

Indochina Report

WHAT PRICE VICTORY?

NUMBER 4



"This was not and is not war — it is genocide."

Lt. Colonel William R. Corson, USMC Retired

"... we are trying to avoid civilian casualties not cause them."

President Nixon

Strange. The only other time most of us have heard that word — "genocide" — used before, it had to do with gas chambers and Hitler's wiping out the Jews. Now the North Vietnamese and even some Americans are claiming that the war in Vietnam that America is fighting is one of genocide. This would seem to most of us to be a very extreme statement. All of us, however, have become aware of the tremendous destruction that has gone on for years in Vietnam. But large-scale destruction does not necessarily add up to genocide. "Genocide" means a deliberate attempt to destroy a whole people. To charge any of our elected officials with consciously trying to wipe out an entire nation seems far-fetched, to say the least.

So, what is going on in Vietnam? How great is the destruction? And does it all add up to a deliberate policy? First, let us take a look at some of the facts and figures.

BOMBING

Since the U.S. began bombing Vietnam, according to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the U.S. has dropped 11,444,533 tons of air, ground and sea munitions. That means that in an area the size of New England, the U.S. has used over three times the amount of explosives used in all of World War II. The Nixon administration, in its first two years, dropped more bombs than Johnson's did during the entire administration. By July, 1972, Nixon had ordered 4.3 million tons dropped on Indochina. In June, the U.S. dropped 112,460 tons — double the amount of the previous January.





At this very moment, the U.S. is dropping 3,750 tons of bombs a day in Indochina — that is 157 tons every hour, 5,200 pounds of bombs exploding every minute.

Among the effects of the bombing has been the transformation of once-fertile land into barren craters. In South Vietnam, according to a report done for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, there are over 20 million bomb craters. These bomb craters fill with stagnant water that breeds malaria-carrying mosquitoes. There are, moreover, several hundred thousand unexploded bombs in the soil and 26 million of the 42 million acres of South Vietnam are riddled with missile fragments. The report illustrates just how devastating the craters can be to present and future agriculture: in France's Verdun area, not only are many of the World War I craters still visible, but some are devoid of vegetation to this day. Finally, since 1968, and increasing after that, five U.S. companies, with 150 bulldozers have been leveling an average of one thousand acres a day.

HERBICIDES

Between 1962 and 1970, according to a report prepared by the Library of Congress, nearly one-seventh of the total land area of South Vietnam was treated with chemical herbicides in order to reduce vegetation and to destroy crops. To accomplish this task, it is estimated that more than 100 million pounds of herbicide, or about 6 pounds for every inhabitant, were sprayed on Vietnam. Nearly ten percent of South Vietnam's population has been sprayed directly. The effect of the herbicide on humans, according to a National Institute of Health

study, is increased incidence of cancer as well as malformed fetuses. Beginning in 1969, the newspapers in Saigon ran daily reports of the large numbers of stillborn and hideously malformed infants.

Needless to say, given such devastation, the people of South Vietnam have to deal with the serious problem of malnutrition. Just one indicator of the extent of the damage done is that South Vietnam, which was once a major rice exporter, must now import virtually all of its rice. In Biafra, after only two years of widespread malnutrition, four out of every ten infants was born malformed. A comparable study has yet to be done in Vietnam.

DEATH TOLL

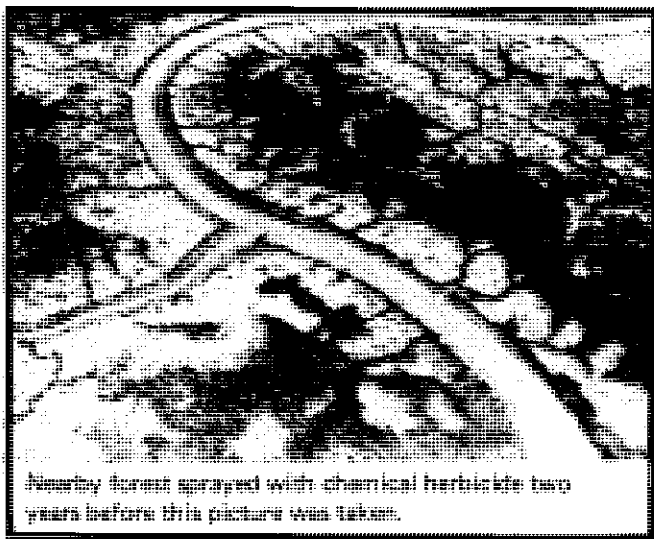
After ten years of fighting according to U.S. government figures, 1.5 million Vietnamese have been killed in South Vietnam — both civilians and soldiers. According to a U.S. General Accounting Office report cited in the *New York Times*, December 5, 1971, over ten million people have been killed, wounded or made refugees throughout Indochina. There are now 258,000 orphans in South Vietnam. According to the South Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, 30% of all civilian deaths were children under thirteen years old.

REFUGEES

In addition to those who have been killed and wounded, there are those who have been forced to leave their homes. According to Senator Kennedy's Subcommittee on Refugees, since 1964 in South Vietnam, there have been over 6 million refugees, over one-third of the population. In Laos there have been 800 thousand refugees in a population of less than three million. In Cambodia, there have been 1.8 million refugees in a population of seven million. In 1961, only ten percent of South Vietnam's population lived in cities; now, as refugees move to the cities, 60% of the people of South Vietnam live in cities. Saigon, whose population went from 400,000 to 4 million in eight years, now has the highest population density in the world, equal to 2½ times that of Tokyo. By 1967 over 5,000 cases of bubonic plague were reported, 60% of Saigon's population is infected with tuberculosis according to the World Health Organization, and over half of Saigon's reported deaths are children under five.

IS IT DELIBERATE?

However great this destruction may be, it is by



no means sufficient by itself to justify the charge that American leaders intend to cause the suffering of so many people — that they are following a strategy of genocide.

There is significant evidence, however, that American planners consciously have relied more and more on methods of warfare which they knew would cause this awesome destruction. From the very beginning of the American military effort our leaders emphasized that the war in Vietnam would involve a very different kind of warfare than we had ever known — it would be fought against guerilla forces and would call for special strategies. By the time President Nixon took office, General Earl Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote a memo that spoke of the difficulties our military effort was running into — he called an American defeat during the Tet Offensive of 1968 "a very near thing." The director of the Pentagon's Office of Systems Analysis summarized the history of the U.S. military campaign in this way:

... despite a massive influx of 500,000 US troops, 1.2 million tons of bombs a year, 400,000 attack sorties per year, 200,000 enemy KIA (killed in action) in three years, 20,000 US KIA, etc., our control of the countryside and the defense of the urban areas is now essentially at pre-August 1965 levels. We have achieved stalemate at a high commitment. A new strategy must be sought.

(Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Vol. IV, p. 558)

NEW STRATEGY

In attempting to develop a new strategy, Pentagon advisers looked for the reason for the U.S. military failure up to that time. Samuel Huntington, a leading Pentagon policy adviser indicated that the U.S.'s problem came from the fact that the

National Liberation Front, who we were fighting, had the support of the rural population of South Vietnam, the overwhelming majority of the people. He explained that the NLF "is a powerful force which cannot be dislodged from its constituency so long as the constituency continues to exist." His solution to the problem — that of ending the existence of the NLF's constituency — was the "direct application of mechanical and conventional power . . . on such a massive scale as to produce a massive migration from countryside to city." For four years, the goal of American military strategy has been to move the rural population into the cities by leaving the people of the countryside no choice. This intention became apparent even to a Vietnam correspondent for the pro-war Hearst newspapers:

a nagging suspicion persists that the effects of bombing are not entirely unintended but derive in part from conscious policy. U.S. officials here appear to operate on a desperate assumption: that the only way to secure the people permanently from the Communists — and deprive the enemy of its manpower — is to remove them physically from Communist territory. From this point of view, the bombing is a broom, sweeping the refugees into the government safe towns.

(reported in the Washington Post, March 2, 1970, from an interview with David Kales)

Along with bombing, the U.S. Army forcibly relocated the civilian population of whole areas. U.S. Marine Lieutenant Colonel William R. Corson described one such relocation and its effect on the Vietnamese people who were moved:

The truth of the matter from the Vietnamese peasants' point of view was that a trip of twenty miles was more fearful than the trek of Steinbeck's 'Okies' to California during the 1930's. Over 90 percent of the residents of Trung Luong had never traveled farther than ten kilometers (about six miles) from their homes. They feared that Cam Lo would not be 'California' but rather a point of no return. Furthermore, the natives of Trung Luong were Buddhists who because of their religious beliefs were greatly concerned about dying in a strange place . . . This fear, added to the loss of their fields and length of the trip, was sufficient to demolish the people. Without a shot being fired, we had conspired with the GVN (Government of South Vietnam) to literally destroy the hopes, aspirations, and emotional stability of 13,000 human beings. This was not and is not war — it is genocide.

(from Corson's book, The Betrayal)

WHY ARE THERE REFUGEES?

The U.S. government has always maintained that

the major reason for the existence of refugees was the desire of many of the people of the countryside to escape from the North Vietnamese. This claim is contradicted by the most thorough study to date, done by a government agency, the U.S. Information Service in June and July, 1970, and based on interviews with numerous refugees. The report concludes that *"the bombing is clearly the most compelling reason for moving."* These interviews produced accounts of life under the bombs such as this one:

There wasn't a night when we thought we'd live until morning . . . never a morning we thought we'd survive until night. Did our children cry? Oh, yes and we did also. I just stayed in my cave. I didn't see the sunlight for two years. What did I think about? Oh, I used to repeat, 'please don't let the planes come, please don't let the planes come, please don't let the planes come.'

The bombing and forced relocation were not the only methods which our government used to remove or destroy the popular base of the National Liberation Front. The extensive spraying of herbicides — their effects on human beings having already been established by a study done in 1965 — was intended not only to remove vegetation used for cover by guerrillas but again, to make the countryside unusable by people whose lives depended on their rice crop. As President Johnson's chief science adviser frankly admitted, *"It's all geared to move the people."*

ANTI-PERSONNEL WEAPONS

The intentions of the men who were in charge of planning our war effort in Vietnam could not have been made clearer than by some of the kinds of bombs they chose to use. According to a paper delivered to the American Association for the Advancement of Science by Professors Pfeiffer and Westing in 1972, *"at least 50% of all bombs dropped on Indochina are what are called 'anti-personnel bombs'."* The purpose of an anti-personnel weapon is best illustrated by the "Dragon tooth" mine (MK-36 system). These four-inch mines which are dropped in quantities of 8,000 by a single aircraft, have been described in the following way by Air Force spokesmen: *"If a person steps on it, it could blow his foot off. If a truck runs over it, it won't blow the tire."* Anti-personnel fragmentation bombs are devised for flesh, they cannot pierce or destroy steel or concrete. Upon explosion, a mother bomb will send out hundreds of thou-

sands of steel pellets, jagged fragments or razor-sharp flechettes. One such commonly used weapon is the "pineapple" bomb. When a single aircraft drops its load of these bombs the effect is equivalent to 13,160 infantrymen each firing one clip from an M-16 rifle simultaneously into the bombed area. The only difference here is that the "Pineapple" bomb is only effective against civilians, not soldiers who are most often protected by sandbags, bunkers and helmets.

The U.S. government has adopted a policy for Indochina which is resulting in the destruction of entire societies. Parts of this devastation are clearly unintended by our leaders, but are the inevitable consequence of their continued pursuit of military victory. Even the most loyal of our government's allies among the Indochinese people are unable to avoid extinction. In Laos, the Meo tribesmen, who were the bulwark of our military effort there, are at the point of ceasing to exist. In 1960, according to Senator Kennedy's Refugee Subcommittee, there were 400,000 Meos. Ten years later, 50% of the men and 25% of the women and children have been killed due to the war. Of the remainder, 95,000 are refugees. The U.S. continues, however, to arm them and send them out to die.

On May 19, 1967, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara delivered to President Johnson a comprehensive report on all aspects of the war up to that time. In discussing "the costs" of any future courses of action, he wrote:

There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring one thousand non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American national consciousness and in the world image of the U.S. — especially if the damage . . . is complete enough to be successful.

(Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Vol. IV, p. 172)

It is now 1972. Is there no limit?

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