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NOTES ON  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
OPPORTUNITIES  
IN THE  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

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NOTES ON  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
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IN THE  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

By  
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COUNTERINSURGENCY INFORMATION ANALYSIS CENTER  
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## P R E F A C E

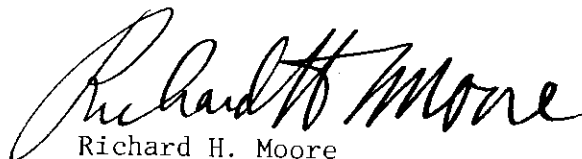
This CINFAC report was developed in response to a request for information on those social, economic, political, military, and ideological circumstances or conditions within the Republic of Vietnam that could be exploited favorably for psychological purposes. Specifically, an historical summary is provided and possible psychological opportunities and vulnerabilities are suggested. The material presented has been selected as a point of departure and as a thought stimulant for those engaged in planning and implementing actual psychological operations in Vietnam.

This research is based on secondary sources dealing with Vietnamese society. Field research was not undertaken, although comment and review by consultants and personnel recently returned from Vietnam have been incorporated. It must be recognized that this is not an exhaustive study of detailed vulnerabilities, audiences, or themes. The task of studying the Republic of Vietnam is a complicated one as the country is undergoing crises of various types. Information obtainable is fragmentary and often biased or contradictory and that contained herein may be dated even before it is published.

The psychological operations discussed in this study "encompass those political, military, economic, and ideological actions planned and conducted to create in the enemy, hostile, neutral, or friendly foreign groups the emotions, attitudes, or behavior, favorable to the accomplishment of U.S. policies and objectives," as defined in the Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage (JD).

In addition to this report, SORO, in response to a request by the Director of Special Operations, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Department of the Army, is publishing under separate cover two other studies: "Persuasion Overseas (Republic of Vietnam Emphasis)" and "A Short Guide to Psychological Operations in the Republic of Vietnam--1965."

Finally, by way of caution, it should be noted that some of the material contained herein may be misconstrued as critical of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.



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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

|   | <u>PAGE</u> |
|---|-------------|
| PREFACE . . . . .   | ii          |
| GENERAL DISCUSSION. . . . .   | 1           |
| PART I:    INTRODUCTION. . . . .  | 3           |
| PART II:   HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SUMMARY . . . . .  | 6           |
| PART III:  AUDIENCE ANALYSIS . . . . .  | 18          |
| FOOTNOTES. . . . .  | 28          |
| SPECIAL SUBJECTS. . . . .   | 32          |
| PART IV:   VIET CONG-NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION<br>OF SOUTH VIETNAM--PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES . . . . . | 35          |
| PART V:   REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM--PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES. . . . .   | 45          |
| PART VI:   UNITED STATES PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN<br>SOUTH VIETNAM . . . . .                                | 62          |
| PART VII:  OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES . . . . .  | 70          |
| FOOTNOTES. . . . .  | 78          |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .   | 82          |
| SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FURTHER READING. . . . .   | 86          |

GENERAL DISCUSSION

GENERAL DISCUSSION

|   | <u>PAGE</u> |
|---|-------------|
| PART I: INTRODUCTION. . . . .                       | 3           |
| PART II: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SUMMARY . . . . .  | 6           |
| A. Cultural Background. . . . .                     | 6           |
| B. Political Background . . . . .                   | 7           |
| C. Historical Development of Rural Society. . . . . | 13          |
| D. Urban Society. . . . .                           | 15          |
| E. Attitudes Toward Change. . . . .                 | 16          |
| PART III: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS . . . . .               | 18          |
| A. General Audiences. . . . .                       | 18          |
| 1. Khmer and Cham Minorities                        |             |
| 2. Aboriginal Tribes                                |             |
| 3. Chinese Ethnic Minority                          |             |
| 4. Peasants   |             |
| 5. Youth  |             |
| B. Special Audiences. . . . .                       | 20          |
| 1. Administrators                                   |             |
| 2. Educators  |             |
| 3. Intellectuals                                    |             |
| 4. Military Personnel                               |             |
| 5. Political Elite                                  |             |
| 6. Roman Catholics                                  |             |
| 7. Buddhist Leaders                                 |             |
| 8. Refugees   |             |
| FOOTNOTES. . . . .                                  | 28          |

## Part I: INTRODUCTION

South Vietnam today is in the midst of a social, political, and economic revolution involving to some extent a fundamental restructuring of the society. A Communist-inspired insurgency has attempted to aggravate societal dislocation and unrest to further its own ends.<sup>1</sup> Herein is a brief analysis of the history and culture of South Vietnam, provided as an analysis of potential audiences and a discussion of psychological opportunities in the present Vietnamese context.

Overall, the following factors are of particular historical significance:

- (1) Social, cultural, and political factors have contrived to make loyalty to the nation-state a difficult concept for the average Vietnamese.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) There exists now, as well as traditionally, a fundamental divergence between the peasant and urban elite.<sup>3</sup>
- (3) Within Vietnamese society, there is a general desire to adapt to circumstances--to be supple in and to adjust to the situation.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, the population of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) is approximately 16 million. Overwhelmingly rural in composition, most of the population is concentrated in the river delta areas which are best suited for rice cultivation. The population density averages 240 people per square mile, with distribution varying from 2,000 people per square mile in the Province of Quang Nam to 13 people per square mile in the Central Highland Province of Quang Duc. The Mekong River Delta area, with 26,200 square miles of territory, has 535 people per square mile; most of these are concentrated along the canals and river banks. South Vietnam has a predominantly youthful population. The growth rate is estimated at 2.8% per year.<sup>5</sup>

Saigon, Vietnam's largest city and the capital of the RVN, has an estimated population of 1.2 million. This city is also the country's cultural and commercial center. Hue, an agricultural and administrative center fifty miles south of the 17th parallel, has a population of approximately 100,000. Da Nang, a city of about 100,000 is located in the Central Lowlands some 100 miles south of the 17th parallel. It is commercially and strategically important because of its excellent deep anchorage harbor. <sup>6</sup>

Indigenous aboriginal tribes (Montagnards) numbering between 500,000 and 700,000 occupy the Central Highlands. In addition, there are approximately one million Chinese and 350,000 Cambodians (Khmers). These three groups comprise the great bulk of the non-ethnic Vietnamese population. European, Eurasian, and other Western ethnic groups are located for the most part in urban areas (Saigon) and do not comprise a significant percentage of the population. <sup>7</sup>

The attitudes, beliefs, values, and interests of the population subgroups present in the RVN today must be taken into account in the planning and execution of psychological operations designed to assist in the defeat of the current insurgency and the building of a modern and peaceful society. The purpose of these notes is to discuss selected psychological opportunities in the RVN with particular emphasis on economic, social, and political vulnerabilities of the Viet-Cong--National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (VC-NFLSVN), the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN) and the United States.

This study is organized into a general discussion and selected special subjects. Part I is a general introduction. Part II is an historical and cultural summary. Part III is an audience analysis.

Part IV assesses specific vulnerabilities of the Viet Cong--National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Part V presents selected opportunities for psychological operations relating to the Republic of Vietnam. Part VI discusses U.S. psychological opportunities within the context of the present Vietnamese situation. Part VII suggests additional psychological opportunities of a general nature. Finally, for convenience, blank pages have been inserted at appropriate places in the text for such use as may be desired.

Throughout this study the political and military arms of the Communist apparatus in South Vietnam will be referred to as the VC-NFLSVN.

## Part II: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SUMMARY

### Cultural Background

Traditionally, Vietnamese society has been based on a system of Confucian values featuring etiquette, adaptability, and family loyalty. Religious, national, political, educational, artistic, literary, and musical forms either find their roots in or have been strongly influenced by this Confucian undercurrent of the culture.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Confucianism, elements more basic to the society as, for example, magic and a belief in the supernatural, are present. Vietnamese animism contains a host of spirits, souls, and "supernatural beings, most of them maleficent."<sup>9</sup>

Religion is also an important factor in Vietnam. Generally, the Vietnamese have embraced Mahayana Buddhism, primarily because the ceremonies and multiplicity of saints fit readily into the patterns of their folk religion. Roman Catholicism was introduced to Vietnam by missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is estimated that the Catholics amount to 10 percent of the population. Two politico-religious sects have been important in the recent past: the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai. Both of these groups retain considerable influence.<sup>10</sup>

Traditional factionalism and regionalism have had a profound effect on the Vietnamese sense of national identification. During the period of independence following the Chinese occupation, there were repeated efforts to unify Vietnam. Both geographical and historical factors limited the success of these efforts however, and indeed, Vietnam

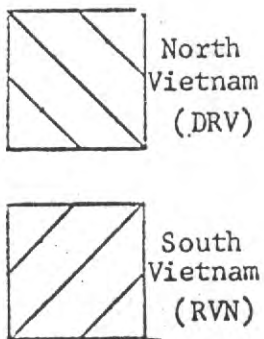
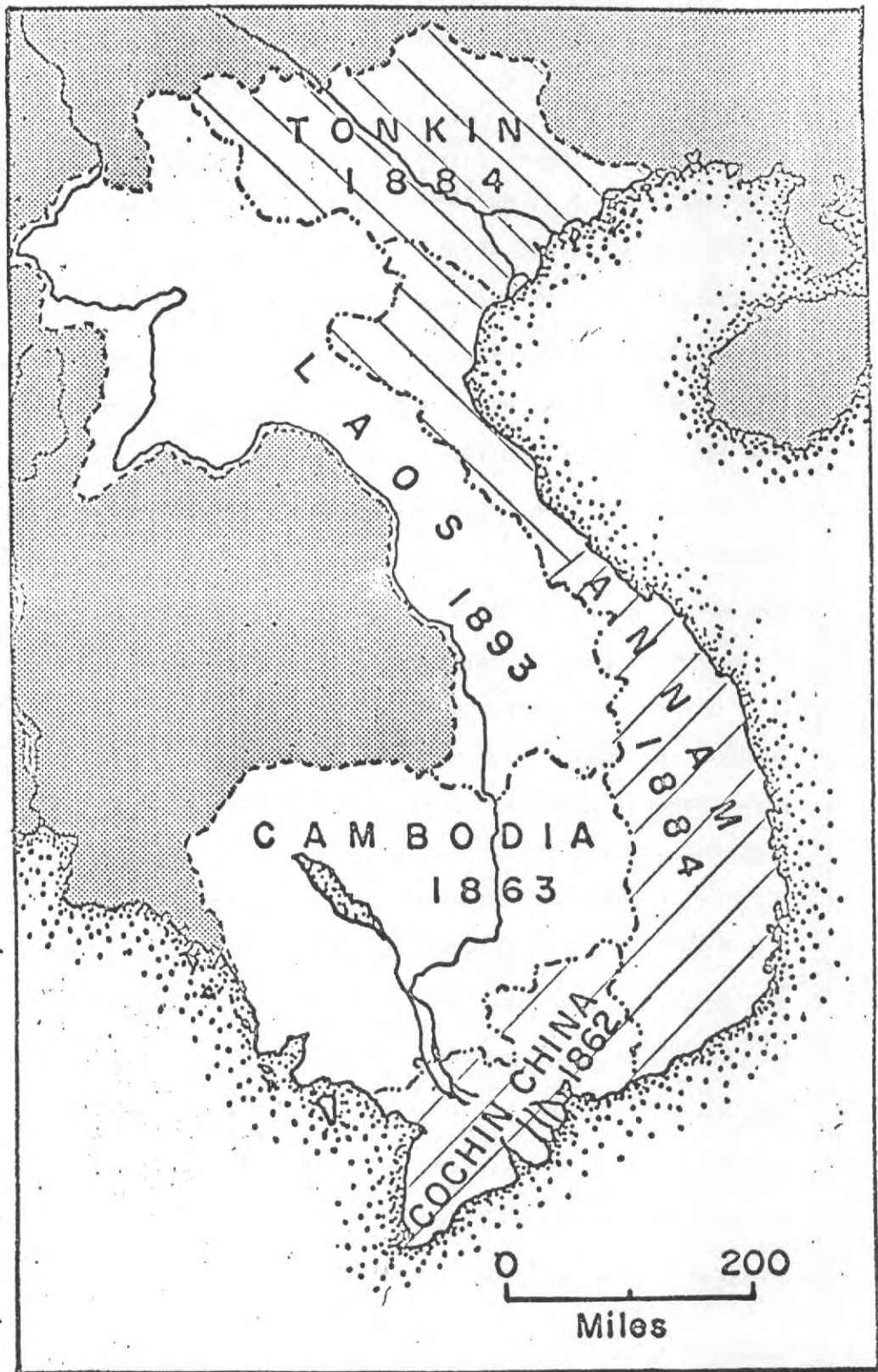
is divided into three fairly distinct cultural and political regions (See map page 8) Today South Vietnam incorporates the southwest of these regions and about half of the Central region. The factionalism of the period of independence and the "divide and rule" tactics of the French have left a legacy of indifference to central authority of the part of the Vietnamese peasant.<sup>11</sup> Despite the absence of a well-defined concept of national identity and loyalty to a central government, an often xenophobic nationalism, complicated by regional perspectives, has been a recurrent theme in Vietnamese history. Religion has played an important part in Vietnamese politics and has often been a catalytic agent in campaigns of nationalism.<sup>12</sup>

Government in Vietnam has been authoritarian, both under Chinese domination, then under the Vietnamese emperors, and, in modern times, under French Colonial rule. In South Vietnam, "The representative institutions and civil freedoms delineated in the Constitution of the Republic remain, in many respects, not achieved reality but a blueprint for political and social evolution."<sup>13</sup>

Education has traditionally determined the social status of an individual in the Vietnamese society. Under the mandarin system which grew out of long Chinese domination, the principal avenue of upward mobility was the acquisition of education. Even with the introduction of wealth as a factor of social mobility, under the French, education remained a very important consideration.<sup>14</sup>

#### Political Background

Under the influence of the Chinese, a mandarin system was established in Vietnam which survived intact for about two thousand years (200 BC-1900 AD). The whole mandarin system was based on



The dates refer to the years of French acquisition

POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF VIETNAM UNDER THE FRENCH  
AND  
PRESENT POLITICAL DIVISIONS

This map was adapted from the map appearing on page 19 of the Special Operations Research Office's U.S. Army Area Handbook for Vietnam.

Confucianism, in which life was ordered on the basis of intellectual achievement. Therefore, scholarship was the key to status in this system and, theoretically, any member of society was able to achieve political importance in the society through study. However, few people were able to devote time to study in the traditional society and, in effect, the mandarin became a self-perpetuating cast of political leaders.

Political authority during the period of independence (1038AD-1862AD) was modeled after the Chinese mandarin. The Emperor was located in Hue, the traditional political and cultural center of Vietnam. The mandarin bureaucracy assisted the emperor in administration of the law and handled such functions as tax collection. Provincial and district mandarins often were assigned to areas far from the capital and, subsequently, ruled with wide discretion and latitude under the most general instructions from the central bureaucracy.

Under the mandarin system the village remained a highly autonomous unit with little or no interference from the higher echelons. Government was symbolized by the village council, comprised of the village elders and, insofar as the people of the village knew, these leaders had ultimate local authority.

French colonial rule began in the late 1800's and lasted for nearly 80 years. Although they could not remake the society, the French altered or weakened critical parts. Under the French, the mandarin influence declined rapidly because of the subjugation of the emperor and the mandarins to French authority. The French instituted a regional approach to the three historic and geographic regions,

retaining the mandarin bureaucracy intact in Annam and Tonkin, and instituting a colony in Cochin China, which was not as well developed politically.<sup>18</sup> (See map page 8) In this way, they exploited the natural particularism and localism of the Vietnamese peasant and the traditional regionalism of the country as a whole. The effect was to break down any sense of identification with single political rule which had grown up under the emperor.<sup>19</sup>

The traditional society was disrupted further by the French introduction of external controls over the village. Rather than improving the relationships between the villagers and central authority, it served to disrupt the traditional relationships between the peasants and the village leaders. However, in spite of the diminution of the powers and prestige of the village leadership caused by the French, and later by the Viet Minh and Viet Cong insurgencies, the village councils are still important since they affect the daily lives of most of the people of South Vietnam.<sup>20</sup>

The growing nationalism of French-educated Vietnamese fostered a desire for independence in the early part of the twentieth century. This nationalism, inspired by Western concepts of national independence and political liberty, encouraged the growth of incipient political parties.<sup>21</sup> As a result of the suppressive politics of the French in the northern and central portions of Vietnam, these parties were forced to operate covertly. The Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD), or Viet Nam Nationalist Party, the most prominent of these organizations, was crushed in 1930 for its part in a mutiny against the French.<sup>22</sup>

Within this party were the seeds of leadership which might have grown strong enough to unite the country under one banner after the

expulsion of the French. The destruction of the VNQDD denied the populace a focus for nationalistic feeling and left the Communists in the forefront of opposition to French rule. By default, therefore, the Communists were able to identify themselves with the growing force of Vietnamese nationalism. They were, of course, ideally suited to the task of survival under French repression because of their disciplined organization and tactical flexibility.<sup>23</sup>

After World War II, when the French returned to Hanoi, they found the Communist Viet Minh in control of most of the people of the North. The South was controlled by a coalition of politico-religious sects, communists and Nationalist "parties" or political groups. The subsequent civil war, which was a part of the larger Indochinese War, aggravated anti-French feelings and contributed to the ultimate demise of French authority and influence in North Vietnam.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, in the South, a politically competent anti-Communist Catholic minority advocated nationalism. The Catholics assumed political power in the political vacuum left by the departure of the French. Although imbued with a French-oriented outlook that was not well adapted to the realities of Vietnamese culture, the "Ngo family of Catholic mandarins was sufficiently anti-French to invest the struggle with the saving dignity of patriotism."<sup>25</sup>

Diem soon found that if he were to effectively hold and exercise power he could not tolerate more than the most moderate political opposition.<sup>26</sup> It is generally held that while Diem espoused the principles of liberation and multi-party democracy he repressed opposition excessively and exhibited what seemed to be obvious official partiality

27

toward Catholics at all levels. The "religious issue" upon which much of the opposition to Diem was focused was not something that suddenly happened, it had been gradually building up from the time Diem first took office. <sup>28</sup> "The Buddhist uprisings of the spring of 1963 brought the political situation to the forefront again." <sup>29</sup>

The removal of Ngo Dinh Diem from power "threw South Vietnam into a continuing state of political ferment and precipitated a social revolution in which new figures and factions have emerged to contend for power." <sup>30</sup> Apparently, the Buddhist leaders do not wish to exercise authority themselves. As their leader, Tri Quang, says, "We have purpose, a high purpose. It is not that we want our members elected-- we are not a party. We will tell our members to elect good candidates and then make sure that there are good candidates." <sup>31</sup>

The so-called "Buddhist Movement" apparently is more concerned with political questions than with doctrinal religious considerations. The Buddhists could exercise power on a much broader base of popular support than either the army or the Catholics, but the militancy of the Buddhist Movement is not shared by all Vietnamese Buddhists. This internal factionalism might militate against their assumption of power. However, while they will not assume official responsibility, the Buddhist leaders continually carp at those who do, contributing to a political instability which manifests itself in successful and unsuccessful attempts to overthrow the Government. The discord and frustration of Vietnamese politics brought about by the militant Buddhists is an apparent aid to the Viet Cong. <sup>32</sup>

Unrest and instability have been heightened by the rise of the

military in a country which has little military tradition outside of the occasional "man on horseback" of the period of independence. Certainly there has been no tradition of an institutional military structure. Until recently, therefore, the military did not merit much consideration or respect in Vietnamese society.

33

However, the almost constant emphasis on security problems since the end of World War II and the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem by the military has brought the military into a position of significant social and political influence. Nonetheless, the military leadership has operated in an urban context with urban values and, as such, has not been able to instill patriotism or a sense of national identity in the majority of the South Vietnamese people. The major problem facing the military is the factionalism within its own ranks. The antagonisms between the older French-trained officers and the so-called "Young Turks" and the problems of personal ambitions and religious beliefs contribute to the instability of the political arena.

34

#### Historical Development of Rural Society

The peasant is the basic element of Vietnamese society. His mores and values have evolved over many centuries in a rural culture based on rice and Confucian ethics. The major values are filial piety, loyalty, benevolence, justice, and propriety and are expressed through the extended patrilineal family. His society has been shaped by the early and prolonged influence of the Chinese, who introduced the Confucian ethical system upon which the peasant bases his allegiance to family and village.

36

Vietnam was ruled by the Chinese for nearly a thousand years. In 1038 AD the Vietnamese gained a precarious independence which they maintained until the French assumed political control in 1862. During this whole period, the country was nominally ruled by an emperor usually situated in Hue. However, the peasants' allegiance was to their families first and to the village leaders second. The majority of the villagers felt no sense of identification with the imperial government; their only concrete experiences were with the tax collector and an occasional imperial representative who conscripted the villagers into the Emperor's military service. Naturally, this type of contract bred resentment among the rural Vietnamese and served to make them suspicious of central authority.

37

This traditional society, based on the Chinese model introduced during the millennium of Chinese domination, existed without noticeable change until the French conquest. Under the French, the Confucian social order crumbled and the prestige and political power of the village elite waned. The introduction of Christianity caused the decline of Confucianism as a dominant intellectual tradition. However, Confucianism was imbedded by this time in the morals and values of the peasant and, therefore, the life of the peasant changed very little under the influence of Christianity.

38

The struggle for independence from the French served to reinforce the sense of unity based on ethnic and linguistic ties, although, in most cases, this was likely to be subordinated to family and village

loyalties. Nevertheless, nationalism had little effect on the rural peasant and he did not develop a broad sense of identification with the elite social, political, and religious groups who were advocating that Vietnam be for the Vietnamese.<sup>39</sup>

Today the peasant is becoming increasingly aware of the turmoil around him and desires to see social and political change which will end internal strife and improve his standard of living. However, his basically Confucian outlook inhibits him from actively seeking or advocating the desired change. In spite of this, it is his mode of life and his culture which will determine both the course of social and political change and who the leaders advocating those changes will be.<sup>40</sup>

#### Urban Society

Western influence, both French and U.S., has contributed to changing values and mores. There has been a limited transition from a Confucian tradition of stability to a more Western emphasis on innovation and change. This has been particularly obvious in the urban areas of South Vietnam. The traditional economic and social dependence on agriculture, with the attendant roots in the patrilineal family, have been loosened by the influence of the cities. This process is being accelerated because the educated youth of an essentially youthful nation are receptive to new ideas and are increasingly vulnerable to Viet Cong appeals based on nationalism and social protest. The youth are turning away from the age-oriented ancestor worshipping family unit, in which they must play a limited and carefully delineated role, and are seeking their separate identity. The restless energy of youth in South Vietnam has been

characterized by student political agitation in Saigon and in other  
41  
cities.

The process of urbanization is reinforcing fundamental divisions in the society, although the number of people involved in the process has been relatively minor compared to the total population of South Vietnam. However, whatever the reasons for urban growth, it is apparent that an increasing gulf, reflected in a growing antagonism between the urbanite and the peasant, is developing between the dynamic, semi-  
42  
industrial urban society and the unchanging traditionalist rural society.

The urban dweller, in spite of his higher economic status (in relation to the peasant) views the peasant as backward, ignorant, and naive, whereas the rural dweller sees the urbanite as corrupt and grasping. This mutual lack of understanding has hampered efforts to build a viable modern  
43  
society.

#### Attitude Toward Change

Many factors have frustrated GVN efforts to instill national ideology and allegiance to the Republic of Vietnam. One of the most important of these factors is adaptability based on Confucian passivity. Passivity sets up a resistance to change which is augmented by the localism of allegiance to family and village. Confucianism requires that each man find his place and function smoothly in the natural order. In rural Vietnam, therefore, it is difficult to convince the peasant that there is a single right way which he should follow. In Vietnam, no position is irretrievable, no commitment is final. Because Vietnamese value adaptability so highly, everyone is expected to adjust to changing

circumstances.

In other words, "Adjustment of principles to a given situation, rather than firm adherence to immutable principle, is admired. The Vietnamese have a proverb which points out that the supple, bending reed survives storms which break the strong, but unyielding oak. The Republic has, in fact, replaced the dragon on the former coat of arms with a bundle of bamboo reeds which represents the endurance of the adaptable Vietnamese in the face of all vicissitudes."<sup>45</sup>

### Part III: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

This analysis of audiences in South Vietnam is concerned with general groups reflecting broad cultural, social, ethnic, and geographic divisions and with special groups representing particular interests or points of view. The general audiences are mass groups such as religious, ethnic and minority groups, peasants, urban dwellers, and youth. Typical of the special audiences are administrators, educators, intellectuals, military personnel, the political elite (See page 23) Catholic and Buddhist religious leaders, and refugees.

Each of the special and general audiences dealt with herein is likely to contain pro-government elements, neutrals and anti-government elements. Often an individual may be a member of several special audiences, if not more than one general group, and his actual political outlook will reflect several, sometimes contradictory, viewpoints.

#### General Audiences

The Khmer and Cham minorities are considered culturally inferior by the great majority of the Vietnamese. For this reason, both the Khmers and the Chams have tended to isolate themselves from Vietnamese society, retaining their cultural, religious, and racial identity intact. They are generally indifferent to Vietnamese politics.

The aboriginal tribes (Montagnards) are not integrated into the society. However, in recent years they have assumed importance because of their willingness to bear arms against the Viet Cong. This does not stem from a commitment to the GVN or from a hatred of Communist doctrine. Rather it stems from a basic hatred of the ethnic Vietnamese. At the request of the GVN forces, the U.S. advisors have motivated the Montagnards to view the Viet Cong as the enemy. Appeals based on loyalty to the RVN

will have little effect on the Montagnards, who for various reasons, prefer  
47  
to remain outside the mainstream of Vietnamese society.

The Chinese ethnic minority is disliked by the Vietnamese people and has been discriminated against by the Vietnamese Government. Therefore, the Chinese isolate themselves as much as possible from Vietnamese social and political life. Although there have been instances of Chinese participation in Communist activities in recent years, the Chinese desire to protect their many business interests may induce them to resist the Communists and tacitly, if not actively, support the GVN and the U.S.  
48  
military efforts.

In Vietnam, peasants, most of whom live in villages or hamlets, have little contact with the Central Government, and therefore have no well developed sense of national identity. The peasant's commitment is first to his family and then to the council of elders who govern his village. The cultural emphasis on adaptability permits the Vietnamese peasant to adjust his attitudes to the situation. For this reason, the peasant's attitude toward the GVN, the U.S. mission, and the Viet Cong tend to vary with the influence that each of these elements exerts over his daily  
49  
life.

Many of the peasants rent their land from absentee landowners. This often results in tension between the peasant and wealthy urban landowners. The large landowner is almost always a city-dwelling absentee landlord who charges excessive rates for the rent of his land. The inequities of the landholding system create strong antagonisms among the people. Viet Cong propaganda operations have not failed to take advantage of these antagonisms.  
50

Urban Vietnamese attitudes tend to be shaped by the economic status of the individual within the urban society rather than by traditional allegiances to family and village. <sup>51</sup> The white collar workers and the skilled laborers who comprise the great majority of the middle class generally have a favorable attitude toward the Government. A stable political and social environment is necessary if they are to retain their relatively high economic position and social status. For this reason, they definitely view the Communists as a threat to their livelihood and status. On the other hand, the lower urban classes, consisting primarily of unskilled laborers, have a potentially unfavorable attitude toward the GVN because of unemployment and low wages. <sup>52</sup>

Youth, especially the university students, are sympathetic to the cause of geopolitical nationalism and, for this reason, are sympathetic to the "Buddhist Movement." This emotional attachment to the Buddhist cause makes them a threat to political stability. It is important to note that the students are followers, not leaders, and as such are subject to manipulation from all sides. If they could be induced to view the GVN as the vehicle for achieving Vietnamese answers to Vietnam's difficulties, they would support the Government and the U.S. military. <sup>53</sup>

The students are a key element in the struggle against the VC-NFLSVN.

#### Special Audiences

The administrators are those non-political members of the governmental bureaucracy who represent the Government at the municipal, provincial and district levels.

While many view the administrators as a homogenous group within Vietnamese society, it is important to realize that this homogeneity derives

from a coincidental sense of self-preservation and a desire to preserve status in a dynamic and threatening environment, rather than from a homogeneity of patriotic aims, goals, and interests.

54

Youthful civil servants who show any initiative, energy, or imagination are quite often squelched by their superiors in the administration, or by the political elite who view the institution of a formal, independent, neutral, and impersonal administrative system as a threat to their traditional position of ritualistic power based on the mandarin form of government. The general effect of such repression is to inhibit any willingness to assume responsibility. The young civil servants, therefore, are bitter, frustrated, and without a sense of purpose. For this reason, they represent a growing threat to the stability of the civil service and the political situation.

55

56

As a rule, the civil servant tends to think in terms of prestige and authority. He is obsequious toward his superiors and authoritarian toward those whom he considers to be his inferiors. He does his job "by the book," regardless of its effect on the feelings and sensitivities of the people. This tends to alienate the populace from the civil servant and builds a popular resentment toward the Government.

57

Traditional regionalism has its effect on the civil service. Refugees from the North and Central parts of Vietnam who have entered the civil service are acutely aware of the Southerner's unfavorable attitudes toward them. Recent Buddhist-Catholic religious strife has had a tremendous impact on the civil service. A common charge has been that the Catholics hold a disproportionate influence in the Government. The lingering effect of the favoritism shown Catholics in the civil service by Ngo Dinh Diem is

connected to this problem. The antagonisms inherent in this situation make united, effective civil service action difficult and increase the possibilities of exploitation of these schisms by the Viet Cong. 58

In summary, it can be said that the civil servant is dispirited and dissatisfied, both with his own organization and with the political leadership of the country. He is unwilling to assume responsibility, avoids commitment to the regime in power, emphasizes the prerogatives of office and behaves in an authoritarian manner, thereby alienating the populace. Finally, the beneficial effect upon morale of the independence from France is being eroded by declining living standards, an unsatisfied psychological need for better opportunities for social and economic advancement, poor political leadership, aged and tradition-bound administrative leaders, and the tensions of war. 59

The educators are the teachers and school administrators. They are, in general, highly regarded and poorly paid. Of great significance for psychological operations aimed at this group is the fact that its members are widely scattered throughout the country, where their most important role is the dissemination and interpretation of the printed word to the illiterate peasant. As a group, they feel a professional superiority and view themselves as the leaders and molders of national opinion. They are the most articulate members of the society and have a number of intellectuals within their ranks. The educator is generally acquainted with Western intellectual influences. However, skepticism brought about by French intellectual training makes him suspicious of the propaganda efforts of the VC-NFLSVN, the GVN, and the United States. 60

The intellectuals consist of lawyers, doctors, scholars, artists,

writers, and poets. Poets and writers have particularly high social status and, as such, can be effectively used as instruments of propaganda. The depth of commitment to U.S. military and civil activities, or to U.S. political philosophy, varies widely. Commitments tend to be emotional because the intellectual often lacks a real understanding of political systems and political movements. On the whole, the intellectual is unsure of his position within the society and would like to protect his high standard of living. However, due to the emotional aspect of his political philosophy, he often sympathizes with the Communists, failing to see the threat that they present to his position within the society. <sup>61</sup>

Military personnel, as an audience, can be divided into senior officers, junior officers, non-commissioned officers, other enlisted ranks, and civil defense forces. While sharing common interests within the military structure, these groups are divided on some social, political, and economic issues. For example, antagonisms between the older officers and the more junior officers, stemming from ambition, religious beliefs, and frustrations over the lack of political progress, have contributed to a considerable degree of political instability. This has not, however, resulted in any evidence of widespread defeatism or a desire to accommodate with the enemy. The non-commissioned officers, other enlisted man, and civil defense personnel now receive an income higher than that of the average South Vietnamese. However, the necessity of leaving families for extended periods, inadequate personal communications, and the social discrimination practiced by some officers have lowered troop morale to some extent. <sup>62</sup>

The political elite is comprised of those who hold or actively compete for policy-making positions generally outside the civil service. Of all

the groups within the governmental structure, the political elite seems to exert the greatest influence. As a group, they are generally opposed to the VC because they view it as a threat to the growth of their influence within the society. On the whole, they are historically sensitive to foreign interference because of the experiences suffered under French rule; for this reason, they tend to regard the U.S. personnel with attitudes ranging from hostile suspicion to hesitant favor.

The Roman Catholics comprise about ten percent of the population and have exercised an inordinate amount of influence over political affairs. Recent religious strife and the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem has drastically reduced their influence and they have become concerned with the salvation of their privileged position in Vietnamese society. In theory they are doctrinally opposed to communism. They are pro-government, however, only to the extent that they would prefer to maintain the present form of government rather than initiate a form which would preclude them from exercising any political influence.

The Buddhist leaders recently have become very concerned with political issues. They have displayed an instinctive touch for public relations and in the anti-Diem campaign took full advantage of their generally favorable foreign press. Such theatrical hands, it would appear, have stage-managed much ostensibly spontaneous protest and agitation. "The breadth of the 'Buddhist leaders' actual political mandate is open to question. Granting all this and more, however, the fact remains that the 'Buddhist' movement has become one of the most potent political forces in South Vietnam." Charges of Communist sympathy are often directed at the Buddhist leadership. These charges seem to have much validity when viewed

in the light of Buddhist support of the "Peoples Revolutionary Force," a political organization which practices lawlessness, violence, and intimidation. On the other hand, a great number of Buddhists are members of the Armed Forces and are loyal to the Government of South Vietnam. <sup>66</sup>

The militancy of the Buddhist leadership seems to be directed primarily at the removal of all foreign influence in Vietnam, including that of the U.S. personnel. Buddhism's broad appeal to the Vietnamese gives the Buddhist leaders a potentially large and receptive audience for their political beliefs. <sup>67</sup> However, factionalism within the Buddhist leadership has prevented them from formulating a unified program. The Buddhist leaders avoid the responsibilities of public office, yet they make emotional protests against those who attempt to fill political offices. A consideration for psychological operations is the fact that leaders are going to be hypersensitive to any real or fancied renewal of "'Diemist' or 'Catholic' political authority and to any potential threat to Buddhism." <sup>68</sup>

Refugees from the North, although mostly ethnic Vietnamese, have engendered some antagonism within the society. Many have entered the Armed Forces and are among the most dedicated of the anti-Viet Cong members of the GVN. The cause of friction seems to stem from special privileges which have been accorded them and their families in recognition of their anti-Viet Cong attitudes. Equally important are the regional antipathies aroused by North and Central Vietnamese being placed in a Southern Vietnamese society. <sup>69</sup>

NOTES

NOTES

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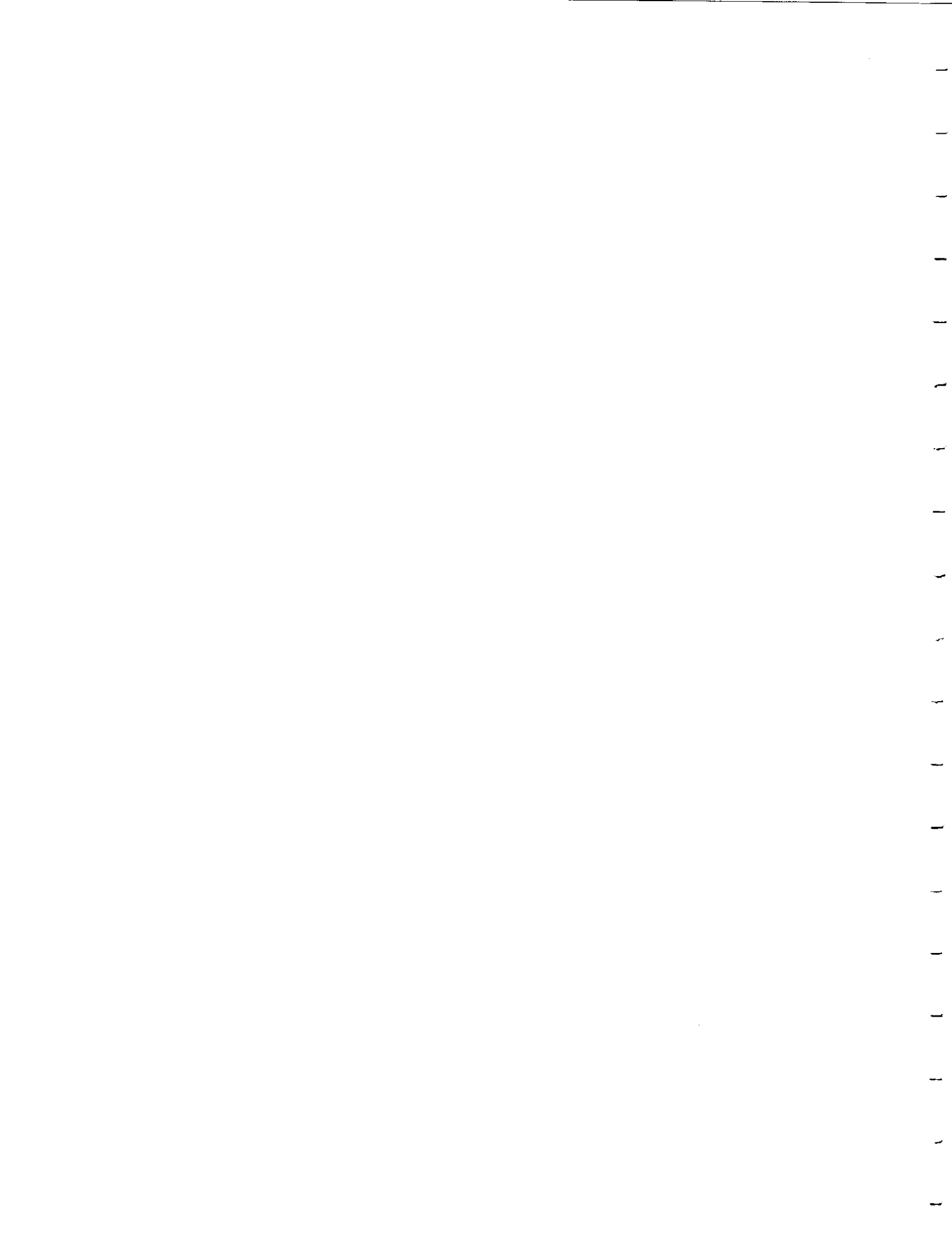
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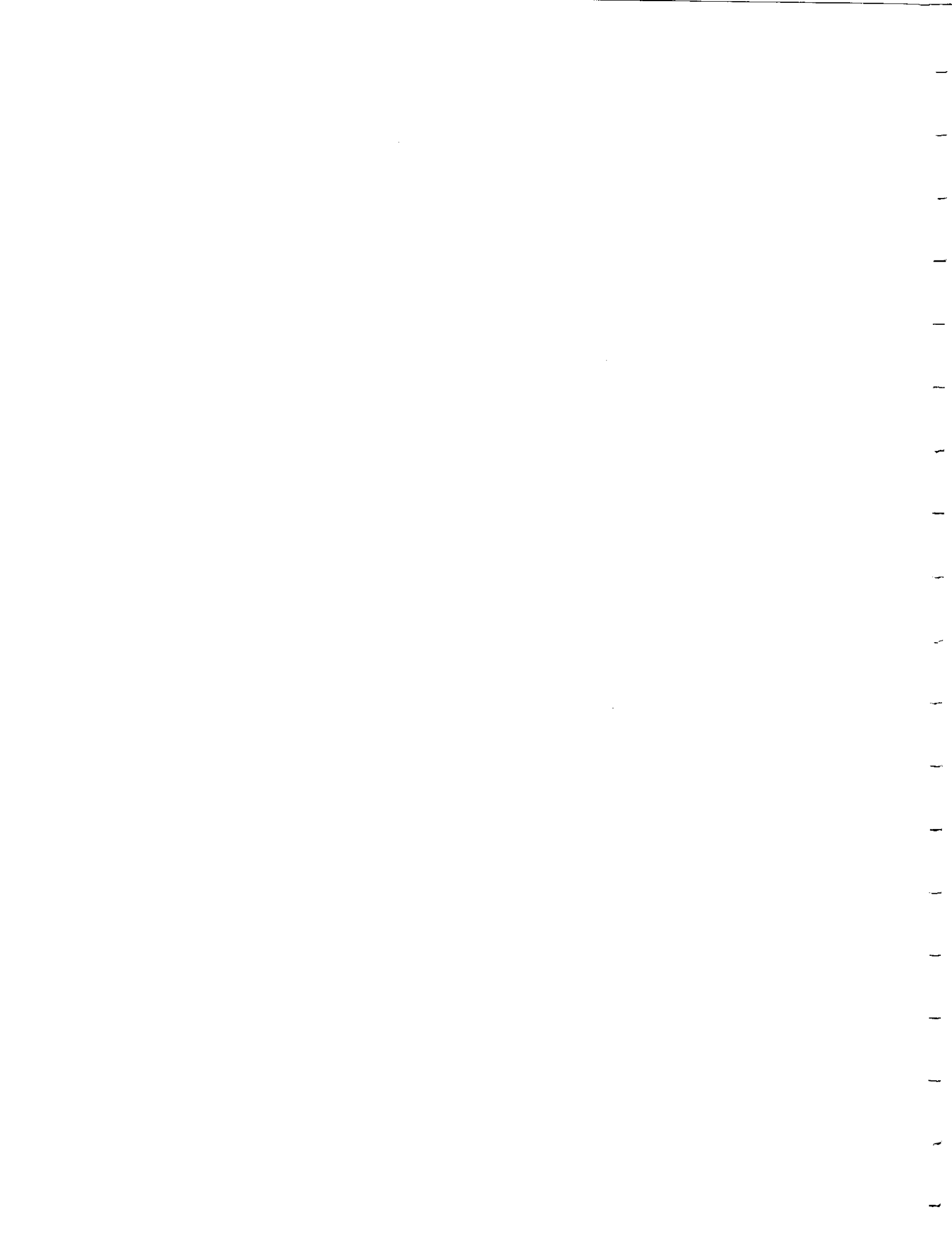
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SPECIAL SUBJECTS



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|  | <u>PAGE</u> |
|--|-------------|
| PART IV: VIET CONG--NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF<br>SOUTH VIETNAM--PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES . . . . . | 35          |
| A. Communist Use of Terrorism and Sabotage . . . . .   | 36          |
| B. Manipulation of Vietnamese Social Values<br>and Society . . . . .   | 37          |
| C. Resentment of Financial, Labor, and<br>Recruitment Practices . . . . .  | 38          |
| D. Inconsistent Propaganda Themes and<br>Abrasive Techniques . . . . .   | 39          |
| E. Historical Antipathy Toward China . . . . .   | 40          |
| F. Historical Mistrust of North Vietnamese . . . . .   | 41          |
| G. Personnel Problems. . . . .   | 42          |
| PART V: REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM--PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES . . . . .   | 45          |
| A. RVN Ideological Weaknesses. . . . .   | 46          |
| B. Popular Suspicion of Foreign Influence. . . . .   | 47          |
| C. Popular Resentment of Catholic Minority . . . . .   | 48          |
| D. Disaffection of Indigenous Ethnic Minorities . . . . .  | 49          |
| E. Disaffection of Buddhists . . . . .   | 50          |
| F. Disaffection of Intellectuals . . . . .   | 51          |
| G. Discontent of Military Elements . . . . .   | 52          |
| H. Disaffection of the Chinese Minority. . . . .   | 53          |
| I. Role of French Elements . . . . .   | 54          |
| J. Restrictions on Civil Liberties and<br>Abuses of Police Powers . . . . .                                      | 55          |
| K. Rural Security and Peasant Dissatisfaction. . . . .   | 56          |
| L. RVN Agrarian Reform Policies . . . . .  | 57          |

|  | <u>PAGE</u> |
|--|-------------|
| M. Public Health and Sanitation . . . . .                              | 58          |
| N. Inadequacy of Educational Facilities . . . . .                      | 59          |
| PART VI: UNITED STATES PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM .  | 62          |
| A. Vietnamese Nationalism and Ignorance of<br>U.S. Objectives. . . . . | 63          |
| B. The Role of the U.S. Military in South<br>Vietnam . . . . .         | 64          |
| C. GVN Alienation of the Population. . . . .                           | 65          |
| D. Shortcomings of GVN Administrative Apparatus .                      | 66          |
| E. Breakdown in US-GVN Interpersonal Relations. .                      | 67          |
| PART VII: OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES . . . . .                  | 70          |
| A. Vietnamese Spirit of Nationalism . . . . .                          | 71          |
| B. Vietnamese Ethnic and Cultural Pride . . . . .                      | 72          |
| C. The Strength of the Vietnamese Family System .                      | 73          |
| D. Religion in Vietnam. . . . .  | 74          |
| E. Communist Environmental and Operational<br>Difficulties . . . . .   | 75          |
| FOOTNOTES . . . . .  | 78          |

PART IV:

VIET CONG - NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF  
SOUTH VIETNAM -- PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

## A. Communist Use of Terrorism and Sabotage

### Background

While Communist doctrine requires strict adherence to policies designed to win the support of the populace, it also calls for the use of terrorism and sabotage against the Government and elements of the population distinctly opposed to communism. At present, the VC uses terror primarily to emphasize demands for support from the people and to embarrass the GRVN and the United States by demonstrating the RVN regime's inability to maintain internal order and to assure personal security, even for government officials and U.S. advisors. The result of these tactics, in addition to the average citizen's fear for his personal safety and his consequent loss of confidence in the Government, has been the destruction of schools, medical facilities, and communications equipment, and the impairment<sup>1</sup> of the governmental administrative apparatus, especially in rural areas.

### Exploitable Aspects

The deleterious effect of the Communist destruction of educational, medical, communications, and administrative facilities on the Vietnamese economy, all of which personally affect rural elements, may be used effectively to arouse the indignation and anger of peasant and urban Vietnamese. The frequency, cruelty, and seeming pointlessness of these actions should reinforce public resentment and emphasize the need for whole-hearted popular support of GVN anti-Communist programs. The use of terrorism and intimidation also exposes the innate cynicism of Communist propaganda and the basic<sup>2</sup> contradictions between VC-NFLSVN official policy and actual procedure.

### Potential Audiences

Audiences for the exploitable aspects of this vulnerability are rural and urban elements of the population who can be reached through propaganda media. Specifically, however, they are: VC-NFLSVN personnel actually from the South; tenant farmers and landowners living in rural areas; teachers, businessmen, and administrators in rural areas and provincial towns; and foreign elements such as the French settlers. Western and Asian military observers are vulnerable to appeals exploiting this subject.

## B. Manipulation of Vietnamese Social Values and Society

### Background

In North Vietnam and in areas of the RVN subject to VC-NFLSVN control, the Communists are attempting to replace traditional values and ethics and to reshape the existing social structure. Wherever the VC-NFLSVN have gained control of a village or a group of peasants, the usual results have been the removal of local notables, the disruption of the agricultural and economic apparatus (to the benefit of the Communists), and the emergence of a social and political organization that disregards many of the accepted Vietnamese ethical and social values. These changes rectifying GVN failures may appear beneficial at first, but it soon becomes apparent that the VC-NFLSVN cadres intend to regulate the society for their own ends and not for the general welfare. Most Vietnamese react unfavorably to attempts to disrupt their society or to interfere with their personal freedom.

### Exploitable Aspects

The reaction of the Vietnamese people to attempts to distort or replace the traditional Vietnamese value system and social structure can be exploited through programs emphasizing that, in VC-NFLSVN controlled areas, undesirable changes occur. These include the distortion of liberty and justice and an increase in suffering and loss of personal dignity. This social upheaval endangers the Vietnamese way of life, values, and traditions. Factors important to most Vietnamese which the Communists would undoubtedly modify, are: the traditional Vietnamese respect for age, education, and religion; the close ties between youth and elders; and the large measure of personal freedom presently enjoyed.

### Potential Audiences

Tradition-oriented farmers and peasants, especially in areas dominated by the Communists or in areas in which there is a great deal of Communist activity, are particularly susceptible to propaganda of this sort. Tribal and other ethnic minorities in South Vietnam are a target, since the Communists also represent a threat to their values and social structure. Themes dealing with personal freedom are applicable to all Vietnamese. VC-NFLSVN personnel, Communist sympathizers, and left-wing urban elements are typical targets of a more specific nature.

## C. Resentment of Financial, Labor, and Recruitment Practices

### Background

The Communists need more food and men to support their growing political and military organization. They are forced, therefore, to demand more rice from the farmer, to extort more funds from the urban dwellers, and to round up young men and women to work and fight for them. "In Tay-Ninh Province, the VC entered a government held hamlet and kidnapped nine men to serve as helpers. In Phuoc Thanh, they held up a bus and collected 'taxes' from each passenger. In Binh Dinh Province, they impressed 100 peasants into service as laborers. Twenty-five other villagers, however, refused to be drafted--so they were shot to death."<sup>5</sup> VC-NFLSVN agents have presented themselves and their organization to a fairly credulous peasantry as the liberators of South Vietnam. The property of landlords kidnapped or killed by the VC-NFLSVN has been distributed free to the farmers, tenants, and laborers of the area. The people only later become aware that, once in possession of these lands, they must pay "taxes" (often disguised as voluntary contributions to the cause of Vietnamese freedom) which very often amount to more than the rents and interest paid to the former "exploiters."<sup>6</sup>

### Exploitable Aspects

The more brutal and ruthless the behavior of the VC-NFLSVN, the less popular they are with the masses. In the eyes of oppressed farmers, they are no longer friends but foes. This is a highly exploitable vulnerability of the VC-NFLSVN; the resentment of the Vietnamese can be intensified through programs emphasizing the frequency, selfishness, and brutality of these acts. The Vietnamese have historically resented both governmental taxation and forced labor; therefore, the VC-NFLSVN has promised to eliminate such practices. This contradiction between Communist theory and Communist practice is most exploitable.

### Potential Audiences

Rural and urban elements subject to VC-NFLSVN labor draft and extortion practices are the targets. Pro-government and neutral peasants throughout Vietnam constitute a secondary, more general audience. Specific examples of such groups are the village notables, the farmers, and the rural GVN administrative personnel. In addition, VC-NFLSVN personnel from the South may be susceptible to programs similar to those outlined above.

## D. Inconsistent Propaganda Themes and Abrasive Techniques

### Background

The VC-NFLSVN have used psychological warfare extensively to educate the rural and urban Vietnamese in Communist objectives and procedures. "Thus, while Communist agents of the Dich-Van and Binh-Van work on their enemy, demoralizing them, inducing them to switch sides, their Dan-Van agents, who operate solely among the peasants, promise them democracy, liberty, happiness, reunification, and a better life without war, with improved living conditions and ownership of lands if they side with them."<sup>8</sup> Communist propaganda is based to a considerable degree on a thorough understanding of the Vietnamese people and conditions in South Vietnam. Nevertheless, the VC-NFLSVN have often failed to fulfill promises and these contradictions become apparent between VC-NFLSVN propaganda and deed.<sup>9</sup>

### Exploitable Aspects

Inconsistencies in VC-NFLSVN propaganda and the use of such propaganda to bring about changes in Vietnamese thinking and to undermine Vietnamese social and cultural institutions, are exploitable aspects of this vulnerability. Specifically, contradictions between VC-NFLSVN promises and practices should be noted in designing anti-Communist programs. Threats inherent in Communist propaganda proposals to change Vietnamese society should also be exposed.<sup>10</sup>

### Potential Audiences

Generally, the entire population of South Vietnam constitutes a target for the exploitation of this vulnerability. More specifically, however, the urban dwellers, political elite, refugees, senior military officers, members of the intelligentsia, businessmen, and administrators and educators are likely to be most receptive to appeals of this type. Catholic and Buddhist religious leaders are also targets.

## E. Historical Antipathy Toward China

### Background

A major vulnerability of the VC-NFLSVN is to be found in the traditional Vietnamese dislike for China. China ruled Vietnam for over a thousand years; since independence in 1038 A.D., a precarious freedom has been maintained only by successively fending off invading Chinese armies and exploiting internal differences and weaknesses in Peking. In the process, much Chinese culture has been absorbed without, however, substantially affecting the Vietnamese way of life. In their long resistance to Chinese political and cultural domination, the Vietnamese have come to regard China as the traditional enemy. Most Vietnamese still reflect this traditional antagonism, and many continue to see danger in any relationship with China. Chinese personnel in Hanoi, including technicians, and other manifestations of Chinese influence on VC-NFLSVN activities in the south have aggravated this situation.<sup>11</sup>

### Exploitable Aspects

This widespread dislike and mistrust of the Chinese can be used to undermine the position of the VC-NFLSVN and to unify the people in the face of a common threat by a traditional enemy.<sup>12</sup> Specific appeals could be based on (a) the dubious nature of Chinese political and military motives toward South Vietnam, (b) the unreliability of Chinese promises, (c) the very real threat of a Chinese dominated government coming to power if the VC-NFLSVN are not defeated, (d) current hardships, most of which stem from Chinese support of the VC-NFLSVN, and (e) the reshaping of the Vietnamese social system and family life in a foreign mold with the probable result of the destruction of Vietnamese culture, religion, and folklore.

### Potential Audiences

Most ethnic Vietnamese, the peasant in particular, are susceptible to appeals based on this vulnerability. In addition, the personnel of the VC-NFLSVN from the South, the peasants, and the tribal people (Montagnards) should be given particular attention as targets. Other groups of interest are the rural administrators, officials, and business and commercial interests.

## F. Historical Mistrust of North Vietnamese

### Background

"The Southerner tends to distrust the Northerner, crediting him with being more energetic than himself and also as being prepared to take every possible advantage in any transaction."<sup>13</sup> Generally, people in the South are intimidated by the North Vietnamese. There was a marked degree of apprehension in the South at the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from the North in 1954. A sizeable number of refugees with administrative skills or professional experience needed by the GVN were given positions in the Vietnamese civil service, an action which has not lessened the antipathy of certain southern elements toward Northerners in general.<sup>14</sup>

### Exploitable Aspects

The extent of North Vietnamese influence in the VC-NFLSVN propaganda calling for the reunification of the two Vietnams presents an opportunity for psychological activity. Since the VC-NFLSVN is guided or influenced by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), its motives must be suspect. In addition, the general mistrust of Northerners in the RVN can be exploited as a basis for closer internal cooperation and development in the face of a common threat. Specifically, appeals could be based on (a) the southern dislike of northern attitudes of superiority, (b) a distrust of the motives of the Ho Chi Minh government, (c) the hardships suffered because of northern interference in the South, and (d) the possibility that a government controlled by the North Vietnamese would result if the VC-NFLSVN is not defeated.<sup>15</sup>

### Potential Audiences

The targets, in this case, are southern Vietnamese with traditional beliefs about the untrustworthiness and aggressiveness of Northerners. In particular, southern personnel of the VC-NFLSVN, peasants, tribal people (Montagnards), rural administrators, government officials, and commercial and industrial executives and small businessmen will probably prove most receptive to propaganda dealing with this subject.

## G. Personnel Problems

### Background

The VC-NFLSVN recruits wherever--and whatever--manpower is available. Younger men are preferred, however, because of their enthusiasm, good will, lack of mature judgment (which makes them more pliable), and their prospective importance as well-indoctrinated members of the party. Effective use of a combination of indoctrination and fear by VC leaders maintains a generally high level of discipline and ideological motivation among VC soldiers. While indigenous VC-NFLSVN morale is quite high under good conditions, serving far from home and having to endure the physical hardships of harsh climate, food shortages, and incessant activity, lowers the morale of the forces in question to a considerable degree.

### Exploitable Aspects

Psychological operations designed to exploit the opportunities inherent in the foregoing may attack VC-NFLSVN recruiting policies by pointing out that they are coercive, unduly harsh, and take advantage of the immaturity of youth. This last aspect may be especially important, given the general position of young people in an age-oriented Vietnamese society. The often fanatical fervor of recently indoctrinated Communists usually makes morale a difficult aspect to exploit. In the present circumstances, appeals may be used on (a) concern of families for individuals who have been moved far from their homes, (b) hardships brought about by shortages of food and medicine, (c) concern over the presence of foreigners and demonstrable foreign influence, especially from China, (d) military or political setbacks, and (e) long hours of labor, hardship, and personal danger. Appeals to peasants and other rural elements illustrating methods by which VC-NFLSVN recruiting could be disrupted and insurgent morale undermined may also prove useful.

### Potential Audiences

Targets to which specific, individual appeals may be directed are: VC-NFLSVN forces locally recruited in South Vietnam, forces recruited from the North, the DRV Armed Forces, Communists and VC-NFLSVN sympathizers in South Vietnam, "hard core" Viet Cong officers, and political cadres. Also important are peasants and other rural elements in areas controlled by the VC-NFLSVN who are capable of further undermining morale or disrupting recruiting procedures.