

VIET-NAM

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WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

It is necessary closely to combine patriotism with proletarian internationalism both in the national liberation and the socialist revolutions. In the present epoch the national liberation revolution constitutes an inseparable component of the world proletarian revolution, and the national liberation revolution can be crowned with complete success only if it develops into a socialist revolution.

—Ho Chi Minh, article in Pravda
October 28, 1967

ORIGINS

The pattern for Communist "wars of national liberation" was established during World War II when the Communist guerrilla forces in Nazi-occupied countries joined the fight for liberation under the orders of the Soviet Politburo (Political Bureau). Almost all national liberation wars since then have been characterized by a similar command relationship between the party political leadership and the military.

By the end of the 1950's it became clear to the Communist world that it could not succeed in the open, direct conquest of other countries. Thus, in January 1961, Chairman Nikita Khrushchev spelled out the new Soviet position on war at the Moscow Conference of Representatives of Communist Workers Parties:

"In modern conditions the following categories of wars should be distinguished: world wars, local wars, liberation wars, and popular uprisings. This is necessary to work out the correct tactics with regard to these wars....

"Now a word about national liberation wars....Can such wars flare up in the future? They can....But these are wars which are national uprisings. In other words, can conditions be created where a people will lose their patience

and rise in arms? They can. What is the attitude of the Marxists toward such uprisings? A most positive one... The Communists fully support such just wars and march in the front rank with the peoples waging liberation struggles."

Soviet foreign policy has been complicated by the ideological divisions which



LAOS. Lao soldiers guard North Vietnamese Regular Army soldiers after their capture in Thakhek, Khammouane Province. The Vietnamese soldiers were guarding a cave containing Communist Chinese-manufactured weapons and supplies.

have developed since the mid-1950's between the U.S.S.R. and Red China. Chinese and Soviet Communists differ substantially in their views as to how communism should be brought to the rest of the world. This difference was spelled out by Communist China's Vice Premier and Defense Minister, Lin Piao, in his famous "Manifesto" of September 1965. Lin pointed out that while the Soviet revolution began with armed uprisings in the cities, and then spread to the countryside, the Chinese revolution won nationwide victory through encirclement of the cities from the rural areas and then capture of the cities.

The Chinese insist that victory is impossible without armed insurgency, preferably agrarian in origin. They place great

stress on the importance of the paramilitary and guerrilla apparatus, sometimes at the expense of political machinery. From the Chinese viewpoint, revolutionary political leadership must emerge from the ranks of the insurgents. Thus Mao's famous statement that all power grows "from the barrel of a gun." Mao's thesis is that "there are only two kinds of wars in history, just and unjust. We support just wars and oppose unjust wars. All counter-revolutionary wars are unjust, all revolutionary wars are just."*

The Russians, on the other hand, place their primary emphasis on political subversion, both in its overt and covert aspects, although by no means to the exclusion of force or the threat of force. The difference is one of emphasis. But it is important, because it means that history has made Soviet strategy concentrate on urban centers and the industrial worker, while the Red Chinese method begins with the rural areas and the peasantry.

CHARACTERISTICS

National liberation wars have these characteristics which distinguish them from conventional military clashes:

All have been waged to forcibly overthrow a legally established government (often representative, sometimes colonial). In this sense, the wars have been revolutionary as contrasted with conflicts between national states.

Elements of the indigenous population have supplied some of the insurgent leadership and combat forces.

All have involved the use of terror, and guerrilla warfare by trained civilians who often wore no distinctive uniforms.

In every case political goals determined military objectives. Most of the wars have been started as "insurgencies" in remote rural areas where local hostility to the entrenched urban government could be exploited. On an increasing scale, the insurgents have adopted the precepts for revolutionary warfare elaborated by Mao Tse-tung and other Communist strategists.

General Vo Nguyen Giap, in his People's War, and the Hanoi government in its official history, state five "lessons" in preparing for wars of national liberation:

1. Careful preparation in ideology and administrative control (including training of cadres, building up bases of resistance, and the organization of armed forces).

* (Mao Tse-tung, Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1954.)

2. Careful timing in seizing the right opportunity.

3. "Launching the revolutionary high tide of the people"--i.e., including in the trained cadres representatives of "all classes, all nationalities, and all religions."

4. Skillful use of all forms of armed struggle combined with all forms of political struggle, shifting emphasis from one to the other often enough to keep the opposition off balance.

5. Full use of the vulnerability in the enemy ranks, and spearheading the forces at the "main enemy."

In practice, the new technique of waging "just" wars involves the fomenting of armed revolt against any non-Communist government, or assistance to anyone else engaged in violence against established non-Communist governments. Its application in Viet-Nam is seen in the terror tactics in which members of "political action" cells have systematically murdered more than 16,000 civilians since 1957 in an effort to destroy any political structure which stands in the way of a Communist takeover.

IMMUNE AGGRESSORS

Although the United Nations is charged with maintaining international peace and security and with taking such measures that may be required to meet its aim, wars of national liberation pose special problems. The aggressors do not respect the United Nation's authority to deal in such matters. In addition, the use of the veto power in the Security Council often has prevented the use of peacekeeping machinery.

Any government in power, faced with armed insurrection it cannot control, must therefore appeal for outside help. If international peacekeeping machinery is blocked at the U.N. level, the government under attack will appeal for help from other sources, including individual nations with a fundamental interest in the maintenance of stability and freedom of choice in other states.

The United States has considered it in its national interest to respond to such calls for aid, even though aware that each time this happened, the danger emerged of the conflict flaring into a large war involving the major powers. On June 6, 1961, when President John F. Kennedy returned from his Vienna meeting with Chairman Khrushchev, he said:

"In the 1940's and early fifties, the great danger was from Communist armies marching across free borders, which we saw in Korea....Now we face a new and different threat. We no longer have a nuclear monopoly. Their missiles, they believe, will hold off our missiles, and their troops can match our troops should we intervene in these so-called wars of liberation. Thus, the local conflict they support can turn in their favor through guerrillas or insurgents or subversion....it is clear that this struggle in this area of the new and poorer nations will be a continuing crisis of this decade."

Broadly speaking, Soviet and Chinese involvement in national liberation wars can be broken down into three categories:

1) Those conflicts where the Soviet Union or Red China acted as the motivating force, or became the motivating power shortly after the outbreak of hostilities.

2) Those wars which were waged without much obvious Soviet or Red Chinese participation, but which were skillfully exploited, and where the outcome greatly benefited the international Communist movement.

3) Conflicts where Communist participation, for a variety of reasons, remains minimal.



VENEZUELA. Three tons of buried weapons and ammunition found on November 3, 1963 on a Venezuelan beach were traced to Cuban origin. Cuba is the only country in the Western Hemisphere equipped with the 7.62 mm. rifle shown above, which was part of the arms cache. The arrow points to the hole left by the removal of the Seal of Cuba normally engraved there.

Since 1945 there have been at least 14 wars of national liberation (some authorities cite as many as 30), all undeclared—

a surprisingly large number for a world which by legal definition has been at peace. Chronologically, the principal ones have been as follows:

- 1) The French war in Viet-Nam (1946-1954)—in many respects a variety of colonial war.
- 2) The civil war in China (1945-1949).
- 3) The Greek civil war (1946-1949).
- 4) The Huk campaign in the Philippines (1946-1956).
- 5) The Dutch-Indonesian conflict (1947-1949), where the Communist role was not dominant.
- 6) The Malayan insurrection (1949-1959).
- 7) The Korean war (1950-1953) which, while essentially a conventional war, North Korea has tried to portray as a war of liberation.
- 8) The civil war in Cuba (1954-1959).
- 9) The Algerian war (1954-1962), where direct Communist involvement was small, but where Soviet diplomatic gains proved to be enormous.
- 10) The war in South Viet-Nam.
- 11 and 12) Two civil wars in the Congo (1960 and 1964), where Communist participation was small.
- 13) Major insurgency in Venezuela (1961-1963).
- 14) Insurgency in Guatemala (1964 to present).

With variations, the techniques used by the Communists in Viet-Nam have been applied in Cuba, Guatemala, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines, and many other areas, with varying degrees of success.

In Cuba, Fidel Castro came to power in a classic implementation of the war of national liberation, gaining the support of the Cuban people against an oppressive and unpopular regime. Typically, most Cubans supporting Castro believed they were supporting a liberal or social democratic revolution; few Cubans—and indeed few Americans—believed a Castro victory would lead to a Communist authoritarian regime.

In the Philippines, the power of the Hukbalahaps was broken by the brilliant social and military reforms of Defense Minister Ramon Magsaysay.

In Malaya, the anticolonial character of the war was stressed by the Communist guerrillas—mostly of Chinese descent. British and Malay forces after 8 years destroyed the military and terrorist forces, then deprived Communists forever afterward of the anticolonial

excuse for a war of national liberation by giving the country its independence under a democratically elected government.



PHILIPPINES. Townspeople search the wreckage of their homes after a Communist-led Hukbalahap guerrilla raid on Luzon Island August 25, 1950. Guards ringed Manila after a weekend of terror by the Huks left a death toll of 85 persons in nearby communities.

U.S. POLICY

As the war of liberation became increasingly exploited by the Communist forces, it necessarily evoked a corresponding increase in the response from the United States. The contest which has been developing in Viet-Nam since 1954 became the vortex of the struggle. As the Communist offensive was mounted out of North Viet-Nam, the issue was accurately described by General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander in Chief of the North Vietnamese forces,* as follows:

"South Viet-Nam is the example for national liberation movements of our times....If it proves possible to defeat the 'Special Warfare' tested in South Viet-Nam by the American imperialists, this will mean that it can be defeated everywhere else as well."

Backing up Giap, and expounding on his thesis that encirclement of the cities from the rural areas is applicable on a global basis, Red China's Lin Piao argues in his Manifesto that the "rural areas of the world" today are Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The "cities of the world" are Western Europe and North America. Hence, Lin maintains, just as commu-

nism in China succeeded by capturing first the countryside and then encircling and defeating the cities, so the world Communist movement will succeed by first capturing Asia, Africa, and Latin America and finally by decisively defeating the United States and its Western European allies. The focus today of the Communist revolutionary movement against the United States, according to Lin, is Viet-Nam.

Thus, the 17 million people of South Viet-Nam have become the fulcrum from which the Communists hope to stimulate "additional Viet-Nams" in underdeveloped countries everywhere.

Should North Viet-Nam succeed in subverting South Viet-Nam, other non-Communist countries in the area will undoubtedly come under more direct attack and increased attempts at subversion. In Laos the Communist Pathet Lao, with heavy North Vietnamese support (troops, supplies, training), have attacked numerous government outposts, in violation of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva accords, and now occupy almost half of Laos. Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand are fighting Communist insurrections; guerrillas captured in Thailand's northeast sections have admitted being trained in North Viet-Nam.

While this in itself does not mean these countries are destined to fall should North Viet-Nam overrun the South, it would have a disturbing psychological effect and Communist resources now committed to the Viet-Nam war would be freed to stimulate or supply insurgencies elsewhere. Thus, the outcome of all insurgencies in Southeast Asia will be affected by what happens in Viet-Nam.

With this in mind, United States policy has developed along two lines:

1. It has been the U.S. position from the time of the Geneva conference of 1954 that the people in South Viet-Nam (and indeed in all divided countries) have the right to choose freely their type of government. At the Geneva conference the representative of the State of Viet-Nam on July 21 declared his government's unwillingness to be bound by any agreement between the other parties concerning the political future of the people of South Viet-Nam. Tran Van Do, the esteemed statesman then representing the State of Viet-Nam, protested that others had arrogated to themselves "the right, without prior agreement from the delegation of the State of Viet Nam, to fix the date of the future elections despite the clearly political character of such a provision."

In his declaration to the conference Tran Van Do said:

* Nhan Dan, July 19, 1964.

"The delegation of the State of Viet Nam has put forward its proposals aimed at obtaining an armistice without partition, even temporary, of Viet Nam, by means of the disarmament of all the belligerent forces after their withdrawal into assembly areas as restricted as possible, and by the establishment of temporary control by the United Nations organization over the whole of the territory until such time as the restoration of order and peace permits the Vietnamese people to decide its future by free election.

"The Vietnamese delegation ... protests solemnly against the hasty conclusion of the armistice agreement by the French and Viet Minh (Communist) High Commands alone, in view of the fact that the French High Command only commands Vietnamese troops by delegation of the powers of the Chief of State of Viet Nam, and above all in view of the fact that several clauses of this agreement are of a nature to compromise gravely the political future of the Vietnamese people....

"Consequently, the Government of the State of Viet Nam demands that it should be put on record that it protests solemnly against the way in which the armistice was concluded and against the conditions of this armistice, which takes no account of the profound aspirations of the Vietnamese people, and that it reserves complete freedom of action for safeguarding the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to territorial unity, independence, and freedom."

As a result of the election impasse Viet-Nam remained divided, and the Communists prepared for the war of national liberation in the South. This war was intended to provide the Communists with a cheap, safe, and disavowable technique not only for the conquest of South Viet-Nam, but for future Communist expansion in Asia and other regions.

2. As an outgrowth of the U.S. stand in favor of self-determination and against the introduction of force by the Communists, it became increasingly imperative for the United States to demonstrate that the war of liberation technique, far from being cheap, safe, and disavowable, is costly, dangerous, and must of necessity for free-world security be doomed to failure. The myth of the invincibility of this technique of warfare had to be destroyed if the independence of many other weak nations which are similarly vulnerable to subversive aggression was to be protected.

As President Johnson explained on June 30, 1966:

"Today in South Viet-Nam we are witness to ... a war that is waged by men who believe that subversion and



SOUTH VIET-NAM. Chinese language markings plainly visible on these 77mm. recoilless rifle shells found in offshore caves in South Viet-Nam show that they were manufactured in Communist China. At least 100 tons of North Vietnamese military supplies, mostly from Communist China and Czechoslovakia, were found in this spot alone.

guerrilla warfare, transported across international boundaries, can achieve what conventional armies could not...

"If, by such methods, the agents of one nation can go out and hold and seize power where turbulent change is occurring in another nation, our hope for peace and order will suffer a crushing blow all over the world. It will be an invitation to the would-be conqueror to keep on marching."

U.S. COUNTERSTRATEGY

In November 1961, General Maxwell D. Taylor in a report to President John F. Kennedy raised a critical question about possible future use of U.S. airpower against the source of Communist support in North Viet-Nam:

"While we feel that the program recommended of accelerated support in South Viet-Nam represents those measures which should be taken now, I would not suggest that it is the final word.... Can we admit the establishment of the common law that the party attacked and his friends are denied the right to strike the source of the aggression after the fact of that external aggression has been clearly established?"

In testimony before the Senate in February 1966, General Taylor said that by February 1965 after the invasion of South Viet-Nam by regular North Viet-Nam units was confirmed, "it became clear that we could no longer tolerate this clandestine support from the immune sanctuary in North Viet-Nam which served as the external base for the Viet Cong insurgency."

To combat the war of liberation in South Viet-Nam, the United States and its allies have relied on a four-point strategy:

1. Increasing the effectiveness of ground forces in South Viet-Nam. The United States is taking all possible measures to offset the natural advantages of the guerrilla forces and the secret terror cells.

2. The use of airpower against North Viet-Nam. U.S. bombing tactics have not been aimed at destroying or changing the government in the North, or in conquering it—the bombing is primarily intended to impede and make more costly the operations against the South, and to give Hanoi an incentive for ending these operations altogether. As President Johnson stated in San Antonio on September 29, 1967: "The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Viet-Nam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Viet-Nam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."

3. Nonmilitary activities. South Viet-Nam was vulnerable to the war of national liberation technique because of political, economic, and social instability. The contest will not be won until these conditions are corrected. The United States can help, but the most important work in this field must be done by the South Vietnamese. All we can do is assist them in buying the time needed to make essential reforms and to carry out economic and social development. An important step forward was taken when the people of South Viet-Nam elected a constituent assembly, approved a constitution, and chose a new government.

4. Efforts to initiate a peaceful settlement. From the outset of the war in Viet-Nam, the United States has tried to move from the battlefield to the conference table. President Johnson often has offered talks without preconditions. Hanoi's response until May 3 was to demand preconditions of its own. The U.S. response, in effect, has been: If Hanoi demands such a precondition as a halt to the bombing, the United States has a right to ask for assurance that Hanoi will not take military advantage of such a halt. Moreover,



VIET-NAM REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT. Vice President Humphrey and Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker observe young Vietnamese boys being taught national songs at the Vung Tau National Revolutionary Development Center. The Center has graduated more than 30,000 young rural men and women who have gone into hamlets threatened or controlled by the Viet Cong to assist the local people in resisting Communist intimidation. The Vice President flew from Saigon where he was attending the October 1967 inauguration of President Thieu.

Hanoi has never indicated a willingness to scale down its side of the war in return for a deescalation on the other side.

In other parts of the world, the United States has offered a wide range of assistance in counterinsurgency programs to countries facing possible Communist-inspired upheaval. While the military aspects of these counterinsurgency programs gain most of the attention of the press, they are built first and foremost around social and economic reforms of the sort most needed to give progress to the peasants. One of the most difficult aspects of this is that often in its earliest stages, social progress itself can generate social disorder, testing the durability, patience, and convictions of the established government. When poor people for the first time receive some improvements, their expectation of progress tends to soar far beyond the practical ability of any government to accelerate the pace of progress. At this most difficult and vulnerable point the Communist apparatus will attempt to destroy public confidence in the existing regime and to divert popular support to the more violent and seemingly more rapid revolutionary changes through the war of national liberation. This has repeatedly faced non-Communist governments with the extremely difficult task of trying to push evolutionary reform

while fighting revolution. Thus the government might be forced into a position of appearing to oppose change even when trying to propagate it.

The U.S. view has been consistently that violence impedes needed change and destroys the necessary machinery for progress. Therefore, the United States on the one hand presses for reform and constructive change, and on the other hand resists Communist-inspired terror and violence which capitalize mercilessly on the need for change.

CONCLUSION

An incisive description of the problem of coping with wars of national liberation was given by Adlai Stevenson in one of his last major speeches.* Ambassador Stevenson said:

"The development of camouflaged aggression has reached such a sophisticated stage that it is increasingly dif-

* Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson, "The Shades of Gray," delivered at the 56th Annual Convention of Rotary International in Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 1, 1965. Published in "Vital Speeches," July 1, 1965, Vol. XXXI, No. 18.

ficult to diagnose and define—so much so that it often creates just the kind of confusion that its sponsors hope for....

"Almost by definition, the new style of clandestine aggression—and the new techniques of subverting legitimate protest movements—lead to greater confusion. The aggressor does not blow a bugle to announce his identity. The agents of aggression may lurk in the jungles or perch on the roofs of narrow streets or mix with civilian crowds in the marketplace.

"The government in power may be non-representative or unpopular. The opposition may be partly legitimate and partly conspiratorial and partly the work of outside powers. Yet the world is too volatile to permit the spread of militant violence and the success of clandestine aggression. And until the international community is ready to rescue the victims of clandestine aggression, national power will be called upon to fill the vacuum in peacekeeping capacity. It is the most costly, the most dangerous and the least desirable kind of peacekeeping—and the sooner it becomes unnecessary the better it will be for all of us."

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VIET-NAM INFORMATION NOTES

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PRESENTLY AVAILABLE ...

1. Basic Data on South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8195) summarizes general information on the land, people, history, government, and economy of the country.
2. The Search for Peace in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8196) reviews the efforts of individuals, governments, and international bodies to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict in Viet-Nam. The policy of the Government of North Viet-Nam with regard to a peaceful settlement is included.
3. Communist-Directed Forces in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8197) seeks to answer such questions as: What is the Viet Cong? Who are its leaders? How is it related to party and government organs of North Viet-Nam? What are the Communists' objectives? Their strengths? Their weaknesses?
4. Free World Assistance for South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8213) describes the scope of the international aid program for the Republic of Viet-Nam. It gives facts and figures about the contributions of 36 participating nations (U.S. aid is not included—a separate Note is to be devoted to that subject).
5. Political Development in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8231) discusses South Viet-Nam's steady progress toward an elected government and representative institutions at all levels of government.
6. Why We Fight in Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8245) describes the origin of the conflict and the principal reasons for U. S. involvement.
7. Viet-Cong Terror Tactics in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8259) describes the deliberate campaign of terror by which the Viet-Cong hope to break the resistance of South Viet-Nam.
8. National Reconciliation in South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8260) describes the Chieu-Hoi, or Open Arms, program of the Government of South Viet-Nam.
9. Prisoners of War (Dept. of State pub. 8275) explains the special status of prisoners of war under the Geneva convention, allied treatment of prisoners and efforts to discuss with North Viet-Nam and the Communist National Liberation Front repatriation, exchange, and other matters pertinent to prisoners of war.
10. Legal Basis for U.S. Military Aid to South Viet-Nam (Dept. of State pub. 8285) discusses the well-established points of law and fact which are the legal basis for the U.S. military commitment in South Viet-Nam.
11. Opinions of Asian and Pacific Leaders (Dept. of State pub. 8363). The leaders of the countries most immediately concerned about the future of Viet-Nam express their views on: the U.S. commitment, the nature of the war, North Vietnamese and Chinese involvement, peace efforts, and regional goals beyond the war.

Several other Viet-Nam Information Notes will be available in the near future. The Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, on request, will place individuals on its mailing list to receive Selected United States Government Publications—a free, biweekly announcement of new publications, including subsequent numbers of this series.