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Partial Translation of the Book

"A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAM"

By Colonel Hoang Van Lac, Saigon, 1966

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FOREWORD

Since the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem government in South Vietnam on 1 November 1963, five successive governments, badly shaken and sometimes radically reorganized as the result of eleven major crises, have unsuccessfully sought answers to the problems which proved insoluble for their predecessors.

Each political crisis produced an attempted coup d'etat. None led to a clear-cut change, such as in the November Revolution, but each effected a change in the relationships among the personalities seeking power. Every successive leader, proclaiming himself more righteous than his predecessors, sought to stabilize the government and consolidate his position-- but only upon his own terms.

Meanwhile the military situation took a more decisive turn with the notable battles of Binh Gia (Phuoc Tuy), Ba-Gia (Quang Ngai), An Lao (Binh Dinh), Hill 159 (Quang Tin), Dong Xoai (Phouc Lang) and the like. The Viet Cong also launched mortar attacks upon American bases at Bien Hoa, Pleiku, and Da Nang. The rapid sequence of these events appeared to constitute an open challenge to a powerless and disunited government.

Civilian politicians charged the military in government with dictatorial ambitions and inexperience in political matters; the military retorted that the politicians lacked energy and leadership. As the military first turned over power to civilians, then reclaimed it in the next crisis, the views of both sides appeared justified.

No one seriously questions that true leadership is required if South Vietnam is to solve its problems effectively. Public opinion within the country, however, as well as abroad, tends to assume that the problems now apparent stem from a lack of qualified leaders whose talents, virtues and political backgrounds would ensure the support of the people. This assumption is not correct. The real disease afflicting the Vietnamese body politic is not lack of leaders, but lack of a solid ideological background supporting a political and military policy capable of defeating Communism.

In an atomic era preoccupied with intercontinental missiles and artificial satellites the Communists continue, overtly and efficiently, to carry on an all-out, protracted, permanent and unconventional revolutionary war throughout the Afro-Asian and South American countries.

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While the Communists naturally expect and receive support from their sponsors in the Soviet Union and Red China, in South Vietnam a tendency is growing to look for more and more foreign aid from the Free World. Although the necessity for such support from friendly countries is enescapable, now more than ever before, aid to South Vietnam will achieve real significance and usefulness only when the Vietnamese people stand up to take upon themselves their full responsibilities before the bar of history. When the Vietnamese people are prepared to establish a solid foundation of national concepts upon which to construct a national policy with defined political and military plans, the Vietnamese nation will be ready not only to defeat the enemy in its own land but to offer a pattern for victory in expelling the Communists from under-developed countries everywhere in the world.

In a situation of ever-increasing complexity and confusion the task of determining the precise nature of our problems and their solutions is not an easy one. Encouraged by Charles T. R. Bohannon, who has long studied our common problems, and with the valued assistance of my friends Le Van Thuc and Vo Nhu Vong, I have undertaken in this book to present the facts as I have seen them, and to suggest certain courses of action.

If this work contributes to clearer understanding or more effective action on the part of those who may read this book, its aim will have been fulfilled.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CONTRASTING CONCEPTS OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Twenty years of war experience against the Communists in Vietnam have proved that the outcome of that kind of war which the Communists call a revolutionary war, or a national liberation war, or a clash between the classes, cannot be decided by the clear and open competition of two armies upon a battlefield. Rather, the outcome depends upon the employment of the total fighting force in political, social, economic and psychological fields. Hence, the military aspect of such a war is only a political tool appropriately employed during successive phases of a general war plan.

With the concept that war is only a means to a political objective, the Communists follow a very ancient axiom in the great struggles between man and men, between factions, and between nations. Recognizing that war is simply a means for resolving political conflicts, the Communists never lose sight of their ultimate objective-- the minds of men. To this end they seek always to motivate, to exploit the internal conflicts of their opponents, to produce the crisis situations in which men's minds will be most receptive to the demagogic approach.

Since the Japanese dream of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosp erity Sphere" collapsed in the summer of 1945 under the impact of a pair of atomic bombs, many in the Free World have assumed that old rules and old methods had succumbed to the absolute power of modern weaponry. Modern war strategy, they concluded, had shifted to a new stage; the Communist notions about the decisive character of the struggle for men's minds were now outmoded. Despite this supposed entry into a new era of push-button warfare, however, the past twenty years have seen supposedly "old-fashioned" warfare continuing unabated--especially in the underdeveloped and newly independent nations. Wars in such nations are still decided--even in the shadow of a possible thermonuclear holocaust--in the hearts and minds of men. As such wars drag on endlessly, the minds of men still constitute the true objective, the actual battle ground, and the ultimate weapons.

During this twenty year period the Communists defeated the French, although the French had absolute superiority in military strength and equipment. The Communists defeated Chiang Kai-shek and his army--then considered the fifth largest in the world--despite Chiang's successful eight years of resistance against the Japanese and his abundant American aid. Both French and Chinese were defeated, not by superior military force, but by superior tactics--perhaps, more correctly, by a superior political strategy.

Had the Free World been less subjective in its assurance that atomic superiority had made political warfare obsolete, or had it been less ready to despise an enemy of such obvious technical inferiority, the results might have been quite different, and our present situation in Vietnam far less dramatic.

For the Communists, the mobilization of the whole people is an accepted essential ingredient of victory. The objectives of war are not left to the military to achieve alone and unaided, but are considered as inseparable from the political struggle in which the effective organization of a local Communist party constitutes a decisive factor. So long as the West ignores the basis for Communist war--the preparation of a suitable political situation through attention to all the social, cultural, economic, psychological and military aspects--and recognizes only the last factor, the Communists are free to concentrate their strength upon their chosen targets.

Classic military theory holds that the objectives of warfare are to 1) find and destroy the enemy's military forces, 2) break the enemy's will to resist, and 3) occupy the enemy's territories. In wars against Communism, however, our objectives must be to win the support of the people and to break the Communist cadre's will to fight. These objectives, unfortunately, have largely been ignored to date.

In South Vietnam, in particular, the population whose support for one side or the other will decide the outcome are not the people of a foreign country, but of our own. Conventional military tactics employed here not only were usually ineffective against the Communists, but often proved profitable to the enemy. The thorough indoctrination methods of the Communists, their effective propaganda, and their ability to take refuge among the population united them with the people as common victims of military operations. Had we enjoyed complete military success, we might have lost, without realizing it, the real basis for strategic superiority--the support of the people.

The Western view, in general, has overemphasized the importance of military power and modern technology while ignoring the importance of the Communist concept of total warfare, in which every man's capabilities are fully exploited in support of the overall plan. Especially in areas under Communist occupation this exploitation has been carefully carried out, with full explanations to the population of the Communist objectives, convincing assurances of eventual victory, and detailed, individual efforts to win each man's full cooperation. All of these have done much not only to reduce the technical inferiority gap under which the Communists must operate but to minimize the effect of it.

In the West it is generally thought that the poverty of Asia provides fertile soil for Communism and that the obvious solution is to improve the economic status of the people through economic aid. While this thesis appeals by its very simplicity, it does not square with the facts. Communists in Asia do not necessarily begin by exploiting poverty any more than they necessarily begin by preaching classic Communist ideology. In preliminary stages of winning public support Communists are able to appeal to patriotism, to point out social injustices in feudal and corrupt societies, to exploit all the people's unsatisfied aspirations, and to appeal to purely local sentiments or resentments.

If the West bases its aid on an assumption that the patriotic spirit and culture of Asian peoples are no higher than their economic status, such aid will reflect a racial superiority complex certain to produce the conflicts made to order for Communist exploitation under the guise of promoting democracy and freedom. If aid to Asian peoples is to be effective, it must recognize Asian sensitivities and aim at the development, not of economic conditions alone, but of a national patriotic spirit and a just and democratic government.

A second basic Communist concept holds that revolutionary wars are protracted wars, wars in which time and space are not absolutes but inter-related factors in a total picture. Ready to learn from their mistakes, failures and delays, Communists have been able and willing to trade space for time, time for the organization of popular support, manpower for machinery, and politics for industrialization. The Communist theory of protracted wars coolly accepts the thesis that such wars will never end until the West is completely annihilated. Communist theory holds that, because of its own internal conflicts, the West must try for quick victories and quick decisions. It follows that the West, under this theory, despite ever-changing strategies aimed at winning such a quick decision, can really only fight a kind of conventional war which ignores the political basis of the struggle. While such efforts may postpone the result by impeding the progress of the Communists, they cannot change the final outcome. By Communist thinking, the West must eventually tire of protracted war without the possibility of victory and content itself with face-saving negotiations leading to inevitable concessions to Communism, while ostensibly preserving the status quo. One need hardly qualify as a military strategist to foresee the outcome of protracted conflicts in which one side is willing to continue indefinitely and the other is not.

The three basic assets of Communism in protracted wars are space, time and manpower. Because the Communists are willing to invest all three assets on an unlimited basis, the West finds itself unable to estimate the ultimate scope and costs of the conflict. The West therefore, in confusion, tends to try to reduce its investment in any given conflict by feeding in limited numbers of men

and limited amounts of equipment to maintain a conventional war effort of measured dimensions. The really vital factors in this type of war--the support of the native peoples and world support--receive only secondary attention.

Some in the West, reasoning in a fashion which can only be termed simplistic, mechanistic and subjective, apparently pin their hopes on supposed differences within the Communist bloc. They hope that Communism's own internal conflicts will bring about its own disintegration and destruction. But those who so readily adapt a Communist theory about the nature of Capitalism to their own ends fail to recognize that internal explosions in the Communist world are necessarily muffled; they could do no more than effect some temporary delay in the Communist master plan for the elimination of capitalism in the world. There may indeed be shifts in the Communist superstructure; centers of power may move within the Communist bloc; individual leaders may be replaced; but the basic objectives of Communism will not change; protracted wars will continue just as long as they are successful. Communists, of whatever nationality, remain Communists; any legal recognition of Communist parties assures the effort, sooner or later, by these parties to take over the countries in which they are permitted to exist. Men will never know peace in the world so long as Communism exists.

A third concept of revolutionary warfare is Communist insistence. So what the West may term "peace," by Communist definition, is simply another kind of warfare waged without the military fanfares.

Communists therefore choose to represent any conflict of whatever nature anywhere as part of the world-wide confrontation between Communism and capitalism. Any local event, even though it appears to the Free World as a purely internal affair, is promptly interpreted by the Communists as part of the eternal war. Any struggle--with or without armies, peaceful or violent, political or psychological--is part of a war which may be termed "hot" or "cold" according to circumstances varying in intensity and duration in each situation; but all of these are simply time phases in the eternal and never-ending war.

The Communists can hardly claim originality in this theory. In the 16th century the philosopher Hobbes opined that human society is always in a state of insecurity and that latent waves always exist which will lead to a change of social conditions. The situation prevailing during World War II illustrates Communist adherence to the theory enunciated by Len in 1920, when he said, "Any peace treaty signed with a capitalist is simply a continuation of war." While ostensibly allied with the Free World in the struggle against Germany, Italy and Japan, Communist concepts and objectives were totally different; the cessation of the military phase merely marked the beginning (more properly, the resumption) of the political war. While the West talked of eternal peace under the United Nations the Communists prepared realistic plans for a protracted war.

The events at the end of World War II demonstrated the difference in objectives. Russia divided Germany, occupied eastern Europe, and, by entering the war against Japan at the last minute when profits could be made without risk, occupied Sakhalin and the Kuriles, Ports Dairen and Arthur and North Korea, thus monopolizing the railways which served Mongolia, parts of China and North Vietnam. While the Free World won the military victory in World War II, the political victory was Russian exclusively. With the signing of the Yalta agreement President Franklin D. Roosevelt cast himself in the role of the benefactor of humanity and saw the agreement as the keystone of world peace. Ironically, only 48 hours after signing this document, the Russian Foreign Minister, Vyshinsky, was answering a question from the King of Romania about the execution of Yalta terms by shouting, "Yalta? I am Yalta!"

One of the striking, and most unfortunate, aspects of the contrast between Communist and Free World concepts of revolutionary warfare is the constant and considered exploitation -- and creation, wherever possible -- of internal conflicts within the enemy camp. The West has never been willing to take the risks inherent in openly supporting and exploiting the revolts which have taken place behind the Iron Curtain: East Berlin in 1953; Hungary in 1956; or the (almost unknown in the West) revolt of the people of Quynh Luu in North Vietnam against Communist agrarian reform measures and the ideological revolt of North Vietnamese intellectuals in the Nhan-van Giai-pham movement. Had we been able and willing to support and exploit such revolts by the people living under Communist oppression, we might at least have been able to give the communists a taste of their own medicine. While working to achieve a strategic parity from which to exercise our superior technical resources.

The contrast in our intent and preparation is illustrated in the events surrounding the Geneva Agreement of 1954. When the great exchange of population took place between North and South Vietnam, the Communists deliberately left behind many of their best and ablest hardcore cadres; on the Free World side, those who fled to the South did so in such hasty and disorganized fashion that they had often to leave behind their family members, but not as cadres, simply as unfortunate victims of poor management. Had we left behind equivalent numbers of clandestine nationalist cadres to match the Hanoi-directed cadres of the South, how different might have been the events which followed.

At the present time it becomes clearer each day that the Western concept that "weapons will decide everything" can no longer be accepted. On the contrary, as the production and destructive power of atomic weapons steadily increases, the likelihood of their use steadily decreases. Mao is thus able upon the one hand to announce his determination to promote peace and to oppose any war which would use atomic weapons -- saying, with Presidents Johnson and Kennedy, that such wars could bring an end to humanity -- while,



on the other hand, he follows steadily along the course of another kind of war. For Mao, revolutionary war has proved both advantageous and free from risk.

Meanwhile the Afro-Asian nations frequently adopt a wait-and-see attitude, either because they recognize their own weakness or because they hope to gain some advantage by playing one side off against the other. Some would even like to assume a mediatory role between Communism and the Free World, although they are generally careful to indulge their penchant for criticism only against that side which they deem least likely to punish them for their temerity later. The West has yet to formulate a basic strategy for a long-continued struggle, a strategy which would appeal to those now hanging in the balance.

The need for this new strategy can no longer be denied with references to the awesome power of atomic bombs, intercontinental missiles, supersonic jets, Polaris submarines and the like -- not while every military or political clash continues to increase the balance of relative forces in favor of the Communists.

Lack of a positive new Western strategy with wise appeal has enabled the Communists to copyright the appealing policies of "Neutralism" and "Co-Existence" as proof of their peaceful intentions towards the very large, but weak, Afro-Asian bloc. Underdeveloped nations in an already critical situation are naturally prone to fear anything which seems to threaten an all-out nuclear war of total destruction; the Communists cunningly and hypocritically exploit these fears by offering what appears to be an escape route while continuing to wage their real war of revolution without hindrance or criticism.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## A NEW POLICY

The Republic of Vietnam is today in a most critical condition as the result of the all-out war launched against us by the Communists. Our casualty lists become longer each day, our garrisons and outposts are being overrun in series, our communication axes are threatened, and all of our actions are severely restricted. As every province in the nation continually requests more men, more weapons, and more outposts, it is clear that the Communists have the active initiative while we are caught in the passive position. Our unfortunate position is not the result of shortages of weapons or technology, not even of manpower shortages, but of our inferior strategy and tactics.

Our numerous large-scale operations launched to encircle and annihilate the enemy have resulted in little more than increases in our own casualty lists. All too often we have arrived at our target area to find the enemy has melted away and even the local population has deserted the area. Sometimes we found and killed a few guerrillas and captured half-a-dozen rifles or grenades. Such "successes" did not even make up the losses we constantly sustained in the overrunning of outposts or the ambushing of our own units.

Participation in such operations destroyed rather than strengthened the morale of our troops. Physically exhausted by their efforts to maintain strict schedules for movement, constantly harassed by booby-traps, mines and snipers, the soldiers who originally gained confidence from their superiority in weapons and strength soon lost their confidence and enthusiasm as they unsuccessfully sought an elusive enemy in unfamiliar and hostile territory. Even in the rare instances when we succeeded in killing perhaps a hundred of the enemy and captured a few score weapons, such "victories" were more than matched by the enemy's successes. Damage inflicted upon the enemy was minimal, for the troops so caught and dispatched by our operations were seldom fully trained regular units with first-class equipment. Replacement of such losses was therefore no great problem for the enemy, who could recruit new men and equip them with weapons taken from us in their next action against one of our outposts or in another ambush. Strategically speaking, what should have been our territory and our population remained under the enemy's control, just as before. We might have gained a bit on the tactical and psychological side for a moment, but the strategic aspects remained unchanged.

The present Communist objective in our rural areas is still to remove all forms of GVN control in order to establish and maintain their own infrastructure as a preliminary step towards the total overthrow of the government of South Vietnam and the incorporation of this nation into the Communist bloc. To this end the Communists have carefully worked out their various stages of progress, during which they will utilize every method -- illegal,

semi-legal and legal -- to develop and consolidate their "Peoples Revolution Liberation Forces." The process begins with the establishment of hard-core cells in hamlets, villages and popular organizations of all kinds. These cells motivate the population for the political struggle by integrating themselves into the population where they can effectively make their propaganda, utilizing the issues best suited to the particular group -- students, religious groups, military, etc. Guerrilla warfare is still their basic tactic in the countryside, and they must so effectively mingle with the population that it serves them as a boundless source of supply for food, manpower, money and everything else they require, including intelligence. The bulk of our rural population tends to live along lines of communication -- canals, roads and rivers. Their attachment to their native places is very strong, but they have no real organization within their native hamlets strong enough to resist the Communist effort after the establishment of an infrastructure so successfully worked into the hamlet life that it has been impossible to distinguish friend from enemy in this war without fronts.

The lack of security in the countryside due to destruction and terrorization by the Communists is the basic source of all of our difficulties. If we cannot provide this security on a long-term basis, all our plans for the improvement of the peoples' lives, for economic development, and for the development of freedom and democracy are doomed to failure. The various programs must be abandoned because the principal efforts of the government are directed toward national defense, and because of the constantly accumulating difficulties between the people and the government officials, between the cities and the countryside, between large hamlets and small hamlets, and among the governmental organs! These difficulties, furthermore, cause discouragement everywhere, from top to bottom and both within and without. And because of the lack of security, the people cannot earn a living; their lives and property are threatened day and night, and since they cannot rely on the government to protect them, they lose faith in it. Discouragement at all levels becomes universal in all echelons of the government, from the districts to the provinces, divisions, and corps, which petition the national government to grant them more soldiers, more arms, more money, more cadres, more of everything. Because the central agencies cannot grant these things in unlimited quantities, all become disheartened with the central agencies, which they see as failing utterly to understand local problems. In their turn, the central agencies complain because their budgets and resources are curtailed and join in that general disappointment.

When the rural population, because of their lack of security, abandons the ancestral land and homes to attempt life in the presumably more secure cities unemployment in the cities becomes an increasingly serious problem even as prices continue to rise because the farmers are no longer producing. Goods which should have gone out for sale in the provinces stagnate in the cities; businessmen blame the government and demand a solution. The government,

in turn, seeks to increase its budget. As taxes cannot be collected, the government turns to foreign aid as the only possible source. But, since this aid is limited, and is provided on a year-by-year basis with the maximum of accompanying red tape and delay, the government joins in the general chorus of disappointment -- blaming its foreign friends, particularly the United States, for failing to solve its problems.

And so we come vicious full circle, to the inevitable realization that the problem cannot be handed over; it is ours, and ours alone. Foreign assistance is not the magic solution which can substitute for effective Vietnamese action. The public, which includes everyone, has seen that the government policies pursued to date cannot obtain the desired results in the anti-Communist struggle. Civilian and military authorities, who have attempted to pass the buck to each other repeatedly while rejecting their own responsibilities, can do so no longer. Living in insecurity, the population is reluctant to serve in the military forces because they know that their families are still subject to Communist terrorism -- morally and physically -- in their home villages; if they serve, their morale is poor. Sloppy and temporary efforts to improve military morale -- pay increases, grant of special home leaves, creation of dependent housing camps, and Draconian measures of punishment against draft dodgers and deserters -- all have failed.

Other solutions offered to date to end this spirit of general discouragement and low morale have shown little merit. Some have advocated "liquidating" all those who have, consciously or unconsciously, acted to dishearten the population; but even the "liquidators" recognize the fallacy of this, for the places of the liquidated would soon be filled again. Others, fancying themselves as intellectuals with a perfect grasp of politics, say that changing the Cabinet, or the regime, or improving either, will bring those precious democratic liberties which will induce the population to fight eagerly and actively against Communism, restore peace to the nation, and thus bring back security. Their position is not entirely unreasonable, since we are fighting against Communism to secure liberty and democracy. But we should not confuse objectives with means. So long as the rural population must live night and day under the Communist control in conditions of dire poverty and emotional stress, the fact that, in Saigon, we may have freedom for the press, freedom to organize political parties, freedom to participate in the government, or that a new decree on elections has just been issued does not inspire the population to enlist and fight, nor does it frighten or compel the enemy to withdraw to the north.

Still others, especially some within the government, have believed that it is necessary to adopt a strong policy, concentrating all powers in a few hands and firmly reacting against every "excessive practice" of democracy. This, too, is not entirely wrong. We know that unbridled license in the guise of liberty can

be utilized both by Communists and colonists to create disorder in our ranks and to undermine our fighting spirit. But such exceptional powers must be used sparingly and must be severely restricted in duration to the shortest possible period.

Finally, there are those who hold that our solution lies in the creation of fully cultured and completely virtuous cadres who will serve the population. Our cadres' work so far has largely been fruitless, because they have not acted in accord with the population. How then can we expect, in a few months, or even a few years, to produce the required number of "perfect" cadres? Heroes with the required morale and stamina are few; the past corruption and inefficiency of our cadres is an actual fact known to many. Those who feel that the creation of corps of "perfect" cadres is a prerequisite to beginning the task are pursuing a chimera; the training of effective cadres is a matter of indoctrination, time and perseverance.

To date we have been so strongly influenced by western military technology that we have made grievous mistakes in our evaluation of the enemy we face. Our army has been organized along traditional lines in companies, battalions, regiments, divisions and corps. We prepared to face a Communist enemy making a conventional invasion across the 17th parallel in an overt aggression precisely following the pattern of the Korean War. But the three-stage military strategy of the Communists (already discussed in Part I) cannot be dealt with efficiently by the modern and mechanized army of the Republic of Vietnam. With our present forces we can resolutely face a field war designed to annihilate the enemy, but faced with the combination of political and mobile warfare employed by Communism in the first and second stages, our present forces are impotent. In manpower strength and in quality and number of weapons we enjoy a clear superiority over the Communists, but in strategic matters there is a dangerous difference: here we are prepared only to deal with Communist warfare in its third phase. In theory we have Regional Forces, Popular Forces and Rangers to deal with the mobile enemy forces; however, instead of employing these as mobile units we have split them into small units defending fixed posts (a job which should be done by the police) and confined them to these tiny areas. Popular Forces which should defend hamlets and villages, coordinating with Regional Forces and Regulars for mutual protection, have been stationed permanently in villages, district towns and even Provincial capitals and given the uniforms and some of the duties of Regulars. Their training and arms are rudimentary, and attempts to use them as Regulars means the abandonment of the hamlets to Communist control.

Contradictions between Vietnamese commanders and American advisers have operated against the effective use of such troops. Equipment and training are not geared to the assigned or actual missions of such troops, who are generally misused. Popular Force soldiers all too often are employed to guard the homes of

district chiefs and their families, or of village chiefs; this abuse of authority contributes to the general aura of corruption which surrounds the Popular Forces. Embezzlement of public funds through enrollment of ghost soldiers, who exist only for payroll purposes, and other corrupt practices, flourish wherever these units exist.

We must recognize that, no matter how numerous our Regular, Regional and Popular Forces may be (even if they were reinforced by 100% of their present number), they could never deal effectively with the Communist enemy in a protracted revolutionary war. Only when we can organize and utilize an effective infrastructure of our own within the hamlets, classify and organize the population in groups and associations, train and equip a popular self-defense force of local young people -- a true Combat Youth organization -- can we hope to achieve our real aims. We must be able to drive the Communists out of the rural areas, destroy the enemy's foundations within the hamlets, discern friend from foe, and be able to defend the hamlets through the efforts of the hamlet's own people. The hamlets must be so aided in their own self-defense that the army can be freed from its fixed posts and made into mobile units able to cope with the enemy in every phase of revolutionary warfare. If all those now enrolled in Regional Forces, Popular Forces and Rangers could be transformed into mobile units prepared to deal with the enemy on his own terms we could equalize the struggle as it has never been equalized before.

But we should also recognize that the Communists, too, have had their difficulties arising from misunderstandings and misapprehensions. When the Geneva Accords were signed in 1954, the Communists believed that they would find the South under the same old French colonialists, with the same disparate groups of armed forces under religious and other leaders, generally corrupt, feudalistic and separatist, all threatening national unity and prestige, all, to varying degrees, henchmen of the French colonialists. The Communists felt sure that the population of the South would readily be enlisted in another crusade to liberate the South from the French and the events of the previous years would be duplicated exactly as before. To what must have been the Communists' astonishment, the people of the South actually rose up unanimously to suppress the French colonialists and their lackeys. The Communists therefore had to shift targets and propagandize for the establishment of a "National Liberation Front" under the motto, "Annihilate the American Imperialist Interventionists." The Communists also experienced problems with the hard-core cadres left behind in the South. These cadres, fully indoctrinated to deal with the situation as they expected it to develop, gradually came to realize that events were not following the pattern they expected. Some of the best of these, whose primary motivation was their determination to end French colonialism, sought opportunity to leave the Communist ranks, and at that time the first efforts at reconciliation with the Government were undertaken under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program.

Losing many of their best men in this manner, the Communists sought to utilize all available elements -- especially some of the worst among the former henchmen of the colonialists -- to work for the establishment of a "neutralist" regime in South Vietnam as a first step towards Communism. They sought out those who -- coward, but clever -- yearned for "peace" and compelled them to cooperate in their plan. But they soon found that agitation for the return of Bao Dai, Bao Long, Tam, Huu, Hinh, Ho Thong Minh and the like created serious contradictions within the party and undermined their ability to propagandize in favor of "liberation." Lacking a just cause which could win the support of the people at that time, and recognizing the difficulties inherent in seeking a military solution, the Communists were forced to prepare for a protracted war in several stages. But their purpose has never changed: to overthrow the government of South Vietnam in order to set up a regime willing to re-establish relations with the North as a prelude to a complete Communist takeover.

Thus far we have analyzed the problems of both sides, considering our own blunders and the shortcomings of the enemy, to the end that we may evolve a policy and strategy of our own which will be capable of meeting the challenge of the enemy's three-stage strategy of protracted wars and of eliminating the contradictions apparently existing between our own two basic needs: achieving rapid progress while guaranteeing democratic liberties.

To win this revolutionary war we must rally the people to the just national cause; control of the people is the key to victory. It is a truism to say that the people are ours, but the Communists have used them as their most effective weapon against us. To turn this weapon against the Communists and win this war, we must have a new policy, a policy which centers upon the people and which utilizes all of their capabilities in a concerted effort directed toward common goals.

The basis for this new policy will be that historical phenomenon called underdevelopment, the actual status of our country in the twentieth century. The revolutionary war in which we are now engaged is oriented toward the rural areas, and it is there that we must begin. We must begin a rural revolution aimed at bringing social justice to the Vietnamese farmers at the hamlet level as the first essential step towards independence and self-determination and an eventual improvement of living standards. The revolution must begin at the lowest levels and work upward to ensure the greatest possible mass participation.

At the present time there is an enormous chasm existing between the life of the minority who live in cities and the majority (83%) who live in rural areas. The urban population enjoys relative security, economic prosperity, personal freedom, liberty of speech and action, and an exaggerated sense of its own importance. In the country, the population is forced to live without any basic security, without the protection of law, without economic advantages, and under constant threat to their lives and property.



This basic gap has been consistently exploited by the Communists in their plan to drive a wedge between the cities and the central government and the rural areas. To neutralize this basic social injustice, we must establish a government infrastructure in the hamlets which will give the farmer the same benefits enjoyed by the city dweller. It is not a question of reducing the rights of the urbanites, but of matching these with equal rights for the farmer. A just and prosperous society, based upon the best of Vietnamese ethics, customs and traditions, can and must be created. All citizens must be able to participate in the management of their own affairs. This can be accomplished in the hamlets through democratic election of local representatives. All citizens must also share in advantages in proportion to services rendered to the community.

First priority (rank) must go to those volunteers who with initiative and zeal assail the Communists, and for their families.

Second priority (rank) goes to those whose model and exemplary behavior has been recognized through their election to leadership offices such as the village council, hamlet committees, popular organizations and the like -- all of which serve to preserve the rights of the community. Such persons demonstrate the courage to assume command, to affect the coordination and consolidation of the whole people for the common defense and reconstruction of the nation.

Third priority (rank) is reserved for those farmers, workers and businessmen who creatively build the new society and overcome underdevelopment problems through their production.

These elements, comprising the elite of the new community, will be appropriately recognized and respected. With social justice in effect, we can keep our nation in a state of constant development and improvement. We must create for every citizen the favorable conditions which will help him in his duties of constructing and defending his home and his community, with full equality in both duties and rights.

In the military aspect, we must reverse the present war situation by adopting a new concept designed to separate the Communists from the population from which they have previously drawn their support. Separated from their former masters morally and physically, the population in hamlets enjoying social justice and new life can supply information about the enemy in safety and serve in anti-Communist forces without fear for their families. Separated from the people, the Communists will lose their flexibility and mobility in a war without front lines or rear areas, will be unable to exploit the popular forces as before, and will sooner or later be compelled to come to pitched battle -- a move which they have always tried to avoid, lest their entire force be destroyed by superior weapons.



The organization of our military forces must be quite contrary to tradition. Our main force must be local forces, with Regulars in a secondary role of support and reinforcement only. For tactics, we employ the same ambushes and scattered attacks against the Communists which they previously used against us, profiting by our enjoyment of better intelligence from the people of the hamlets. Thus we may force the enemy to try our old counter-insurgency tactics, which he lacks the modern equipment to undertake successfully. Hence the enemy will become only an expeditionary force from North Vietnam. The military aspect of the war, under this new policy, still remains secondary, but it can assist us to upset, from the bottom, the Communist system of military tactics and rules of warfare.

To gain the final victory, our military strategy should be divided into three periods:

The first period is employed to build up our infrastructure in the hamlets, separating the people from the Communists and establishing their defenses against a Communist return. We thus alter our relative positions vis-a-vis the people and the enemy and regain the initiative. Our strategic objective is gaining control of the population; destruction of the enemy is the tactical action only.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Although defensive in character, our actions during this first period are designed to frustrate the enemy's offensive strategy. By pre-empting the hamlets which have served as his bases of support and operations we drive him into trying to establish new bases. Having won the allegiance of the hamlet population by carrying out our political and social revolution, we deny the enemy his previous support and force him into increasing his exterior supply lines, which thus becomes more vulnerable to our attack. In this war of position, we are able to sweep both his interior and exterior lines simultaneously. At the same time we establish strong bases both for our own mobile operations and for pitched battles, should the issue be joined prematurely by enemy desperation. In this event our superior forces can be brought to bear quickly upon the massed enemy if he risks attack upon the hamlets in force.

In the second period, our principal aim is to develop and strengthen our guerrilla installations with the strategic objective of bringing a war of attrition to the enemy. During this period we match the speed of our war of position to the tempo of our operations in completing the surface system. Simultaneously with the development of democratic liberties, social justice and improved rural economy in the hamlets we expand our guerrilla operations to their highest level of effectiveness against the enemy's interior lines. Mobile warfare is constantly increased in scope and range, robbing the enemy of his initiative and driving him into defensive posture. At the same time our increased destruction of exterior lines destroys enemy supply installations, zones of production, and communication and liaison systems. This two-pronged war of attrition is designed to pave the way for our general offensive against the enemy's strategic defenses to be undertaken in the third period, which calls for the maximum effort on our part.

Only when we have attained absolute strategic superiority do we launch into a full offensive aimed at annihilating the enemy's main force and destroying his base installations of the strongest character. This, the third period, calls for a vast increase in both size and scope for our mobile operations as we attack the enemy at all points. Our surface war continues as part of the defensive strategy for maintaining our own interior lines which support our offensive. This last period is aimed at opening the way for ultimate reunification of the nation.

It must be stressed that these three periods do not necessarily follow in precise order, with each period completed before beginning the next. On the contrary, all three may well be under way in different areas at the same time. Or it may be possible, in some circumstances, to skip over the second period entirely and proceed directly to the third from the first. Even if the war should turn into a more conventional type, with several large-scale frontal engagements, in compliance with our wishes and our abilities, our basic strategy remains valid in application. This will be true even if we should have to revert to the second period for a time in certain areas.

In the past, we relied almost entirely upon "encircling and destroying" tactics as the basis for all our offensive actions. Western military leaders overlooked completely the Communists' long and fruitful study, in the light of Marxism-Leninism, of the principles of warfare laid down by Clausewitz in the West and by Ton-vu Tu in Asia. Western military science, therefore, tended

to be unchanged and unchangeable while Communists were ever ready to modify their tactics in flexible fashion adapted to changes in space, time or circumstances. Their basic strategy was constant, while their tactics changed constantly; our strategy changed constantly while our tactics remained constant. As a result of our neglect in studying the Communist military handbooks, we engaged in a revolutionary war without knowing our enemy and without having formulated a sound strategy of our own.

When the French elected to use regular troops to fight Communist guerrillas, the Communists won their first victory. In the years from 1946 to 1954 the French forces suffered repeated defeats because of their unsystematic, patchwork hodgepodge of military efforts devoid of any determined objective. Initially the Communists erred in engaging in pitched battles which drove them from the Delta lowlands and enabled the French to establish security forces in numerous bases. Theoretically under local commanders, these bases were actually totally controlled by the French.

And French supremacy was to be short-lived. The Communists began strengthening their rear zones as the real war began. Recognizing that the French forces represented five to ten times their own strength and were armed with the latest weapons, the Viet Minh dispersed their troops widely and prepared for protracted warfare, with time as an important weapon in their otherwise modest arsenal.

The French continued to rely upon massing large forces, always five or ten times the estimated enemy strength, to carry on the same conventional "encircle and annihilate" tactics, with ever lessening success. The Viet Minh, organizing strong popular support, scattered their forces to neutralize the French effectiveness. Because they relied upon very large numbers, although they had only finite forces to employ, and because they lacked the fluidity and mobility of the Viet Minh, the French were forced to operate under disadvantageous conditions. This was particularly true in the rugged terrain of mountains and forests, where the guerrillas, disguised as innocent peasants or hidden in masterfully camouflaged shelters, could survey the situation and elect either to refuse battle or to ambush the French as they chose. Thanks to the local population, carefully organized to provide information, communications, food supplies, weapons caches and hiding places for the guerrillas, the Viet Minh forces were able to study each objective carefully in advance, plan and rehearse each engagement until each man was letter-perfect in his part. Because they had assumed no responsibility for holding territory, but concentrated upon controlling the people, the Viet Minh were able to move rapidly and secretly from place to place, bring to bear swift concentrations as required, strike hard and fast, then disperse immediately: they thus held the invaluable advantages of initiative and flexibility while the French pursued shadows.

Their military tactics, however, were surpassed by their skill in enlisting the support of the population. They made no efforts at that time to forcibly enroll the young men under arms and push them into battles prematurely. Instead they enticed the people by tricks, inducing them to engage in small subversive acts and always-successful ambushes which compromised them with the authorities and transformed them into true partisans. While terrorism was used by the Viet Minh, both against those who opposed them and as a

means of compromising those who participated in such acts, their recruitments were made infinitely easier by the blind, brutal and savage actions of the French troops. Bewildered by the dazzling speed of an enemy who appeared, disappeared and reappeared like magic, the French troops flailed out indiscriminately, like the blind giant (in the old Vietnamese story) who pursued a family of mice 'round and 'round a room filled with precious objects. Although a mouse was caught from time to time, the mice were meanwhile reproducing, and the precious objects in the room were one after another irreparably destroyed as the giant became more and more exhausted, and the mice more numerous.

Exactly as in the fable, the Viet Minh "mice" finally were strong enough to deal with the French "giant", and were then able to employ their own "encircle and annihilate" tactic. Naturally they chose to launch such an offensive against the French troops only where and when they had an overwhelming preponderance of strength. Having long traded space for time by temporary tactical withdrawals which gave the French repeated delusions of victory, the Viet Minh rear was well organized and consolidated for support. The aggressive actions employed by the French in pursuing an evanescent foe in a futile effort to encircle and destroy him had brought only frustration. The Viet Minh's Fabian tactic of repeated withdrawal and dispersal among the population led to French excesses, indiscriminate artillery and machine gun fire designed more to protect their main force than to destroy enemy targets. Such actions naturally confirmed the population in its support of the Viet Minh and motivated many to join in attacking the French when the time came.

The Viet Minh knew and understood their French enemy perfectly. The French weakness for limiting actions to daylight hours and withdrawing their concentrated forces at night into military posts located at district towns or province capitals (with very modest defensive networks for outer protection) made it possible for the Viet Minh to own the countryside after dark. They could then carry on their propaganda, assassinate friends of the French, kidnap government officials, launch attacks against outposts, prepare ambushes or destroy rescue forces, and thus completely dominate the rural areas despite the presence of strong French forces. Without a major victory -- although that, too, would come in time -- the Viet Minh were able to carry on a steady, destructive attrition of French fighting forces at very little cost to themselves. From having begun with "having much," and were eventually to "have everything." Attrition of the French military forces was their steady tactic as part of their overall strategy of annihilation for all opposing them. Little by little the French grew weaker as the Viet Minh steadily grew stronger; the initiative originally displayed by the French in pursuing the Viet Minh steadily passed into the hands of the Viet Minh. As their local position improved, so did their international support increase.

But, to a certain extent, matters for both sides stood at something of an impasse. While the Viet Minh steadily eroded the French forces, they could not destroy them. Of the two, the French losses were certainly heavier, although they were, at this time, better able to withstand such losses. And these losses mounted steadily. The French clung to the roads, where their heavy and cumbersome mechanical transport actually slowed them down while supposedly giving them speed and mobility. Unlike the Viet Minh,

who could scatter and hide their weapons in the jungle or rice paddies, the roadbound French could only stand and die with glory when ambushed. It was small satisfaction even to the most patriotic, and not all were patriots.

The Viet Minh demonstrated extraordinary coordination between the activities which disrupted the security of the French rear and the mobile guerrilla warfare which harassed the expeditionary forces. Utilizing space in masterful fashion to expand the French lines, they were able to employ fifth columns against interior lines and launch unexpected counter-attacks where least expected.

Logistical considerations forced the French to preoccupy themselves with the problem of maintaining their axes of communication and transport. Large numbers of soldiers who might have been offensively employed instead were manning check points supported by artillery, clearing dangerous roads, and standing by in reserve to counter -- in all too predictable fashion -- Viet Minh initiated attacks upon their vulnerable positions. Military outposts and watch towers -- first built of bamboo, then of mud, then of bricks, then of concrete reinforced with steel -- were reduced with monotonous regularity by Viet Minh soldiers using increasingly sophisticated weapons -- rifles, machine guns, mines and plastic explosives and finally recoilless rifles of large calibre. While the Viet Minh became increasingly expert in the reduction of fortified positions, the soldiers guarding depots full of arms and ammunition, military equipment and even air fields became increasingly bored with their daily routine, and such targets became increasingly attractive to the insurgents. In addition to the tremendous losses of materiel resulting from these actions, the French Expeditionary Forces suffered from the scattering of their forces amongst the innumerable "vital" points to be guarded. Such dispersal permitted the Viet Minh to pick their targets, concentrate their forces, and overwhelm the limited number of defenders.

Meanwhile the French continued their hackneyed tactic of "encircle and annihilate" with generally indifferent success, but one amazing exception. In what is now North Vietnam the French mustered successively from four to six groups mobile to attempt to encircle an enemy never numbering more than one or two battalions. The Brochet, Citron and Amanda campaigns were failures. However, in 1952, five groups mobile, with added strength from other branches of service and reinforced Regional units to muster a total strength of more than 20,000 troops, enjoyed an unprecedented success in the Porto, Polo and Turco campaigns which resulted in the destruction of two-thirds of the Viet Minh 98th Regiment, 316th Division. Eight hundred and ninety-eight Viet Minh soldiers were killed, including ten officers; twelve hundred and sixty-nine prisoners of war were taken, including sixty-eight officers; fifty-five Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR), five hundred fifty-eight rifles, seventy-eight machine-guns, eight sub-machine guns, twenty-three carbines and pistols, thirteen SKZ recoilless rifles, three 81mm and twenty-eight 60mm mortars, and three radio sets were taken from the enemy. It is also worth noting that, of the 1269 prisoners of war, 1067 were Regulars, as were, of course, all the officers. The French suffered surprisingly light casualties: 76 killed and 261 wounded, with 32 MIA. They lost no arms. However, even during the celebration of this unparalleled success current reports listed the neighboring posts of Phuong Tri, Sen Ho, A Lu, Dai Tu, Thien Thanh, and Dong Do as overrun by the Viet Minh.

In retrospect, it appears that the French victory was due less to their massing of 20,000 men and skill in handling such a formidable force than to some subjective miscalculations by the Ninety-eighth Regiment's Command Staff. In any event, the Viet Minh learned their lesson; they never again underestimated the effect of massed Air Force and Artillery firepower in set-piece combat.

The classic tactic of encirclement and destruction, applied against unconventional forces, apparently holds some sort of fatal fascination for military men. From the days of the early Chinese resistance against Japanese aggression through the Viet Minh war against the French colonialists to the present war in South Vietnam, the Communists have consistently sought the support of the people and identified the enemy as a foreign aggressor while their opponents ignored the people and sought to encircle and destroy.

In China, at the beginning of the Japanese adventure on the mainland of Asia, the Chinese resistance was characterized by a genuine desire to fight against the foreign aggressor. The Kuomintang and other nationalist parties, the Communists, and those without political affiliation all united against the common enemy. The Communists successfully disguised their real intentions while gaining the confidence and support of the population in a cause with tremendous patriotic appeal.

In the war of the Viet Minh against the French Colonialists, as leaders in the fight against the white colonialists the Communists enjoyed almost universal popular support in the areas under their control, especially among the youth, who knew nothing of the true face of Communism. But the signing of the Geneva Accords and the subsequent revelation of Communist plans for aggression against the South ripped away this false mask for many. In the Communist-controlled areas the disillusioned had to escape or conform or perish. Indoctrination and strict controls, coupled with brutal suppression of the intransigent, have stilled the voices of protest in the North.

But in the South the determination to resist Communism grew. With support for the independent nation from the United States from 1954 onward, sharply increased after 1960, as the Communist attack became bolder and more apparent to the outside world, the people of South Vietnam courageously determined to resist aggression from the North. The people of South Vietnam had confidence in their own just cause, and faith in the boundless power and resources of the friendly United States.

Today, however, after years of effort and the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives -- including more than 3,000 Americans killed, wounded or kidnapped -- with billions of dollars in

aid expended, the Vietnamese people still find themselves living in misery and poverty in a war-torn land, with the prospects of freedom and peace seemingly as far away as ever. We know that our strength, our weapons, even our economic means, are far superior to those of the Communists, but still the battlefield seems left unguarded as the Viet Cong move freely and aggressively across the land.

And still we launch operations designed to encircle and destroy the enemy, this time employing helicopters. Lacking a strategy, we fall back upon the same tired old tactic, with fresh window-dressing. As a result we fall easy prey to the Communists, who continue to wage their war of attrition against us. No one will deny the usefulness of the helicopter in Vietnam: it has made possible the swift removal of wounded to hospitals and saved many lives; the helicopter has proved extremely useful in routing attacks (when weather permits its use and anti-aircraft fire is not prohibitive), in carrying supplies swiftly to troops in the field without the need of constructing airfields, and in a host of other ways. Unfortunately, the helicopter has not proved very successful in solving the problem of locating the enemy in the field and holding him until superior forces can be brought to bear. As a rule, the initiative still rests with the Communists. If they wish to reveal their position, they attack the helicopter as it passes overhead. If they do not wish to make their presence known, they need only refrain from firing. Still more vexing, they may elect to fire upon the helicopter from the shelter of a hamlet pagoda, school or home in the deliberate hope that the answering fire (delivered after they have fled the scene) will so antagonize the people of the hamlet as to make them more receptive to Viet Cong propaganda and recruitment efforts.

We have had some successes, it is true, but these require more than casual examination to determine their true significance. During the Dan Tien campaign in the upper Mekong zone in 1962-63, and, more recently, in the Dan Tri campaign in Ba Xuyen during December 1964, thanks to strong air support action we killed 72 Viet Cong and captured a number of weapons, including two heavy (12.7MM) machine guns. During the same period in the same area, but under other circumstances, our losses were six times heavier, not to mention the effect upon the people living in the area, which was clearly unfavorable. Several operations launched against the Do Xa Viet Cong base have failed, at heavy cost.

In November 1964, during the Phong Hoa operation -- the largest helicopter operation ever attempted in Vietnam up to that time, employing over 7,000 soldiers and 115 helicopters -- we attempted to encircle the V.C. base in the Boi Loi woods (in the area of the common border of Tay Ninh, Binh Duong and Hau Nghia provinces). We killed perhaps one hundred Viet Cong guerrillas, captured 68 suspects, took ten weapons, and picked up some documents. We also destroyed a number of underground tunnels. In exchange we lost



some 22 dead and 76 wounded, as well as losing a number of helicopters. The American press, commenting freely upon the operation, noted that its cost was conservatively estimated at one million dollars while it netted no more in results than any standard small operation, that the major portion of the Viet Cong forces and the local population had escaped from the zone well before action began, and that local conditions made it impossible for there to be any successful follow-up ground operation. Field commanders thought the terrain so favorable to the enemy that they refused to attempt ground action.

The West, victim of its own eternal subjective optimism, holds that Communism, inevitably, must meet the same fate as the Nazi-Fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. Or of the Japanese warlords who attacked Pearl Harbor. The West forgets that Communist strategy is based upon quite different premises, even though the eventual aim of both Fascism and Communism may be the same. National leaders of the Fascist school played upon national and racial superiority complexes of their own people to develop an irrational belief in their own invincibility. National troops of this type were employed in the direct and naked invasion of neighboring countries to bring them under its domination.

Communist strategy, on the other hand, capitalizes upon the desire of populations to have a national identity and to expel foreign invaders who are exploiting them. Communism seeks to promote struggles between social groups within the nation and to recruit its forces locally. It resorts to invasion by foreign troops only as a last desperate measure, as it did in Korea, and even there, under the guise of rescuing a brother in distress. If we await the direct, armed, totally foreign invasion by Communist troops in our struggle to preserve under-developed and newly-independent nations we shall wait until the Communists have already won. While they enjoy such success with their lullabies of "Peace," "Co-Existence" and "Neutrality" and are able to carry on "wars of national liberation" without the commitment of Communist base forces they are certainly unlikely to resort to the sort of naked aggression practiced in the past by the Fascists. Those who await the formal declaration of war and the opening artillery barrage have already lost the political and psychological war to Communism.

Our very definition of war is an ever-changing one. To attempt to define unconventional wars of the present period in terms of past conventional wars is nonsense; to attempt to fight such wars in conventional terms is suicidal folly; and to imagine that every future unconventional war will precisely duplicate past and current ones is madness. Every unconventional war to date has had unique features of its own; the same will be true of such wars in the future. The only certainty is that Communism will continue to wage such wars as long as they appear profitable.

But this is not to say that we may not learn from the past, and especially from our mistakes. What we must avoid is the mechanical

and unconditional adoption of the methods of the past as a guide to the present and future. As Mao has so aptly said, such rigid adherence to old experience is "clipping one's feet to fit small shoes." As wars develop, they should be under constant study. Such study should decide our strategy, tailored to the specifics of the particular struggle; from our basic strategy we derive tactics to be employed; and from our tactics we plan our campaigns. In all wars, one defeat can cancel all previous victories; conversely, a decisive victory can wipe out all past defeats. The interdependence of all three -- strategy, tactics and campaigns -- must be constantly borne in mind; our major failures of the past can be attributed, at least in large part, to our failure to study the conflict and first decide our strategy. Instead, we concentrated upon tactics and campaigns, a cart-before-the-horse method which ignored the question of correct strategy completely.

During the past decade of anti-Communist warfare in South Vietnam we have alternated between awe and contempt in our appraisal of the Viet Cong enemy. Initially we tended to despise them, regarding them as a ragged rabble of ruffians who could scarcely test the mettle of our troops; subsequently we swung to the opposite extreme, regarding the Viet Cong as supermen who could materialize from the air and disappear as easily. This chameleon-like attitude towards the enemy has not only kept us from an honest and objective knowledge of our enemy -- a first principle in any war -- but has seriously undermined the emotional and intellectual stability of both anti-Communist Vietnamese and friends abroad and has led them into manic-depressive swings between excessive optimism and stark defeatism. Communist experts in psychological warfare have exploited both ends of the pendulum's arc: when anti-Communists are boasting of victories, the Viet Cong becomes the gallant under-dog fighting against the overpowering strength of a gang of overgrown bullies in order to gain sympathy; when the Viet Cong are being touted as supermen ten feet tall, the inevitable victory of the Communist cause is used to frighten the faint-hearted into leaping aboard what they are assured is the winning bandwagon.

National vitality of Vietnam actually resides in the countryside, where 83% of our population lives. This population, however, is like dry sand on a breeze-blown beach, without cohesion or stability, the victim of every passing puff of wind. In a negative sort of way, the population believes that the government to which it occasionally pays taxes owes them perfect security and an improved standard of living to include better roads, bridges, irrigation dams and canals, sewer systems and pure water supplies. And all of this is to be provided while they occupy themselves solely with earning their daily livelihood; the responsibility for both security and economic improvement is the government's alone. Our task is to bring a sense of reality into this situation, to pour in water and cement which will give the drifting grains of sand a cohesion and stability sufficient to form a firm foundation

for building a better nation. The people must be organized into groups and associations, beginning at the hamlet level. These organized groups must motivate the people to take action in their own behalf, rather than waiting for the government to provide for them. Communist cadres and infrastructure must be rooted out, separated from the population politically, socially and economically. The people will then be able to organize along the historic lines of their traditional daily life. The basis of this organization must be the hamlet; the village organization is designed primarily to facilitate the functions of the administrative apparatus.

In our present situation we may divide the countryside into three different zones: Zone A is that area in which we have full control<sup>1</sup>; Zone B is that area in which we have operational superiority, but lack true control; and Zone C is that area in which the enemy is in control.

Our past experience indicates that a variety of approaches in the construction of secure hamlets have been employed. Some have followed the "oil spot" theory, building hamlets in secure areas from which security is supposed to flow outward. Others have followed patterns dictated by communication axes or the location of district towns. Still others have attempted to use hamlets constructed in Zone B as a defense barrier for Zone A from attacks launched from Zone C. In fact, our actions should take note of all these points, but add one still more important. We should build hamlets wherever the people reside, and there should be no forcible relocation of families; the only movement of houses and families should be of those few outlying homes which could not otherwise be included in an effective defensive system.

Construction of hamlets should be undertaken simultaneously so that the Reds cannot employ the manpower and resources of nearby hamlets not yet organized to strike against hamlets under construction. Hamlets should be selected for construction according to carefully considered criteria: dense population; prosperous economy; and strategic location. Construction of hamlets should be undertaken without excessive regard for mere outward appearances, crudely constructed, but effective, defenses capable of resisting a Viet Cong liaison and reconnaissance squad visit are the first consideration. As rapidly as possible, hamlets built in series should be improved to the point where they can withstand stronger Viet Cong assaults.

Construction of hamlets should not be undertaken haphazardly or with the primary aim of fulfilling a quota by taking the easiest first. We should first study the situation carefully, paying

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1. Full control does not necessarily mean free from any incident. Even Saigon is subject to terrorist activities, and will continue to be.

close attention to population attitudes, the terrain, enemy activity patterns, economic conditions and the resources which we have available. For example, District X has a total of thirty existing hamlets. Of these, perhaps ten may be considered as effectively under our control. The others are either under enemy control or disputed. In our controlled area (Zone A), we may give priority to hamlet construction at a point along the enemy's axis, line of communication, a point where he has frequently attacked and overrun an existing hamlet or perhaps has been accustomed to pause and rest overnight in the near vicinity. Such hamlets, left undefended, constitute open gateways for attacks upon other nearby hamlets.

Construction of hamlets does not necessarily begin in a secure zone and spread progressively over adjacent areas (Zone B). Our essential principle is to build hamlets in linked networks, one after another in some cases and simultaneously in others (according to our plan and our abilities), with the aim of closing the gaps between hamlets in order to secure the territory within the line of hamlets.

Above all else, we must plan and work with a full realization that our real target is the population of the hamlets; the undue importance attached to appearances in the past should not obscure our real objective in the construction of hamlets. The true measure of a hamlet's defensive strength is not the height or thickness of its walls, not the number of guardhouses or the dimensions of moats and trenches, but the spirit of its inhabitants. Building the morale of the people and their loyalty to the anti-Communist cause is far more important than the building of visually impressive physical defense structures, which may only serve to garnish an attractive dish for Viet Cong delectation.

Hamlet construction is a strategic duty which falls upon both civilian and military officials at every level from the lowest to the highest, but perhaps the most vital role is that of the District Chief. His knowledge of the local situation and his implementation of the construction operation constitute the two keys to success. During the period of study and preparation the District Chief must work closely with the Province Chief, the commander of the Regional Force company, and all the military and civilian officials who will be involved in planning and supporting hamlet construction. All must have a clear and thorough understanding of the purpose and the agreed-upon plan prior to attempting construction. The District Chief will also examine the situation in his district, with particular attention to the resources at his disposal and the other obligations which he must meet before undertaking hamlet construction operations. If possible, he will strengthen and reinforce these resources, particularly in personnel. He will carefully consider both friendly and enemy strengths in order to make his plan realistic, rather than predicating the plan upon pending requests for additional assets which may never be forthcoming.

The District Chief may then divide the forces at his disposal into three parts: 1) a minimum force required to guard key installations for which he bears responsibility -- the district headquarters, vital bridges, military posts, etc; 2) a mobile military force charged with responsibility for maintaining permanent clearing operations; and 3) Rural Construction teams comprised of both military and civilian elements. The guard force is under the leadership of the Deputy District Chief; the mobile force is led by the Regional Forces company commander (unless reinforced with Regular Forces, in which case the ranking officer of the Regulars will assume command); and the Rural Construction forces will be directed by the District Chief himself (although he may designate another to act in his place while he is engaged in military operations).

The task of the guard force is self-evident. The mobile force charged with clearing operations carries an additional special responsibility in its relationships with the population. The mobile force commander must ensure that his troops so behave themselves toward the people that the population will want to cooperate in the construction of hamlets. This means that the soldiers must be consistently friendly to the farmers, respectful to their elders, kind to children, correct in their behavior with women, helpful to the sick and injured, knowledgeable of local customs and traditions, protective to property of others, and ready to fight for the security of the hamlet. This introductory phase of the relationship between the government and the people can make or break the entire operation; it must be carried out correctly, or the tasks of all those who follow will be immeasurably increased.

The third force, the Rural Construction team, will include both military and civilian personnel. In its ranks will be found the police, military police, information and psywar cadres, youth leaders, agricultural cadres, agricultural credit cadres, health workers and all the services of government working with the people. Theirs is the task of actually constructing the hamlet, with the cooperation of the population, and only after they have motivated the people to want to cooperate.

After the District Chief has established his three forces, he convenes a meeting of the respective leaders and their assistants or deputies. He acquaints them all with their exact duties and responsibilities, instructs them concerning their communication and coordination under normal circumstances and in emergencies, and clarifies any questions which they may have as to their duties under the plan. All particulars of this plan, and of the assignment of duties will be kept in writing in the classified storage area of the District Chief's office.

The next step undertaken by the District Chief will be the establishment of a mobile administrative office for solving problems on-the-spot. At the same time the District Chief establishes

priorities among the hamlets to be constructed on the basis of up-to-date knowledge of the local situation; these may be continually reviewed and revised as work progresses. Usually priority will be given to hamlets possessing strategic characteristics: for instance, the district may have five key hamlets which are important because they assure communication axes, block enemy infiltration into the district town and other hamlets, and are economically essential to the district. Using his knowledge of the local situation, the District Chief may determine to begin with Hamlet No. One, with a planned schedule of three weeks to two months for its construction. He may work through the five in succession or in several simultaneously as the situation dictates. If his work is well planned and executed, in a period of ten to twelve months he should have established government control in his five key hamlets. The process may then be repeated in the remaining hamlets.

Close cooperation and coordination between the Regional Forces comprising part of the Rural Construction teams and the civilian administration elements is vital. Regional Forces must be prepared to protect the RC teams when they come to the hamlets to begin work and must continue to provide security as long as necessary. The first administrative element of the RC team to begin work will be those members (usually police) charged with taking the census and issuing identity documents. During this process they must identify and root out the Communist cadres in the hamlet. If the preliminary work has been done correctly, they will be assisted by the local population in identifying the Communist stay-behinds. The rest of the civil administration workers begin immediately to organize the population into groups and associations -- according to their special interests-- and to assist these groups in electing local leaders. These tasks are imperative and must be carried out as swiftly as possible.

The duration of the construction work in a given hamlet is of course highly variable, according to a number of factors, including number of inhabitants, previous status (in secure area for some time, just cleared of Viet Cong control, or intermittently controlled by both sides), population attitudes (dependent both upon previous status and the effectiveness of the mobile clearing force work preliminary to the arrival of the Rural Construction team), economic situation (houses destroyed or abandoned, fertility of the soil, existence of cottage industry, etc.), and the size and effectiveness of the RC team. In general, a maximum of two to three months work should be sufficient for one hamlet.

Coincident with the beginning of the census and organization work by civil administration workers in the hamlet, Rural Construction team Regional Force elements should undertake the organization of hamlet self-defense requirements, both through coordination with Popular Forces and by assisting the population in the construction of such elementary physical security items as fences or moats, guard posts, watch towers, alarm systems and communication networks.