

SEMINAR OF PROVINCE CHIEFS
From October 11 to October 12, 1965

Supplementary notes on the
discussions on pacification

(Reporter: NGUYEN NGOC NE)

The following notes contain some details supplementary to the final report presented at the closing ceremony of the Seminar of province chiefs, by Sub. Brig. General NGUYEN DUC THANG, chairman of the discussion group of pacification.

A. Why does our pacification program fail?

The seminar members deemed that the most important cause of our failure is that the Ministry of Defense had drafted the youths from 18 to 30 years of age in order to reinforce the military. This measure was necessary because in times past, our allies had not participated in the fighting as actively as they are at present. As the situation has now changed, the seminar members proposed that for the coming year (1966) that civilian manpower be kept in rural areas to enable our pacification program to yield good results.

Another cause of our failure may be attributed to the fact that most province chiefs continued to compete among themselves just as they did when the late President NGO DINH DIEM undertook to build strategic hamlets. They extended their pacification programs to insecure hamlets. They could not defend those hamlets which were attacked and destroyed by the V.C. The seminar members now adopt this motto: "Let's go slowly but surely".

B. Financial procedures

During the discussion on financial procedures in the field of pacification, there were members who complained that certain projects were approved too late. That is the reason why the provinces concerned could not carry out their programs. In order to speed up the process, the seminar members proposed that "pre-action control steps be simple and easy but post-audit controls be very rigorous".

C. Does the problem of refugees from Communism have any connection with the problem of pacification?

The seminar members raised the following points:

1. One should not concentrate without discrimination various families whose membership may include V.C. adherents; this should be avoided as a general rule. A sorting process is necessary:

(a) There are families which, in spite of one or two V.C. members, are themselves nationalists; sometimes they will have performed anti-communist acts.

(b) There are other families whose members follow the V.C. and they sympathize with the V.C. When they receive supplies (food, cloth, etc.) from the Government, they secretly send such items to their communist relatives.

A case in point occurred in Kien Tuong province. When two brothers, one V.C. and the other nationalist, met in close combat, they shot at each other.

We can keep those families mentioned under (a) with us; on the other hand, we should concentrate on identifying the other families in the (b) category. In either case we shall not maltreat those families by shall treat them humanely.

2. Some seminar members however, expressed the idea that, as a warning, those families whose members follow the V.C. should receive severe treatment. This will make both the communist followers and their families think of the consequences of their acts.

Summarizing the discussions, Sub. Brig. General NGUYEN DUC THANG came to this conclusion:

One cannot take blanket action and concentrate in the same area all families having a member who follows the V.C. One should examine each case separately. There are, for example, some youths who have been kidnapped by the V.C. and forced to follow them. According to regulations in force, the province chief can isolate any family he deems dangerous and confine that family to an assigned place. Thus any families the province chief deems harmful, he can confine but must treat them humanely.

D. The use of allied forces in pacification operations

Good Point! A representative of a province in Central Vietnam mentioned the case of foreign soldiers checking up and searching the passers-by and bus passengers while Vietnamese policemen were looking on. This creates a very bad impression. The V.C. does not fail to exploit it in the form of anti-American propaganda. The seminar members came to the conclusion that foreign soldiers should never perform civil police responsibilities.

E. Do USOM & MACV province reps. create any obstacle to province chiefs?

Some seminar members mentioned the following situations:

- Very Dumb*
- People tend to send their requests for aid directly to the USOM rep.
 - Sometimes the province chief orders that certain aid be given to the people but the USOM rep. refuses it.

- New Life Hamlet inspection teams are composed of 3 people: the province chief, USOM rep. and MACV rep. But very often either the USOM rep. or the MACV rep. is absent, so one signature is missing on the report.

All the seminar members came to the conclusion that USOM and MACV reps. have helped them a lot, especially in the field of pacification and the development of New Life Hamlets. If there have been some unsatisfactory cases, this probably stemmed from bad relationship between the province chief and the USOM or MACV rep. On the other hand, and this is the typical situation, when there is good understanding the cooperation is excellent. The discussion leader exhorted the seminar members to work for a better relationship and closer cooperation with USOM & MACV reps. But, at the same time, he raised this warning: In order to avoid possible difficulties with DGBFA, the province chief should be careful to follow prescribed budget procedures because often when USOM and MACV rep. agree with the province chief, DGBFA may reject the action because the budget procedure has not been observed.

F. Training of cadres

Sub. Brig. General NGUYEN DUC THANG, the new Commissioner for Rural Construction, and leader of the discussion group on pacification, gave much attention to the training of pacification cadres. Training is his special concern. Former pacification cadres of all kinds (mobile action, political, administrative), and in spite of their seniority, should undergo training. The duration should be THREE months instead of one month as hitherto. Training programs for cadres should be adequate. A training center will be set up in the Central agency (Ministry of Rural Construction), and there will be other training centers in the provinces. The training center set up in the Central agency will take charge of the training of province and district supervisory levels of cadres, and also will develop instructors for provincial training centers. The latter will be responsible for adequate training of cadres appropriate to the particular situation of each province.

G. Electrification of rural areas

None of the seminar members opposed the program of electrification of rural areas; its usefulness is recognized by all. In the private exchange of ideas among themselves, however, certain members expressed their doubt about the success of the program because of possible acts of sabotage by the V.C. directed at hindering the realization of the electrification program.

H. Construction of class-rooms

Ten minutes before the closing hour of the last meeting of the discussion group on Pacification, the Ministry of National Education sent in a lady representative. She drew the attention of the seminar members to the pressing necessity of using up the funds allocated for the construction of class-rooms in the hamlets. The greater part of these funds have not been used so far. The Ministry of Education has obtained an extension on their availability until March 1966. The representative of the Ministry of Education urged the province chiefs to use up the funds before that deadline.

Many seminar members complained that the cost of materials for construction has increased considerably; in fact, certain material costs have risen in some provinces as much as 400%. Thus, with the maximum of VN\$50,000 for the construction of an elementary school, the contractors cannot bid and the province chiefs cannot, on their part, carry out this program of construction. The seminar members proposed that the VN\$50,000 ceiling be revised to fit the present situation.

Major GIAU, of the Ministry of Rural Construction, said that he has been arranging with USOM to increase the allotted amount, but the ratio of increase has so far not been decided. They will soon come to an agreement on this matter and the Ministry of Rural Construction will immediately inform the province chiefs on the result.

hm.