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PART V:

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM--PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

A. RVN Ideological Weaknesses

Background

The GVN appears to have failed to provide a viable national ideology, a fact which the Communists have been able to use to their advantage. An additional factor of importance is the inability of the Government "to insure either full consistency or efficiency in its information policies."¹⁸ On the other hand, VC-NFLSVN propaganda (a) exploits the RVN ideological programs as inconsistent and not applicable to the masses, and (b) charges that the Government does not know what it really stands for beyond the immediate self-interest of its members. The Communists do not simply terrorize the population of South Vietnam and aggravate grievances but, depending on their audience, present a positive approach stressing independence, humanitarianism, self-aggrandizement, and the ideology of Marxism.¹⁹

Comments

Remaining inconsistencies in the government information program, such as those which existed in 1959, where responsibility for propaganda was given "to a series of other agencies, groups and persons who apparently now share this responsibility in a vague and ill-defined fashion,"²⁰ could be eliminated. The most important factor, however, is the formulation of a counter-ideology to communism that the average Vietnamese can accept as his own. This should provide the means to satisfy basic spiritual, political, and economic aspirations; a cultural and national identity; responsive government; economic security; individual freedom; and a measure of the worth of the individual. Not only must this ideology be formulated but, as Bernard Fall writes, "This 'our' Vietnamese must do for us, or rather, for themselves."²¹ Information programs explaining the objectives and ideological basis of the Government may prove useful in assisting this effort. The most important psychological operations problem to be overcome in South Vietnam today is the establishment of a popular GVN credibility.

Potential Audiences

Principal targets are all general audiences, particularly youth. A steady program of winning the neutrals and anti-government elements could be undertaken. Examples of the more important groups to be considered are the intelligentsia, senior military personnel, administrators, peasants, and rural and urban working classes.

B. Popular Suspicion of Foreign Influence

Background

Individually, many Vietnamese are friendly and warmly disposed toward foreigners, but in general they are suspicious of strangers whose presence in their country has usually spelled exploitation. Generally speaking, educated and urban Vietnamese appreciate the material benefits of foreign cultures and are interested in their application to Vietnamese life. The rural elements, however, who have had almost no contact with other cultures, remain antipathetic and suspicious of foreigners as a whole. Consequently the people of South Vietnam are particularly susceptible to VC-NFLSVN propaganda claiming foreign interference by the United States and others.²²

Comments

GRVN difficulty in generating an enthusiastic acceptance of U.S. and other foreign assistance is a part of the general problem of constructing an effective overall information program. Nevertheless, anti-foreign sentiment aggravated by the VC-NFLSVN may be minimized by an active GVN program emphasizing the usefulness of foreign assistance in providing the means to security and a better way of life for the average Vietnamese. The United States can aid the GVN in presenting to the people of South Vietnam a sense of the community of interest between the United States and Vietnam, and in imparting a sense of common goals and confidence in the future of the free world of which they are a part.²³

Potential Audiences

Vietnamese peasants and unskilled urban elements would comprise the principal target for the countermeasures to this vulnerability. Military groups which would present suitable targets are the senior and junior officers, the non-commissioned officers, other enlisted ranks, and the civilian defense forces. Other Vietnamese groups differ in their attitudes toward foreigners; the aboriginal groups tend to be suspicious of foreigners too and, therefore, are a target.

C. Popular Resentment of the Catholic Minority

Background

The Catholic elite is highly resented by many elements of the society because of its self-imposed social and cultural isolation and its former political strength. Current hostility toward Catholics as a group stems from the close relationships between Catholic missionaries and Vietnamese aristocracy over the past 300 years, and later ties between those two groups and the French administration. The Vietnamese Catholics "served as the claws which enabled the French crab to crawl across the land."²⁴ Until recently, the ruling elite has been predominantly Catholic; it is generally believed that at least nominal conversion to Catholicism was useful for political or social advancement. Also, while there has not been much open persecution of non-Catholics, there was evidence that suggested official partiality for Catholics and Catholicism. Current anti-Catholic and anti-government sentiment led by Buddhists appears to be the result of a long-building popular resentment against real and imagined discrimination.²⁵

Comments

A program could be quietly undertaken to stress, in a tactful manner, that the GVN is a government for all the people and that the Catholics no longer are politically dominant. The role of the Catholics as a beneficial force should be stressed. Change in attitude toward the Catholics will probably require a considerable effort of good will and interest on the part of both the Catholic leaders and GVN officials. A successful "new image" of the Catholic minority, however, would counter VC-NFLSVN propaganda, charging "foreign religious rule" and "discrimination against the people."²⁶

Potential Audiences

Non-Communist neutral and anti-government factions such as the Buddhists, intelligentsia, professional groups, and civil servants are the immediate targets of a program to counter existing anti-Catholic resentment which could be exploited by the VC-NFLSVN. The urban lower classes, landlords, and businessmen are also important groups among which Communist propaganda on this subject should be countered.

D. Disaffection of Indigenous Ethnic Minorities

Background

Ethnic Vietnamese generally consider the indigenous ethnic minorities inferior and barbaric. Vietnamese behavior toward all of these peoples is characteristically aggressive and superior. Most of the minorities fear and dislike the Vietnamese. Currently, although some tribal people have established friendly relations with individual Vietnamese and U.S. military personnel, overall relations, especially where U.S. personnel are not involved, are generally governed by mutual fear, dislike, distrust, and contempt. This is in part a result of corrupt practices on the part of some ethnic Vietnamese who have taken unfair advantage of these people. Communist exploitation of this situation has been extensive. Nevertheless, the VC, usually ethnic Vietnamese themselves, have problems similar to the GVN's in establishing rapport with the minorities.²⁷

Comments

Programs to encourage the tribal people to be enthusiastically anti-Communist and wholeheartedly cooperative toward the GVN will have to provide an appropriate outlet for tribal beliefs and a political and economic equality within the Vietnamese society. To achieve this it is probable that (a) constructive GVN policies will have to be implemented with honesty and sincerity, (b) programs to reeducate the lowland Vietnamese will have to be undertaken to change his view of the Montagnards, and (c) the Montagnards will have to be educated to respect the lowland Vietnamese.²⁸ Programs highlighting cooperative efforts between different ethnic groups and the achievements of individual minority groups might prove beneficial.

Potential Audiences

Targets are the civil servants and public administrators dealing with Montagnards, the peasants and farmers in provinces bordering on Montagnard areas, and the tribal people themselves. Also important are small businessmen, traders, and commercial people, such as the Chinese, religious groups, and teachers, doctors, and military assigned to mountain areas.

E. Disaffection of Buddhists

Background

The recent resurgence of Buddhist political activity directed against alleged government abuses constitutes the most complex and one of the most significant RVN vulnerabilities to Communist propaganda exploitation. Their attacks center on government corruption, lack of significant Buddhist participation in policy formulation, inadequate Buddhist representation in the Government, and the GVN's conduct of the campaign against the VC-NFLSVN. The Buddhists thus far have avoided the more difficult task of constructive suggestions and do not appear anxious to take up the responsibilities of public office. Nevertheless, it can be expected that they will watch closely the formulation of government policy in the future and will be especially interested in anything affecting Buddhism or religious freedom. It is likely that public, economic, and social policy will also be equally of interest to them.²⁹

Comments

Countermeasures to this should concentrate on a strong program to eliminate corrupt or discriminatory practices, to include Buddhist leaders within the policy-formulating apparatus, and to delegate some authority to the Buddhist leaders in working out effective social policies and procedures. The picture of the Buddhist hierarchy as a responsible element of the RVN elite should be emphasized in programs directed toward the people. The accomplishments of prominent Buddhists within the Government which contribute to the general welfare of the RVN might be included here as well. The Buddhist movement, however, may be directed into constructive channels giving the Government a measure of "mass support, and thereby allowing the kind of radical reforms needed to undermine the VC."³⁰ Communist anti-religious problems can also be exploited.

Potential Audiences

The Buddhist Bonzes (Monks) are, as the leaders of this movement, the principal target in any attempt to gain Buddhist cooperation and support of GVN programs and policies, and, at the same time, counter VC propaganda claiming religious persecution and totalitarian rule. The urban and rural people who accept or are influenced by Buddhist leadership are also important targets. Typical of these are the Vietnamese intelligentsia, students, businessmen, members of the bureaucracy, and those members of the military who sympathize with Buddhist aims.

F. Disaffection of Intellectuals

Background

This group, primarily consisting of students, artists, writers, journalists, professionals, and some members of the higher ranks of the civil service, has become politically active recently; to a great extent, they seem to identify themselves with the goals of the Buddhist cause. They are dissatisfied with corruption and inefficiency, restrictions on expression, and inadequate representation in the ruling elite. They are, however, subject to manipulation from many quarters. Resentful of foreign influence of almost any sort, these elements are "potential followers searching for new leaders with Vietnamese answers to Vietnam's difficulties."³¹

Comments

Successful countering of Communist exploitation of this group will probably depend on the success of the RVN Government in encouraging intellectuals to identify with the Government and with the development of a democratic South Vietnam. Programs to gain the support of these elements will have to include opportunities for unrestricted criticism of GVN policies, some adequate responses to suggestions for change, and increasingly democratic procedures in government administration. A legislative body that would presumably draw on these groups for membership could act to channel the energies expressed here into constructive channels.³² Programs which explain GVN policies and answer the criticisms of the intellectuals may be useful in countering this vulnerability.

Potential Audiences

The generally oppositionist intellectual in the Vietnamese society, other than the Catholic elite, is the target of this RVN vulnerability. Specifically, students, artists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, journalists, labor leaders, and some members of the bureaucracy, military and religious hierarchy are likely to be responsive to appeals outlined here.

G. Discontent of Military Elements

Background

Although the morale of the RVN Army appears to be reasonably good, there are significant elements of the military forces, discontented for a variety of reasons, who are vulnerable to Communist propaganda. A potentially dissatisfied element has resulted from tensions between the older, higher ranking officers and the younger junior officer corps. These "Young Turks" appear to be dissatisfied with the counterinsurgency campaign, government social reform policies, and the measures to institute changes. Below the "Young Turks" an "even more junior group may well be forming," composed of NCO's and other enlisted men.³³ The general restlessness within the military establishment, however, is not the product of a single cause. In addition to the above factors, personal ambition, religious belief, concern over the activities of civilian groups, uncertain on non-existent communications between soldiers and their families, and frustration over the course of the war are all contributing factors. "As yet this restlessness does not seem to have produced any element of defeatism or desire for accomodation with the enemy. Instead, an ardent and truculent nationalism and a touchy sense of national pride seem to be traits common to all significant military factions."³⁴

Comments

Measures to insure the loyalty and effectiveness of the several major elements of the army depend upon the ability of the RVN regime to provide them with economic security and reasonable outlets for their ambitions. Specifically, programs to improve the financial security of dependents and family and programs to insure reasonable personal communications between troops of all ranks and their dependents should be undertaken. Troop information programs might be reviewed to insure that the reasons for the difficulties and inconveniences faced by the army are explained to the troops and that appeals are based on national aspirations and individual patriotism.³⁵

Potential Audiences

Appeals to the following might be useful: the civilian defense forces, the lower ranks of the army, the NCO's and junior officers, and the senior officers. Wives, families, close relatives of soldiers, veterans, students, rural and urban elements sympathetic to military problems, and tribal people who respect or admire particular military personnel are also targets of psychological operations suggested here.

H. Disaffection of the Chinese Minority

Background

The Chinese in Vietnam traditionally have been very influential in business and have played an important role in the economic life of the country. Since independence in 1954, GVN has attempted to "Vietnamize" the Chinese and, at the same time, to undermine their economic position. The Chinese have resisted government efforts to force assimilation. Chinese business activity has been considered reduced as a consequence. The Communist regime in China, overshadowing overseas Chinese as it does, causes Chinese communities in the South particular concern for the future, and raises a question of continuing Chinese loyalty.³⁶

Comments

Vietnamese resentment of the favored position of the Chinese under French rule and of continuing Chinese economic success can be countered by a campaign stressing the value of the Chinese to RVN economic development if Chinese cooperation and wholehearted support can be obtained. The following could be emphasized to lessen Chinese-Vietnamese antipathy and to improve the Chinese position within the Vietnamese society: "The Chinese are admired for their heritage of traditional culture... and for their commercial acumen. They are resented for the same reasons."³⁷

Potential Audiences

Chinese, antagonized by GVN programs to eliminate Chinese economic influence, are the target for countermeasures suggested here. Rural peasants, small businessmen, urban commercial elements, landowners and administrators who resent the influence of the Chinese in day-to-day life, are also targets for these programs.

I. Role of French Elements

Background

The French plantation owners--the remaining French presence in South Vietnam of any significance--appear to think that the insurgency will probably succeed. Since 1954 they have contributed substantially to VC-NFLSVN activities to counter the possibility of a communist takeover of their holdings. Their support of the VC has been mainly in the form of protection money and a minimum cooperation with Saigon. The French also cooperate with the Government, to some extent, in an effort to negate government anti-French policies which damage French economic interests.³⁸

Comments

Strenuous efforts will be required to convince the remaining French settlers that neither extreme nationalists nor the Communist insurgents are likely to gain political power. Such a program could stress the necessity for closer GVN-French cooperation and support to promote GVN political, economic, and military programs and to safeguard French investments. Programs demonstrating the value of the French rubber interests to the Vietnamese economy and the desire of the GVN to work with the French interests, if convincingly stated, could provide the 15,000 remaining French with a more positive base for cooperation with the GVN and active anti-VC activities.³⁹

Potential Audiences

French plantation owners and settlers are the principal audience for these countermeasures. The Vietnamese workers of the plantations--whose nationalism may pose a threat to French interests--should be secondary subjects of appeals. Other subjects are rural and urban elements, particularly landlords and tenants, who are strongly xenophobic in character and who desire to obtain French owned properties.

J. Restrictions on Civil Liberties and Abuses of Police Powers

Background

Despite constitutional guarantees of civil rights, the legal system of the RVN is so full of qualifications that the Government can claim constitutional sanctions for virtually all of the restrictions that it imposes. These restrictions are especially apparent in the use of police power, censorship, and the suppression of all political opposition. The VC-NFLSVN has made considerable propaganda capital from this situation, although they do the same thing, in reality. VC-NFLSVN propaganda is especially effective in rural areas where the activities of the GVN, usually carried on by the army, are often least appreciated and abuses often most obvious.⁴⁰

Comments

To some extent, revision of present restrictive government policies and activities is undoubtedly necessary. The removal of existing restraints on the free expression of opinion, and the elimination of abuse of civil rights by police and security officers, are two examples of necessary revisions. The emergence of a stronger and more independent judiciary and a more widely publicized official respect for civil liberties would also be helpful. Since the army is often the most significant GVN agent in rural areas, its actions necessarily reflect on the government. This is a distinct problem when the army is not completely aware of the importance of its civic action role in an insurgency situation. Corrections of police and military abuses should be publicized.⁴¹

Potential Audiences

Attention should be given to the peasants in the rural areas and the educated or professional elements, the Buddhists, and the students in the cities. Examples of more specific targets are students, journalists, writers, artists, religious leaders, educators--especially at the university level--civil servants, and elements of the military and civil government.

K. Rural Security and Peasant Dissatisfaction

Background

In rural areas, it appears that the peasants are not particularly concerned with either communism or "capitalism-nationalism" but, "their primary desire, after ten years of war, is peace--in military jargon 'security'."42 The GVN anti-Communist program therefore emphasizes "new rural life communities" designed to control the countryside and, at the same time, destroy the VC-NFLSVN rural organization at the village level. These "new life" hamlets and their even more sensitive predecessors, the "strategic hamlets," have brought about or at least emphasized a marked vulnerability of GVN-Government-peasant relations. For example, many of the relocation centers have not provided even minimal physical facilities for their inhabitants, many of the new villages are indefensible and, most significant, the entire program resembles a concentration camp scheme in the view of many peasants.⁴³

Comments

Countermeasures to propaganda exploiting the resentment of the peasants might emphasize GVN efforts to provide law, peace, order, and economic security. A major source of resentment is seen in the following: "when we round them up and bring them in, and there's no land ready for them, no houses, nothing."⁴⁴ Under these conditions the Communists are afforded a distinct edge in the psychological battle. The peasant should be made more aware of the GVN role in improving conditions--not as soldiers or tax collectors who add to his burden rather than lessen it, but as builders of schools, providers of medical facilities, and, most important, guardians of the peace. A more thorough understanding of GVN objectives, of the relation of these objectives to the individual peasant, and of the necessity for the consequent sacrifices may also alleviate the problem to some extent.⁴⁵

Potential Audiences

All peasants, rural traders and shopkeepers, landlords, rural administrators, teachers and government officials, and, most important, the army officers and enlisted men responsible for rural security are the focus for appeals based on the countermeasures suggested here.

L. RVN Agrarian Reform Policies

Background

Government administrative ineffectiveness and lack of security in large areas of Vietnam have retarded GVN programs designed to redistribute the land and reorganize the rent system of rural Vietnam. In the Mekong Delta area where, traditionally, the worst abuses of landlordism have been felt, there has been little effective government action to rectify problems. The intensification of guerrilla activity after 1959, however, interfered with GVN programs to redistribute land and to control rents and agricultural price levels. These programs have still not been effectively implemented and many peasants, unsure of their status, fear government attempts to collect past rents for absent landlords or to evict nonpaying tenants.⁴⁶

Comments

In order to utilize suitable aspects of this situation and to bring about a sincere peasant support of the GVN, a major effort is required to provide an agrarian system that will eliminate past administrative and economic abuses and give the peasant economic and social security. In short, the peasant desires improved living conditions, a reasonably honest government, and the hope for a better life for his children.⁴⁷ Expansion of cooperative agricultural producing and marketing organizations might be an example of this type of action. Information programs publicizing objectives and actions of the GVN in the area of land reform would be a fruitful effort.

Potential Audiences

These measures could be implemented first in reasonably secure areas where the majority of the people are still pro-GVN or neutral. Subsequent success could be exploited through psychological operations in predominantly anti-government areas. Specifically, these appeals could be directed to tenants, farmers of public lands, and squatters who do not pay rent. Appeals of approximately the same type should also be made to absentee landlords, officials of the rural agricultural marketing and production apparatus and the controllers of rural credit--who are often Chinese, French settlers, or wealthy urban Vietnamese.

M. Public Health and Sanitation

Background

The low level of health and sanitation constitutes a major vulnerability of the RVN regime. Health and medical facilities, especially in rural areas, are either non-existent or very inadequate. Communist terrorism and sabotage have undermined the government's rural health program still further and health officials and sanitation teams have gradually restricted their activities to the environs of the larger cities. Consequently, proper public sanitation and medical care are generally available only to the urban elite. However, the use of GVN-US and allied medical teams in conjunction with anti-Communist military operations appear to have been very successful in aiding a small percentage of the population. These programs also have been successful in countering Communist propaganda exploiting the failure of the GVN to fulfill its responsibility to provide public sanitation and medical care.⁴⁸

Comments

Army medical teams have proven successful in bolstering GVN-peasant relations and could be used increasingly to good effect. In areas under GVN control, medical stations, health and sanitation personnel, and public health programs designed for the peasant could be increasingly instituted as part of the general GVN responsibility for public health. As soon as security permitted--as a part of the long range effort--these could be extended to newly cleared areas and the response could be exploited through appropriate psychological activities. Medical care could be provided to poorer elements in the urban areas if necessary and could also be exploited.⁴⁹ Spectacular results in terms of good will and support could be achieved in a short time by the use of modern medicines to treat the more easily curable ailments and diseases.

Potential Audiences

Audiences for these measures are the peasants and urban workers in areas under GVN control, and, as the effects of coordinated public health and sanitation programs are increasingly felt the neutral and anti-government rural elements, as well. The tribal and ethnic minorities are very important.

N. Inadequacy of Educational Facilities

Background

Although advances in education have been made since 1954, several fundamental problems remain that must be solved if the Government is to fulfill its educational responsibilities to all elements of the population. The most pressing of these problems is the lack of qualified teachers--due to several causes--inflexibility in meeting changing needs on the part of educators, and low educational standards for all but the urban elite. GVN indifference to rural problems in general has brought about a situation whereby large areas of Vietnam are practically without educational facilities. Also, it should be noted that in some areas the only education available to the peasants is provided by the VC-NFLSVN.⁵⁰

Comments

Expansion of the educational system is necessary. The GVN could provide both rural and urban areas with a minimum standard of education, new programs stressing increased teacher training, and additional educational facilities. To counter VC-NFLSVN propaganda, an effort must be made to provide the necessary facilities in areas controlled by the Government and to extend these to other areas as quickly as security can be provided for rural teachers. Psychological exploitation of successes should be undertaken in conjunction with government programs.⁵¹ Goals and accomplishments of the GVN should be publicized.

Potential Audiences

Targets are the poorer urban and rural segments of the population who are deprived of an opportunity to receive an elementary education. All elements of the population are vulnerable to exploitation through psychological activities stressing GVN successes in this field. This would apply equally to most neutral or anti-government people. For example: The VC-NFLSVN personnel actually from South Vietnam, Communist sympathizers, indifferent or war-weary teachers and administrators, and Montagnards.

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PART VI:

UNITED STATES PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. Vietnamese Nationalism and Ignorance of U.S. Objectives

Background

The Vietnamese as an ethnic group regard themselves as eminently superior to their neighbors and to foreigners in general. Nevertheless, they have been exploited by both the Chinese and the French and, in the process, have become resentful of strangers. To date, this resentment of foreigners has not been directed against the United States to any significant extent. There are some exceptions, however, as discussed elsewhere herein paper. Until fairly recently, however, few Vietnamese have had any personal contact with U.S. personnel and most know little or nothing about life in the United States. Communist propaganda has attempted to exploit this strong anti-colonial feeling on the part of a majority of South Vietnamese by claiming that current U.S. interest in Vietnam is designed to bring about a degree of U.S. control over the RVN and consequent economic and political advantage.⁵²

Comments

To offset this situation U.S. countermeasures could continue to concentrate on clearly presenting U.S. objectives and rationale to the people of Vietnam. At the same time, GVN programs should exploit Vietnamese nationalism, which can be directed against the Communists. It could be demonstrated that economic and military support of the GVN is in the Vietnamese interest. More specific measures to rectify this situation could emphasize that US-RVN cultural and philosophical backgrounds have a common belief in human freedom and national dignity.⁵³ It is considered important to reassure the Vietnamese that U.S. personnel are expected to voluntarily depart when their assistance is no longer needed or required by the RVN.

Potential Audiences

All Vietnamese are targets for appeals based on these countermeasures. Some specific groups could be selected for particular attention: students, middle-class professionals, the military, and those elements of religious groups that are strongly nationalistic in character. Peasants and the urban working class are also targets for these appeals, together with VC-NFLSVN elements and sympathizers who do not have vested interests in a Communist government.

B. The Role of the U.S. Military in South Vietnam

Background

The United States, some sources feel, has thus far emphasized the military aspects of the anti-Communist campaign, and the social and political problems of South Vietnam have not been effectively handled. The Viet Cong, on the other hand, appear to always link military action to an overall political plan. It is charged that civic-action programs and economic aid have been applied, generally speaking, in a shotgun manner and not in a coordinated attack on the underlying political and economic causes of social dissatisfaction.⁵⁴

Comments

The future role of the U.S. military in South Vietnam could be the subject of further study by appropriate U.S. agencies. GVN psychological warfare programs should refute allegations that the United States is using the present situation in South Vietnam merely as a means to attack communism and is not primarily concerned with the troubles of a developing Vietnamese society.⁵⁵ The constructive aspects of this situation might be emphasized. For example, the useful role of the military in supporting the Vietnamese economy, in aiding minority groups, and in maintaining peace and order might be the subject of GVN programs.

Potential Audiences

The leaders of the various groups in Vietnamese society are targets for these countermeasures. In particular, the Buddhist leaders, intellectuals, peasant leaders, GVN administrators, and the GVN military who are vulnerable to propaganda charges of "foreign militarism," are especially important. In addition, other typical target groups might be farmers, students, and the urban working classes.

C. GVN Alienation of the Population

Background

The present regimes in office recently in South Vietnam have been unable to establish a solid foundation of wide-spread popular support for their activities. The Vietnamese in rural areas tend to resent restrictions and controls imposed by the GVN which interfere with their daily lives. In addition, they are not sympathetic to the policies and programs of a remote government with which they are too often only indirectly concerned and which they may only know through periodic anti-Communist sweeps by soldiers and accompanying tax collectors. The urban citizenry are more likely to be familiar with constitutional concepts and be influenced by democratic ideals and are equally disaffected with the small and relatively inaccessible ruling elite and its restrictive, often corrupt, policies.⁵⁶ This is a vulnerability that has been heavily exploited by the Communists in North Vietnam and the VC-NFLSVN.

Comments

In spite of the fact that most Vietnamese closely associate the GVN and the United States, it does not appear practical to present U.S. objectives and policies as separate from those of the GVN because this would certainly further undermine popular confidence in the Government. The United States may be able to counteract the basis of popular resentment of the Government by setting an example of high standards for official conduct and making clear the need for and benefits of sound government with large-scale popular support. This policy could be further reinforced by enthusiastic propaganda support of GVN "steps-in-the-right direction" and cessation of propaganda support for policies or actions likely to further aggravate the situation.⁵⁷

Potential Audiences

Specific appeals should be directed to the farmer, landowner, low-level administrator or official, small businessman, and teacher or professional man. The urban working classes, students, urban professionals, medium-level and big business executives, and religious and minority group spokesmen are also significant targets. Appeals should also be made to GVN civil and military officials to assure better behavior of the government cadre and the troops.

D. Shortcomings of GVN Administrative Apparatus

Background

Differences in formal education and social values between members of the administrative apparatus and the rural and urban masses hamper the effective and efficient functioning of the Government. Within the administrative apparatus, background and age gaps create disruptive tensions. Newer program-conscious agencies conflict with older and more conservative agencies in the implementation of regime policies. At least a part of the problem can be traced to a personnel system which is too inflexible for present needs, factionalism, and self-interest which regards promotions largely in terms of status and increased income. As a general consequence, the net output of the administrative system as a whole is reduced in quantity and effectiveness.⁵⁸

Comments

Immediate short term and relatively spectacular countermeasures to improve bureaucratic efficiency could be attempted by the United States. Examples of such measures may be found in basic U.S. management techniques and practices. Long term problems, however, should not be neglected-- policies designed to raise morale, eliminate factionalism and favoritism, and reduce corruption may be implemented as well. In this respect a faith in the regime and Vietnamese nationalist spirit should be emphasized. It should be noted, however, that a "fairly high degree of control will continue to be needed from those in positions of highest authority."⁵⁹ In addition, information programs outlining administrative requirements and procedures should be encouraged. The role and responsibilities of administrative officials should be explained.

Potential Audiences

Targets for these countermeasures are the administrative civil servants. In particular, low and middle level administrators and government employees, and, as appropriate, the ranks and officers corps of the army, and senior religious leaders are included. Additional groups through which improvement may be usefully exploited are businessmen, journalists, writers, and educators.

E. Breakdown in US-GVN Interpersonal Relations

Background

Difficulties in cross-cultural interpersonal relations between U.S. and Vietnamese officials exist to some extent in South Vietnam. Some of the governing elite and bureaucracy appear to resent U.S. assistance and advice. U.S. values and principles are often misunderstood and thought not applicable to Vietnamese problems. Resistance to U.S. programs and policy is not restricted to low level relations between Special Forces counterparts. It may also occur with top military, civil, and religious leaders, who seem to resent and misunderstand U.S. advice and advisors on occasion.⁶⁰ The Communists have exploited this problem.

Comments

U.S. personnel may have to go more than half-way in understanding the limitations of their Vietnamese counterparts. Psychological operations can be used to emphasize Vietnamese officials' need to understand the "why's and wherefore's" of the U.S. presence, to realize its importance and to cooperate as much as possible. Personal courage and example are essential elements in maintaining effective relationships. Communist exploitation of this vulnerability could be countered by efforts to present a picture of close cooperation and understanding between the two governments. Information and propaganda themes presenting evidence of successful US-GVN teamwork should be valuable.⁶¹

Potential Audiences

Principal targets for these countermeasures would be low and intermediate level administrators, the enlisted and NCO ranks of the army, and all Vietnamese employees in contact with U.S. personnel. Other targets at a higher level are senior Vietnamese diplomatic, military, and administrative officers; important national figures such as newspaper editors; outstanding political, educational, and religious leaders; and leaders of the ethnic minority communities.

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PART VII:
OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

A. Vietnamese Spirit of Nationalism

Background

The ramifications of a strong nationalistic spirit as a cohesive factor in building a viable Vietnamese society are extensive. The Vietnamese spirit of nationalism, at present, is complicated by cross-currents of regionalism and may well be subordinated at times to family and village loyalties. Since 1954, the GVN has attempted to strengthen nationalistic sentiment among the people. Particular emphasis has been placed on the development of pride in Vietnamese culture and past achievements.⁶² Propaganda opportunities related to Vietnamese nationalistic feeling are discussed in the following sections.

Exploitable Aspects

Programs of the GVN should attempt to stimulate and extend a Vietnamese nationalist sentiment through appeals based on traditional ties, as well as future aspirations. At the same time the disruptive effects of regionalism can be countered. Once a "national" sentiment becomes a more active factor in Vietnamese life, it can be directed, through psychological operations programs, against the Communists and can be used to unify a regionally divided country. For example, appeals could stress the inherent threat of communism and at the same time call for sacrifices of an economic and political nature designed for the "national good." To be stressed in all presentations of this sort is the potential of a free Vietnam for increasing personal freedom of action and attaining purely national aspirations and objectives.⁶³ It should be noted in preparing programs of this sort that non-Vietnamese ethnic sub-groups do not appear to see themselves as a part of the Vietnamese nation.

Potential Audiences

The Vietnamese ethnic peoples constitute the audience for the exploitation of this psychological activities opportunity, although the Montagnard, Chinese, and other alien sub-groups are definitely targets as well.

B. Vietnamese Ethnic and Cultural Pride

Background

Vietnamese nationalism, such as it is, has been based on the apparently quite strong feeling of ethnic pride and cultural superiority. Much of this stems from the successful Vietnamese resistance to absorption by China. Moreover, the Vietnamese take much pride in the defeat of repeated Mongol invasions and in the destruction of the Cham. Culturally, it is true that the Vietnamese have borrowed much. However, an immense body of orally transmitted folklore, consisting of sayings, proverbs, maxims, stories, and legends is an original, purely Vietnamese art form. The proverbs and sayings are an integral part of Vietnamese daily life and have a special importance as a cohesive factor in the society.⁶⁴ VC-NFLSVN propaganda has attempted to take advantage of this cultural trait for Communist benefit.

Exploitable Aspects

Since the Vietnamese are proud of their historical and cultural heritage, measures should be taken to exploit the reasonably strong force for unity within the society. Emphasis in exploiting this psychological opportunity should probably be placed on the two outstanding aspects of the culture: pride in military successes and a vast, thoroughly pervasive literature composed of folklore and legend. An awareness of a genuine threat to this heritage should reinforce its value for unifying Vietnamese society and stimulating anti-Communist feeling.⁶⁵

Potential Audiences

Propaganda based on the Vietnamese cultural heritage which exploits these inherent socially unifying factors can be directed to the ethnic Vietnamese population with emphasis on the youth. The social and religious divergencies within the society would require modification of the propaganda to suit the various specific elements.

C. The Strength of the Vietnamese Family System

Background

Family and kinship are of paramount importance in the social organization of the Vietnamese. Most of the basic social institutions, religious practices, economic, social, and political life, and the values and attitudes of the people are geared to or conditioned by family and kinship relations. Consequently, the individual is restricted to a certain extent by his close kin relationships, while at the same time, the society as a whole is fundamentally tied together through a common cultural phenomenon and heritage.⁶⁶

Exploitable Aspects

Although its importance has decreased somewhat in recent years, the family still remains the most important social institution in South Vietnam because it is deeply a part of the social and cultural fabric. The family thus represents a significant unifying factor within the RVN. The Communist system tends to divert absolute loyalty away from the family-- a point which could be exploited in propaganda. A Vietnamese society radically altered to fit a Communist pattern would lose much of its uniqueness and cultural vitality. The disruption of family life caused by the VC-NFLSVN, the hardships caused by the necessity of soldiers being away from home to fight the Communists, and VC-NFLSVN intentions to reshape the Vietnamese family system to a Chinese or Russian form are specific examples of possible appeals.⁶⁷

Potential Audiences

With the exception of confirmed Communists and Communist sympathizers, all Vietnamese are legitimate targets for propaganda exploiting this psychological opportunity. Special attention, however, should be given to the particularly tradition-minded peasants who constitute the majority of the population. VC-NFLSVN personnel of southern origin, those uncertain of where their true sympathies lie, the RVN militia units, and the enlisted ranks of the regular army are particularly important examples of possible audiences.

D. Religion in Vietnam

Background

Most non-Christian Vietnamese claim to be Buddhists, reformed Buddhists, or partial Buddhists. Buddhism as such, however, is merely one of the numerous facets of Vietnamese religious life. Equally important are elements of animism, Taoism, and a Confucian ethic that permeate the life of peasant and urban elite alike. The result of this religious diversity has been not so much eclecticism as the assignment of individual aspects of the various religions to meet social and cultural needs. For example, Confucian principles regulate family relationships and much of the social structure, while the magic and spiritualism of Taoism fulfill a need among the superstitious rural population. The amalgam of many cultural influences which presently exists, is uniquely Vietnamese and, as such, is regarded highly by most elements of the population.⁶⁸ Communist anti-religious policies are also a factor in this psychological activity.

Exploitable Aspects

The threat of the complete destruction of the traditional Vietnamese religions and, more importantly, of the removal of the religious underpinnings of the culture posed by the Communists can be exploited to counter VC-NFLSVN propaganda and to further programs designed to unify the society. More specifically, religious sentiment can be exploited effectively if (a) religious leaders can be convinced to accept a degree of responsibility for GVN programs and policies, and (b) the population as a whole can be convinced to appreciate the inherent threat to any religion by communism.⁶⁹

Potential Audiences

Within the general population, special circumstances based upon location or religious background may require variations on general themes exploiting this opportunity. The Buddhist and Taoist leaders, administrators, and others holding strong Confucian beliefs, and the leaders of all the ethnic minorities may be appealed to with particular emphasis.

E. Communist Environmental and Operational Difficulties

Background

A final opportunity for effective, positive psychological operations exists in the difficult environmental and operating problems of the VC-NFLSVN. The VC-NFLSVN must currently contend with the effects on Vietnamese morale of repeated U.S. bombing of the North; interruptions of the sea supply line; a long, obstacle-ridden overland infiltration route unsuited to the movement of heavy materiel and made additionally hazardous by conditions causing chronic malaria and dysentery; and some interception of personnel and materiel coming through the overland route. VC-NFLSVN problems are emphasized by a shift in Vietnamese public opinion--the public in this case includes not only those loyal to the RVN, but neutrals, the indifferent, VC-NFLSVN sympathizers and, perhaps, elements of the hard-core cadre.⁷⁰

Exploitable Aspects

The possibilities for exploitation of this situation are excellent--a few examples of such possibilities are suggested herewith. First, the difficulties encountered by the VC-NFLSVN in obtaining the supplies necessary to counter a growing U.S. presence and the difficult, hazardous living and operating conditions could add up to good reasons for a VC-NFLSVN reassessment of motivations and intentions, at a personal level if not at an official one. Second, in regard to the shifting of public opinion, the average Vietnamese appears to be slowly becoming more interested in the outcome of the war. Programs designed to reinforce this trend, while demonstrating RVN determination to win, could help bring about a bandwagon effect.⁷¹

Potential Audiences

Suggested audiences for appeals based on this opportunity are the leaders and important figures of the VC-NFLSVN, the officers and members of this organization and its supporters. In addition, the peasants and rural elements in contact with the VC-NFLSVN or in areas controlled by them are likely to be responsive to such appeals. Finally, general programs intended for the people of Vietnam may be usefully undertaken.

NOTES

NOTES

SPECIAL SUBJECTS

FOOTNOTES

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