

A STUDY

**PROSPECTS FOR THE
VIET CONG**

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I. OVERVIEW: THE ORGANIZATIONAL WEAPON

The single most important thing about the struggle in Vietnam is its complexity. It defies simplification. The struggle is part military and part psycho-political. Its battleground, chiefly, is the nation's 2,561 villages where live 80 percent of the people. The village is the heart of Vietnam.

The war -- generally called revolutionary guerrilla warfare -- has not varied greatly except in complexity from the internal wars which communists have waged elsewhere. Its basic characteristics are these: specialized military action, psychological in intent; use of the united front organization to establish a mass base of support; and heavy use of psychological warfare to foment social strife. It is part of the class struggle which is the essence of Marxism-Leninism. Its objective is to seize power. Although the communists across the world assert their love for peace, there is no inconsistency in their minds when war is used as a weapon of social change. To the communist what is taking place in Vietnam is a war of liberation or a "just war", and communists not only can, but are obliged, to support it. The communists now claim in Radio Liberation broadcasts, that the nature of the war in Vietnam has changed from what they call a "Special War" to what they now refer to as a "Limited War." It is true that in some respects the war here is coming to resemble a conventional small-scale war, such as the Korean War. This is perhaps most true with respect to the fighting along the demilitarized zone of the 17th Parallel, the scene of increasing activity; and least true with respect to fighting in the Mekong Delta.

Just as the essence of the communist success over the Nationalists in China was strategy, and just as the essence of the Viet Minh success over the French was spirit, so the essence of such successes as the communists have achieved in Vietnam to date is organization. Beginning early and working hard, their cadres organized the people of rural Vietnam into a series of tight, self-contained, almost totally isolated socio-political organizations called "liberation associations." There always are at least six, and sometimes as many as twenty such quasi-political parties, social movements, and similar groups operating openly in communist-controlled villages, or covertly, although of course to a lesser degree, in the contested or GVN-controlled villages. The organizers made clever use of the traditional village structure as well as the family-clan relationships which are all important in Vietnam.

This struggle from the start has had clear objectives as far as the NLF and the DRV are concerned. The intermediate objectives of the two, although differing, were parallel and mutually self-supporting; the ultimate objectives of both were the same. The goal of the NLF was political power -- all political power if possible or, if that were not feasible, some political power. The goal of the DRV was unification of North and South Vietnam into one communist state, which also was the ultimate goal of the NLF leaders. Both had short-range goals: destruction of the GVN as a viable government and elimination of all American and other non-communist presence and influences in South Vietnam.

From a doctrinal standpoint the communist theoreticians in the NLF

considered that three strategies were open to them. They were:

1. The Khoi Nghia or General Uprising. This was a social myth -- in the Sorelian sense -- probably traceable to the communist myth of the General Strike. Through creation of social pathology or simple anarchy in the Vietnamese countryside, by selective terror, by low-grade guerrilla warfare, by motivating the villagers through a well organized struggle movement, the revolutionary consciousness of the villagers would be developed until that golden morning when all the villages of the country would unite in a general uprising. The people would seize power.

2. The famed three-stage revolutionary guerrilla war of China's Mao Tse Tung and North Vietnam's Vo Nguyen Giap. Essentially, it is guerrilla activities in a revolutionary context, leading to full civil war involving more or less regular military units and culminating with a general offensive military campaign. It is basically a military route, aided by political devices, including Khoi Nghia.

3. The coalition government thesis. This was espoused by a small minority in the NLF in the earlier days. It involves organization of a political base, usually a united front, which then drives for political power by means of judicious low-grade guerrilla warfare, plus some Khoi Nghia activity, but chiefly by means of great diplomatic pressures abroad. The goal is to generate both internal and external pressures on

the indigenous government to permit insurgent participation in that government. Once this has been achieved, by seepage, infiltration and superior organizational work, control of the government gradually is assumed. Those in the NLF who advocated this route argued that it obviated American military intervention and argued further that if there were sufficient diplomatic pressure on the Americans they could be forced out of Vietnam. These theoreticians maintained as their model the Dutch departure from Indonesia after World War II; the Dutch, they maintained, were pushed out by the United Nations and other diplomatic pressures, thus obviating the necessity of fighting a war. The coalition government thesis, which is not the same as a "political settlement", essentially is diplomatic rather than political.

In the early years of the struggle, 1958 to the end of 1963, the Khoi Nghia thesis dominated. Emphasis gradually swung from it to the three-stage revolutionary guerrilla war thesis which remains dominant at this writing. The coalition government thesis has never been tested.

With respect to tactics, within this strategic framework, the communists have pursued a three-fold set, all taken directly from the Viet Minh war. This three-pronged attack consists of political, military, and military proselyting efforts. They in turn rest on the communist bed-rock: their organizational structure in the villages.

II. THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST AND HIS DOCTRINE

The sense of countless public pronouncements by the communists as well as innumerable captured internal documents provide this communist assessment of their position, beginning in 1964:

ASSESSMENT AS OF:	The year 1965 would be:	The year 1966 would be:	The year 1967 would be:	The year 1968 would be:
Fall 1964	Year of victory	---	---	
Mid-1965	---	Year of consolidation	Year of general offensive	Year of victory
Late 1966	---	---	Year of consolidation	Year of consolidation

When the Year of Victory?

Let us briefly look at the judgements for the last two years.

Assessment in late 1964: The communist leadership in late 1964 believed that the viability of the GVN had been almost totally destroyed by the political turbulence in Saigon and the repeated coups d'etat; that ARVN military reserves were about exhausted; that the Americans quickly were losing heart; and that the collapse of resistance was months if not weeks away. With the exception of the loss of heart by the Americans,

this was not an inaccurate assessment. The fighting had been shifted, under communist orders, from the Mekong Delta where it had been centered for years, to the inhospitable Highlands. Communist battalions were being combined into multi-battalion units and more and more the fighting was taking on the appearance of the Mao-Giap third stage of revolutionary guerrilla war. So confident was it on New Year's Day 1965, that the PRP broadcast on Radio Liberation this greeting:

"During 1965, we will unite the people into one bloc and quickly build our military forces so that 1965 will tip the balance in our favor and bring victory this year."

Plans were made and advanced in early 1965 that almost had a post-war tone to them. Moves were made to link administratively the various "liberated areas" and a number of strictly communist-type social institutions were launched. Radio Liberation in February 1965 proclaimed that:

"A new society is taking shape in the liberated areas, the most salient feature of which is cooperative, mutual-assistance labor and production brigades. This is the people's collective way of making a living." Some two million hectares of land were seized, the communists announced, and either given to landless farmers or turned into communal farming ventures. The social changes were accompanied by confiscation, regimentation and terrorism. Then NVN troops began infiltrating in numbers into the South, many of whom had begun their infiltration training in the North as early as 1964. They were being hastily dispatched in some cases not because they were needed militarily, but because Hanoi wanted

units of loyal and obedient Northerners in the south when the end came. It was taking no chances that guerrilla war victory would lead to separatism, as had happened elsewhere.

The possibility of a communist victory, of course, resulted in the American decision to enter into direct combat in Vietnam. A short time later, with the US (and later, other country) military build-up, the chance of a communist military victory almost immediately began to recede.

Assessment in mid-1965. The initial communist assessment of the American decision was that it had come too late, that the rot was too far gone. By mid-1965 however it was apparent this was indeed wrong and the communists then responded to the US military buildup by starting one of their own. More men were needed and the communists got them from two sources: North Vietnam and the villages of the Mekong Delta. The recruiting -- or more accurately impressment -- of men in the south required strong-arm methods. For one thing, young men were being asked to fight in the Highlands, rather than in their home areas, and Lowland Vietnamese fear the malarial regions of the mountains. For another, there was growing belief by Vietnamese villagers that the NLF could not hope to win against the full might of the United States. A third reason was that the NLF and the communist movement steadily was turning more coercive and losing what voluntary support it had enjoyed in the earlier days. At a great price in terms of alienating the villagers, the communists trebled their numbers in about 18 months.

It was not only men that were needed, however, but also more money, more food, more supplies, more logistical support. Again the NLF turned to the villagers and began increasing the Viet Cong taxes and stepping up sale of the Viet Cong war bonds (both discussed in detail below). Also, increased food production was ordered in the villages controlled by the communists.

This buildup, the leadership realized, would take time. Its assessment in mid and late 1965 was that 1966 would be the year of growing strength and when difficulties in the logistical system would be mastered. The chief task during 1966 was to make up short-comings and rectify errors. There was conservatism in military operations, a refusal to take any great military risks. All things were to be sacrificed for the buildup during 1966. Then 1967 would see the communists take the initiative, launch a general offensive which would deliver victory in 1968. One captured communist document, dated mid-1965 gave this analysis:

"We failed in accurately estimating the increase of US strength and the new enemy plan of attack in the Delta. As a result initiative was lost in the first months of the year (1965). We encountered serious difficulties especially when the enemy attacked in liberated areas... Guerrilla units failed to carry out their tasks. The military proselyting program was slow and was never consolidated. Little attention was given to the matter of force buildup... This seriously affected our military plans and our enlistment appeals... Only in June did the zonal Party committee regain

the initiative and begin to strengthen the rear base, attack the enemy and spread confusion... Leadership did not keep pace with the developing situation. Responsible leaders failed to persevere. There was little coordination between political indoctrination efforts and other efforts. As a vanguard leader we were weak at all echelons, did not operate smoothly, and... there was much confusion."

The PRP Central Committee met in mid-1965, took stock of the situation and issued these terse orders:

"1. Begin a resistance movement for national salvation designed to smash the new American schemes...

"2. Deliver military punches in strategic (enemy) areas and political punches in the cities.

"3. Step up the organization of the resistance movement in the rural areas..."

The DRV, increasingly hurt by the air strikes, sought to raise the tempo of military activity in the south, at once if possible but in any event as soon as feasible. It declared:

"The most effective way to foil the enemy's schemes is to concentrate all the forces in the nation to totally "defeating" the enemy in the south. The annihilation and disorganization of the major main force units of the mercenary and puppet armies in the south are essential for the total defeat of the enemy. If we do this quickly the enemy will not be able to transform his special war into a limited war." But time was outstripping the communists.

Assessment as of late 1966: There are Vietnamese in Saigon who at this writing (early October 1966) believe the communists still plan to make 1967 the year of the general offensive. Some communist pronouncements do appear to continue to cling to the idea, but increasingly it is a hope for a miracle rather than a probability of a reality. Texts of materials broadcast following a meeting of political commissars in the Liberation Army in August indicate that the communists believe 1967 will be a year of continued consolidation, much as was 1966, and that possibly this consolidation effort will continue on into 1968. Cadres at the conference apparently were left with an open-ended proposition, free to assume if they wished that 1969 would be the year of the general offensive and 1970 the year of victory. These dates were not being spelled out however, either in public statements or internal documents. The leadership in fact was silent on the time factor -- except to emphasize the protracted conflict thesis, the idea of a "fifty-year war."

Live Nobly, Die Gloriously

The communists seem uncertain about the type of warfare they now face. At one moment it is labeled, as in the past, a Special War. Then it is declared to be a Limited War. Or then, both, as in this statement from a captured directive:

"The war in South Vietnam has entered a new strategic phase. Before it was a Special War. Now it has shifted to a Limited War. But its true nature remains the same, a war of invasion with the purpose of

launching a new kind of colonialism... Our principal enemy remains the American imperialists and their henchmen. Previously our efforts were centered on attacking the puppet army. Now our objective in combat is both the American troops and the puppet army."

The DRV appears to agree with this definition, but lest combatants in the south think this means a shift of burden, it pointedly noted:

"The enemy's Special War has shifted to a Limited War. The south is now the front line and the north the rear area. Both areas must concentrate their forces on defeating the Americans. We continue with our policy of self-sufficiency in each area. Assistance between areas will be provided only under extreme conditions."

In agitprop and indoctrination classes the communists make great use of the Chinese communist notion about the superiority of human strength over material strength, the "people a spiritual atom bomb" idea. One indoctrination guide told cadres to use this idea in their work:

"The decisive factor in any war is the human factor and the revolutionary spirit of man. It is not weapons, not even the modern war materials which are so frequently and loudly boasted of by the US... Victory will come through ardent patriotism and extreme bravery of our people and army... and sound Party leadership (guided by) proper political and military policy lines... It is the bravery of man not steel and weapons that decides the outcome of war... The people's war is a powerful weapon. Only revolutionary armed forces, using this powerful weapon, bring man's bravery and militancy into full play... live nobly, die gloriously..."

"Equally vital, cadres were quick to add, is the organization weapon:

"The liberation associations and other peoples' organizations are the roots of the revolutionary movement. In the near future attacks will be fiercely launched by the enemy to destroy these organizations. We must firmly resist. We must strengthen the peoples' organizations. We must improve their quality and efficiency..."

"Our policy continues to be a combination of political struggle and military operations, specifically the three fronts: political, military and military proselyting. We will defeat the enemy step by step, win partial success, and then come to a general offensive and the General Uprising..."

"Our present leading concept is to fight a protracted war and to concentrate efforts on winning decisive victories a relatively short time..."

Assessment of the Americans. The communists believe that the nature of the struggle in Vietnam is such that a reciprocal function is at work with respect to military actions by American and Allied forces. The heart of this belief is that the greater the Allied effort, the greater becomes the opposition and hostility to the Allied cause. This leads to what appears to be either an ironic or an absurd statement:

"The longer we fight the stronger we become and the greater the victory we will achieve... The more the American imperialists build up their force and escalate the war, the weaker they become."

Communist assessment of America was indicated by Radio Hanoi,

September 21, 1966, in listing what it regarded as the four major American weaknesses in Vietnam:

1. "The (war) waged by US imperialism in both zones of our country is entirely unjust and illegal.
2. "The US cannot devote all of its strength and money to war in Vietnam because of its role as an international gendarme and because of its preparations for a nuclear war..."
3. "The aggressors... cannot solve their logistical problems... everything must be transported to South Vietnam from the United States and they cannot meet their logistical needs when they step up the tempo of war.
4. "They cannot meet... the (techniques) of a people's war, which is a multiform war in which the enemy... is compelled to deploy his forces everywhere, divide his forces into many parts, each part of which then is encircled..."

Other pronouncements and documents have spelled out the view from Hanoi. Admittedly, said the communists, the Americans have certain advantages:

"The enemy's strong point is his immense war potential, wealth and resources. These have permitted him to carry on a war regardless of cost or disadvantage. But his strength must have a limit. The Americans cannot endure a tough, protracted and guerrilla type war in a tropical country far from home. This is a fundamental weakness of the Americans. It lies in all fields, and includes political, economic and military..."

Based on their own assessment, the communists in Vietnam expect that in 1966-7 the United States "will take these courses of action: continue its pacification efforts...launch military counter-attacks during the dry season with heavy participation by the US and puppet armies, air forces, and navies...continue to rave about its so-called unconditional peace proposal, hoping thus to gain what cannot be gained on the battlefield... increase its psychological warfare activities and deceiving propaganda to undermine the morale of our army...The purpose of the enemy strategy is threefold: 1) To prevent the serious deterioration and crumbling of the puppet army and government; 2) To limit the development of our forces and victories; 3) To create a situation favorable for the settling of the Vietnam conflict by political means."

One of the results of this assessment has been the rigid refusal to consider any sort of negotiations or even preliminary talks aimed at a political settlement of the struggle. The reasons for this hostility toward negotiations per se are difficult to understand. The communist objective since the start of the insurgency has not been military "victory" but seizure of political control. It would seem necessary at some stage to go to the conference table to arrange it. Therefore blanket denunciation of even the idea of talks would seem to be detrimental to communist plans. This is not the same as reluctance to negotiate at any one point in time -- in transferring the struggle from the battlefield to the conference table, naturally each party hopes to do so at his side's moment of maximum strength.

III. CONDITION OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE SOUTH

By all measurements -- including their own -- the communists in South Vietnam are in a time of troubles. This should not be over-stressed -- their predicament is not survival, for survival at this writing is not the problem. But virtually everything else is: the doctrinal problem, the simple question of how they plan to win, that is, the formula for victory in terms the rank and file can understand and will believe; manpower problems, the force needed to match the nearly one million men ranged against them; logistical problems of feeding, clothing, housing, transporting, arming and equipping the 200,000 members of their military and para-military units who may not need the materiel of the Americans but who nevertheless will starve to death in the Highlands unless food is steadily brought in; and finally morale problems, which are perhaps the most serious, for with guerrillas, morale counts for all.

Endless Circle of Problems

Perhaps the best testimony to the condition of the communists is found in their own words. Presented below is a sampling of direct quotes, taken from communist public statements and captured documents, a symphony of complaint played virtually on one note:

"The war becomes bitter and ruthless. The enemy has switched from fighting a Special War to fighting a Limited War. He increases his troop strength, use of aircraft, artillery and toxic chemicals. He attacks

us more fiercely. Confronted by this situation, cadres and soldiers start to worry. They worry about US troop increase, about the war becoming a protracted conflict, about the destruction of our safe havens. Also they worry about their food supply, about shortage of men and equipment. They wonder if they will receive more foreign aid so as to be able to bring the war quickly to a victory... Some individuals cannot endure the hardships of the war and because of erroneous thoughts or bad influences resulting from lack of information, they have become traitors and have deserted to the enemy...

"Soldiers do not have a clear grasp of their mission or their guidelines, especially their missions which must be accomplished at once. We fail to coordinate military with political activities... A number of cadre do not yet know what is their immediate mission...

"Soldiers fail to observe discipline. Camouflage and guard duty are not performed carefully. Some cadres have connections with persons who are politically suspect. Soldiers do not have an iron-like determination to destroy the enemy. Cadres and units seek ways to avoid fighting the enemy. Most soldiers are fearful of the enemy air and artillery activities. They fail positively to conduct attacks and raids on a large scale against the enemy. They fail to comb their area in search of (GVN) CIDG personnel. Soldiers lack patience in waiting for the enemy. They are still afraid of death, hardship and enemy aircraft...

"Agitprop work among the populace is weak. Cadres even have

been responsible for destroying the peoples' property. Medical teams have failed to give medical treatment, evacuate the wounded or take care of wounded soldiers...

"In general: soldiers do not understand guidelines. Soldiers do not have strong fighting spirit. They fail to accept discipline, do not overcome hardship and fail to fight aggressively...

"During the first six months (of 1966): 1) We suffered serious losses in engagements with US forces which were supported by heavy artillery and aircraft. 2) The enemy's pacification program made some progress which had the effect of undermining the people's confidence in us. 3) The spraying of defoliants destroyed many of our cultivated areas and caused local shortages of food. 4) Lower echelons have not understood guidelines nor followed orders. The Binh Van mission was carried out in an unsatisfactory fashion. In general we did not evaluate the enemy situation correctly...

"Because we encounter temporary difficulties, some Party members develop a lack of self-confidence. They over-estimate the enemy. For example, they over-evaluate the US economic, military, and technological potential, become frightened of its might and thus lose confidence in the Party and in victory. They also lack confidence in the masses and in the youth...

"Awareness of class and national interests still is poor. The people's force is weak and small. Internal organization is poor -- general and specific requirements have not been set down. High resolve in attacking

the enemy is absent. Only small numbers of enemy troops are defecting. Revolutionary consciousness exists only in a small number of (our) troops. We lack adequate administrative machinery and the cadres are poor in capability...

"The situation:...the enemy has temporary superiority in air power... We must increase our self-confidence... We must improve our spirit of solidarity... We must become familiar with conditions and circumstances in which we would be fighting all by ourselves... We must fight fear of isolation...

"Deficiencies which exist among Party members (include): conservatism, rightism, lack of bravery in attacking the enemy... Some Party members fear to operate outside the liberated area. Some, assigned to hamlets close to enemy (military posts) do not dare live with the people in the hamlet, but only visit the hamlet from time to time... There is fear of sacrifice, fear of hardship, lack of faith in the thesis of protracted conflict, fear of aircraft and artillery,... a general reluctance to act aggressively. Also, lack of confidence in the people and thus failure to indoctrinate and guide the people in the struggle. Some Party chapter leaders neither understand what the people want nor do they lead the people properly. Thus they cannot put into effect the directives sent them...

"The Party chapters also are deficient. They are not aggressive in political and ideological leadership. They fail to take the initiative or to closely follow the situation and the mission of their unit. Therefore, in difficult moments they cannot make full use of the human factor...

Bureaucracy and paper work are still prevalent. Communist ethics have not been sufficiently taught to cadre and Party members. Kiem-thao (self-criticism) sessions are not conducted. As a consequence some comrades become degenerate and lose the ethics which all Party members should have. In short, ideological indoctrination has failed to overcome rightism and passiveness...

"The Party chapters also fail properly to emphasize the youth groups. This is a failure in leadership... the Party's policies are not made known to the youth. They are not imbued with Marxism-Leninism and communism. We do not pay heed to the importance of the Youth Leagues... class consciousness is not fostered among them... and there is not sufficient recruitment of new members...

"Party leadership is weak. Leaders fail to be strong; they fail to coordinate priority with routine missions, combat with training. When a priority mission is received other missions are neglected. Collective management is being neglected...

"At present the major obstacle to our combat activities and work program is the rightist and passive tendency which is typically reflected by the fear of long-lasting hardships and sacrifices. Specifically in combat some comrades are so demoralized and hesitant that they fail to seize the opportunity to kill the enemy. Some of them even fail to accomplish their mission. Others incessantly complain of difficulties and excessively rely on others instead of striving to overcome the difficulties. Furthermore their work is bureaucratic and done for form's sake. Some

Party members are still reluctant, insincere in criticism and self-criticism sessions, lack a sense of political responsibility in bringing up and pointing out deficiencies which contradict the Party's view or harm the unit. The level of political consciousness among Party members is not high. Some Party members are too individualistic and fail to place Party interests over their own, thus harming unit spirit and reducing the enthusiasm of others. Still others are even corrupt, debauched. There is licentiousness, which is the result of individualism. Resolutions, orders, directives, regulations are not properly observed or initiative is not taken in implementing them. Kiem-thao sessions are conducted in a negligent manner. Some cadres even disregard decisions taken at higher echelons..."

Problem of Doctrine

The doctrinal approaches employed or considered in the past now are being openly questioned in the south not only by the rank and file but by cadres and probably by elements of the top leadership. There is a bankruptcy of new doctrinal approaches; there is only the reflexive response that the way to win is to hang on.

The Khoi Nghia (General Uprising) route to power came perilously close to success especially in the anarchical situation which developed during and after the last days of the Diem government. The communists stood at the gates of victory, but could not enter. The reasons were complex, stemming basically from the fact that the NLF no longer held the monopoly of organized

opposition to the Diem government and to the new socio-political alignments in South Vietnam involving the rise of the Buddhists, students and the South Vietnamese military as political factors (all three previously had been dormant). Khoi Nghia as the main route to power was abandoned although certain of its forms, such as the struggle movement, continued.

Revolutionary guerrilla warfare also has failed to deliver victory and increasingly cadres are questioning whether the military techniques which worked against the French have not been outdated by a generation of military technological developments. The doubt as to doctrine in turn affects strategy and tactics: when one is not sure of what he is doing, he is inclined to think whatever he does is wrong. Certainty has vanished. Military operations now tend to be inflexible, and overly cautious.

The change of doctrine from Khoi Nghia to RGW also had a deleterious effect on the support received from the people, especially in the Mekong Delta where the majority of the Vietnamese live. More young men were needed for the Liberation Army and they were taken from the villages. More money was needed and this was taken in the form of "taxes" or "war bonds." Communist military activity in the village area brought air strikes and artillery barrages, and the Vietnamese villager tends to blame the communists, reasoning that the communists drew the planes and artillery shells. To a large degree the communists have themselves to blame for this view of things. In the early days of the insurgency, cadres argued long and persuasively with villagers that only the militant village was left alone.

This was part of the cadre effort to justify use of force and warfare. A very early (1961) document declared:

"The Party has put forward the policy of combining the political struggle movement with the armed (i. e. military) struggle. Experience has proved this to be the correct policy. However many of our countrymen do not see the advantages of such a policy. They think that the armed struggle when used in hamlets and villages will cause the enemy to come and terrorize them and create trouble for them. Or they reason that if they kill the enemy soldiers they commit an act of sabotage and therefore it is only natural that the enemy will send more troops to conduct a military clearing operation. In other words, they have no faith in the ability of the political struggle to stop enemy terrorism. We must use facts to enlighten the masses. We must ask why in the liberated villages the people live normal lives in safety and do not have to evacuate their villages as we did in the days when we fought the French?"

Thus having created the image that the communists meant protection, the communists are faced with the fact that now in "liberated" villages, when a governmental military operation approaches, the local guerrilla fires a few shots of a warning for the cadres in the village and then flees, leaving the villagers to deal with the arriving troops. The villager learns that his best protection against any type of government military operation is the absence of communist forces. The villager tries to persuade communist military forces to avoid his village and understands -- though of course does not like -- GVN and US attacks on communist forces in

his village.

From a villager's standpoint either the Khoi Nghia or the never-tested Coalition Government route to power would be better than the RGW. Certainly most unpalatable of all to him is the idea of a "fifty-year war" which would be won when and if the Americans get tired.

Problem of Manpower and Logistics

From all evidence it is apparent that the communists face serious shortages of manpower and materiel. They are being hurt on the battlefield -- arms, ammunition and food caches are being captured in increasing amounts. They are being hurt in their base areas by dwindling rice production, loss of voluntary support, desertions, as well as war destruction through air strikes and military operations. Recruitment or more correctly, impressment of young men, daily grows more difficult. The young men themselves now are highly reluctant to be inducted. Further, this manpower source -- that is the communist controlled villages of South Vietnam -- is by no means infinite, and quickly is drying up. The system is everywhere plagued by shortages -- the communists are short of everything with the possible exception of ammunition.

The manpower the communists have mustered at this writing consists of:
PRP + PRP Youth League members: 85,000 - 100,000.

Members of the NLF (civilian villagers for the most part): 200,000 to 300,000.

Civilian cadres of the NLF (full-time; about half of whom are northerners):
35,000 to 40,000.

Members of the Liberation Army (which is divided into two parts: full-military or Main Force Units; and para-military units which in turn are divided into two types, the regionals or territorial units and the local or village guerrilla unit) full-military 60,000 - 65,000 and para-military: 110,000 to 120,000.

Members of the North Vietnamese Army: 45,000.

These are the "hard core" supporters. Obviously there are other Vietnamese sympathetic to varying degrees with the cause, although this group dwindles steadily. At this writing probably this figure is at most 10 to 15 percent of the total adult population.

The strength of the apparatus in a Delta province of 500,000 persons would be something like this: members of the Farmers' Liberation Association, the chief front organization, 25,000; members of the Women's Liberation Association, the second most important front organization, 2,000; members of the third most important front group, the Youth Liberation Association, 2,500; other liberation associations membership -- those linking workers, students and cultural or professional persons -- 500; cadres, about 1,500; PRP members, 500; PRP Youth League members, 450; local guerrillas, around 3,000; regionals or territorials, 2,000 or less; probably no Main Force units. There would of course be overlapping in these categories; one person for example could be a member of the Youth Liberation Association, the PRP Youth League and a local guerrilla. In communist-organized "struggle movements" perhaps as many as 90,000 persons could be reached. Thus only something like 20 to 25 percent of

the population of the typical province is in any way engaged in the political struggle and only a fraction of these are committed. The manpower pool therefore, is not large, by any measurement.

Communist casualties, for the first nine months of this year have been: 34,970 killed, 4,908 captured and an unknown number of wounded, possibly twice the number of killed. In addition some 12,800 (Jan 1 - Oct 1) persons have quit the communist ranks under the government's amnesty program. An unknown number, but certainly equal to the amnesty program rate, have deserted and gone back to their villages or come to the cities, and thus are untabulated except in communist records. The communists are finding it increasingly difficult to impress men.

Even local guerrillas in some areas are now subject to what amounts to a corvee labor system which previously employed only civilians. The chief task is digging countless endless tunnels or acting as porters.

An NLF Central Committee directive to district level cadres, dated August 1966, discussed the desertion problem and ordered action:

"Since January (1966) the number of deserters from our ranks has increased steadily. Both military and civilian elements are affected. Desertions in turn have led to other deficiencies; shortage of manpower, unsatisfactory recruiting drives, prejudice toward us by potential recruits, damage to the morale of the troops who do not desert.

"Some deserters went back to their home villages, others joined the enemy..

"It appears that persons are deserting for these reasons: fear of

hardship and death, a higher sense of responsibility to one's family, the enemy's Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) propaganda campaign...

"Therefore we begin a campaign designed to rally back all deserters and assign them to territorial and local guerrilla units, but not full-military units. All persons must participate actively in this campaign and the civilian populace must also be motivated to support it.

"Special agitprop teams will be created from NLF units and other propaganda groups and dispatched to villages to lecture deserters on the spot or to bring them to indoctrination centers at the district level..."

(In earlier years communist cadres talking to the occasional western newsmen able to contact them declared that no force or coercion was used to prevent desertion since desertion by a guerrilla, if he really seeks to do so, cannot be prevented anyway. This is correct. It is folly to use force to try to hold a guerrilla band together.)

In order to overcome the manpower shortage the communists have developed a civilian labor-brigade system, a good deal like the old much hated French corvee labor system. Declared a captured directive:

"Civilian laborers play an important role in our military activities. We must recruit more civilian laborers. Use the slogan: Everything for the Front Lines, Everything for Victory Over the Americans. Henceforth all civilians in good physical condition must donate at least 36 days and not more than 30 days at a time.

"For (our province) we need a total of 5,500 civilian laborers... They will be divided into categories. For Category A we need 2,000...

for Category B we need 3,500. Category A will serve in distant parts of the province for longer periods... those in Category B will serve in nearby areas for short times...

"To implement this task the following steps must be taken..."

"1. Indoctrination of civilians is to be intensified. Wide-scale motivation projects must be launched. Make use of commendations, medals and other awards.

"2. Recruit by group such as village-front chapters, etc. It is most desirable that all members of an organization volunteer together and at once.

"3. Civilian laborers must bring with them a ten-day supply of food. While in a combat zone each will be issued one kilo of rice and five piasters per day beginning the day each enters the combat zone.

"4. Civilian laborers should be told of measures to take to protect their health, etc.

"5. Emulation movements among civilian laborers should be established.

"6. Monthly reports are to be made and forwarded to provincial headquarters..."

The civilian labor brigade system is highly unpopular. Many of the Chieu Hoi returnees are persons impressed into this service who fled at the first opportunity.

The attempted communist buildup of manpower has had a side

effect of putting great strain on the communist financial system, already overloaded. More men means vastly increased monetary needs. It is estimated that the NLF "civilian" budget (for such things as administration, first aid treatment, salaries and expenses for cadres, costs of paper and printing materials, etc.) now totals one billion piasters per year. The communist military budget (not counting NVN army costs) is estimated at three billion piasters per year. The main force unit members get from 15 to 30 piasters per day salary and ration allowances depending on rank; and this is double the 1964 rate. It is estimated that about 40 percent of the NLF budget comes from "taxes", "duties", etc.; about 40 percent from the so-called war bonds; the remaining 20 percent comes from outside Vietnam, presumably from Hanoi.

Upwards to three-fifths of the total population (16.5 million persons, half of whom are adults) provide some financial support for the communists. That few of them no longer do so voluntarily is irrelevant of course, from a logistical standpoint. At this writing, the money and food continue to pour into communist hands.

However, it should not be inferred from this that the communists operate anything like a complete political or governmental system. In the communist-controlled villages there are only limited "governmental activities." The communists collect taxes. They extort money and call it selling bonds. They impress men into their armed forces or their

civilian labor brigades. They collect supplies, either by buying or taking them. They maintain a communication system. There is a surveillance system, what they call the "anti-American spy program." And finally, there is a great deal of agitprop work.

The chief communist need from the villager at the moment is financial support. The farmer is the cow being milked in the name of the revolution. He is expected to produce food for the cause. He pays taxes on upwards to fifty percent of the total crop he harvests. Even the worst of the landlords never charged more than 35 percent -- and the legal GVN rate is 15 to 20 percent, depending on acreage and type of crop.

The so-called Viet Cong war bond is now appearing in all parts of the country. When a "war bond sales team" visits a village every person or family is expected to buy a certain number. Each family in a communist-controlled village is expected to buy 7-10,000 piasters worth each year.

Road blocks are thrown across major roads in the more remote areas to "tax" commercial vehicles. A typical tax schedule is this, captured in Tay Ninh province:

Truck carrying 12 cubic meters of 1st grade lumber...	11,500 piasters
Truck carrying 12 cubic meters of 2nd grade lumber...	7,500 piasters
Truck carrying 12 cubic meters of firewood.....	700 piasters

Bamboo	per truck	200	Piasters
Charcoal	per cubic meter	10	Piasters
Petroleum	for each truck of 200 cans	4000	Piasters
Dalat vegetables	per truck load	1000	Piasters
Chickens	each	1	Piasters
Pigs	each	10	Piasters
Shrimp	per kilo	1	Piasters
Passenger buses to Saigon		1000 - 1500	Piasters
Passenger buses from Saigon		1500 - 2000	Piasters
Boats on canals: under 6 H. P.		150	Piasters
Boats on canals: over 6 H. P.		250	Piasters
Rubber plantations per hectare per year		350 - 400	Piasters
French owned plantations per hectare per year		1200	Piasters

Two things become apparent from a study of the communist financial position in the south. First, money though tight, still can be had in sufficient amounts if the communists wish to make the effort to collect or extort it. Second, the greatest increase in extortion activities has been among the farmers in the communist-controlled villages, in the form of increased taxes and sale of war bonds. Whereas 18 months ago the war bond was almost unknown, now, as noted above, 40 percent of the NLF's budget comes from this. The most obvious result has been to increase the hostility of the rural Vietnamese toward the communists, creating a condition that cannot

help but have detrimental long-range effects on the communist cause.

Problem of Morale

Morale, either of guerrilla units or the villagers who support them and their system is difficult to measure. Further, it is a constantly changing factor. One useful way of looking at morale is in terms of original motivations.

The most common motivations in the early insurgency years, the reason persons joined or supported the movement, were family ties and other social pressures, used by the Communist as one of their organizational weapons. Often the person involved would not be completely aware of the process. A typical exchange between an interviewer and Chieu Hoi returnee would go like this:

Interviewer: Why did you join the Viet Cong?

Returnee: I was forced to join.

Interviewer: How long did you stay before leaving?

Returnee: About three years.

Interviewer: Force may explain why you joined, but it does not explain why you waited three years before leaving.

Returnee: Well, all my friends and relatives were supporting the Front and they expected me to do the same thing. They were the ones who made me join and serve.

In essence then, social pressure caused him to join, caused him to stay. This is normal social behavior. Parts of rural Vietnam have

been under tight communist control for a generation. In these villages the local leaders were originally regarded by the young as the legitimate administration to be obeyed and even protected. The motivation of the young was intimately bound to the attitudes of their relatives and friends. If their attitude changed, so did theirs. The communists in the past several years steadily have lost the close identification with the people that marked their earlier days in Vietnam. These people, mostly villagers, have in turn become disenchanted with the cause chiefly because of: the compulsory draft which takes young men far from their home villages; the increased and never-ending financial demands; the growing coerciveness of the system; and the inability of the communists to defend them against attack.

The paranoid preoccupation with "spies" has had a deadly effect on the villager. In several instances during October of 1966, GVN and US troops freed prisoners from Viet Cong jails and heard from them bone-chilling stories of communist justice in action. A new system of house-arrest in the villages now is in operation, described in this NLF Central Committee directive:

"The following persons should immediately be put under surveillance: Those enemies of society whose arrest and execution or imprisonment would be beneficial to the Revolution; those guilty of being enemies of society, who have not repented, but whose cases are not so serious as to warrant imprisonment; former inmates of (communist)

prisons who have not repented. The names of all persons under sentence of surveillance must be sent immediately to district cadres. Persons in this category must make a public confession and denounce their accomplices. They must present themselves every 15 days to the village security cadre and make a public report on the re-education progress. They must perform forced labor to redeem themselves. The surveillance sentence can last up to two years at the end of which time the person, if still unredeemed, will be tried by a People's Court."

Persons arrested by any cadre are handed over to provincial-level commissars along with his dossier and a bill of indictment. He goes before a People's Court which tries and sentences him -- to death or imprisonment. Cadres are cautioned to use extreme care in arresting religious figures, leaders of ethnic minority groups or prominent members of a village community. The death penalty is meted out by provincial officials. An exception is "anyone who uses force to prevent the people from destroying (an enemy controlled) hamlet defense system...he may be shot on the spot by the district cadre..." District cadres may sentence persons to prison or detention up to one month. Longer sentences must be approved by provincial officials.

Increasingly repressive measures as part of the new "judicial look" are common throughout the rural areas. An NLF public announcement in the form of a poster went up in communist-controlled villages of

Tay Ninh province. It declared:

"1. Publication and distribution of religious materials that criticize or opposes communism is forbidden.

"2. Travel by religious personages within the liberated areas is forbidden unless such persons have authority from the Zonal Central Committee.

"3. The establishment of religious communities, is forbidden, for they are simply disguised hamlets.

"4. Approval must be obtained from the Provincial Central Committee to hold any religious conference, meetings or fund drives..."

In one Mekong Delta province rural Vietnamese were notified:

"1. Possession of religious books or literature is forbidden.

"2. Possession of Saigon newspapers, GVN produced leaflets or GVN produced pictures is forbidden.

"3. Listening to Radio Saigon is forbidden.

"4. Gambling is forbidden.

"5. Smoking of GVN-made cigarettes is forbidden."

The purpose of the first three orders obviously is to cut the flow of communications from Saigon and prevent the GVN from communicating with its people. The last two were issued not for moral or health reasons but because gambling and smoking are considered to be economic waste by the hard pressed communists.

During 1966, defectors and others have made mention of a new NLF institution: thought-reform sessions. These are conducted by NLF

cadres in areas under tight NLF control. One defector reports that during a three month period in a ten-province area some 1,300 people attended thought-reform classes, including former village officials, captured deserters, informers, those who had created confusion in the villages. Included were more than one hundred women. After the forced attendance at sessions was over, the people were sent home and their relatives were told they were responsible for their conduct. The report added "even after many thought-reform classes a number of these bad elements continue secretly to work for the enemy."

One cannot help but wonder about such a person. His is an untold story of the Vietnam war. And he is the war's authentic hero, for alone, in silence, in the face of incredible odds and with no very great hope of doing much, he fights on against the monolithic communist apparatus in the most dangerous area of all, the communist-controlled village. In fact, one cannot help but be impressed by the courage often displayed by villagers in defying the communists. An example was the September 1966 elections when, in some villages, as many as ninety percent of the eligible voters cast ballots in the face of direct orders to the contrary by communist cadres and in some cases even with bullets being fired into the polling place.

Thus the Vietnamese villager's hatred for the communists and their cause grows steadily, ever reinforced by the suspicion of the pragmatic

villager that the communists probably are now sure losers. This hate and sense of failure feeds like a virus back into the communist military and civilian system, poisoning morale.

The second major motivating factor among the insurgents was: alienation from society, mixed with strong grievances against the government.

In the early days injustices were committed by Diem's police and members of his secret political party, the Can Lao. But none of the governments which followed Diem could be termed repressive in any real meaning of the word. The GVN's hand for that matter rests so lightly on the rural Vietnamese that it is in no position to be oppressive, if it wanted to be. The chief grievance these days is that impersonal war strikes the villager. His response may be anger, sorrow or despair; but he rails more against fate than against the specific institution represented by the GVN or even the US. Certainly, he is seldom aroused to the degree that he is willing to take up arms against the GVN. The most common response by a villager to the repeated intrusion of war into his life is to flee to the safe haven of the towns and cities. The result has been a million refugees, or what could be more accurately described as self-displaced war victims.

Grievances against the government no longer represent a strong motivational force. In fact the real grievances in rural Vietnamese society today are against the communists -- because of their activities, because they are responsible for continuation of the war. Those who

continue to fight for them are less and less sure the price being paid is worth it.

Idealistic belief in a cause was another of the early motivations used by the communists. Today it probably is the strongest motivation of those who remain true to the cause. The most common idealistic appeal currently being employed is the "struggle against the aggressor", the nationalistic, patriotic, "country-saving" theme. A propaganda leaflet distributed in Saigon expressed the theme well:

"As more and more American troops arrive, their mien becomes clearer, our people's hatred swells higher, our nationalist spirit is more fiercely aroused and determination grows stronger in each Vietnamese heart to fight and defeat the American aggressor. American presence is synonymous with aggression, terrorism, arson, pilferage, outrage, widespread inflation, developing prostitution and a harder life for people in the cities...Elephants are being brought in to trample on the family tomb..."

From all evidence, rural Vietnam is relatively free of anti-Americanism, despite intensive propaganda by the communists over the years, chiefly because of the suspicion, cynicism and distrust which the average rural Vietnamese has for anyone's statement about anything. Only in certain pockets, around major American installations, do interviewers encounter anti-American Vietnamese, and these never run higher than twenty percent of those polled.

Marxism-Leninism as a motivating factor is quite weak, even among

those who profess to be good communists. Even North Vietnamese Party members have little familiarity with communist thought and indicate that examinations for admission to the Party are pro forma affairs in which candidates are coached on answers before hand. Among the more educated and intellectual communists, perhaps, Marxism-Leninism has some impact.

The final major original motivating factor was opportunism. Many persons joined the insurgency in the early years because it offered a means of advancement. A young villager for example would see this as a route out of the village and upwards in the world. These people must now entertain serious doubt as to whether it is a road to success.

Lowered morale reflects itself most directly in the military sphere. The overriding characteristic of communist military activity in 1966 was its increasingly defensive posture. Allied forces averaged nearly one victory a week and suffered no significant defeats; virtually all of the multi-battalion battles fought were the result of offensive operations by the Allies and were not initiated by the communists. Communist military tactics became conservative in terms of risk taking. This was freely acknowledged inside the Party, as indicated by this entry in a cadre's notebook:

"My troops at the moment fear to operate (militarily) because of increased enemy power. The principal reason for this inaction is

their low degree of revolutionary awareness."

The morale of the cadre -- that peculiar and all important communist social institution -- is low. The ranks of the older cadres have been thinned and those who remain seem dated in their responses, like faded idealists, they mutter guardedly about "the revolution betrayed." The newer cadres are clearly inferior to the earlier ones. Captured cadre personal-history records contain such entries of criticism as: "lacks knowledge of Marxism-Leninism...is too concerned with rank and status, does not love the masses...has a bourgeois spirit and enjoys American beer and cigarettes...lacks initiative...works too slowly...too hot tempered...too narrow-minded...suffers from sense of regionalism...lazy...jealous and envious of others...is out of touch with realities...has individualist tendencies..."

The sense of insecurity held by the leaders and the cadres has communicated itself to the rank and file and caused a further downward spiral in their morale.

IV. THE COMMUNIST RESPONSE

The basic response of the communists in South Vietnam to the host of problems they face has been to exhort the faithful to greater organizational and indoctrinational activity. Consider these "task" or "mission" statements culled from dozens of captured communist documents in mid-1966.

"Our three tasks are: 1) Ideological indoctrination campaigns that emphasize dau tranh (the struggle concept); 2) Recruiting Front members, especially into the Farmers' Liberation Association; 3) Improving the Party organization at the lower levels...

"The three main tasks of the (district) cadres are: Indoctrination and training of Party members... increased Party chapter activities... greater leadership and attention paid to youth groups...

"Our mission is to... motivate the people... recruit women, youth, and especially farmers... initiate indoctrination courses for them.

"Train cadre... develop Party chapters as the vanguard leader... Cause the Party chapter to become stronger. Apply Party policies and achieve good results in rural areas... counter individualism...

"1. Develop the three front movement; attack, destroy and disintegrate the enemy main force by means of military attacks.

"2. Win the people away from the enemy and counter his deceptive economic and political schemes. Launch attacks on weak enemy areas so as to end enemy control of villages.

"3. Build our strength both militarily and politically. Consolidate the liberation associations, the guerrilla and hamlet defenders. Recruit new Party members...

"Proper conduct of the second stage of (RGW) at this moment requires the following: 1) High morale and great mobility of troops; 2) Secrecy in planning and execution; 3) Close coordination among units; 4) Leadership by the Party...

"Our present revolutionary mission is to contain and defeat the enemy's Special War. To concentrate all the forces in the nation to winning the war in South Vietnam as soon as possible, and to be prepared to defeat the enemy in a Limited War, if the enemy initiates one. We must continue to build up North Vietnam both in military and economic spheres. We must resolutely protect North Vietnam by thwarting the war of destruction and the blockade conducted by the enemy air force and navy and must be prepared to fight and win a Limited War in both North and South Vietnam. We must mobilize North Vietnamese forces to support South Vietnam, help resolve the situation in Laos, and conduct an all out attack on the enemy in South Vietnam. Our slogan must be: Strengthen the North, Liberate the South.

"It is very difficult to conduct activities in weak areas where there are large numbers of enemy soldiers and their dependents. Our cadres there are small in number and illegal (i. e. covert). Consequently it is necessary to form legal in-place cadres (i. e. covert) because only they can solve everything in time and obtain success for us in the weak

areas. Re-examine the status of the legal cadre, indoctrinate him and draft plans for him to operate...

"The southern urban centers have been in a phase of great convulsion since March 1966. Now (August, 1966) outwardly the storm seems to have subsided, but it is smouldering strongly and promises new winds which will be more furious and more fierce... a factor (in this) is the direct and indirect influence of the NLF over the movement. The revolutionary fighter in each hamlet, school, factory, market, group or as a separate individual, must assume the guiding role... and guide the masses in conducting political and armed struggles... particularly within and at the suburbs of Saigon and Gia Dinh where the Front has high prestige among the masses...

"The tasks in the liberated areas are: Raise the morale of the population; increase political awareness of the population; boost agricultural production; step up the political struggle and proselyting efforts by the people themselves; develop local guerrilla units...

"The entire Party, the entire army and the entire people must do their best to concentrate the strength of the nation to defeat the US imperialists and their henchmen in South Vietnam, frustrate the imperialists' war of destruction in North Vietnam, protect the establishment of socialism, supply the revolution in South Vietnam and Laos with manpower and natural resources and prepare to defeat the

enemy in case he enlarges the war throughout the country (i. e. land war in North Vietnam)...

"Therefore you are ordered to:

"1) Develop a thorough knowledge of your situation, mission and guidelines. Maintain determination. Correct all errors. 2) Provide better leadership in every field. Heighten the spirit of combat in your unit. 3) Execute all orders received. 4) Coordinate combat with development of your unit, along ideological and technical lines. 5) Motivate all members of your unit by means of an emulation movement (which seeks to) kill the enemy...

"In this situation, it is necessary for us to properly reconsider the following immediate and basic requirements: First, take advantage of military successes; continue to resolutely fight and defeat the American imperialists and their lackeys during the monsoon (Oct 1966 - May 1967). Second, develop and strengthen the armed forces; promote the youth and national solidarity movements and generate an anti-American feeling among the population.

"At Party Headquarters, Party Committee echelons must concentrate all their efforts to command the army, the guerrillas and the people in order to: Annihilate enemy forces; develop guerrilla warfare; destroy strategic hamlets, build combat hamlets, and expand our bases, etc... Step up the political struggle both in the rural and urban areas. Gradually step up military proselyting. Recruit men for the army and encourage

people to increase agricultural production and practice economy. Consequently, motivating the farmers has become an important mission now. Although this is not our primary mission, it must be carried out well..."

From these and other indicators, then it is probably that the communists during 1967 in South Vietnam expect to:

1. Practice great conservatism -- in terms of risk-taking -- in military operations. They will search for the opportunity to deliver a stunning psychological blow to American morale, as for example, attempting to destroy some elite American military unit of company size or larger. The criteria for this would be precision, almost total American casualties, devastating psychological shock to the Americans; communist losses, regardless how high, would be a secondary consideration.

2. Concentrate military efforts on a war of attrition against the Vietnamese para-military organizations, the Regional Forces and the Popular Forces, defenders of the villages...

3. Experiment with urban insurgency, trying to find patterns of vulnerability and opportunity. Possibly this will include increased urban terrorism.

4. Increase at all levels, indoctrinational and training efforts.

5. Build up the PRP and its leadership role, and generally strengthen and bring out into the open the Party apparatus, necessary because of leadership and management demands.

Indoctrination: The Golden Wand

The communists place an incredible amount of faith in the indoctrination process, believing that a Vietnamese, if only lectured to for several weeks in some special class will be left with high elan and great faith in the communist cause. This is strangely naive and inconsistent with the mental set and behavioral pattern of the average rural Vietnamese. The effort must be an endless source of disappointment to the individual communist cadre. But both among civilian villagers and in the communist armed forces -- where the process is called "maturation" (truong thanh) -- the process goes on month after month. Special classes, indoctrination courses and retraining sessions are held in the remote areas, attended by cadres, NLF members, Party members and other key figures. Deserters if captured are sent to special camps where the chief activity is indoctrination. Emulation movements and other socialist-competition movements are staged endlessly in villages to motivate the rural Vietnamese.

Declared one directive on the subject:

"Everyone must be indoctrinated to promote his hatred of the US imperialists and their henchmen, his patriotism and love of compatriots. It is recommended that revolutionary heroism and international proletarianism be continuously disseminated. Party chapter members must be incessantly indoctrinated on communism,

revolutionary vigilance and class consciousness. They must be well disciplined and loyal to the Party and place full confidence in the leadership of the Party. The political leadership assumed by the Party chapter is the primary mission, especially in difficult situations."

The indoctrination effort is a mixed bag -- part of it deals with substance, the nature of the struggle; part of it involves training in organizational principles; and part in specific revolutionary techniques. A PRP memo to cadres criticizing current training and indoctrination programs declared:

"Training and indoctrination of Party members have not been carried on in a fervent and total manner. Party members are not being trained to endure hardships. In fact little training is carried on and there is little self-study by Party members. Probationary Party members do not attend training courses and thus do not develop ideas about the important role of the Party and the sense of collectivism which new Party members must develop. Indoctrination classes have not been conducted to train Party members on policy lines, Party missions, communist ethics and doctrine from a revolutionary standpoint. Administration is loose. There is little discipline. There is not absolute compliance with Party principles or to Party leadership. At kiem-thao sessions some comrades did not criticize others or themselves and they refused to admit their mistakes by blaming others. In short, solidarity between cadres and Party members is weak. There has not been a materialization of the principle: collective leadership but with an individual in charge. There is little respect for collectivity..."

The heart of the current indoctrination campaign is the national salvation thesis -- and its model is the Chinese communist "national salvation struggle"

against the Japanese in the 1930s. As defined in one communist document, the national salvation thesis is expressed thus: Vietnam is one. The Vietnamese people are one. This has been so for generations, from Friendship Gate to Camau Cape... The sacred vigor of the rivers and mountains of the country, our glorious tradition of unity, patriotism and indomitable spirit of combat now are being shaped and directed in a struggle for national salvation against American imperialism... The stormy, vigorous struggle for national salvation against US aggression rises steadily everywhere. When North Vietnam calls, South Vietnam answers. When South Vietnam calls, North Vietnam answers. All wealth and manpower are being mobilized... Fighting US aggression for national salvation is the greatest work in the history of the revolutionary struggle of our people."

The heart of this campaign is the single idea: hate America. Hate has great utility in both the Chinese and Vietnamese communist systems. At Xuan Mai, the huge North Vietnamese training camp which prepares most North Vietnamese infiltrators for their trip south, a special course called "Hate America" is taught; three one-hour classes per week are held on the subject.

Emulation campaigns are built along the same lines; South Vietnamese farmers are urged to grow more rice as a means of defeating the American "invader."

Within the PRP, emulation campaigns have a somewhat more sophisticated tone. The recent Lao Dong Party congress issued Resolution Twelve which ordered the development of "Four Goods in Party Chapters" emulation

movement. The PRP, which considers such a resolution binding on it, has developed its own emulation program for its own ranks. Its four "goods", actually more than four in number, include: "good revolutionary spirit... good enthusiasm for combat... good strong anti-American spirit... good unshakable faith, regardless of difficulties, with firm resolution to persevere and willingness to sacrifice all (for the cause)... good ability to persuade the people to follow the Party's leadership... good increased vigilance against revisionists, rightists and those who fear the protracted conflict (thesis)..."

The protracted conflict thesis, in turn, is being presented especially in the north, in these terms: "The war may drag on for another five, ten, or twenty years, or even longer. Hanoi, Haiphong and a number of cities and factories may be destroyed but the Vietnamese people will rebuild and make their country better and more beautiful."

A Liberation Army indoctrination guide declared that, "To improve our motivation (efforts) we need urgently to make troops aware of the national revolution and of the class struggle... Stress the concept... protracted warfare... not impatient to entertain illusions about peace... incessant revolution. We must struggle against indetermination and hesitation. Smash all phenomena tainted with revisionism and strive to build up the Party leadership potential. Cause soldiers not to be nearsighted and enable them to see the whole of the revolutionary picture throughout the whole country... Violence: develop a spirit of hatred and a desire to annihilate the enemy... Use the slogan: live nobly and die gloriously."

Leadership: The Rise of the PRP

Until January 1962 the communist party in South Vietnam was known as the southern branch of the Vietnam Worker's Party (Dang Lao Dong); but at that time it was decided to abolish the southern branch and replace it with what came to be known as the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam. The decision was taken for two reasons, according to Party members who have since left the movement. First, the leadership felt that the tasks of the two parties were so different -- the task of the Party in the north being to build socialism, then communism; while the task of the Party in the south was to "liberate" the south or at least to keep conditions there so anarchical that the GVN could not launch a military attack on the North -- that they required entirely different types of organizations. Second, to prevent provoking an attack by South Vietnam on North Vietnam, or provide a pretext for such an attack, the PRP had to be established as an independent unit from the northern wing of the Lao Dong, even though the PRP was a Marxist-Leninist party by its own admission. Within the PRP there was less emphasis on class consciousness, discipline was less firm, goals less dogmatic and in general there was less orthodoxy -- all conditions required to fit the situation in the South. These were accepted by the leaders of the PRP because of the loss of status that would occur in the international communist movement.

The PRP never denied that it was communistic. Neither did it deny that it was much more than simply a member of the NLF. It asserted, in fact, that it was the engine of the Revolution, "the vanguard of the NLF, the soul of the NLF." It did deny that it had any official ties with Hanoi, Communist

China or the USSR, beyond the "fraternal ties of communism." The PRP considered itself to be the reinforcing rod in the ferroconcrete building that is the NLF. Or, for a more graphic representation of its relationship to the NLF: picture the NLF as a broad-based pyramid with the Vietnamese villages at the base and the NLF Central Committee at the apex. The PRP is a core pyramid within, thinner and harder and also rising from base to apex. Though it was not covertly communist, the PRP did tend to soft-pedal its communist nature, especially in strongly religious villages, such as Roman Catholic, Cao Dai or Hoa Hao villages. In its outer trappings, however, such as flags, the communist imprint always was firm. The PRP flag consisted of a red field on which was centered a white hammer and sickle. The PRP Youth League flag was a red field with three yellow stars centered and a white hammer and sickle in the upper right. And, though it long assumed the vanguard role of the NLF, the PRP never asserted its primacy of leadership.

Beginning in mid-1966, however, this changed. The PRP began not only to assert but to flaunt its communist nature. At the same time it began claiming a strong direct role in the leadership of the struggle.

At the same time, almost casually, the true nature of the NLF -- as a "tool of revolution" identical with earlier communist-front organizations -- was openly asserted. The Hanoi regime declared (Hoc Tap, the DRVN theoretical journal, October, 1966):

"The policy of founding the Indochinese Democratic Front between 1936 and 1939, the Viet Minh Front between 1941 and 1951 and the Lien Viet Front;

the decision to sign the March 6, 1966 preliminary accord; the present NLF policy of upholding the slogans of independence, democracy, peace and neutrality, and so forth, are typical examples of the clever application of the following instructions of Lenin:

'It is possible to defeat a stronger enemy only through displaying great effort and under the necessary conditions of taking advantage very minutely, very attentively, very carefully and very cleverly of any rift, even the smallest, among the interests of the bourgeois of various countries and among the interests of various bourgeois groups and factions in each country; as well as taking advantage of any possibility, even the smallest, of winning over an ally who is numerically strong, although this ally is temporary, uncertain and, from certain viewpoints, unstable and unreliable.'

"Anyone who does not understand this truth, understands neither Marxism nor scientific modern socialism in general."

Quite probably, future historians of the Vietnam war will record as the single most important development in 1966 the rise of the PRP and the shift to overt communist leadership of the insurgency--all the way to the hamlet. It was a decision taken because it was forced, because the leadership was convinced that only by this means could the revolutionary organization remain viable. The need was for a tighter, more centralized organization, more effective leadership, more dedicated cadres, as well as for the discipline, experience and knowledge which only the Party could supply. Also needed was more ideology, something to explain events to the faithful which would provide them with a sense of certitude, a doctrinal cement.

So, in late 1966, the PRP Central Committee issued a basic directive, reorganizing the Party and the NLF-PRP relationship. Most of the changes came at the village level. The order has had the effect of putting communists, as Party members, into positions of direct overt control of the insurgency. While the process of regularization or communization of the struggle had been underway for several years, the result of this order was to complete the process. Specifically the objectives were to build up the numerical strength of the Party -- and the leadership seemed more interested in numbers than quality -- and to push the individual Party cadre and Party member forward into stronger more prominent leadership roles. The order declared:

"We must thoroughly understand the importance of strengthening the Party, admitting Party members, establishing the branch machinery and popular organizations in order to ensure the execution of the Party's political tasks. Concentrate (in recruiting) on main areas, the cities, towns, and sensitive areas near strategic lines of communication and especially the prosperous and densely populated areas. Admit Party members according to the Party's class policy. This means that Party members must be selected from workers, share croppers, poor farmers and lower middle farmers. Strive to recruit members from ethnic minorities and religions. Pay attention to the People's Revolutionary Party Youth League. Pay attention to women's special situation when admitting them. Admit Party members among local guerrilla units, (NLF) liaison agents, outstanding

elements in NLF organizations. Do not admit into the Party enemy secret agents, Biet Kich (CIDC) members, reconnaissance agents, spies, SDC members, Civil Guard members or members of (GVN) political organizations. Persons mentioned above can only be admitted as Party members if they have been intensively indoctrinated or planted in the enemy ranks as fifth columnists... Admission of Party members strengthens the Party chapter's leadership and masses good people around the Party. Recruit Party members according to the needs of the leadership and not according to the size (of each unit)... Strive to establish a Party Chapter in an area where there are only one or two Party members... Village Party chapters must double the present number of Party members. Party chapters which have already from three to five party members must double this number. Strive to recruit at least one Party member in each white village or new hamlet. Probationary Party chapters must urgently recruit members in order to meet the requirements for becoming official Party chapters. To support our urban missions, select and recruit good Party members, group members, cadre and civilians with legal (GVN) papers, having relatives in the cities and thus able to operate in the cities...

"But, in general... give priority to these areas: newly-liberated rubber plantations, liberated areas in which we have weak control, the enemy's armed forces...

"Specific measures... constantly indoctrinate Party members and settle their ideological difficulties... Village administrative machinery must be

established, revolutionary organizations such as Farmers' Liberation Association, hamlet and village guerrilla units strongly consolidated, youth groups closely controlled and used to carry out the Party chapter's resolution. Chapter Party committee members must be assigned to be in charge of important tasks..."

One provincial central committee in Central Vietnam notified its district cadres that "We are...to consolidate and extend Party leadership down to the village and hamlet...By the end of the year the following Party strengths must exist at district level: In liberated areas, one Party member per 100 persons; in disputed areas, one Party member per 150 persons; in enemy controlled areas, one party member per 250 persons; PRP Youth League, 700 members per district...Further, you are notified that 30 percent of regional and territorial units will be promoted to main force units; 45 percent of local guerrillas will be promoted to Regional units; 20 percent of the PRP Youth League members will be assigned to main force units; 10 percent of all prisoners held are to be put into NLF Armed Forces...At local level, vacancies to be filled by women and aged persons."

Quotas also were issued for recruiting Party members by specific village and hamlet. This sort of mass recruitment is the very antithesis of the selective elitism that normally characterizes a communist movement, and must have Lenin turning in his grave.

While emphasis was placed on numbers, a parallel order called for efforts to improve quality:

"Strengthen the quality of the Party units at the lower levels...Improve the revolutionary behavior of Party members, putting increased emphasis on class consciousness. Party members must set examples in initiative and sincerity at the kiem thao sessions...Party members must be exemplary models for others in combat, study and work. Improve Party leadership over the masses. Increase recruiting into the Party...The slogan to be used is: Leadership Exists Wherever Party Members Are."

V. SUMMARY

We may summarize and conclude:

1. The Communists, both in North and South Vietnam, but particularly in South Vietnam, perceive that they are in a period of serious difficulties if not crisis. The single task that now unites the insurgency is to defend North Vietnam and "liberate" South Vietnam. Since "liberating" activities in the South also defend the North, no longer is there any dualism: it is now seen as a single task.

2. The major problem which the communists face is doctrinal: how to win. Survival of their forces at the moment is not the problem, they remain an effective fighting force; morale is low but military units remain operational. What is lacking is an understanding of how they must proceed, what they must do in order to win. Previous doctrines are now openly questioned. The Khoi Nghia route failed. The RGW route has developed a host of apparently insoluble problems relating to the enemy's great mobility, tremendous firepower and his shift to greater air war. The return to the Coalition Government route appears to be closed. This uncertainty in doctrinal matters has led to divided opinion on strategy and tactics, which in turn has led to cadre and rank-and-file confusion and demoralization which the leadership desperately is trying to stem.

3. A rigidly hostile and apparently genuine public position is taken by communist leaders toward the idea of a political settlement.

4. It appears that as of this writing that communist leaders are in truth undecided as to what policy to adopt: whether they should seek a

short term improved military situation, and then at the optimum moment go to the conference table; or whether to refuse all negotiations in the foreseeable future.

5. Logistical and manpower shortages exist every where and are a limiting factor to any material response by the leadership. Increasingly this must involve larger contributions by the DRVN.

6. In responding to changed circumstances during the past 18 months the communists have alienated virtually all of the rural Vietnamese in a calculated risk that victory would be achieved before the effect of this alienation could set in. This failed. The people not only are alienated from the communists but also no longer think of the communists as winners.

7. The major response by the communists has been to put primary emphasis on indoctrination efforts and improved leadership, the latter chiefly manifested by the communist party taking a direct role at the village level on the grounds that only it has the discipline, know-how and leadership.

8. The communists have emphasized the national salvation theme and tried to recapture the spirit of nationalism and anti-colonialism which marked the Viet Minh effort. They have emphasized the protracted conflict thesis to persuade true believers that they can, that they must, be prepared to fight a "fifty year war."

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

ARVN - Army of (South) Vietnam.

Binh Van - The NLF proselyting program; literally action among the enemy troops (condensed from binh van - chinh van, the B and C Program which included chinh or civil servants as well as binh or military personnel).

Cao Dai - Religious sect peculiar to Vietnam; claims to be a blend of all major world religions; claims membership of one million.

Chieu Hoi - The GVN's surrender or amnesty program; lit. open arms.

CIDG - Civilian Irregular Defense Groups - guerrilla type units of the GVN.

Civil Guard - Early GVN para-military organization, now called Regional Forces.

Dau Tranh - Literally struggle; the golden word in the communist lexicon. Essentially a series of social disorders promoted in rural areas, designed chiefly to raise revolutionary consciousness among villagers and lead to the General Uprising.

DRV or DRVN - Democratic Republic of Vietnam, i. e. North Vietnam

Dong - Vietnamese unit of money, more commonly called a piaster

First, Second and Third Stages - The three phases of revolutionary guerrilla war as outlined by Mao Tse Tung, later amended by General Vo Nguyen Giap and practiced in South Vietnam beginning in 1958 with the People's War.

GVN - Government of (South) Vietnam

General Uprising (Khoi Nghia) - Major social myth of the South Vietnamese communists, similar to the early communist social myth of the general strike.

Hoa Hao - Religious sect peculiar to South Vietnam; a variant differing chiefly from other Buddhism in its militancy.

ICC or ICSC - The International Control Commission or the International Control and Surveillance Commission - the international organization (Canada, India, Poland) created by Britain and the USSR to supervise the implementing of the 1954 Geneva Accords in Indochina.

Khoi Nghia - See General Uprising

Kiem Thao - Criticism and self-criticism sessions; a communist institution.

Lao Dong - Workers Party. The Communist Party of North Vietnam.

Liberation Army - Communist Army in South Vietnam, excluding NVN Troops.

Limited War - A small scale conventional war, similar to the Korean War.

NLF or NLFSV (sometimes NLFSVN) - National Liberation Front (of South Vietnam).

NVN - North Vietnam - The DRV or DRVN.

Popular Forces - GVN's village militia; formerly called Self Defense Force (Dan Ve).

PRP - People's Revolutionary Party, the Communist Party in South Vietnam.

PRP Youth League - Junior wing of the PRP, chiefly for youths, although includes persons in their 30's.

Protracted Conflict - Communist doctrinal thesis, highly deterministic, which holds that time, especially in terms of decades, is on the side of the communists, that inevitably they will succeed in communizing the world.

Regional Force - GVN's para-military force standing between ARVN as a national army and the Popular Force as a village militia; found at provincial level.

Resistance (The) - Communist name for the French-Viet Minh War, 1946-54

RGW - Revolutionary Guerrilla War; the type of war being fought in Vietnam.

See: First, Second, Third stages.

RVNAF - Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (South Vietnamese armed forces).

Self-Defense Force - Former name of GVN village militia; see Popular Forces.

Special War - Name used by the communists for the type of war being fought in South Vietnam. They define it as an imperialist war for the purpose of colonization but in which the fighting is done by "lackeys" rather than by soldiers of the colonizing nation.

Strategic Hamlet - Diem government's program to develop system of defended villages as part of its resources control program. After Diem it became known as the New Life Hamlet. Elements incorporated in the present Revolutionary Development Program.

Struggle Movement - See Dau Tranh

Viet Cong - Imprecise but now universally employed term for the insurgents in South Vietnam.

VNAF - (South) Vietnam Air Force.