

A
FILE SUBJ.
DATE SUB-CAT.
7/69

MASS DESERTIONS SAID TO PRESAGE AMERICAN DEFEAT

[Article written according to VNNTX (Vietnam News Agency) news: "The Puppet Army Continues to Disintegrate and to Decline"; Hanoi, Nhan Dan, Vietnamese, 18 July 1969, p 3]

The officers and soldiers in the puppet army in the South, influenced by defeatist ideas and peace illusions ever since Johnson had been forced to unconditionally stop the bombings in the North, were more and more dissatisfied with the way Nixon stubbornly continued the American aggressors' already-lost war. Antiwar feelings, which had been rising in the puppet soldiers' ranks, further speeded up the decline of the puppet army.

There appeared, after 1 November 1968, a movement in the puppet army to discuss the unavoidable defeat of the Americans and the Thieu-Ky clique, and the victory of the NFLSV. Everywhere, any time, in the cities, including Saigon, at remote outposts or during military operations, soldiers in the different arms of the puppet armed forces, including members of the puppet police force, continued to talk about such hot subjects as "the Americans are losing," "Thieu and Ky cannot avoid a collapse," "the Front is coming to Saigon," and so on. On 15 January 1969, discussing the news events at a coffee shop near the Thiec market right in the center of Saigon, a policeman of the 5th city ward openly said: "The Americans who provoked war and accepted defeat in the North will lose in the South and have to go home! The 'liberation' people who are Vietnamese, why should they go anywhere?" Other policemen continued: "They will come to Saigon! Let us be prepared right now before it will be too late!"

After the NFLSV made public the overall 10-point solution and particularly after the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam was set up, the antiwar tendency in the puppet army has been growing fast. A battalion commander in the puppet 7th division, during an operation in My Thien area of Cai Be District in My Tho Province, in the middle of May 1969, openly said to his soldiers: "Did you know anything about their overall 10-point solution? You should take care of yourself, each of you, since they have already pointed to the road you should take; if you died

now, your wives and children would lose their support!" Another puppet officer of the same division, in another operation on 20 May 1969 in Hau My District of My Tho Province, told his compatriots: "We got orders to launch this operation, but we are not so silly as to touch the 'liberation' troops at this time. They are about to win. We must keep ourselves alive in order to return to our families and not to feel guilty toward our fatherland."

The puppet soldiers, having a definite concept of the American aggressors' unavoidable defeat, and with their nationalist spirit being further awakened, felt proud as they learned of the victory of the North over the American aggressors, showed admiration toward the NFLSV, and for the first time showed their resistance against the Americans and the Thieu-Ky clique. The French journalist, Certillon, made this observation as he wrote about the Saigon situation: "In the ranks of the (puppet) military and police, the anti-American tendency has never been stronger than it is today." And never before has the revolution strongly shaken the feelings and morale of the puppet soldiers. In Long An, all members of a puppet army unit, when receiving orders to suppress a meeting of the people of Nhon Thanh in Tan Tru District on 20 June 1969, which was organized to welcome the birth of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, not only refused to do any harm to their compatriots but also shouted these slogans: "Welcome the PRG of the Republic of South Vietnam!" and "Down with the American imperialists and the Thieu-Ky-Huong clique of lackeys!" Afterwards, the entire puppet army unit, beating drums and carrying flags and revolutionary slogans, marched toward the provincial capital, Tan An.

More and more phenomena appeared in the antiwar movement in the puppet army, such as the puppet troops trying to explain to the local people, asking them to get in touch with the people's liberation armed forces in their name to explain that they were only "draftees" and wished that they would be spared of any attacks, deliberately avoiding contact with the liberation troops during operations or while under attack, quickly dropping arms and surrendering during attacks, seeking to get in touch with their relatives in the revolutionary ranks, trying to hide some Front leaflets or documents as "guarantees," voluntarily offering contributions to the resistance, and so on.

A large number of puppet soldiers, educated by their compatriots and guided by the light coming from the overall 10-point solution of the NFLSV, firmly left their ranks or returned to the people with their weapons, thus seriously undermining the morale and combat organization of the puppet army.

The scope and rate of desertions in the puppet army increased tremendously. According to a recent secret report of the Saigon puppet administration, each month an average of 11,000 puppet soldiers deserted, and the rate of desertion has increased four times and continues to increase.

According to incomplete statistics by the Liberation News Agency, since the beginning of November 1968, at least more than 120,000 puppet soldiers (over one-half being regular soldiers) have left their ranks. In the first three months of 1969 alone, nearly 50,000 puppet soldiers deserted on the battlefields in Tri-Thien (Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces), Trung Bo

(central part of Vietnam), Tay Nguyen, central Nam Bo (southern Vietnam), western Nam Bo, and Ba Ria-Long Khanh. The number of puppet soldiers who deserted, after each phase of the offensive and uprising of the army and people of the South since the beginning of 1969, has not ceased increasing, and all battlefields have indicated disintegration was fast.

In May 1969, the number of puppet deserters in central Trung Bo was almost one-half of the total number (10,000) in the three months of the Ky Dau spring. This rate of desertion was so common on all Nam Bo battlefields, particularly in central Nam Bo. In My Tho, over 2,000 puppet soldiers deserted in the first three months of 1969, and nearly 2,500 in May 1969. In An Giang, in 20 days, from 11 to 31 May, the rate of desertion increased almost four times over that in April (over 200 soldiers), and almost equaled one-half of the total desertion in the first three months of 1969 (over 1,500 soldiers).

This situation revealed the more and more critical demoralization of the puppet army and its organizational weakness in the face of the ever-increasing and continual attacks of the people's liberation armed forces, and at the same time reflected the rising movement in the puppet army to protest the Americans who stubbornly continued the war.

The new disintegration of the puppet army is represented by the movement of desertion that quickly spreads among the main-force ranks and in the "civil defense" force, the important source of reinforcement for the puppet army.

The "civil defense" force was set up early in 1968 by the American aggressors and puppet administration in the cities, "strategic hamlets," and areas of "popular concentrations" to cope with the offensives and uprisings of the army and people of the South; however, it was broken by the Ky Dau Tet offensives launched by the army and people of the South. In Saigon and vicinity, in the first six months this year, more than 25,000 members of the "civil defense" force left their ranks. Nearly 3,500 of them deserted in the area northwest of Saigon alone in the first three months this year. In Hue and Da Nang, and particularly the city of Can Tho, about 50 percent of the "civil defense" force there either deserted or were dissolved. In many parts of Can Tho, nearly all members of the force left their ranks. In the areas outside many cities, the force was almost totally disintegrated. In eight of 10 hamlets of Long Dien District in Ba Ria-Long Khanh area, it was completely disintegrated. In Nam Long An, more than 8,000 "civil defense" force members either deserted or were dissolved in the first six months this year.

The spreading desertion movement grew along with a tremendous antiwar movement that was carried on in the form of returning weapons, "refusing positions," and "refusing jobs"; fighting military training and standing guard; and rioting, which became a danger for the American aggressors and the Saigon puppet administration. French journalist Certillon remarked: "The Saigon administration now fears that the tens of thousands of guns that were distributed to the 'civil defense' force in Saigon in the last six months

could be wrongly used. The fact that it withdraws weapons in many areas and takes many measures to avoid 'confusion' in the 'civil defense' ranks actually serves to cope with the antiwar movement that is spreading in this force."

The disintegration of the "civil defense" force directly affects the effort to strengthen the main-force units, which also face serious desertion situation. The rate of desertion, since 1 November 1968, has increased to 50 percent in most of the puppet divisions. It was higher in many battalions of these divisions and in many other puppet "armed services," even as much as 70 percent (as in battalions 1, 2, 3, and 4 of regiment 31 in the 21st division; ranger battalions 41, 42, 43, and 44; battalion 3 of regiment 4 in the 2nd division; the "cadet" units in Vinh Trung and Ba Xoai, An Giang Province; and many security and special force companies in the Chau Doc subzone). Each battalion of regiment 31 in the 21st division, at the end of May 1969, had only 100-150 soldiers left, and battalion 3 only 66. Even worse was the case of regiment 51 in Quang Nam Province: each of its companies had only 50 soldiers left, and each of its platoons just over 10. Desertion even affected the effectiveness of entire battalions like the case of battalion 380 in Quang Ngai Province.

More remarkable is the fact that the desertion movement develops even more quickly in the puppet units that are used as guinea pigs on the battlefields in connection with the "de-Americanization" stand. In the 18th division, nearly 4,500 soldiers have deserted since the Americans began applying their "de-Americanization" stand, or about equal to the total of its desertions in three years, 1965-1967. After November 1968, and recently, sometimes as many as 300 of its soldiers deserted in one day. A particular case was on 4 July 1969: more than 70 soldiers of regiments 43 and 52 in that division, who had been stationing in Trang Bom, left their ranks and returned to the people with all their weapons and ammunitions. In the puppet battalions that took part in the experimental "de-Americanization" operation in Kontum, the same desertion situation occurred on as large a scale as in the 18th division.

The phenomenon of collective desertion -- collective surrender on the battlefield, or abandoning of outposts, vehicles, or formations and returning to the people or their families -- is more and more common. In Xuan Loc and Nui Dai of Bien Hoa and An Giang provinces, respectively, hundreds of puppet soldiers, in May and June 1969, broke away from the battle minutes after they had just started fighting the enemy.

The thinking and actual act of desertion also widely spread among the ranks of puppet officers. Many of them, in many operations in Tay Nguyen, eastern Nam Bo, and central Nam Bo, openly "ordered" their soldiers to flee freely to avoid being uselessly killed.

In addition to the wave of large-scale desertions, the antiwar movement takes the form of injuring oneself to avoid being sent to the front line and resisting orders concerning reinforcement and counterattacks; it spreads to all puppet "armed services," including the strategic reserve forces. This form of protesting the war took place not only in platoons and companies, but

in many puppet battalions.

In the middle of May 1969, soldiers of a battalion in the 7th division, during an operation in My Thien, My Tho Province, followed an order from their commander by using camouflage to hide themselves from the Americans in their flying aircraft, and then returning to their base.

Collective antiwar incidents do not cease to increase, along with the tendency to oppose the war which develops more and more quickly in the puppet army, particularly after the NFLSV 10-point solution has been made public. On the central Nam Bo battlefield, there were 38 collective antiwar activities in the first three months of this year; in My Tho alone, 25 battalions, four companies, and three platoons staged collective antiwar demonstrations in May 1969.

In many cases, collective antiwar activities broke into military action like the one staged by the soldiers and officers of battalion 4 of regiment 50 in the 25th division, stationed in the provincial capital of Hau Nghia, on 10 June. The antiwar soldiers not only refused to obey orders from their commanders, but also fired at the special-force villains who had committed many crimes against the people.

Many antiwar incidents broke out continually right in the cities and in the ranks of key enemy forces like the rangers, military police, and riot police. The city of Can Tho was the most exceptional, for since the beginning of 1969 nearly 10 antiwar incidents broke out in the ranks of dozens of battalions and companies and involved hundreds of main-force and ranger troops and riot policemen.

The collective antiwar movement, in the face of the continual attacks of the people's liberation armed forces, was spreading to companies and battalions, greatly reduced the puppet soldiers' combat efficiency, and created many obstacles for important enemy action. On the central Trung Bo, southern Tay Nguyen, and central Nam Bo battlefields, many collective antiwar activities that broke out in May 1969 in the forms of resisting orders and refusing to launch operations on the part of many puppet companies and battalions hampered and thwarted many enemy operations aimed at providing reinforcement, counteroffensive, or release of pressure, and compelled the enemy to evacuate from a lot of besieged positions.

The most outstanding feature of the antiwar movement in the puppet army after 1 November 1968 was the nationalist awakening among the puppet soldiers. As the contradictions between the Americans and the puppets got deeper, a movement to launch armed riots gained strength among the patriotic soldiers.

The number of armed incidents involving patriotic soldiers continuously increased and took place on all battlefields. These soldiers, in the first three months this year, staged over 200 armed riots. On the central Trung Bo battlefield, there were 178 incidents, or more than one-half of all the armed

actions there in 1968 (350 incidents). The patriotic soldiers in the puppet force in central Trung Bo, after 1 November 1968, launched 58 consecutive armed riots that gave rise to many big events in the puppet army. In the incident of 18 November 1968 alone, the patriotic soldiers in northern Quang Nam destroyed three aircraft, killed an entire enemy company on board and six American pilots, and threw the puppet army ranks into disorder.

Many armed riots of the patriotic soldiers, who had the assistance of the people's liberation armed forces and the facilities of patriotic soldiers' associations, were continually organized right in the cities and enemy command posts, and created a lot of discussions afterwards. More representative were the ones staged by the patriotic soldiers in Quang Nam, Da Nang, and puppet regiments 5 and 51, stationed in Quang Nam and Binh Dinh provinces, respectively.

The patriotic soldiers taking part in armed riots, with determination to accomplish deeds and return to the people, and because of higher organizing and coordinating capacities, scored many remarkable achievements in destroying the vitality and means of war of the Americans and puppets. In the first three months of 1969, they killed nearly 1,400 Americans and puppets (including well-trained troops, officers of colonel rank, and a lot of villains among the traitors and puppets); destroyed a pretty large section of their means of war, consisting of dozens of aircraft, many ships and military vehicles, warehouses, pipe lines, information offices, and radio stations; and, along with the people and liberation armed forces, completely destroyed many installations manned by traitors and puppets, and reduced to rubbles a lot of outposts. The patriotic soldiers in northern Quang Nam and of the two puppet regiments 51 and 41 particularly scored brilliant achievements by organizing successive armed riots right in the heart of Da Nang and enemy command posts; destroyed a lot of American and puppet well-trained manpower (including many American pilots and puppet officers of colonel rank); and completely destroyed many important means of war, including dozens of helicopters, transports, and jet fighters, scores of military vehicles (including many armored vehicles), many gasoline storage facilities containing millions of liters, a number of ammunition dumps, etc.

5598
CSO 3520-D