority of the people protested against the guerrillas' shooting of aircraft, so what could the VC do? Kill all of them? (127)

Did the guerrillas in the hamlet under VC control fire at aircraft?

No. The people would prevent them from doing so. If they were in the villagers' houses and wanted to get out to fire at the aircraft that appeared, the people would cling to their sleeves, and pull them back into the houses. (4)

81. (Section VI) DRASTIC ACTION SO AS TO MAKE HUMILIATION CEASE AND UNDO THAT ALREADY INFLICTED

The target may be close to oneself. After an informant, not flagrantly psychotic, had mentioned "a fire that had burnt down my hut," the following exchange develops:

Was your hut really burned?

Yes. I had myself set fire to it.

Why did you burn your house?

It wasn't a house, only a little hut where I lived by myself. Several times, while I was out, friends had broken into it and got hold of my things. I lost my temper and burned it.
(308)

Or the insulted one may of course turn starkly against himself:

If a team composed of men and women is sent on a mission, and all the team members belong either to the Party or to the Labor Youth except for one man, this man will feel very angry and ashamed, and he can even go so far as to commit suicide. (231)

Or the offender may become the objective. "I am not a mild-tempered person," a rallier explains. "If someone steps on my toes, then he had better be careful." And he tells a story which would not lose all significance were it a lie: "I was ready to be admitted to the Party in 1959, but the company commander made a bad remark about me, and I turned around with my gun and aimed at him."⁽¹⁸²⁾ Here is a junior "spring cadre" being insulted by a senior "autumn cadre":

What criticism was made against you at the Party group's meeting?

I nearly shot the other guy....I already had gotten to my gun, and had cocked it ready to shoot....The man was so scornful of me....He himself [he said] had been a Party member for many years and had been in the Resistance when I was a child and didn't yet know about anything. I didn't have as many words and was not as eloquent as he was, and there were many people on his side; that was why I got mad and loaded my gun. (156)

Hence, if you want to make targets explode, provoke insults against them. "The proselyting cadres," a rallier advises not the GVN attempting to weaken the VC, but the latter trying to enfeeble the GVN, "ought to take initiatives...so that the [GVN] soldiers feel their unit leaders trample on their self-respect." For "when the soldiers' self-respect is hurt, they will burst into action." (180)

82. (Section VII) IT MAY BE IN AN EFFORT TO RESTORE ONE'S
DAMAGED PRIDE THAT ONE JOINS A SIDE

Before you became active in the Front, how did you feel about your life? Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with it?

I wasn't satisfied with my life then, because I felt my family's background had tied me up...As far as the Front was concerned, we were a GVN soldier's family.... I was ashamed before my friends. I wanted my family to be treated at least like other families in the village. I wanted to bring back honor to my family. I thought there was no other way for me but to join the FrontMy family would be washed of all its former mistakes, and there would be no difference between it and other families. (19)

83. (Section VII) ...OR LEAVES A SIDE

I decided to rally because my marriage plans had been cancelled, and I would thus lose face....I was engaged to Miss C. Our marriage was approved by the Long Trung Village Party Committee, and the Province Current Affairs Committee. The marriage was to be celebrated on October 29, 1965. But on October 26 the Secretary of the Long Trung Party Committee told me he had received a letter from B. sent to the Village Party Committee, stating that I myself was a good individual, but that I was from a bad social class [A GVN soldier's family, with a brother killed by the VC]. Long Trung Party Committee couldn't recognize the marriage unless they received a statement from Cam Son [the informant's village] Party Committee stating that I was from a poor farmer family, as I had stated in my curriculum vitae when I first joined....Of course the Cam Son Party Committee couldn't give a wrong statement, and so the Long Trung Party Committee couldn't

represent the Party to celebrate our marriage. I was too ashamed to see Miss C. again. And when the Province Party Committee [would become] aware of the fact [of the informant having lied in his curriculum vitae], I would be severely criticized for cheating, and demoted. I would lose face. My comrades would look down on me and laugh at me, and [now the proper view of everything as a means to the Party's end]: it would be impossible for me to carry on with my task. (19)

84. (Section VII) LANDLORDS WHO BEAT: RALLIERS REMEMBER
THEIR CHILDHOOD

I was born...in a very poor family....I went to school for a year, but since we were very poor I had to quit this school, and tend buffaloes for a landowner. This rich farmer possessed 30 cong of ricefields and four buffaloes. I was often beaten by him because I failed to pen the buffaloes at 3 a.m. every morning. He demanded that his buffaloes must have eaten their daily ration of grass before 6 a.m., when he needed these animals to help him till his land. I was then very scared of darkness, and therefore I dared not lead the buffaloes to the field, when it was still dark. (309)

Because my family was extremely poor, ...my father kept insisting that I become a buffalo herder for a landlord in the village when I was only eleven years old....The landlord made me look after six buffaloes...and told me to sleep in the buffaloes' stall.... I was even responsible for them at night.... At night the buffaloes often break down the fence, and go foraging in the ricefields. Every time that they got out and got into someone's field and destroyed the crop, I was in for a beating and abuse from the landlord. But at night, I would fall into a sound sleep,

and many nights the buffaloes would break down the fence without my knowing it. As a result, the beatings and cursings were as regular as rain.... (73)

85. (Section VII) FIST FIGHTS IN THE VC

What was the most common mistake which the cadres and fighters in your unit...committed?

The men were usually criticized for bad manners.... They often lost their tempers, quarreled and engaged in fist fights. (179)

Particularly under stress, of course, as during the long march south of regroupees or members of PAVN:

How often did you [regroupees] hold a meeting during the trip?

A meeting would be called whenever some problems came up -- for example, when a dispute or a fist fight had taken place....The men kept their spirit very high when their stomachs were full, but when they were hungry...somebody was bound to get sore and insulting words were exchanged. After a tiring day...a lot of men...started to quarrel, or sometimes engaged in fist fights. Incidents like that took place very often, and the whole group of men looked like an unruly crowd in a market place. It was quite a sight at the end of a day's march....They fought, despite the fact that we were cadres....

I wonder what would happen to units of infiltrators in which there were more fighters than cadres?

It would be worse....We were cadres, yet we behaved that way....I talked to one of the unit leaders, and he said it was quite a headache to go South with a group

of young fighters. The kids just fought all day. Hunger and hardship made people behave badly....When we were unhappy, we became careless. We even organized [sic] fist fights among the wounded veterans or with the people....[Northerners] dared ...to say sarcastic things against us. Of course we got mad and started a fight.... (179)

Thus, as we would by now expect, the VC's struggle against beating is especially likely to fail under insult. Observing that "if they [the fighters] were dissatisfied, they would look for excuses to ask for leave to go home," and that "even if the permission was not granted, they would go home all the same," an informant adds: "If the village cadres in their village come to talk to them, they will...go so far as to beat these cadres up.... Especially if the female cadres in the village come to make fun of these fighters, calling them 'broken soldiers,' the fighters will...beat them up." (21)

86. (Section VII) IN ASSESSING THEIR OWN MISTAKES, THE CADRES MAY ATTRIBUTE HIGH COST TO CONTEMPTUOUS CONDUCT

The Party's sensitivity about the role of manners in reducing or exacerbating hostile reactions to the infliction of losses -- a sensitivity which, one would surmise, operates to moderate the VC's obnoxiousness to its targets -- is illustrated in reports sent to his home office by a VC agent among the Cao Dai, when he discovers that VC cadres are emulating the improprieties more usually ascribed to GVN personnel. "His family," he notes about that of a prominent man, "is very incensed about our

actions....His son went to cut wood in the forest...and was arrested by our people while he was carrying wood out to the road. After being arrested, he was forced by our people to carry the wood for a distance of over 1,000 meters back to the place where he had gotten it. This action made him indignant, because his back was hurt and his clothes were wet with blood. He was so incensed that he considered the VC more wicked than the U.S. imperialists. He said that it would be all right not to allow him to take the wood, but we should not torture him in forcing him to carry the wood for one kilometer."

Also, "I learned that the Cao Dai...here went to drain the water in a shallow public pond to catch fish, and encountered our people who told them to go ahead with draining the pond. But when the believers were ready to go home with their fish, our people did not allow them to go, and forced them to dig a hole in which to put their fish [sic]. The believers were told [these particular Cao Dai being credited with sympathy for the VC] that the fish was the only food available to us while we were carrying out the Resistance, and that we could not live without it. The believers dug a hole, put all the fish in it, and indignantly went home. This created friction between us and the believers. The believers said that it would be all right if we did not allow them to take the fish away, but why did we ill-treat them? They said that we are more brutal than the imperialists." Further, "the woodcutters in Mo Cong Forest were insulted and ruthlessly beaten by our people. The victims' families became very indignant....They argued that they were beaten by the

Revolution just because they are too poor and want to make a living in the forest. They felt that the Revolution is worse than American imperialism. One day they all prepared to get even and...met our people, who attempted to arrest them. They gathered together and beat our people. One of our men was killed."(310)*

87. (Section VII) MAJOR AS WELL AS MINOR OFFENSES
PUNISHED BY "CRITICISM"

Even extreme misconduct, at least when committed not too often, may be punished by "criticism" only. When an informant recalls that "the company cadres told us there were three comrades of another unit who had escaped because they had been unable to endure hardships, but they were already arrested," the following exchange develops:

Have you heard of what happened to those three men later?

They were only subjected to self-criticism. (311)

What were you criticized about?

I balked at their order to go on a mission. I refused, because I was afraid that I would get killed and because of the hardships. (312)

If one cell member [in a three-man cell] rallied, the two other members would be called upon to report the circumstances during which the other member had escaped. If it was found that the other two members had helped their comrade to make his escape, they would be strongly criticized. (114)

* Emphasis added.

Variations of punishment for an extreme offense might all be subsumed under "criticism":

What was the hardest punishment for someone who ran away with the intention of surrendering, but then failed and returned to the unit?

The worst punishment would be criticism and warning in front of the company. The lightest measure is criticism in the squad.
(3)

The treatment for what might appear mere misdemeanors may not, at first sight, seem different. "I was first company quartermaster," runs an informant's story. "During the New Year celebration I was told to buy a pig for 2,000 piasters. I told them 3,000 for a pig and all that went with it would not be much. I asked them to give me 1,000 piasters more. They agreed. When I added all the expenses up, they came to 4,500 piasters....When I brought the papers to have them signed, they refused to sign. They said it was...a misuse of Party funds. I was asked whose permission I had gotten to spend more than the amount allotted. I replied that I had gotten the permission from the Assistant Company Leader....I was not the only one who ate that pig. The entire company shared in that celebration, and everybody got their share. I had the papers to prove it. At the end, I was accused to trying to ruin the Party's property. I was criticized in front of the Unit Party Chapter for not protecting the economy of the Party. At the end I had to accept their criticism and declare myself guilty. I was then warned in front of the whole company."(41)

In these conditions, targets of "criticism" may themselves fail to distinguish between capital and minute offenses. "I was," an informant recalls, "criticized so many times that I cannot recount them all. Sometimes when they asked me to go on operations, I refused...and they criticized me." He continues: "They were always criticizing us for our smallest errors." (191)

88. (Section VII) BLAMING THE DEAD TO CORRECT THE LIVING

According to a rallier,

Disciplining action will be taken during the memorial service against those dead fighters who have been guilty of some faults while they were living....Usually, if the faults are small the Front will disregard them. An exception to this is the case of Captain Vong of My Tho, a regroupee who had returned to the South in February 1962 and was killed during the Kim Son battle of 1963. He had with him a photograph of himself in uniform with the rank of captain, and his former Northern unit identification card. The GVN captured these documents and splashed them all over the newspapers, and accused the North of sending regulars to fight in the South. This caused great damage to the Party's policy, so during his memorial service he was expelled from the Party and his crime was put in his record. That incident was discussed in all the units. (19)

Here is, with regard to the target, the definitive characteristic of insult; but for the purpose of coercing others. The dead one thus performs a last service to the Party.

89. (Section VIII) PERSONS WITH A RECORD OF ENMITY MAY
BE RECRUITED UNDER DURESS

"They killed the GVN hamlet chief -- I was his assistant," an informant recalls. "I resumed my occupation to earn my living, I grew sweet potatoes and other crops.... There were no VC in my village, when I went back home. But in a hamlet of my village, a VC regroupee...succeeded in persuading a SDC to join him....Le Son [the regroupee] and the SDC who had joined him broke into my house at about midnight to arrest me....They said: 'The Revolution in the South is now ripe. Youths like you must go to fight.'"(52) "At the time I joined the Front," recalls another informant, "there was no longer a GVN Village Committee [in my village]. The hamlet chiefs had stopped working for the GVN. When the VC came, they were obliged to work for them."(80) "The VC...told me," reports yet another, "that I had worked for the GVN; if I did not follow them now, it was because I wanted to spy on them...."(313) Either you are a spy for them or a cadre for us:

Before I was with the VC, I was in the ARVN. When I received my discharge, I returned home. It was then that the VC approached me and forced me to join them. I...was given a ten-day training course. After completing the training course, I was made chief of the Military Proselyting Team of Guic Tuong village. I worked at this job from that date until the day I rallied. (84)

90. (Section VIII) EVEN DEFECTORS MAY BE INCORPORATED
ANEW UNDER DURESS

While in many cases the cadres tolerate desertion by persons whose morale they view as irremediably deficient, they may also not be averse to forcing former defectors to serve them anew, until, perhaps, they change sides once more:

I was active [in the VC] from December 1961 to April 1962....In April 1962 I gave up....On August 1, 1962, I enlisted in the 7th Division (ARVN), where I did my bit for one year. On July 30, 1963, I was called in by the Security Unit of the Division, which made investigations regarding my service in the Front in 1962. I was afraid of being imprisoned. Therefore, I deserted and went to -- village...where I lived until February 1964. Then I was compelled by the local cadres to join the Front. They told me, "You are as a young man duty bound to do it." After that they sent me to follow a military and political training course...for two months. After having attended this training course, I was assigned to a recon squad.... Then I served in this recon squad until April 8, 1965, when I got in touch with Mr. -- in order to rally to the GVN. (314)

91. (Section VIII) THE CADRES MAY REQUIRE AN INTERVAL,
BETWEEN CHANGING SIDES, FOR PUNISHMENT AND PERSUASION

Before I worked for the VC I had worked for the GVN. I had been a member of my village council after 1954. I had sent people in my village to build a strategic hamlet....I had also collected the taxes for the GVN.... After the VC started their uprising in 1960, they held me for reeducation during three months and five days....My right thigh still

hurts me since I was held by the VC [such an allusion to maltreatment is rare]. I had two water buffaloes. The VC confiscated them, put them on sale, and gave the money to the villagers to pay back for the taxes I had collected from them. Then the VC asked me to work for the Front. I didn't like it, but they said to me, "You cannot repay all your sins with only two water buffaloes, so you must work for the people or else you will be beheaded." (29)

92. (Section VIII) OR THE CADRES MAY PERMIT A PHASE OF INACTIVITY BETWEEN CHANGING SIDES

What happened to those who have joined the ARVN, when they came back to their hamlets [presumably either on leave or having deserted]?

When they returned, the Front took them away for an indoctrination session. Then they would be allowed to stay home for a while. After that the Front would force them to join its forces. If they refused, they would be accused of being GVN spies by the Front. (9)

93. (Section VIII) FORCING CURRENTLY ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE GVN TO CHANGE

What made you join the VC?

I was forced to join them. I had been a member of the Combat Forces [GVN]; when the VC came, they transferred me to their guerrilla unit. (243)

Having alleged a long record of service for the GVN -- "I have served as a hamlet chief for the GVN. In 1961, I cumulated [sic] the function of a secret agent for a lieutenant who was in charge of intelligence-gathering in

seven villages....On my information three Viet Cong had been captured. Later I was revealed, because Hay Sung, who had been thrown into jail on my information, recognized me on his release. In November 1961...three Viet Cong agents wearing grenades came to kidnap me and accused me of being a GVN spy....They blindfolded me for three days and then released me....[Afterwards] aside from my job as a secret agent and as a squad leader of the SDC, I also worked as an assistant on the Republican Youth for... the district chief....Every time the district soldiers came back from an operation with their captured suspects, I would be asked to identify them." Having displayed such a past (never mind to what extent it had occurred, as long as it seemed a plausible introduction to what now follows, an informant recalls:

In the middle of 1961 the Front started to contact me....They enticed me to come over to their side with my weapons to wash clean my mistakes. They said...that I would be killed if I remained on the GVN side, and that if I was intransigent I would be beheaded when Armistice came....They wrote me a note saying that at such-and-such time and date I had to go over to their side, otherwise they would kill me....When I first joined the 502nd Battalion, I served as a cell leader....
(315)

94. (Section VIII) TRANSFORMING DISSATISFIED PEOPLE INTO BACKBONE ELEMENTS

What kind of people were the [Party Youth] group leaders [in a controlled village]? Were they those brilliant young individuals you told me about?

The Group leaders weren't brilliant individuals. Brilliant individuals were intended for...cadre positions. On the contrary, the stubborn elements like me who were against them, were appointed Group leaders.

Why did they appoint such elements Group leaders?

They used to follow up our work to ascertain whether or not we were diligent. If we didn't make our utmost efforts to work, then they would arrest us and send us to a thought-reform session. (225)

During the last three months, how many face-to-face struggles were conducted by the cadres?

There were three face-to-face struggles during the last two months....The...villagers, seeing that they would be arrested if they continued to go on demonstrations [to conduct face-to-face struggles against the GVN authorities], had to struggle against the village cadres in order to be exempted from face-to-face struggles....The...villagers were...unwilling to go on demonstrations....The district committee [of the Front] sent...agents to...[the village in question] to conduct a...investigation. The latter fulfilled their mission by arresting three villagers. They...forced them to attend a reeducation course, brought them back to the village, gathered the people once again, and compelled these three men to wage a face-to-face struggle. From dissatisfied people, these three villagers now became backbone elements. (316)

95. (Section VIII) ONE'S EXPERIENCE ON ONE SIDE MAY
IMMEDIATELY BECOME ONE'S QUALIFICATION FOR THE OTHER

Describe your life...before you became active for the VC.

I lived in Ngoc Lanh until 1962. In April 1962, the GVN told the people to go and live in Nui Mieu Strategic Hamlet. There, I became a member of the Combat Youth until November 1963, when the VC came and burned the strategic hamlet....One month after I moved [into the strategic hamlet], I was chosen to be a Combat Youth by the Chief of the Security Section....In late March, 1964, I went back to my old house in Ngoc Lanh hamlet. There the VC came and asked all the young men to join the guerrilla force...all joined the guerrilla platoon. That was in June, 1964....

Do you know why you were chosen to be Assistant Platoon Leader?

...the VC said I was fit for the position because I was formerly with the Combat Youth.
(317)

In such conditions, the matter of convictions may be introduced only in case a person asked to switch sides is recalcitrant.

Under what circumstances did you join the Front?

When the VC set up an Area Cadre Affairs Section, they asked me to assume responsibility as Chief of the area unit, and as I refused, they threatened me by saying: "For many years you have worked as platoon leader for the GVN and have gotten a lot of experience. You must take this job....If you are stubborn, we shall send you to a reeducation camp!" (318)

96. (Section VIII) RAISING FALSE CHARGES AGAINST A PERSON
TO BE RECRUITED SO AS TO RENDER THE PATTERN OF RECRUITING
AN ENEMY UNDER DURESS APPLICABLE TO HIM

The VC arrested me and accused me of being a GVN spy. They detained me...for more

than a month....I felt that they wanted me to work for them. Afterwards the VC apologized for having arrested and detained me, and asked me to work for them. I was obliged to accept. (16)

I started working for the VC in March, 1964. I was moving around, hoping to find people who wanted to have portraits or landscapes painted for a fee. I met some guerrillas. They were five armed guerrillas. They said I was a spy for the Republican Government, and threatened to arrest me. Then they abducted me...to a place where I was assigned to a Regional Force Unit. (319)

97. (Section VIII) THE CADRES' CONFIDENCE IN THE IMPACT OF THEIR DEVICES ON BELIEFS

Did the people truly want you to liberate them so badly?

They did, because the local cadres always educated them and made them aware of the importance of being liberated. (320)

When did you return to your village after your discharge from the ARVN?

At the end of January 1963.

Did the local guerrillas have a high fighting spirit at that time?

No, it was very low....

How did morale change between then and May 1964, when you joined [the VC]?

It rose whenever the VC Province Forces came in, and fell when they left. One time I saw morale reduced so much that I said to the [VC] village chief: "You must do something...." He said that it didn't matter, because whenever the Province Force withdrew, it could prepare another tactic to heighten morale when it returned.

Do you think he was right?

No, I thought at the time, "Bullshit, you are a big liar."

But why did he think the Province Forces could boost morale at will like that?

He didn't really think that. This is the Communist way. When he didn't have a good answer, he would always say something like that. (84)

Quite apart from the choice of a lie often being determined by obscure beliefs, it is not certain that the cadre was thoroughly insincere. At least the objects of his manipulations tend, as we have seen, to accept the proposition that for every desired modification in them there is a quantity and quality of persuasion that will produce it.

98. (Section VIII) EVEN HIGHER CADRES ARE IN NEED OF
LARGE DOSES OF PERSUASION WHEN CONDITIONS ARE TRYING

Do you know why the Main Force units remained inactive for a long time prior to the attack on Song Be [in May 1965]?

During that period they had a reorientation course to strengthen their ideology. These units were all from the Delta, and they had been concentrated in the jungle. Before, when they were still in the Delta, they were not much exposed to air bombardments. Life in the jungle was full of hardships, and they had to live far from the people. Besides, they had been bombed...and this discouraged them [the implication is: a protracted reorientation course in the jungle was now in order].

What was the last battle they took part in prior to their concentration in the jungle to attend the reorientation course? When did this battle take place?

The last battles in which the men in my unit participated were in Gia Dinh Province. They took place before Tet in 1965 [before February]. After the battles they remained in that province to beat off ARVN mopping-up operations, if there were any. However, nothing happened, so they withdrew to Duong Minh Chau War Zone to attend the reorientation course. [Which, thus, may have lasted for several months.] (5)

99. (Section VIII) THE VC DOES MORE PERSUADING THAN THE GVN

How much contact did the local GVN officials have with the villagers?

They appeared when they came to collect taxes. They rarely met the people and talked to them. (174)

Did the GVN ever send people to the village to talk to the people the way the VC did?

The GVN have never done that. (115)

When the ARVN troops came to your village, did they ever gather the villagers for a meeting?

No. (233)

Were there any...units of the ARVN passing through your village?

Yes....They treated us correctly. They did not organize meetings and did not say anything. (321)

(The exception, of course, would be GVN units whose special mission prominently includes propaganda; the informants say little about them.) The agents of the GVN may add to such inactivity with regard to persuasion a lack of surveillance, or even presence, which helps the VC acquire superiority in the battle of meanings:

Although the GVN was in control of my village, the officials weren't very active. During their absence, the VC would come to make propaganda to the people. (221)

The targets may infer an authority's tastes from the relative amounts of the diverse instruments of influence applied by it to them:

What were the differences between the Front and the GVN's policies?

I found that the Nationalists more often used force than persuasion. The Nationalists arrested and threatened the people. Meanwhile, the VC appealed to the people's emotions. They would rather use persuasion than force. (144)

100. (Section VIII) THE CADRES' AND TARGETS' BELIEF THAT ANY DESIRED IMPACT CAN BE PRODUCED BY A SUITABLY PROTRACTED APPLICATION OF REPETITIOUS PERSUASION

Were you successful in your proselyting?

Yes. Many soldiers joined the Front.... However, it took two or three months to proselyte them. In 1962, the entire garrison in Vinh Hu Post deserted to the Front. It was the same thing with Yen Luong post in 1963. We called upon the soldiers every night for two months.... (201)

I believed them [the village cadres] because they repeated relentlessly that.... (322)

The VC came to convince by their propaganda day in and day out. Finally, people were convinced.... (323)

The man who contacted me was a member of the Party Chapter of the village. He came to our house many times, and every time he came, he insisted that I should work for the Front. At last...I followed him. (324)

Whenever they needed the people's contributions, the cadres organized training sessions before. Many times if, after the training session, the number of people who volunteered to contribute, or the amount of money or quantity of paddy contributed wasn't high enough, the cadres asked the people to attend more training sessions. They kept training until they had the desired result. (291)

101. (Section VIII) PERSUASION DIRECTED BY DIFFERENTIATED
TARGET INTELLIGENCE

During the talk it was very easy to notice those who listened intently. The village secret agents who mixed with the population would follow these persons and would make contact with them. (207)

We sent cadres into the villages...in order...to study each individual....On the basis of these findings, we educated the people....For example, a woman was suspected ...by the ARVN soldiers, she was beaten up,... The cadres learned about this and came to see her...to take care of her...(164)

An informant having recalled how he was beaten by GVN forces, the following exchange occurs:

How did you feel about this incident?

I was scared, but at the same time I was extremely angry.

Did the VC come to talk to you afterwards?

Yes. The VC came to inquire about what happened and make propaganda. They asked me to join their ranks. (285)

It is according to a rallier that

Their words scratched you where you were itching. Every time my hamlet had anything that troubled people, the VC took advantage of that and proselytized. (105)

102. (Section VIII) BEING FASCINATED BY THE CADRES' SKILL IN TALKING

When you went home for leave [from ARVN], how long were you able to stay with your family before the VC came to see you?

They came to see me two days after I got home.

....Did they come to see you in your house?

They came to see me in my house.

Was it during the day or at night?

....It was about 10 in the evening.

How many VC came to see you?

One.

How well did you know that person?

I did not know him.

What did he say to you?

His talk was sweet to my ears. He said I should not do my soldier's work for the GVN because it was not good. Instead I had better

join the Revolution....I agreed to follow him,
and he took me away.

How long did he talk to you?

About half an hour.

How did you feel about his speech?

....[I was] captivated by what he said....
He spoke very well. (282)

Observers may relate disparities between popular
reactions toward the two sides to differences in their
skill with words:

How did the GVN soldiers behave? What
did the people in the hamlet think of them?

They have always been correct....How-
ever, I noticed that nobody liked them. I
don't know why.

.....

How did they [the Front cadres] behave?
What did people in the hamlet think of them?

The Front cadres who came to the hamlet
were very nice people. I think people in
the hamlet liked them better than the GVN
cadres.

Could you tell me why?

I think maybe the Front cadres spoke
well. They knew how to talk to people,
while the GVN cadres never knew how to make
propaganda. (325)

In a family, if one man joined the
Front, while his younger brother joined
the ARVN, he would write and ask him to go
home. He would use emotional appeals or
political arguments...according to his own
talents. If his brother liked his arguments,
or admired his talent for political discus-
sion, he would return home. (9)

Differences in productivity between various cadres may be related to the impressions created by their words:

Since he [a cadre] was not articulate, he could not win the villagers' sympathy. (326)

Which people in your [VC-controlled] village were the most important?

The regroupees enjoyed the most respect.... The local VC didn't enjoy any respect at all.

Why didn't the villagers respect these local VC?

Because they were the local people....

Why did the villagers respect the regroupees?

They respected the regroupees because the regroupees had been away for nine or ten years, and they knew how to talk. (167)

103. (Section VIII) FORCING THE PEOPLE TO SPEND A GOOD DEAL OF THEIR TIME IN MEETINGS

"At night," an informant recalls about his hamlet's occupation by the VC, "they compelled us to attend meetings. There are meetings always. Thirty times per month without a single day dropped. After organizing one association [for a major category of people], they organized another." (194) "As soon as the village came under VC control," a fighter reports, "the cadres began to make all the villagers attend political courses organized right in the village. There was a course for the men and another for the women and young girls....After the political

courses the cadres organized meetings of all the village youths. The meetings usually began at 7 p.m. and ended around midnight, or sometimes 2 or 3 a.m. There was a meeting every night for a month without a break." (223)

104. (Section VIII) WHEN THE CADRES EXERCISE BUT TEMPORARY CONTROL OVER THE PEOPLE WHOM THEY FORCE TO ATTEND THEIR OFFERINGS, THESE MAY BE DESIGNED TO PLEASE; IF THE VC'S GRIP IS PERMANENT, LESS SO.

What did the villagers applaud most?

Russian or Chinese dances. Those people who came from the cities by bus, who were arrested by the VC and compelled to attend the ceremony for one day and one night, applauded those dances very much....The VC stopped more than one hundred cars and busses, threatened the drivers that those who tried to flee would be shot at, and brought the passengers to the place where they played. They prepared seats, places of honor, etc., for the townspeople very properly....They also told them to report to their parents or relatives when they went back to...[the] towns that the VC performances are better than movies and theaters in town. I have followed these townspeople as they walked back to their busses and cars, and I actually heard two women saying to each other that they found the piece excellent.

To be sure, "one or two other men said that the VC only seduced people and [that] there was nothing excellent in that piece," but "I guessed that they worked for the GVN and got themselves up as civilians." This informant favorable to the cadres happens to show how the use of force at such occasions goes beyond securing attendance:

How could people sit up so late to watch those pieces?

At such a time everybody slept sitting and swayed his head, but the VC had a special committee in charge of waking people up and encouraging them to watch. (225)

-- a penchant here moderated, but one which comes into its own when the cadres are in permanent control:

In the villagers' opinion the thought reform sessions are worse than torture. During those sessions, people had to sit down ...for hours at a stretch, and those who were absent-minded were given two or three times as many study hours. They couldn't even get out to urinate. (225)

105. (Section VIII) THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING ABDUCTED TO THE MOUNTAINS FOR "REEDUCATION"

"In the evening at seven on January 27, 1965," an informant recalls, "three VC, two of whom were armed with rifles, called at my home to tell me that the Front had decided that I should follow a political reeducation course. They didn't give the reason. They added that I must bring along my own personal things and sufficient food for twenty days....I prepared a bundle containing some clothes, seven kilos of rice and one kilo of mam quoc [fish sauce], and started off with them....[In the mountains] we got up at five to prepare our morning meal. There was a lesson from seven to eleven, rest from eleven a.m. to one p.m., then a lesson from one to four, and finally the evening meal....We did nothing else."(327)

Were there families who refused to pay [taxes to the VC]?

At the beginning there were some people who refused to pay, or who asked to have the contributions reduced. But they all had to take reeducation courses, far from their villages. They had to take rice with them. They had to live far from their families, and in not very good conditions. They lost work time and couldn't take care of their rice fields. (170)

106. (Section VIII) "RE-EDUCATION" AWAY FROM ONE'S
HAMLET APPROACHING HARD LABOR

Those who were forced to attend an indoctrination session...were kept in a hutThey were left there, and the cadres only came to indoctrinate them when they had a spare moment. Between indoctrination hours these people were forced to grow dua [a thorny plant] and to scoop up mud from the canal. (91)

Those who sympathized with the GVN...were arrested and taken to a so-called re-education course. But, as a matter of fact, they had to join in...potato production. (225)

-- a reality which may even be acknowledged despite the cadres' infatuation with "studying":

Those who refused...would be sent to "study" or to "work for the Front in the indigo tree area" for three months. (328)*

107. (Section VIII) EASING RECRUITMENT BY INITIAL
DECEPTION

"Between 1960 and now," an informant observes, "from time to time the VC came to my village and took young men

*Emphasis added.

to the forest to educate them. Sometimes they kidnapped the young men they met outside the village, in the fields or in the forest nearby. The VC told them that they would have to leave home only for a few days, three or four at most; but actually they kept them for at least one month and sometimes up to three or four months."⁽¹²⁾ "In 1965," a fighter remembers, "the VC didn't speak about military duties. They only asked the youths to attend their political courses. But once the youths went to the courses, the VC would fool them by taking them away."⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ "In February [1965] they asked me to join with them," reports an informant. "I said I did not want to go, and they said they would tie me up and abduct me anyway." Also, however, "they said they wanted me...to undergo training for a few months, after which I could go back if I wished,"⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ after which he was incorporated into a VC unit. "They complained very much," an informant recalls about youths of his hamlet. "They said that the VC invited them to come to a rendezvous for a talk, and when they came, they were carried away."⁽²³⁴⁾ Sometimes in several stages:

Would you describe...how...you became active in the Front?

I went home on January 30 to visit my family and to celebrate Tet with them.... In the evening...the guerrillas appeared and requested my attendance at the meeting which was being held in the village. They did not mention reeducation. During the meeting we were informed that a study course was being organized for our benefit, and that we were all requested to attend. From then on, they wouldn't let us out of their sight. There was no Tet celebration for us. For fifteen

days we learned about our responsibilities....
After fifteen days they. asked for volunteers.
There were some who volunteered, and they were
released and permitted to go home. As for the
"non-enlightened ones," they were told that they
would be sent away for more study until they
"saw clearly what their duties were."

However, "We were taken to Ben Tre...and in place of
more indoctrination we were given military training." (b4)

REFERENCES

1. AG 206, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
2. Log 5-164-64, a captured document.
3. AG 345, detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eleven months in the VC movement.
4. AG 215, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; of unspecified former status, with one month in the VC movement.
5. AG 211, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fifteen months in the VC movement.
6. AG 325, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fifty-nine months in the VC movement.
7. AG 228, detained May 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
8. DT 30, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector.
9. AG 196, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twelve months in the VC movement.
10. AG 371, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with forty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
11. AG 472, detained June 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.

12. AG 338, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
13. AG 246, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with four months in the VC movement.
14. AG 330, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-eight months in the VC movement; a Party member.
15. AG 356, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
16. AG 346, detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with thirty-three months in the VC movement.
17. DT 45, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
18. DT 109, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with fifty-four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
19. AG 327, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with forty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
20. AG 293, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with forty-three months in the VC movement.
21. AG 200, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eighty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
22. AG 263, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with fifty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.

23. AGR 8 is: a refugee.
24. AG 79, detained February 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with sixteen months in the VC movement.
25. DT 119, detained May 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fifty months in the VC movement.
26. AG 471, detained June 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with sixty months in the VC movement.
27. AG 193, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with forty-four months in the VC movement.
28. AG 435, detained February 1966, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member; with thirty-one months in the VC movement.
29. AG 217, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with thirty-six months in the VC movement.
30. AG 48, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with eighty-six months in the VC movement.
31. DT 2, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with unrevealed number of months in the VC movement; a Party member.
32. AG 153, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with fifty months in the VC movement; a Party member.
33. AG 353, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement.

34. AG 186, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with fourteen months in the VC movement.
35. AG 439, detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with fifty-five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
36. Log 5-256-65, a captured document.
37. Log 4-246-65, a captured document.
38. Log 11-69-64, a captured document.
39. DT 78, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-four months in the VC movement.
40. Log 7-385-65, a captured document.
41. AG 266, detained June 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fifty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
42. AG 493, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with sixty-five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
43. G 3, detained July 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-two months in the VC movement.
44. Log 1-288-65, a captured document.
45. Z 026, detained April 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with 120 months in the VC movement.
46. Log 6-156-64, a captured document.
47. Data unavailable.

48. Data unavailable.
49. Log 6-43-64, a captured document.
50. AG 298, detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with twenty-six months in the VC movement.
51. AG 467, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with two months in the VC movement.
52. AG 238, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
53. AG 45, detained December 1964, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
54. Z 033 - G 18, detained July 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with unrevealed months in the VC movement; a Party member.
55. AG 108, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese voluntary prisoner; a former guerrilla, with five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
56. AC 55, detained June 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
57. AG 98, detained March 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-eight months in the VC movement.
58. AG 444, detained March 1966, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with seven months in the VC movement.
59. Log 5-267-65, a captured document.
60. Log 10-43-64, a captured document.

61. AG 89, detained in 1963, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with sixty-eight months in the VC movement.
62. AG 397, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with ninety-nine months in the VC movement; a Party member.
63. AG 421, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with sixty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
64. AG 296, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eight months in the VC movement.
65. AG 130, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with eighty months in the VC movement; a Party member.
66. AG 284, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eighteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
67. AG 155, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former Local Force member, with sixty-two months in the VC movement.
68. AG 122, detained February 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement.
69. AG 425, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with thirty-nine months in the VC movement.
70. AG 410, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with forty months in the VC movement.

71. DT 43, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with twelve months in the VC movement.
72. VC Log No. 9-65, a captured document.
73. DT 101, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with sixty months in the VC movement.
74. AG 199, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert, with five months in the VC movement. (No datum on former status.)
75. AG 66, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
76. AG 427, detained April 1966, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with two months in the VC movement.
77. DT 32, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former Main Force member, with thirty months in the VC movement.
78. G 52, detained September 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with two months in the VC movement.
79. AG 118, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with three months in the VC movement.
80. AG 240, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with two months in the VC movement.
81. AG 101, detained October 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with five months in the VC movement.

82. AG 100, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
83. AG 133, detained (no datum), is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with thirty months in the VC movement.
84. AG 172, detained September 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with three months in the VC movement.
85. AG 289, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eleven months in the VC movement.
86. AG 145, detained November 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with thirty-two months in the VC movement.
87. AG 481, detained September 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with nine months in the VC movement.
88. AG 375, detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with twelve months in the VC movement; a Party member.
89. AG 207, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with eighteen months in the VC movement.
90. AG 418, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with fifty-one months in the VC movement; a Party member.
91. DT 133, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty months in the VC movement; a Party member.

92. AG 143, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with three months in the VC movement.
93. AGR 65 is: a refugee.
94. DT 41, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with one month in the VC movement.
95. AG 470, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with twenty-five months in the VC movement.
96. | AGR 6 is: a refugee.
97. AGR 14 is: a refugee.
98. AGR 1 is: a refugee.
99. DT 26, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with thirty-one months in the VC movement.
100. AGR 31 is: a refugee.
101. DT 14, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector, with unrevealed months in the VC movement. (No datum on former status.)
102. AG 295, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventy-eight months in the VC movement; a Party member.
103. Log 5-155-64, a captured document.
104. AG 165, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with seven months in the VC movement.

105. AG 362, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with fifty-five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
106. AG 352, detained December 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement.
107. AG 185, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with fifteen months in the VC movement.
108. AG 220, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with eighty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
109. DT 144, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former civilian, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
110. AG 486, detained September 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-eight months in the VC movement.
111. DT 105, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with sixty-six months in the VC movement.
112. AG 288, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former guerrilla, with four months in the VC movement.
113. AG 51, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with five months in the VC movement.
114. AG 359, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventeen months in the VC movement.
115. AG 264, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with forty months in the VC movement.

- 116. Data unavailable.
- 117. AG 491, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty months in the VC movement.
- 118. AGR 13 is: a refugee.
- 119. AG 265, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with nineteen months in the VC movement.
- 120. AG 287, detained August 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with twenty-five months in the VC movement.
- 121. AG 478, detained June 1966, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 122. AG 156, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former Local Force member, with fifty-nine months in the VC movement.
- 123. DT 7, detained February 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventeen months in the VC movement.
- 124. DT 72, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with five months in the VC movement.
- 125. DT 130, detained May 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with forty-four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 126. DT 1, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with eight months in the VC movement.
- 127. DT 141, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with fifty-six months in the VC movement.

128. DT 68, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with nineteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
129. DT 44, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
130. AG 136, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty-nine months in the VC movement.
131. AG 158, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former guerrilla, with forty-four months in the VC movement.
132. AG 212, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eighteen months in the VC movement.
133. AG 271, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with twelve months in the VC movement.
134. AG 134, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with seven months in the VC movement.
135. AG 261, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with sixty-five months in the VC movement; a Party member.
136. AG 363, detained October 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with sixteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
137. AG 490, detained May 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with ninety-nine months in the VC movement.

138. AG 205, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with ninety-four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
139. AG 451, detained February 1966, is: a North Vietnamese (no datum on whether or not defector, deserter, etc.); a former civilian, with unrevealed number of months in the VC movement.
140. AG 384, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with twenty-six months in the VC movement.
141. AG 500, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with ninety-nine months in the VC movement; a Party member.
142. AGR 56 is: a refugee.
143. AGR 63 is: a refugee.
144. AG 433, detained April 1966, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with eleven months in the VC movement.
145. AGR 57 is: a refugee.
146. AGR 58 is: a refugee.
147. AG 313, detained October 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
148. AG 294, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with twelve months in the VC movement.
149. AG 168, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with two months in the VC movement.

150. AG 389, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with thirty-two months in the VC movement.
151. DT 13, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with unrevealed number of months in the VC movement.
152. DT 16, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with one month in the VC movement.
153. DT 94, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with twenty-five months in the VC movement.
154. DT 52, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
155. AG 365, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with twenty-one months in the VC movement.
156. AG 482, detained September 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventy-one months in the VC movement; a Party member.
157. AGR 15 is: a refugee.
158. AGR 54 is: a refugee.
159. AG 272, detained May 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with five months in the VC movement.
160. AG 374, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with forty-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.

161. DT 85, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fourteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
162. DT 121, detained June 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with two months in the VC movement.
163. AG 35, detained September 1963, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former Main Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
164. G 45, detained June 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
165. AG 436, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with eight months in the VC movement.
166. AG 170, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with thirteen months in the VC movement.
167. AGR 67 is: a refugee.
168. DT 60, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with thirty months in the VC movement.
169. AG 483, detained September 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with fifty-five months in the VC movement.
170. AG 331, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with sixty months in the VC movement.
171. AG 162, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with thirteen months in the VC movement.

172. AG 329, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventy-two months in the VC movement.
173. Z 037, detained September 1963, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with 100 months in the VC movement; a Party member.
174. AG 76, detained October 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with ten months in the VC movement.
175. DT 61, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert, a former civilian, with forty-one months in the VC movement; a Party member.
176. AG 216, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with two months in the VC movement.
177. AG 213, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement.
178. AG 174, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector, a former Local Force member, with forty-four months in the VC movement.
179. AG 475, detained May 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eighteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
180. DT 69, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with forty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
181. AG 286, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with thirty-one months in the VC movement.
182. AG 297, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with thirty-five months in the VC movement; a Party member.

183. DT 87, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with thirty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
184. DT 73, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with ten months in the VC movement.
185. AG 448, detained February 1966, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
186. AG 177, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with six months in the VC movement.
187. DT 137, detained August 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-eight months in the VC movement; a Party member.
188. AG 426, detained February 1966, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with fifty months in the VC movement; a Party member.
189. DT 102, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
190. AG 248, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
191. AG 250, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
192. DT 74, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty-nine months in the VC movement.

193. Log 3-154-65, a captured document.
194. AG 218, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with two months in the VC movement.
195. AG 67, detained November 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member; with ten months in the VC movement.
196. AG 385, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eighty-six months in the VC movement.
197. AG 91, detained November 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with forty-eight months in the VC movement.
198. AG 370, detained January 1966, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
199. AG 124, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with thirty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
200. Log 5-232-64, a captured document.
201. DT 8, detained August 1963, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with thirty-three months in the VC movement.
202. Z 035, detained June 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seventy-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
203. DT 76, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with twenty-two months in the VC movement.

- 204. G 37, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with seventy-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 205. DT 100, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-nine months in the VC movement.
- 206. AG 114, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with thirty-three months in the VC movement.
- 207. AG 73, detained February 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
- 208. AG 437, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with ten months in the VC movement.
- 209. AG 382, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
- 210. AG 223, detained April 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with fourteen months in the VC movement.
- 211. AG 328, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with thirty-six months in the VC movement.
- 212. AG 107, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with two months in the VC movement.
- 213. AG 449, detained March 1966, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with eighty-one months in the VC movement.
- 214. AG 376, detained December 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fifteen months in the VC movement.

- 215. Log 8-42-65, a captured document.
- 216. AG 402, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector, a former Main Force member, with ten months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 217. Log 6-113-65, a captured document.
- 218. AG 308, detained July 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
- 219. Log 10-391-65, a captured document.
- 220. AG 349, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member with one month in the VC movement.
- 221. AG 405, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with seventy-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 222. AG 386, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with six months in the VC movement, a Party member.
- 223. AG 339, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with three months in the VC movement.
- 224. AG 465, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with one month in the VC movement.
- 225. AG 395, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with seventeen months in the VC movement.
- 226. AG 351, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with one month in the VC movement.

- 227. AG 350, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with seventeen months in the VC movement.
- 228. AG 164, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with forty-eight months in the VC movement.
- 229. AG 260, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with four months in the VC movement.
- 230. AG 249, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with seven months in the VC movement.
- 231. AG 262, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
- 232. AG 424, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
- 233. AG 372, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with ten months in the VC movement.
- 234. AG 227, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with four months in the VC movement.
- 235. Log 6-22-64, a captured document.
- 236. AG 159, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with fifteen months in the VC movement.
- 237. DT 110, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with thirty-five months in the VC movement.

- 238. DT 70, detained August 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with forty-nine months in the VC movement.
- 239. AG 438, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with fourteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 240. AG 337, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
- 241. AG 411, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with twenty-six months in the VC movement.
- 242. AG 234, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eleven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 243. AG 247, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with three months in the VC movement.
- 244. AG 322, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with ten months in the VC movement.
- 245. Log 9-289-64, a captured document.
- 246. AG 154, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with forty-six months in the VC movement.
- 247. AG 269, detained July 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with sixty months in the VC movement.
- 248. DT 58; detained December 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with six months in the VC movement.
- 249. DT 136, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express

desire to defect or desert; a former civilian,
with ninety-nine months in the VC movement;
a Party member.

- 250. Log 3-238-65, a captured document.
- 251. AG 340, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert (no datum on former status), with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
- 252. AG 195, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with forty-five months in the VC movement.
- 253. DT 88, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with fifty-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 254. DT 98, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with ten months in the VC movement.
- 255. AG 64, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with thirty-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 256. AG 479, detained June 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with eighty months in the VC movement.
- 257. AG 198, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
- 258. DT 57, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with nine months in the VC movement.
- 259. AG 494, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with seven months in the VC movement.

- 260. AG 368, detained November 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with fifty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 261. AG 428, detained March 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; (no datum on former status), with fourteen months in the VC movement.
- 262. AG 487, detained September 1966, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with eight months in the VC movement.
- 263. DT 108, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with forty-six months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 264. DT 28, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-three months in the VC movement.
- 265. AG 131, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with two months in the VC movement.
- 266. AG 429, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with thirty-eight months in the VC movement.
- 267. DT 117, detained April 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 268. AG 167, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector, a former Local Force member, with thirty-eight months in the VC movement.
- 269. DT 120, detained May 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-four months in the VC movement; a Party member.

- 270. AG 394, detained February 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eleven months in the VC movement.
- 271. DT 91, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with six months in the VC movement.
- 272. DT 125, detained June 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with seventy-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 273. DT 29, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese deserter; a former Main Force member, with sixty-two months in the VC movement.
- 274. AG 71, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
- 275. G 11, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
- 276. G 34, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with thirty-five months in the VC movement.
- 277. AG 358, detained November 1965, is: a North Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 278. AG 125, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
- 279. DT 89, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with fourteen months in the VC movement.

- 280. Log 3-215-65, a captured document.
- 281. AG 74, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
- 282. AG 232, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with eight months in the VC movement.
- 283. G 7, detained September 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with thirty-one months in the VC movement.
- 284. AG 119, detained March 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with five months in the VC movement.
- 285. AG 72, detained February 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
- 286. DT 132, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector (no datum on former status), with forty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 287. AG 237, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with three months in the VC movement.
- 288. AG 184, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with forty-two months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 289. AG 80, detained October 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with sixteen months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 290. AG 208, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with twenty-five months in the VC movement.

291. AG 366, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with twenty-nine months in the VC movement; a Party member.
292. AG 161, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-two months in the VC movement.
293. DT 3, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with eight months in the VC movement.
294. AG 135, detained November 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with unrevealed months in the VC movement.
295. AG 62, detained December 1964, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with four months in the VC movement.
296. AG 187, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with four months in the VC movement.
297. AGR 43 is: a refugee.
298. ZHO 126 - ZHO 65, detained October 1964, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with twenty-four months in the VC movement.
299. AG 210, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former Local Force member, with fifty-three months in the VC movement; a Party member.
300. AGR 49 is: a refugee.
301. DT 128, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with six months in the VC movement.

- 302. AG 202, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with twenty-one months in the VC movement.
- 303. AG 181, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former guerrilla, with two months in the VC movement.
- 304. AG 241, detained June 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with one month in the VC movement.
- 305. DT 86, detained October 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-eight months in the VC movement.
- 306. DT 131, detained July 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with sixty-seven months in the VC movement; a Party member.
- 307. DT 23, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Main Force member, with seven months in the VC movement.
- 308. AG 226, detained June 1965, is: a South Vietnamese (no datum on whether or not a defector, deserter, etc.); a former civilian; with eleven months in the VC movement.
- 309. DT 104, detained January 1966, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with six months in the VC movement.
- 310. Log 5-147-64, a captured document.
- 311. AG 290, detained September 1965, is: a North Vietnamese prisoner who did not express desire to defect or desert; a former Main Force member, with three months in the VC movement.
- 312. AG 190, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with eight months in the VC movement.

323. AG 179, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former guerrilla, with seven months in the VC movement.
324. AG 61, detained January 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with three months in the VC movement.
325. AG 285, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with nineteen months in the VC movement.
326. DT 79, detained September 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former civilian, with fifty-two months in the VC movement.
327. AG 137, detained April 1965, is: a South Vietnamese prisoner expressing desire to defect or desert; a former civilian, with three months in the VC movement.
328. DT 12, detained May 1965, is: a South Vietnamese defector; a former Local Force member, with five months in the VC movement.