Rural Pacification in Viet Nam:

1962-1965

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Dissertation Abstract

"Rural Pacification in Vietnam: 1962-1965"

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The study is concerned with the efforts of the Republic of Vietnam and its allies to establish peace in the rural areas of South Vietnam. The focus of the study is the administration of counterinsurgency campaigns at the province level and below.

Part I deals with the context of the insurgency such as the social, political, and historical factors involved and the strategy and tactics of the communist movement in the rural areas. Part II briefly surveys the efforts to pacify the rural areas, beginning with the 1954 Civic Action programs of Ngo Dinh Diem. The strategy of the Strategic Hamlet program and its successors is analyzed as an introduction to more detailed discussions in Part III.

The focus of Part III is on province pacification programs, 1962-1965. A detailed description and analysis of the Quang Nam province campaign is provided, and several other special pacification efforts are described briefly. Special chapters on security programs, political/psychological warfare, and social and economic projects are included, with subject matter from various provinces.

Part IV deals briefly with the national pacification system, with special attention to the American advisory role. Part V

includes a summary evaluation of pacification efforts in Vietnam and a proposed theory and model for an improved approach to the problem. The model is an attempt to suggest a more effective system of program implementation through application of some of the more simple principles of the PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) system to the complex management problems involved in pacification.

PREFACE

This study of pacification in South Vietnam is written from a perspective that involves a basic presupposition. Although the study is primarily concerned with how pacification has been and should be conducted, it is assumed that communist insurgency in the South should be defeated.

The impressive achievements in economic and social development by Russia and China are mirrored to a lesser extent in North Vietnam. In the view of the writer, however, these communist achievements have been made at too great a cost in terms of the totalitarian control required to achieve these goals and the consequent suppression of the civil rights cherished in western democracies. Perhaps a valid test of the pacification enterprise in the South is whether it will lead to the representative government and civil rights for all citizens pledged by every regime since 1954.

The background for this study began through my association with World Neighbors, Inc., whose community development projects in the Huk areas of The Philippines introduced me to the interrelation of social changes and insurgency. Studies in Chinese Communism with Lord Lindsay of Birker at The American University heightened my interest. Counsel from James Eliot Cross, of the Institute for Defense Analyses, pointed me towards Vietnam, and Rufus Phillips, then Assistant Director for Rural Affairs in AID/Saigon, offered me a position as a Province Representative

and I served a two year tour of duty in the provinces of Central Vietnam during 1962-1964.

The opportunity for full attention to the study in the final six months of preparation was made possible through a University contract with the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense, which has prior and continuing rights to use of the study in whole or in part.

Many persons have contributed to the preparation of the study, and they, too, have my deep appreciation. The uniformly cooperative personnel of the Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, the United States Information Agency, and other agencies greatly enhanced the content and perspective of the study, although responsibility for the analysis and evaluation is my own. The special assistance of the following is noted with warm appreciation: George K. Tanham, W. Robert Warne, Thomas Luche, Dan Whitfield, John Helble, Vincent Puritano, and Jerome French. Professor Kenneth Landon and the other members of the Committee have been helpful in many details of research and preparation. John Donnell and John Stempel permitted access to personal copies of their dissertations on Vietnam. When these studies are eventually available in microfilm, they will be of great value to many researchers.

Finally, the greatest single source of inspiration and assistance throughout doctoral studies has been my wife, Ruth. She typed and proofread the entire study, while her aunt, Garneta Wessel, provided order and sustenance in our household during the final months of preparation.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an examination of the ways and means for the building of peace in rural Vietnam by the Republic of Vietnam and its allies. Its focus will be on what has been attempted--and could yet be done--1) to isolate the enemy and destroy his influence and control over the rural population, and 2) to win the peasant's willing support through effective local administration and programs of rural improvement.

Military, political, and administrative practices will be examined selectively--where they are relevant to the problems of pacification. These problems will be analyzed from the perspective of the provincial administrators of pacification, and, more particularly, the American advisors and representatives at that level. The peasant response to pacification will also be considered. The national pacification system will be briefly reviewed for its relevance to the problems of administering province programs.

A definition of several key terms may be useful at this point.

Counterinsurgency refers to any effort by the government against the insurgent. It is a broader term than pacification, and may describe many different types of military and political actions.

Pacification may mean, simply, to "make peace." In this study, pacification refers to a comprehensive government effort to bring law, order, and effective administration to the countryside. It may involve multiple social and political activities that could culminate in revolutionary change in the rural areas, leading to improved living conditions and increased self-government. It is a complex process which requires various civilian and military resources of the counterinsurgent government to be applied in a carefully coordinated sequence. Pacification as discussed in this study will be concerned with populated areas outside the major cities: the farming and fishing hamlets that house nearly 90 per cent of the nation's population.

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction are terms utilized to convey the positive aspects of pacification: the improvement and restoration of community life to a level more favorable than during the conflict. Increasingly, pacification has been referred to as Rural Construction, which implies far more than the building of physical facilities. The Vietnamese Government has employed Rural Construction to describe a massive social, economic, and political reformation of rural life, involving increased government services, greater political participation, and economic benefits.

In February, 1966 a newer name for the pacification effort began to take the place of Rural Construction. Revolutionary Development describes the same activities, but suggests the dynamism and depth of the changes intended for the rural areas.

Civic action is used by the United States Armed Forces denoting activities by military units to establish effective relations with civilians in an area in which an operation is underway.

Clear and hold operations are the military context for other pacification efforts: expelling main Viet-Cong units from an area and holding the area so that the insurgent forces cannot reassert their influence.

Sweeps, in contrast, are operations to locate the enemy and destroy him and his supplies. When the sweep is completed, the area may return to Viet-Cong control.

The reader is asked to note the limits set by the researcher for this study. Pacification touches on so many of the normal elements of military, governmental, and political affairs that one is tempted to tell too much in order to create an adequate context for understanding. Chapters II through V are an effort to give an overview, and a context, with footnote references for more detailed exploration.

Abbreviations and other terminology are defined in the Glossary located at the end of the Bibliography.

PART I

THE NATURE AND SOURCES

OF INSURGENCY IN VIETNAM

SYNOPSIS

Some of South Vietnam's significant national traits and conditions (geographical, social, political, religious) are briefly reviewed for their relevance to insurgency and counterinsurgency. The characteristics of traditional rural communities, influence of other countries, and the new social and political revolutions are discussed.

Chapter III surveys the Viet-Cong insurgency, particularly in its rural strategy and tactics for political and military takeover through propaganda, terror, and mass organizations. The Viet-Cong "pacification" of a single village is discussed in detail.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTEXT OF THE CONFLICT: AN INTERPRETIVE SURVEY

The area now known as South Vietnam has been an historic arena for unconventional warfare. Long before the Cham peoples harrassed the Mongol invaders from their mountain hideaways in the thirteenth century, guerrilla activity had been conducted against pre-historic invaders who arrived by sea and forced the coastal dwellers into the safety of the mountains.[1]

By most criteria, South Vietnam today could be classified as an insurgent's paradise and a counterinsurgent's nightmare. All of David Galula's elements for successful insurgency--a cause, a weak counterinsurgent, favorable geographic conditions, and adequate outside support--are fulfilled in the situation.[2]

I. GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Geography. The three disparate topographical regions in the South--highlands, coastal lowlands, and Mekong Delta--favor the insurgent. The coastal lowlands are a narrow ribbon of short river valleys--ten to forty miles long--that reach quickly

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[1] D.G.E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia (London: Macmillan and Company, 1955), p. 166.

[2] David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (New York: Praeger, 1964), Chapter II.

into the mountains which form the eastern edge of highlands. Some mountain spurs reach the very shores of the China Sea, providing cover and bases for guerrilla influence over the hamlets that dot the narrow coastal plain. The highlands extend past the western boundary into Laos and upper Cambodia, a nationally unpoliceable territory where insurgents may build major bases and find sanctuary after a military operation across the border in Vietnam.

The third major area is the flat and fertile Mekong Delta, where almost anything will grow and the counterinsurgent's problem is the difficulty of denying food to the enemy. This vast area was made arable and habitable by the French who drained swampland and laced the region with canals. The nearby Cambodian border and almost impenetrable swamps provide secure bases in close proximity to much of the Delta population.

Ethnic groups.[3] Approximately 85 per cent of South Vietnam's population of about 15 million people is ethnic Vietnamese, whose predecessors inched their way down the coastal lowlands from the Red River Delta in the North. The process spanned 600 years and was capped by an enormous emigration after the Geneva partition of 1954, involving nearly a million northerners. The disparate

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[3]Statistical data for this section is taken from the United States Army's Area Handbook for Vietnam, prepared by the Special Operations Research Office, the American University (Washington, D.C., 1962), Chapter IV, pp. 53-62.

regionalisms of central lowlanders, northern emigres, and southerners have created problems in administration and politics.

Of the three major ethnic minorities in the South, the Highlanders are the most unique and internally diverse. There are more than thirty ethno-linguistic groups in the Highlands. The French, who called them montagnards, encouraged their separation from the Vietnamese and administered the high plateau (Plateau Montagnard Sud) independently. Some tribes still carry the cultural memory of their violent primeval displacement from the fertile lowlands by more powerful invaders. Added to these legends is a consistent history of mistreatment of Highlanders by Vietnamese in politics, trade, and appropriation of land. These frustrations have found outlet in protest and even violent take-over (in Ban Me Thuot, September, 1964) of government facilities. More serious is the direct involvement of Highlander tribes with Viet-Cong insurgency in some areas. Viet-Cong supply routes from the North cross Highlander territories to reach guerrillas operating among the densely populated coastal and Delta lowlands. Thus the highlander tribes are strategically significant to both sides in the conflict, even in the conduct of operations among the lowlands.

Khmer peoples are the same racially as the majority population of Cambodia. Some 350,000 to 400,000 are in Vietnam--all in the Delta region. They tend to live in their own villages and they practice the Theraveda Buddhism common to Burma and Thailand.

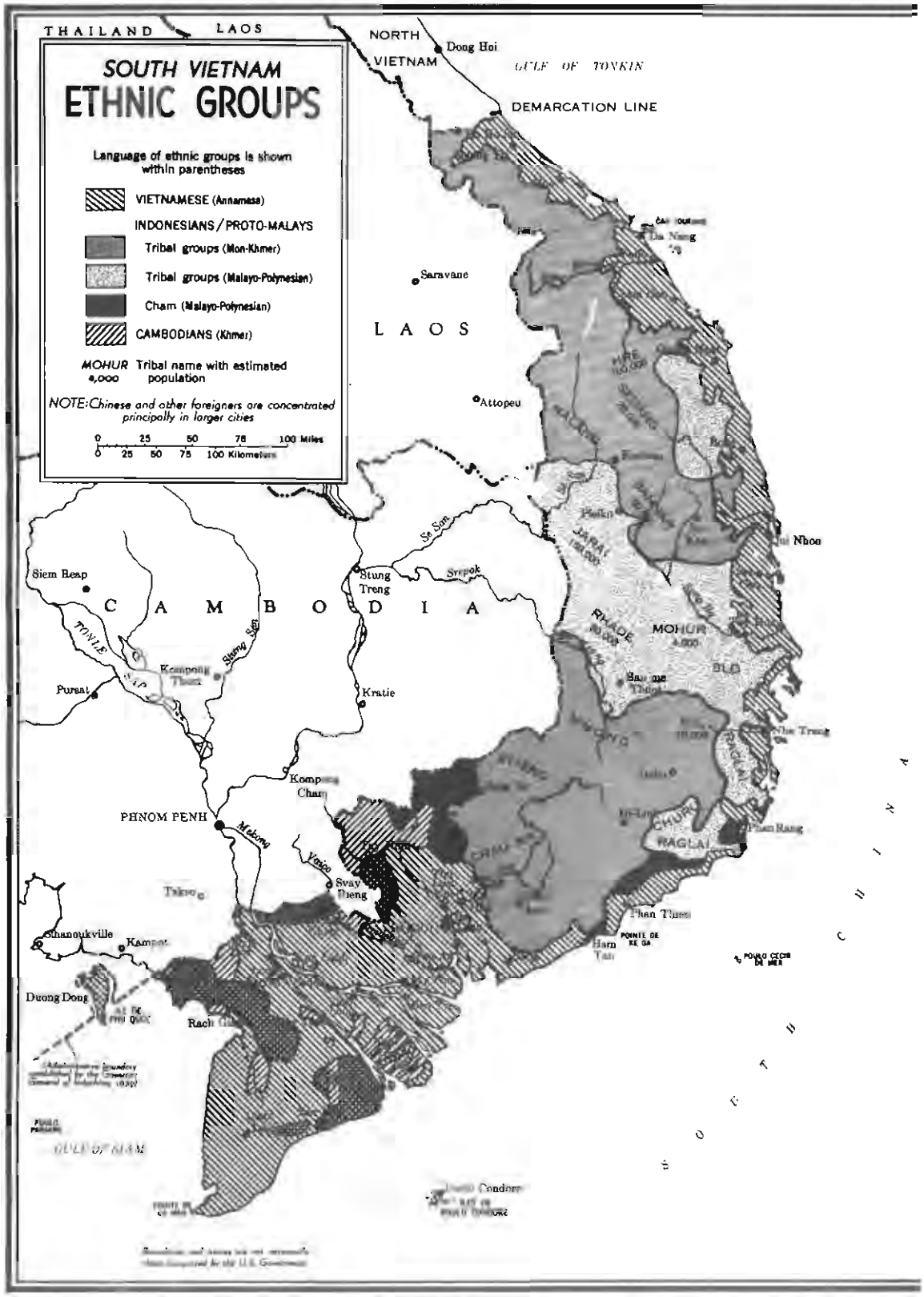
SOUTH VIETNAM
ETHNIC GROUPS
Language of ethnic groups is shown within parentheses
VIETNAMESE (Annamese)
INDONESIANS / PROTO-MALAYS
Tribal groups (Mon-Khmer)
Tribal groups (Malayo-Polynesian)
Cham (Malayo-Polynesian)
CAMBODIANS (Khmer)
MOHUR Tribal name with estimated population
4,000
NOTE: Chinese and other foreigners are concentrated principally in larger cities
0 25 50 75 100 Miles
0 25 50 75 100 Kilometers
THAILAND
LAOS
NORTH VIETNAM
Dong Hoi
GULF OF TONKIN
DEMARCATION LINE
Da Nang
Saravane
L A O S
Attopeu
Se San
Stung Treng
Siem Reap
C A M B O D I A
TONLE SAP
Stung Sen
Kompong Thom
Pursat
Kratie
Kompong Cham
PHNOM PENH
Mekong
Tonle Sap
Svay Rieng
Takeo
Sihanoukville
Kampot
Duong Dong
Rach Gia
GULF OF SIAM
Qui Nhon
JARAI
RHADE
MOHUR
BLO
CHURU
RAGLAI
Phan Rang
Phan Thiet
Ham Tan
POINTE DE KE GA
POINTE DE CA MAU
Condore
SOUTH CHINA SEA

Figure 1

The Chinese minority of over 1,000,000 is mostly centered in Cholon, the Chinese sister city contiguous to Saigon, and in smaller urban areas. Their enormous economic power, differing language, and school systems encourage separatism and have troubled the Vietnamese leadership. Extreme government moves to force Chinese into Vietnamese nationality early in the Diem regime led the Chinese to retaliate by using their power to paralyze the country's economy.[4] The capability of the Chinese minority to give major financial and material support to the insurgents underscores their significance in the conflict.

II. VIETNAMESE RURAL SOCIETY

Despite the opportunities for insurgent gains through disaffected minorities, the heart of the insurgency problem is found in the Vietnamese majority itself. The most significant prize of the present conflict is the support and control of the ethnic Vietnamese rural population, almost entirely situated in lowland areas. They live in villages (xa), each comprised of several hamlets (ap).

Although there have been social changes forced by war, there is a continuity of the customs, habits, and world-view common to the traditional village life over several centuries. The average peasant's desires and hopes for life usually can

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[4]Joseph Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," Chapter VI in Wesley Fishel, Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 109-111.

be expressed in terms of what lies in the village where he lives. The peasant's concerns can be categorized into five general areas: rice, land, family, religion, and education.

Rice. In Vietnamese society rice is infinitely more important than any one food is to a westerner. It is almost equivalent--particularly for the poorer peasant--to food itself. The growing of rice dictates many of the villager's activities. His work calendar, feasts, and worship are geared to the phases of its production. Government demands for his labor may be deeply resented if they conflict with the production of rice.

Land. The land as the source of sustenance and as the symbol of status and security in peasant society is not unique to Vietnam. Hunger for land ownership is a major factor in agrarian discontent and a vital factor in the "cause" of the insurgent. Ownership patterns vary considerably in Vietnam. The most serious scarcity of land is in the densely populated enclaves along the central coast. However, an old tradition of communal cooperation in parts of Central Vietnam, possibly dating back to the early days when entire villages migrated there together, provides a democratic distribution of the land in the form of an equal portion to each voter in the family.[5] In parts

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[5]Charles Robequain (tr. by Isabel A. Ward), The Economic Development of French Indo-China, Institute of Pacific Relations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 62.

of Quang Nam the amounts per family sometimes total as little as 1/10 hectare, (about 3/10 acre).[6] In the Delta, where there is far more land per capita, inequities of ownership are more severe. In his study of the village of Khanh Hau, Gerald Hickey describes the opposite extreme of land ownership that is characteristic of the Delta. Prior to a modest land reform in 1958, there had been only 130 owners of the 926 hectares of paddy land in the village of 3,241 people.[7] But in Khanh Hau, even tenant farmers had much more land to till than the peasants in Quang Nam, averaging 2.4 hectares per tenant (vs. 1/10 to 1/5 hectare average in Quang Nam for a man-wife allotment).[8] Shortage of land for whatever reason, whether from overpopulation or undistributed ownership, has been a vital factor in the problem of insurgency in South Vietnam.

Family. Traditional Vietnamese family life resembles that of China. The bonds of family are many times more relevant to human activity than in the United States. The peasant treasures his tie to his forbears and his progeny as links that project his

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[6]This calculation is based on field investigation of land allocations in villages of western Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province in 1963. Per voter shares ranged from 1/10 hectare to 1/20 hectare. One hectare equals 2.5 acres.

[7]Gerald Cannon Hickey, Village in Vietnam (New Haven: Yale, 1964), pp. 41-42.

[8]Ibid., p. 45.

existence beyond the present. He feels himself part of an unending stream to which he contributes and from which he receives. His self-identity is closely interlaced with that of his family. Family duties and attachment extend well beyond the man-wife-child relations familiar to the United States. One is a conscious and responsible part of a clan of cousins, aunts, and uncles in the local community. Such ties have been enlisted to strengthen both the positions of the insurgent and the government, and the family is always a factor to be considered.

Religion. Vietnam inherited its most pervasive religious views from the Chinese traditions of Confucianism/Ancestor Worship, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism. These various viewpoints may be manifested in the religious rites of a single village shrine. For the peasant, these views are all part of his world-view. He draws on the moral strength and humanistic confidence of Confucianism to run his family, do his work, and judge his government; he faces overpowering natural disasters with the resigned acceptance of Taoism; and he leans on the mercy of the Buddhist goddess Kwan Yin to forgive his moral inadequacies. Melded with this traditional Chinese contribution to his religious perspective is a fundamental matrix of superstition and spiritism common to rural Southeast Asians. The peasant lives in "two different worlds" at the same time--the real and the spirit-filled--and his behavior is conditioned by both.[9] Insurgent

[9]Kenneth P. Landon, Southeast Asia: Crossroads of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 36.

familiarity with this characteristic has been a valuable propaganda resource. Propaganda themes that appeal to traditional and local superstitions are often employed by the Viet-Cong.

Education and Morality. The traditional Chinese system of rule by scholars--mandarinism--left a residue that lingers today in the profound respect for learning among rural Vietnamese. In the Confucian tradition learning implies propriety and moral uprightness, as well as factual knowledge. There is a steady demand for schools and most peasants hope their children will get more education than they received themselves. Despite the prevalence of corruption at all levels, there is still a popular expectation of justice and morality as the pattern of behavior for government officials. As in China, the insurgents in Vietnam have appealed to the Confucian tenets of ethical rule both by their attacks on government corruption and by exemplary communist behavior.

The village as a microcosm. The Vietnamese village, in contrast to western communities, tends to be a little world to itself. It is highly structured in its internal relationships. It has traditionally been a closed society, which one enters by being born or by marriage. One cannot "run away" to another village, because it, too, is its own microcosm, and the stranger is strictly an outsider.[10] Thus maintaining one's self in the

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[10]Nguyen Dinh Hoa, Verbal and Non-verbal Patterns of Respect-Behavior in Vietnamese Society: Some Metalinguistic Data (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1957), p. 230.

good graces of his community and his family, is a strong motivation for the peasant. The influence of the village community on its individual members can, therefore, play a vital role in the motivation and control methods of insurgency and pacification.

For centuries the village confronted outside authority as an organic social unit, rather than a collection of individuals. An old Vietnamese saying notes that "the emperor's authority stops at the village gate." Imperial administrators levied taxes and troop requirements from villages as whole political units, leaving the village councils to determine which families or individuals would staisfy how much of the levy. Although the solidarity of the village has been shaken by communist and Government political organization in recent decades, most of the civil problems among village citizens are settled without recourse to higher authority. The village police chief still adjudicates, on an informal basis, the vast majority of civil disputes.

The foregoing portrayal of traditional Vietnamese village attitudes should be examined with the understanding that the tremendous new social forces arising from the war and modernization, are reshaping the peasant's viewpoint. Refugee relocations have particularly affected many families. But the traditional elements of the average peasant's world-view and his concerns for living are demonstrated in the current activities of village life which remain in many ways the same as centuries ago. The rural community is in transition.

Another fundamental problem common to Vietnamese peasants is physical security--for the safety of life and limb. This drive for preservation of self and family takes precedence over all other concerns, and determines, to a great extent, the nature of the peasant's response to both sides of the conflict. As the fighting in village areas has escalated, the search for survival has consistently shown its priority over political and other values. Generally, the peasant will support or oppose one side or the other as the situation requires in order to survive.

III. THE ROLE OF FOREIGN PENETRATION

China. Foreign influence on Vietnamese rural society is nothing new. A thousand years of Chinese rule profoundly influenced (as noted in the categories above) the shape of Vietnamese institutions. The Chinese dominance over Vietnam helped foster a permanent dislike for foreign rule and a distrust of the Chinese. Vietnamese nationalism has a rich collection of legendary heroism against Chinese and Mongol oppression. This early national heroism, is, in fact, the historic keystone of a strong insurgent tradition further developed against the French.[11]

The French presence. The French introduced the cultural stimuli of western religion, education, and administration.

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[11]The reader will find Joseph Buttinger's The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1958), a useful historical source for the Vietnamese-Chinese experience.

With an ambivalence similar to their attitude towards the Chinese, the Vietnamese accepted the new ideas (among most of the educated class), while rejecting French rule. Thereby they enriched their anti-colonial arsenal with the revolutionary ideas of the West.

French colonial administration suffered from perpetual changes and poor quality French officials.[12] The behavior of French officials had a negative impact on the high Confucian expectations of the peasants. Donald Lancaster notes:

> The failure of the administrative service to maintain French moral prestige. . . in distant and inaccessible provinces must be considered a contributary cause of the widespread discontent with French rule, which was to culminate in the uprising of August, 1945. . . .[13]

In the nineteenth century, the French undermined the mandarin administration by using it as a tool and by blocking Vietnamese attempts to reform the system.[14] The old colonial technique of fomenting rivalries among different regions and political factions was widely practiced by the French. The tragic consequences of the policy are evident in the residue of splintered, suspicious, and conspiratorial nationalist groups in the South today.[15]

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[12]Bernard B. Fall, The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 31.

[13]Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indo-China (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 64.

[14]Ibid., p. 77.

[15]Ibid.

The French recruited Vietnamese as low level fonctionnaires to do the paperwork of administration and thereby bequeathed a heavy burden of that clerical mentality to the Diem government. For want of more qualified people, Diem appointed many former fonctionnaires to executive positions demanding decisiveness and initiative. The result is clear to those who are familiar with the endemic government red tape, delays, and avoidance of decisionmaking. The fonctionnaire's psychic and vocational security rests in the safety of precedent, procedure, and routine--an orientation towards: "preparing papers for others' signatures, (to) forwarding dossiers to other offices for consideration, and (to) putting their date stamp on the administrative mail."[16]

Among the less culturally structured Delta communities, an outlet for the nationalism of the Vietnamese during the pre-World War II period was created through use of religious and quasi-political structures. The formation of two religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, after World War I, attracted substantial mass support and considerable influence over local political thought. The Cao Dai is an imaginative, if at times grotesque, amalgamation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Catholicism (and every other major religion but Islam) claiming approximately a million adherents, principally in the Delta.

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[16]Nguyen Thai, Is South Vietnam Viable? (Manila, Philippines, November, 1962), p. 54.

The Hoa Hao is closer to a revised form of Buddhism, with a strong spiritualist flavoring.[17] Both groups have considerable strength in certain Delta provinces, and are now being armed and encouraged politically by the Government since the demise of Diem, who had subdued and disarmed them. Their sectarian and social cohesion apparently makes these groups less susceptible to communist (and other) influences.

The Catholic presence in Vietnam is a religious contribution sustained by France but initiated by Portugal. Now a nationwide religion with three centuries of Vietnamese tradition, its influence is well beyond its statistical share of the population. Many key officials in the army and among the educated class are Catholic. There is a long history of persecution between the Catholics and other previously established religions. Inherited resentments on both sides are factors in current conflicts in the South, and also played a major role in the fall of Diem.[18]

The Viet-Minh. In the conflict with the French after World War II, the nationalists were caught between the communist

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[17] A brief analysis of these two indigenous Vietnamese faiths is available in Vittorio Lanternari (tr. by Lisa Sergio), The Religions of the Oppressed (New York: New American Library, Mentor, 1963), pp. 216-221.

[18] A lucid analysis of the historical roots of current revolutionary thrusts in Vietnam, including early religious conflicts, is available in George A. Carver, Jr., "The Real Revolution in South Vietnam," Foreign Affairs, April, 1965, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, pp. 387-408.

control of the united revolutionary effort in the form of the Viet-Minh and the French efforts to wipe out even the less volatile nationalist elements. Mass arrests of Vietnamese nationalists by the Viet-Minh occurred in 1946 when the constitution for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was established. Thousands of non-communist leaders were "reformed" or exterminated.[19] Until the Geneva Accords there was no effective focus of non-communist nationalism, and the Viet-Cong inherited, after Geneva, much of the popular support and sympathies previously attached to the Viet-Minh in the South. Non-communists had been an important part of the Viet-Minh forces.

IV. SOUTH VIETNAM AFTER GENEVA

The Regime of Ngo Dinh Diem: Controlled Revolution

When Ngo Dinh Diem came to power in 1954 he established a governmental and political apparatus in the midst of an array of enemies, including the religious sects, many French-oriented army officers, and the numerous nationalist elements that had surfaced after the transfer of power from the French.

The vacuum of power left by the absence of the French and the withdrawal of Viet-Minh from their areas of control, was not easily filled by Diem, who had no political apparatus

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[19] Bernard B. Fall, Political Development of Vietnam, V-J Day to the Geneva Cease-Fire (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1955), p. 26.

he could count on for control. Saigon tea houses were full of intellectual attentistes (political fence-sitters) who had grown in numbers as the outcome of the previous war had become more clouded.[20]

Diem surprised many in his victories over the various dissident sects, and his government went to work in the previously Viet-Minh areas to root out the remnants of communist influence (to be discussed in Chapter IV). His American advisors were pleased at his successes--which had been accomplished in close association with Col. Edward G. Lansdale, who had worked with Magsaysay in the Philippines. With American help, nearly a million refugees had been moved from the North and were being resettled. Diem had discarded the authority of Bao Dai through a nationwide election in 1955, which led to the proclamation of the Republic of Vietnam, with Diem as President. Diem received an overwhelming (and undoubtedly rigged) majority of more than 97 per cent.

After the establishment of his power, Diem had, by 1956, turned to a massive effort at nation-building--which he wanted to accomplish through a total revolution in the Vietnamese society.

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[20]Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 67. Chapters IV and V provide a responsible survey of events in the Diem regime, particularly as related to the insurgent conflict. Another journalist well acquainted with the subject is Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964). The most complete study of the Diem government is by Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1964).

Personalism--a philosophical system including elemetns from Confucian, Catholic, Marxist, and other traditions--was the philosophic touchstone from which a revolutionary elan and concrete programs would hopefully emerge.[21]

Vietnamese personalism (Nhan Vi) was based on the personalist ideas of Emmanuel Mounier, a French Catholic philosopher. Ngo Dinh Nhu, the French educated brother of Diem, attempted to blend the ideas with Confucian thought for application in Vietnam. The doctrine stresses the dignity and worth of the individual and the obligation of the state to develop the person to his fullest powers. Political affairs would be run by a highly qualified elite thoroughly schooled in personalist doctrines. Personalism is considered by Vietnamese and western students to be a confusing amalgam of traditions, neither understood nor practiced outside the Ngo family. Functioning as Diem's political alter-ego, Ngo Dinh Nhu increased his own role in government steadily after 1956. Nhu developed and largely controlled the mass political organizations of the regime.[22]

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[21]An analysis of Personalism may be found in John Donnell, "Personalism in Vietnam" in Fishel, Problems of Freedom, op. cit., Chapter III. The most thorough discussion of Personalism and politics under Diem is Donnell's Ph. D. dissertation, "Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority and Conflict" (University of California at Berkeley, 1964).

[22]The relation of Nhu and Diem cannot be discussed in detail here--although Nhu's role in pacification will be included in later chapters. Interviews with numerous sources unanimously confirmed the view that his influence over Diem, through his control of information reaching the Palace and the political apparatus of the regime, was critically important in the execution of policies that led to the fall of the regime.

As a nation-builder, Diem was a man in a hurry. He knew he had to be. He was an idealist with enormous revolutionary ambitions for the transformation of his country. But he was also aware of the older revolutionary intentions of the communist regime to the North.

When the insurgency was renewed after a period of comparative quiescence, 1954-1957, the government's nation-building effort was placed under increasing pressure. The race was on for the loyalty and control of whole communities in the rural areas and the communists had a headstart. Some of the problems faced by Diem in this titanic political contest were inherited; others were created by the regime itself. Both types of problems will be discussed in subsequent chapters as they pertain to pacification.

As a pattern, the movements of the regime were towards ever-enlarging programs, demanding more and more time from peasants and officials, but achieving little in the way of security or prosperity. There was much talk of revolution, democracy, and the dignity of man, but the behavior of the regime towards the citizenry, and particularly minority political leaders, was often the opposite of the edifying words.

While the communists whittled at government influence over the people through its techniques of terror and assassination, the government's apparatus itself was beginning to face away from the people and towards the Palace and its ambitious demands for realization of its personalist programs. Loyalty to the

regime became an obsession which negated the possibility of creative dissent. A "loyal opposition" became a contradiction in terms. Intellecutals, businessmen, and peasants were alienated from the administration and its demanding ideological idiosyncracies. Sycophants in the government learned to report the accomplishment of programs planned but never completed. Presidential trips to the countryside were elaborately staged to give the showcase effect of successful efforts. A demoralized civil service endured promotions based on political loyalty and religious affiliation. Corruption increased as morals in the civil service decreased. The objective of local officials became control of the population, not genuine popular support from it. Although the Viet-Cong hammered at the regime as an American puppet, Diem's isolation from American advisory influence also widened. Nhu's pathological distrust of the United States created a formal charade out of cooperation which further frustrated key advisors.[23]

As the Viet-Cong pressed to isolate the government from the populace, the ironic self-isolation of the Ngo regime hit its maximum in the Buddhist crisis and subsequent coup of 1963. Along with the communists, and by using similar means, the Ngo regime had tried to control a revolution that neither it nor the

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[23]At least one top advisor felt he was in rapport with Nhu, but a highly placed American (Source Number 42) told the writer that, as Nhu's influence over Diem increased, each American Palace intimate was elbowed out. Nhu, he related, "would play the game only if it was his game."

communists had entirely spawned. Behind the militant response of the Vietnamese people in favor of the suppressed Buddhist demonstrators were political and personal aspirations and resentments reaching above religious affiliation, and covering every class and creed.[24]

After Ngo Dinh Diem: The Uncontrolled Revolution

The administrative failures of the Diem regime were repeated and even made worse after the coup of 1963. The destruction of Diem's system of political control was followed by rapidly shifting political alliances among military officers and civilians. These changes further demoralized the civil servants. There were few political elites and these had almost no following--apart from the sects. Vietnam has since been governed by various elements of the evolving military officer class which has been forced to be responsive to the newly emerging pressure groups.

But a political and social revolution is underway in Vietnam. It is not controlled by the communists although they have sought to exploit it. It is rooted in a desire for political expression that may reach deep into Vietnamese tradition. The

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[24]The extremity of Diem's isolation ((or perhaps his hypocrisy), both from the people and from the harshness in his own regime, is demonstrated in his front page statement in the Times of Vietnam just three days before his assassination: "South Vietnam is the only country of the Third World that sincerely and effectively endeavors to maintain a truly open society." (October 28, 1963).

current Vietnamese revolution has brought new names to the top in the military forces. It has thrust forward whole new publics: students, Buddhists, and Catholics. Older nationalist parties, like the VNQDD (Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang) and Dai Viets, have been revived. The sects are openly active again. All of these forces may be working toward an eventual political balance that can bring stability to the country or their inter-nacine warfare may destroy any hope for a viable political system. Carver puts it this way:

> ". . . if South Vietnam's real revolution does not destroy the country first, over the longer term it may prove the eventual undoing of Communist ambitions and produce a real national entity where none has heretofore existed."25

The "real revolution" in Vietnam has shown its power and its frightful lack of cohesion and direction. The Ngo regime failed to shape it for its own ends and it has been impressively immune, for the most part, to the overtures by the communists to control it. It is a "real revolution" in contrast to the artificially stimulated and controlled revolutions of Diem and the communists.

In sum, the context of South Vietnam's insurgency is steadily, perhaps radically, changing. The massive inputs of the insurgents and the government and its allies are reshaping the atmosphere of the conflict. For better or worse, South Vietnam will never be the same again, and it behooves the student

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[25]Carver, op. cit., p. 408. The grave social crisis is further described by Charles Mohr, "Saigon Social Ills Worry U.S. Aides," New York Times, February 21, 1966, p. 1.

of counterinsurgency to review the operational context of his programs, and those of his enemy, with an eye for significant social and political change.

The traditional factors of the social situation must also be considered. Despite all the impact on the Vietnamese peasant, there is a persistence of the traditional culture that mystifies the modern mind. The successful counterinsurgent, like the effective insurgent, must consider the peasant from the dual perspectives of his persistent traditional values and the fresh inputs of the modern world.

CHAPTER III

THE RURAL STRATEGY OF THE VIET-CONG

Historic and Organic Continuity

From the communist point of view, the Geneva Conference was merely a resort to diplomatic and political means for reaching the communist objective: the unity and control of Vietnam and the building of a communist society. The failure of these means has led to another chapter in the older conflict, with new opponents and a smaller theater of action (the home base in the North having been "legitimized" at Geneva). The desire for a united Vietnam is not unique to the communists. All nationalist groups have sought unity in the name of Vietnamese nationalism and for sound economic reasons. The rich ricelands of the Mekong Delta have traditionally supplied the industrialized North in a balanced and mutually advantageous exchange of products.

As has been mentioned previously, the rebirth of the communist insurgency benefitted from its popular association with the broadly nationalist image of the Viet-Minh as the liberating force from French imperialism. This historic continuity blessed the Viet-Cong with a fertile field for recruitment and other support in the South. The Second Indo-China War (as Bernard Fall calls it) began with the Geneva truce that ended the first conflict and permitted thousands of political cadres and soldiers

to go North for the elaborate training with which they would return to subvert the South.

This organic tie with the Viet-Minh tradition and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has also provided considerable revolutionary expertise for the southern conflict. The accomplishment of the Chinese in their own rural-based insurgency was passed to the Viet-Minh to great advantage after the fall of Chiang Kai Shek.[1] Vo Nguyen Giap's concept of the "people's army" is straight from the Chinese experience, stressing the party's political indoctrination and control of the army and the army's oath to respect, help, and defend the people.[2]

The formation of the National Liberation Front in December, 1960 as the precursor to a provisional government was an effort to assume the broadly nationalist image enjoyed by the Viet-Minh, in order to gain more ready acceptance among the peasants. The Front has hinted at a possible neutralist position, independent of the North, in order to gain the support of other nationalist elements in the South. The tactic has failed, however, to attract leading political personalities from non-communist parties.

The objective of the communist revolution in North

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[1]The sophistication of the Chinese advisory input may be seen in the reproduction of a secret manual for Chinese advisors to the Viet-Minh in Allan B. Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History 1945-1955 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell, 1956), pp. 127 ff.

[2]Giap Vo Nguyen, People's War People's Army (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 55-56.

Vietnam are clear to knowledgeable southerners and the thousands of refugees who fled from the North. There the communists have executed a comprehensive change in almost every aspect of urban and rural life in a manner similar to the revolution in communist China. However, the program of the National Liberation Front publicizes more moderate objectives designed to appeal to peasants and other nationalist parties, even though its ultimate designs are identical to the communist North. The aims of the Front will be further discussed below as propaganda themes.

The General Strategy in South Vietnam

Like a disease, the revolutionary organism invades the body politic at the points of least resistance--in the peripheral or isolated communities less subject to government control. By the destruction of the government presence and the substitution of the Viet-Cong's control in one village after another, the area expands towards the centers of government power.

The initial communist bases were established where the Viet-Minh had actually ruled as a government before Geneva--in the coastal provinces of Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, and Quang Nam (known earlier as Interzone 5), jungle areas north of Saigon, and parts of the Delta. Young men who had gone to the North from these areas returned and recruited others. (See Figure 2).

The intensity and type of Viet-Cong local efforts have varied with the area. One could create a scale of intensity to indicate the wide range--in time and tactics--applied to various provinces, or within a province or even a single district. In

Viet-Cong Regular Forces*

1963	24,000
1964	34,000
1965	73,000

*In addition, irregulars are usually estimated at from two to three times the number of regular forces. Sources: 1963: Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Vietnam and Southeast Asia, 88th Congress 1st Session (Washington, 1963); 1964: Wesley Fishel, "The Eleventh Hour in Vietnam," Asian Survey, Vol. V (February, 1965) pp. 98-107; 1965: U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, The Vietnam Conflict: The Substance and the Shadow, 87th Congress 2nd Session (Washington, 1966).

Viet-Cong Terror Activity*

	1963	1964
Local officials killed	515	436
Other civilians killed	1,558	1,350
Kidnappings	7,262	9,531

*Sources: 1963: Republic of Vietnam, Communist Against the Republic of Vietnam (Saigon, July, 1964); 1964: U.S. Department of State, Aggression from the North: The Record of North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam (February, 1965).

Figure 2

some provinces--such as Ninh Thuan and Tuyen Duc--Viet-Cong activity has been limited to propaganda efforts, agent systems, and occasional attacks on peripheral hamlets. In the Delta, provinces such as An Xuyen are Viet-Cong occupied areas, some parts of which have never been penetrated by government forces. In provinces such as Quang Nam (Central Vietnam), the political and propaganda activities continued at a steady but low level until 1964. Then the operations were escalated towards larger unit actions, increased terror, and continuing communist control of many villages. In some contested regions there is "shift-control." The government rules by day and the Viet-Cong by night.

Propaganda and Program Themes

One of the major propaganda themes is the appeal to oust the Americans, in the name of Vietnamese nationalism. The Americans have been made the symbols of foreign imperialism in place of the departed French. Americans have become the prime political and military target rather than the Government of Vietnam, and efforts have been made to alienate official Vietnamese and the populace from the Americans. South Vietnamese troop fatalities at Viet-Cong hands have been advertised as American deaths.[3] A Vietnamese term to describe the Diem regime, "My-Diem," meaning "U.S.-Diem" (later U.S.-Khanh), has been so widely used that

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[3]David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 88.

innocent peasants have addressed government officials in this manner.[4] There are standard appeals to Vietnamese cadres and Armed Forces personnel to refuse to fight "for the Americans."[5]

The communists focus regularly on local issues of direct concern to the village. Provincial interests are singled out for emphasis at that level. Land reform is a standard local issue in many provinces and is often carried out as soon as the Viet-Cong have the power to execute it. The Viet-Cong give exacting attention to the dynamics of a local situation that may give them a special leverage. In a Delta village, for instance, lasting appreciation was won by the Viet-Cong for straightening a path that had forced villagers to walk a long way around an obstinate landowner's field.[6] Noticeably missing from the Viet-Cong appeal is the communist call for denunciation of families, pooling of land ownership, attacks on religion, and similar communist revolutionary themes widesly purveyed in the North as a part of the complete communist revolution. The Viet-Cong woos the peasant in terms of what the peasant already wants, hates, and fears.

A typical summary of Viet-Cong propaganda themes was

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[4]Scigliano, op. cit., p. 158.

[5]AID province report, Khanh Hoa, 3 May 1965.

[6]John Mecklin, Mission in Torment: An Intimate Account of the US Role in Vietnam (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), p. 87.

reported in Phong Dinh province as follows:

> 1) Tell the United States to withdraw from South Vietnam, 2) Resist the Government draft call, 3) Request that the bombings of North Vietnam be stopped, 4) Demand negotiations between the Government of South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front to terminate the war, 5) Stop the use of artillery in rural areas.7

These five themes epitomize the appeal to anti-foreign nationalism, national unity, and the very real local problem of war weariness. Notably they omit the less popular communist dogmas mentioned above.

Viet-Cong Pacification: Destruction of the Government Presence

Despite the rising emphasis on American targets, the heart of the communist effort has continued to be a two-fold political drive against the Republic of Vietnam: 1) the isolation and destruction of the government presence and influence in the villages, and 2) the substitution of the National Liberation Front as the local operating government.

In essence, the Viet-Cong strategy itself is a type of pacification of the rural areas. The initial phase of destruction of the government position assumes many forms, including efforts to suggest the relative superiority of Viet-Cong strength. Here follow a few of the techniques.

Symbolic victories. Careful selection of targets is made among Government posts or units, resulting in an impressive

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[7] AID province report, Phong Dinh, 30 June 1965.

Viet-Cong victory. It may not change the Government capability, but it often changes the peasant's confidence in the protective capability of the government forces.

Sabotage. Damage or destruction of all symbols of the Government's presence is widely carried out. Roads, railroads, schools, health facilities, and village headquarters are favorite targets.

Assassination, kidnapping, threats. Perhaps the most lethal blows to the Government presence are the perpetual murders and kidnapping of its field representatives: village officials, school teachers, pacification cadres, health workers, agricultural agents, etc. (See Figure 2, page 30, for statistics). Kidnappings also effectively remove officials, many of whom are never released. Threats against local leaders have prompted many resignations and attempts to leave government service.

Neutralization. The response of many civil servants to the intimidations and terrorism cannot usually be measured. It often amounts to a form of neutralization. Officials may go into the countryside less and less. Or they may manage to be inconspicuous by not doing well at their work, and not seeing all they should notice as officials. The Viet-Cong tend to kill the outstanding leader and the most rotten--the former because he makes the Government look good and the latter because killing him appeals to popular feelings. The official who performs in

a mediocre manner is safest. His slowdown in response to intimidation may be unconscious. Or this accommodation may be a tacit "gentleman's agreement" between the official and the Viet-Cong to leave each other alone.[8]

Overloading Government apparatus. A relatively recent alleged Viet-Cong technique is the use of dislocated peoples to burden the Government with their care. The refugees often return after military operations have ended in their villages and may carry with them an image of poor government performance if their care as refugees has been inadequate.

Economic strangulation. In the Delta and other areas the Viet-Cong have demonstrated the Government's inability to control the flow of rice and other commodities to markets. Despite the tradition of rice surplus in Vietnam, thousands of tons must now be imported to serve some needy areas.

Disengagement of the populace. By the multiple means described above, the communists are able to drive a wedge between the rural citizen and his government. The citizen becomes convinced he cannot be protected by government forces. He may be warned by the Viet-Cong against repaying his loan to the government farm credit system, thereby erasing his chance to borrow from this source

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[8]Halberstam, op. cit., p. 114.

again.[9] Candidates for province councils were discouraged by the Viet-Cong from standing for election in 1965--a direct act intended to disengage and neutralize the local leader from his government.[10] Defectors have reported that they were forced to quit government local security forces and join the Viet-Cong because of terrorist threats against their families.[11]

The methods are varied, but the result is the same: the annihilation of the Government presence through destroying the image of its capability in the minds of the peasants and by effecting a paralysis or withdrawal of its apparatus in the rural areas. With this destruction accomplished, the way is paved for the second phase: the substitution of Viet-Cong administration.

Viet-Cong Pacification: Substitution by the Insurgent Government

Viet-Cong pacification programs are rooted in the Viet-Minh experience against the French in the Red River Delta. Villages in that area had been protected for centuries against animal predators and pirates.[12] These communities were further fortified against the French by the addition of tunnels, trenches, and retreat systems, and by the organization, training, and arming of

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[9] Hickey, op. cit., p. 177.

[10] From various AID province reports, 1965.

[11] Washington Post, 27 December 1965, p. A8.

[12] George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare: The Vietminh in Indochina (New York: Praeger, 1961), pp. 92-93.

village volunteers. The Viet-Cong have been developing many such fortified villages in the South since the recurrence of the insurgency after Geneva.

The fortifications of a rural community are only the physical symbols of communist influence over the people. To achieve community control, the Viet-Cong engage in a carefully planned campaign among the people, involving propaganda, community organization, and intimidation, if not terror.

The wooing of XB village. The following is an outline of the steps normally taken to move a village to the communist side. It is based on an actual village in Kien Phong province described in a captured Viet-Cong document and referred to below as village "XB."[13] The first Viet-Cong efforts met with failure, death, and capture of cadres by government troops. The cadres regrouped and began to work more carefully. They focussed on land reform,distributing land owned by absentee landlords to those cultivating it and forcing resident landlords to reduce rents. The cadres eliminated the influence of recalcitrant village elders and "security agents" of the Government by fomenting popular resentments against them. The people were coached to express their feelings, especially hatreds, in public meetings.

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[13]"XB" Village is the subject of an English translation of a captured Viet-Cong study issued by the United States Information Service in Saigon, entitled "When the Communists Come" (Saigon: USIS, July 1962), mimeographed. Denis Warner, op. cit., describes XB Village as the subject of Chapter VIII.

Psychological "liberation" from the landlords and the "oppression" of the "My-Diem" government were the beginning for the enlistment of the populace as a whole in the cause of a better life for the village.

Mass organizations for all ages were formed: "Lao Dong Youth," "Liberation Women," and a Farmer's Association. To celebrate their "new freedom," the villagers displayed 600 National Liberation Front flags and argued down government soldiers who objected. At the insistence of the Viet-Cong cadres, village leaders refused to work on government-sponsored projects, and the people would not use government-provided drugs. Instead, the Viet-Cong cadres opened a health station in the village.

A further step was taken by laying spiked boards (with sharpened ends pointing upwards) along pathways as hazards to discourage government soldiers from coming into the village. One soldier was hurt on a board and the troops came less often thereafter. The cadres laid the first boards with the people cautiously imitating them. It became a game, and slogans moved the people to "heroic spiked board laying." Eleven barricades were built and manned by the sub-cells of the Viet-Cong farmers association. Soon farmers were making grenades in a small factory. Everyone was expected to do something. Eventually the whole village was involved with the Viet-Cong.

Careful attention was given by the cadres to maintaining high revolutionary fervor--both among the cadres themselves and

the villagers. Villagers were encouraged to do daring things. Self-criticism meetings were held to keep the people psychologically strong. The cadres developed techniques for keeping mere formal adherence to a program from replacing true enthusiasm. Fighters against the "imperialists" and Diem were recruited. Taxes to support the National Liberation Front were collected. Two schools were built by the people, and Viet-Cong teachers were employed.

All this activity took place in an area very close to Vietnamese government forces. Although the ineffective and erratic effort of the government to control the situation aided the Viet-Cong cadres, the capability of the communists to motivate and manage a rural community is clearly demonstrated.

In Chuong Thien province in the Delta, Viet-Cong pacification efforts have apparently shown progressive social and economic results. The following is a counterinsurgent perspective of the Viet-Cong effort. It is a report by the United States Operations Mission (USOM) Province Representative:

> Long held beliefs that the VC pacification program exists have been validated. They are developing "combat hamlets" vs. our "new life hamlets". The basic differences are that the VC hamlets are well organized,clean, economically self supporting and have an active defense system. For example, a cottage industry in one hamlet was as large as has been previously witnessed anywhere in Chuong Thien province. New canals are being dug and pineapples are under cultivation. The VC also have a relocation program for younger families. These areas coincide with the areas just outside the planned GVN sphere of interest. Unless the USOM/GVN activities exhibit a more qualitative basis, there is little likelihood of changing the present

> attitudes of the people. For example, in one area only five kilometers from the province capital, the people refused medical assistance offered by ARVN medics.14

Communist Highlander Programs

The Viet-Cong have long given attention to highland tribes, some of their programs carrying over from the days of the Viet-Minh. In contrast to the absence of an adequate government program, Viet-Cong agents have learned bizarre languages, pierced their ears, and married Highlander women to become close to the tribes. Select young men are sent North for training as cadres. By the fall of 1962, a contest for control of the Bru tribe had developed. Many Bru had come for protection to the government centers in Quang Tri province. Other hamlets vanished overnight--induced by the Viet-Cong to move deeper into the jungle or into Laos.[15]

The xenophobic Katu tribe, located in Quang Nam province, had long enjoyed common cause with the Viet-Minh against the French, who had tried to control the tribe prior to World War II by engaging in military expeditions against them. Several thousand Katu were systematically relocated by the Viet-Cong in the jungles beyond the reach of government cadres after 1957. A Michigan State University field study unit made contact with a Katu village in 1957, but the Highlanders' fear of Viet-Cong

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[14]AID province report, Chuong Thien, March, 1965.

[15]The writer was at that time (1962) involved in programs of assistance to the Bru tribe.

punishment prevented their acceptance of gifts of rice from an accompanying missionary even though they appeared to be starving.[16]

One of the chief appeals by the Viet-Cong to the more advanced tribes is their offer of an autonomous tribal zone for Highlanders, independent of Vietnamese internal administration (previously noted in Chapter II). Communist policy has always given considerable attention to the relations with tribal minorities.

Trends in Viet-Cong Pacification

Part of the underlying genius of the Viet-Cong success lies in the judicious mixture of persuasion and terror--the alternation of the carrot and the stick. As the power of the Viet-Cong has increased, there appears to be a similar rise in violence and threats of force to obtain their goals. The stick has begun to replace the carrot. In Vinh Binh province, a highly selective policy of terror--directed against particular officials and informers--has been replaced, as communist strength has grown, by wanton destruction of civilian facilities. Terror has been applied to bring in larger numbers of recruits and higher taxes.[17] In Binh Dinh province (Central Vietnam) a Buddhist pagoda was destroyed by the Viet-Cong with a loss of ten lives--the first

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[16]Michigan State University, Vietnam Advisory Group, Preliminary Research Report on the High Plateau and Field Trip Report on the Katu" (Saigon, June 1957). (Mimeographed.) p. 60.

[17]Robert Warne, "Vinh Binh Province" in George K. Tanham, War Without Guns: American Civilians in Rural Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 25.

such attack in the province, and considered by the United States Operation Mission Representative to be a serious Viet-Cong error.[18] There are two causes for the more massive use of terror by the Viet-Cong. First, the increased size of the insurgent military apparatus has necessitated much higher taxes and larger numbers of men to keep it functioning. Terror is the only way to meet these enlarged requirements. Secondly, the great power of the Viet-Cong and its seeming nearness to victory may cause it to relax its self-control with regard to the populace.

In Quang Tri, on the border with North Vietnam, a similar pattern of Viet-Cong extremism appears to have created popular resentments. The USOM Representative reported on the popular attitude towards the Viet-Cong:

> The people for the most part are anxious to be given the opportunity to openly side with the Government. There are indications of increased fear of and disgust with the VC, who have abandoned many of their programs to win the hearts and minds of the people and who are concentrating on killing or neutralizing GVN troops, terrorizing the countryside, stealing food and money, trying to cut GVN supply routes and trying to keep VC supply routes open.[19]

James Cross has noted that communist insurgency everywhere has tended towards reliance on more terror and coercion as its position matures.[20] Referring to popular response to terror in

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[18] AID province report, Binh Dinh, December 1964.

[19] AID province report, Quang Tri, 30 June 1965.

[20] James E. Cross, Conflict in the Shadows: The Nature and Politics of Guerrilla War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 94.

South Vietnam, he cautions, however, that "the people will continue to support the guerrillas because they have no alternative unless and until the government is able to protect them from guerrilla depredations and punishments."[21] Such popular resentments against the Viet-Cong are worthless to the counterinsurgent, however, if he cannot extend a viable option (i.e. government protection) to which the resentful peasant can repair.

As the communist build up in South Vietnam continued in early 1966, there were signs that they were determined to meet the concomitant American increase and to press the villages for more men, food, and funds to fight the war. Communist China may have suggested a course different from the Viet-Cong policy of escalation. RAND experts, D.P. Mozingo and T.W. Robinson, interpreted the remarks of Chinese Defense Minister Lin Piao as suggesting abandonment of terror, forced conscription, confiscation, and assassination and a move toward "multi-class" united front tactics against the Americans as the Chinese had done against the Japanese. The Chinese think the Viet-Cong should shift to defensive and small-scale warfare in the face of superior American military capability. The Chinese recommend more Vietnamese patience in wearing the Americans down while keeping the populace on the side of the communists.[22]

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[21] Ibid., p. 39.

[22] Washington Post, 27 January 1966, p. A19.

Whatever the future may bring, at this writing the communist system of support and control within South Vietnamese rural areas appears to be well entrenched and a long way from disestablishment. At the moment the Viet-Cong seem able to afford their excesses. Only a highly imaginative and comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign, with nearly perfect execution and with substantial military support, would be capable of dislogding such a powerful and extensive insurgent apparatus.