

THE SITUATION OF THE PARTY

The situations regarding the enemy and the movement were explained above. What was the situation of the Party organization?

Prior to the ceasefire, the Party organization in Nam Bo had 60,000 members. There was a Party chapter in every village, except in the colonies of the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai, the ethnic groups of Eastern region, the Khmers in Soc Trang, and also in the rubber plantations and in most of the cities and towns.

The Party organization in Nam Bo openly led the resistance and enjoyed the greatest influence among the people. Therefore, the people and the enemy knew most of the overt Party members and cadres by face, as well as by names, excepting only those who operated behind enemy lines.

In general, the Party members were the hard core elements of the working class. During the period of "Competition to Develop the Party" from 1951 to 1952, the Party enrolled some dubious people, but these were few, and they mostly came from the Western region provinces. And even though the Party organization in Nam Bo had not yet conducted a political reorientation down to its basic structures, most Party members were indoctrinated throughout the many study phases during the resistance years. So, in brief, the Party had a fairly strong organization, qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

After the ceasefire, a small number of Party members and cadres went North but the great majority of them stayed behind. They were all summarily indoctrinated on the significance of peaceful victory and on the policy and immediate tasks of the Party. However, in many areas, such as in the Eastern region provinces and in the Dong Thap area, the period prior to the embarkment to the North was short, and as a result, a number of Party members were not indoctrinated or were indoctrinated poorly. The organization's improvement was not fully completed, but this was to be carried out when the political struggle began. The Party system from the Regional Committee down was re-organized. Party members with low morale, dubious political backgrounds, those who were operating carelessly, or came from the exploiting class, were purged from the organization or were reclassified as Party members class B, class C, etc. The Party organization then

had only about 15,000 members who were left behind. They were deployed in small and mobile organizations and operated clandestinely, since relations between the higher and lower echelons and vice-versa were restricted.

With regard to the general ideological viewpoint, the Party organization was concerned about the temporary partition of the of the country and was not satisfied with it. However, the Party did not accurately evaluate the balance of strength at that time, so it overestimated its successes and became somewhat too optimistic. From late 1954 to early 1955, the U. S. - Diem were busy dealing with France and the pro-French elements, so they did not yet violently oppress the people. In addition, the majority of our Party members were obsessed with the notion of a peaceful victory and became optimistic and exposed themselves. During this period a number of Party members and cadres felt that it was time to relax. Most of them overrelied on the legality of the Geneva Agreement and on North Vietnam. They firmly believed that the country would be reunified in two years. This situation was due primarily to the higher echelon's conduct of indoctrination. The effects of the above-cited subjectivism and carelessness were that a number of Party members felt confused when the enemy directed his attack on the Party. In every area we suffered losses. The Truong Tan Buu operation completely disintegrated the Party organization in Thu Duc, Lai Thieu and Long Thanh.

In the middle of 1956, we began our first phase in the shifting of Party members. The majority of the known members were ordered to stay still or to move to other areas. In general, these measures were not effective because the enemy now started controlling the rural areas. The shifted cadres were either captured or had recourse to the only way left, which was to flee away. Most of the dormant cadres slept forever. Feeling that the Party organization was still cumbersome, we undertook another "consolidation of the organization" and a number of members were purged.

One of our biggest mistakes was to try to legalize our Party members. In some Central region provinces it was called "the reincarnation" of the Party members which meant that they reported themselves to the enemy. So, as a result, a number were arrested, some stopped operating, and others became enemy henchmen.

The situation daily became harder. The ideology of the Party members became more and more confused. Most did not believe in the possibility for political struggle and in the Party's line. The desire for armed activities appeared and expanded quickly. In some areas, Party members killed spies on their own initiative and armed the people to counter terrorism. These acts, however, were not numerous because the higher echelons were severely critical of them.

The number of Party members decreased daily. The number of key personnel, etc., and organizations developed very slowly, and the Party's sources of replacement dried up. The remaining cadre were exposed after a short period of activity because they had much to do and their areas of responsibility were large. They were hunted down and arrested. Many Party members had to live underground the year round and only went out at night.

Early in 1958, the enemy's oppression was intensive. The mass movements ebbed. Many basic structures disintegrated. Many comrades were killed. So, questions and doubts of the political struggle line rose again and most people wanted an armed struggle. Ideological guidance sometimes calmed them down, but doubts in the Party's line kept growing more and more. By mid-1959, when the enemy used the law 10/59 to repress us, the desire to take up arms to fight the enemy became much stronger.

With the exception of shirking and wavering members who denounced others after they had been apprehended and interrogated, or after they had surrendered (the number of defectors was few while those who denounced members were numerous), the majority of Party members and cadres fought bravely and resolutely undergoing much suffering and hardship. The comrades who stayed faithful to the movement at its most adverse moments firmly believed that the revolution would be victorious. They all were determined to lead the people to struggle and felt ready to risk their lives against the enemy.

In mid-1959, the total number of Party members in Nam Bo was about 5,000. Many organizations were almost annihilated, such as the Party organization in Gia Dinh Province. Even after many replacements, the entire Gia Dinh Provincial Committee lost all its members in 1959 and its secretary committed suicide. The district echelons of Go Vap and Tan Binh had more than 1,000 members after the restoration of peace. In 1957 after the consolidation of their

chapters, they had only 385 comrades left. In mid-1959, however, Go Vap had only one comrade and Tan Binh five. All the district committee members were either arrested or killed. The Kien Tuong Provincial Committee in the center of Dong Thap Muoi only had a three-man cell for twenty-one villages in mid-1959. As for places like Go Cong, Cho Gao and My Tho city, they almost became white zones.

Even though the statistics are still incomplete, the number of cadres from the district, provincial to the regional echelons lost during 1954-1959 was in the hundreds, and that of Party members and chapter cadres in the thousands.

To sum up, the situation of the Party during this period had these prominent characteristics:

1. Having been strong, the Nam Bo Party organization progressively disintegrated, with its strength decreasing and organizations being broken in many places.
2. Up to 1959, the opinions of Party members and the Party line were not in agreement, but everybody seriously carried out the Party's directives.
3. During this period, the majority of members resolutely stayed with the people, led the struggle, and died bravely. Thus, the surviving Party members were the hard core. They were extensively tested and forged. Their experiences and political backgrounds were fairly solid. Thanks to them, the Party gained more and more prestige among the people and frightened the enemy. These very hard core Party members were the seeds that later promoted a big revolutionary movement.

THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION

The comprehensive enemy and friendly situations explained above have revealed the leadership of the Regional Party Committee. The Regional Committee was responsible for the ups and downs of the movement. Below is our retrospective opinion of the Regional Committee's policies from late 1954 to mid-1959.

After the restoration of peace, the Nam Bo Party organization set forth the following line based on the new situation:

1. The immediate task in South Vietnam was to maintain and consolidate peace, to struggle for the realization of freedom and democracy, for the improvement of social welfare, and then to move toward the realization of reunification and the fulfillment of independence and democracy for the entire country.

2. To achieve the above task, the South Vietnamese people were to carry out a political struggle according to peaceful means. Political and peaceful struggle might be difficult and complicated, but victory was certain in the end. And this was the only and correct strategy of struggle.

The required objectives of the struggle were to force the enemy to carry out the Geneva Agreement, fulfill freedom and democracy, improve the people's living conditions, and democratize the administrative machinery of South Vietnam, so that a general election could be possible throughout the entire country and its reunification, independence, and democracy could be fulfilled.

The goal of our task then was not to overthrow the enemy government as during the resistance, but to force it, by means of struggles, to improve social welfare and carry out freedom and democracy. By this way the enemy administration would be changed gradually, and favorable conditions for the realization of independence and reunification through the fulfillment of the Geneva Agreement would come about.

3. We moved from the military struggle to a political one, so our main effort and means were not situated in the rural areas as during the guerrilla

resistance. On the contrary, we had more ability and means to operate politically in the cities, the enemy centers of political activity.

4. The operational guideline or the general task for South Vietnam was to harmonize the covert, overt and semi-overt activities. The Party's organizations were to be completely clandestine; the mass organizations and their activities were to be overt and legal, but basically they were to be semi-legal; and the struggles were to be a combination of both legal and illegal, but basically illegal activities.

Today, in view of Central's leadership and the actual situation in South Vietnam, we recognize that the line cited above had many inappropriate points in dealing with the situation then:

1. The biggest leadership shortcoming during that period was the failure in pointing out the fundamental matters which were to serve as the basis of the Party's overall line and courses of action as regards the revolution in South Vietnam.

After the restoration of peace, South Vietnam was still under the rule of the imperialists and feudalists, so the nature of South Vietnamese society could not be other than a colonialist and semi-feudal society.

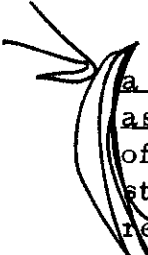
At that time there were many facts not as clear-cut as they are today. For example, Diem's feudalistic regime was not yet stable, and it was not so brutal and fascist as today; French imperialism was not yet replaced by U. S. imperialism; and both the feudalists and the imperialists did not so openly violate the Geneva Agreement as they do now, etc. Thus, we must not be subjective and automatically use all the recently known data to review the previous situation. However, right then if we had meticulously analyzed the nature of the imperialists and feudalists, if we ~~had evaluated and~~ accurately foreseen their schemes, and if we had applied the dialectical viewpoint to the assessment of the situation,

we see that it was incorrect to have maintained that there were no fairly clear factors enabling us to grasp the problems and detect the enemy scheme of violating the Geneva Agreement and the scheme of the feudalists and the imperialists -- the U. S. imperialists particularly -- to enslave the South of Vietnam. Therefore, it was incorrect to have maintained that it was impossible for us to foresee right then that South Vietnam was being transformed into a colony and that South Vietnamese society could not avoid being colonialist and semi-feudal.

2. We failed to set forth the strategic task and the basic line for the revolution in South Vietnam.

In dealing with such enemies and considering the above assessment of the nature of South Vietnamese society, it is clear that the South Vietnamese people could not have done otherwise than to pursue the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution, and pursue the people's national and democratic revolution under a new situation and with new tasks. The key problem was the enemy, especially the French and U. S. imperialists and the feudalists symbolized in the person of Diem. It was unrealistic that they would make concessions to the people and even yield an inch. Therefore, whatever the tactics used, the revolutionary struggle of the South Vietnamese people would be hard and fierce, and should not deviate from the principles of a revolution carried out in a colonialist country. The resolution of the 15th Central conference correctly asserted this problem. It was clear that the South Vietnam revolution moved to a new phase of struggle with new conditions. Recently, we have been winning, and the enemy losing. We are determined to achieve the national and democratic revolution throughout the entire country, and the enemy, being stubborn, has been striving to subjugate the entire country to the colonialists and the feudalists. His first step was to occupy South Vietnam. The contradictions between us and the enemy have not lessened and, on the contrary, they have grown more tense and fierce.

As we mention the principles of the revolutionary process in a colonialist country, we cannot avoid treating the subject of overthrowing a reactionary administration by revolutionary methods and by violence. We cannot cease adhering to the basic points of the line which was formulated by our Party since its foundation, and which was improved by the rich experiences of the August Revolution. For form's sake, we considered the South Vietnamese regime basically democratic. Through taking advantage of the people's spirit, we could have forced the enemy to carry out a relative degree of freedom and democracy, right after the restoration of peace. However, considering the enemy's nature and schemes, this was only one of our many capabilities. It was necessary to have used the demand of fulfilling the Geneva Agreement as a guideline, but this demand should have been considered as a tactical motto only, a political offensive motto to win over public opinion in order to advance the revolution. The fulfillment of the Geneva Agreement should not in any case have been regarded as the strategic and only goal of any entire phase of the revolutionary struggle. In our direct struggle, our stratagem never raised the question of overthrowing the South Vietnamese administration as a first priority. This stratagem was right at the time, but it is necessary to point out our opinion that it was utopian to have hoped that we could have peacefully changed an imperialistic and feudal regime and created the conditions which would have forced it to carry out the Agreement and move toward peace and the unification of the country. Even our attitude toward the enemy army and administrative machinery was also not clear. We used the guideline: "Transform the enemy army into a revolutionary force," and we did not make it clear that the enemy administrative machinery was our antagonist. (Later, we altered it.)

 Our biggest shortcoming at that time was to regard a tactic as a strategic policy and a stratagem of reformism as a revolutionary line. When we set forth the strategy of a phase we neither reiterated or pointed out again the strategic tasks nor defined the long-range and basic revolutionary line of the Party.

The bad effect of this shortcoming was enormous.

First, it made Party members and cadres deviate from the revolution and, as a result, rightist and reformist ideology was born.

Second, because a stratagem was regarded as a strategy, we could not recognize problems quickly and change our line accordingly when the situation changed and when old possibilities disappeared.

Next, because the strategic guideline and the revolutionary goal was not clear, it was impossible to accurately follow the operational guidelines, the methods and the forms of struggle and the way to organize people; and, it was also impossible to correctly achieve the Party's tasks as well as other matters. (Later, we will explain other causes behind the correctness and errors of these matters.)

Finally, because the assessment of the situation was unsatisfactory, our concept of the main strength and the base areas of the revolution was inaccurate. We belittled the role of the rural areas and acted contrary to the principle, according to which, the rural areas ought to be the center of the revolution and the central rallying point of the movement as far as a national and democratic revolution in an agricultural country is concerned. This misconception badly affected the building of the base areas of the Regional Committee itself. For a long period, the Regional Committee used cities as base areas. Thus, not only were its leadership capabilities inhibited, but also its strength suffered remarkable losses.

3. Our evaluation of the balance of the enemy and friendly forces in South Vietnam after the restoration of peace was not comprehensive enough.

When peace was restored, the revolutionary government and army left South Vietnam while the people still had to struggle under the claws of the enemy administration and army. This was a new difficulty, but administrations

and armies were not the only factors in evaluating the balance of power. After nine years of resistance, the South Vietnamese people had achieved a solid political and organizational level. They gained democratic and economic rights to a broad extent. The South Vietnam Party organization, which had openly led the resistance, had much prestige and was strongly organized. ~~Switching from the armed struggle to the political struggle, the movement in South Vietnam did not recede, but was in fact, on the waves of progress.~~ The South Vietnamese people stepped into the period of peaceful struggle after the people of the whole country had victoriously waged the resistance. As for the enemy, he stepped into the political struggle with the disadvantage of defeat, as the analysis in the part dealing with the enemy situation already explained. The enemy had within its ranks many disadvantages, and the biggest one was the non-negotiable conflicts between France and the U.S.A., the clan chieftains, and between the pro-French and pro-American henchmen. In reality, the U.S. - Diem reached the rural areas and pointed their attack against the revolutionary movement only in early 1956. So, we had more than one year to prepare ourselves. ~~To be sure, we did prepare ourselves, but, due to an erroneous concept of the balance of power, we prepared ourselves defensively, decreasing the movement's activities in order to avoid strong reactions by the enemy. Rather, we should have instead prepared ourselves with a determined spirit to hold the revolution's ground and attack the enemy.~~ Because the Regional Committee did not consider the above characteristics in its evaluation of the balance of power, the line and the operational guideline it set forth did not match the existing revolutionary capabilities and spirit of the people.

For example:

- It was set to disband the people's revolutionary organizations. There was a reliance on only exploiting the legal and semi-legal capabilities to organize the masses either in the cities or in the rural areas indiscriminately.

- The form of struggle was strictly a political struggle, and it stubbornly strove to convince the people that such a political struggle could change the situation, etc.

- Concerning the farm lands, it raised only the reduction of rent and the opposition to any changes in crop growing, but nothing specific was raised about the ownership of lands issued to the tillers by the resistance government, especially when the lands confiscated had belonged to the French colonialists.

- It was conceived that the Party chapter organizations would be clandestine and simple. The situation where the majority of our Party members had operated overtly during the resistance was considered "a weakness" of the Party organization. Indeed, as we switched to the new phase of struggle, the basic organizations of the Party were to be clandestine and simple. However, one reason influencing our single-pronged struggle was that we did not recognize all the characteristics of the situation in the Party organizations. We withdrew to the defensive and moved from our advantageous position to a weak one without having been forced to. When the movement encountered many difficulties, the Regional Committee was grossly inclined to reform the organization, instead of searching for the fundamental cause which sprang from the general line itself. It regarded the consolidation of the organizations and chapters as the main way to solve and improve the situation. At that time, as the Regional Committee looked for the causes of the movement's deadlock in various localities, it usually gathered that the causes were that the local cadres and Party members were shirking and lacking in determination, that the local Party committees' leadership was bureaucratic, or that the local Party chapters were distant from the masses, etc. As a result, the correction and response was concentrated on reforming the organizations, their ideological orientations, the reshuffling of Party chapters, the redeployment of Party cells, etc. To be sure, the above activities were important, but they were not at all the key problems. In short, we did not assess the two

aspects of the enemy's nature (strategically weak but tactically strong). Instead we confused these aspects with one another. Thus, mistakes were made.

When the political line was not really appropriate and the evaluation of the balance of power was not really accurate, the form, the method and the motto of struggle on the one hand, and the organizations of the people and the Party on the other hand, surely could not be entirely correct. Therefore, we were unable to maintain and heighten the revolutionary capabilities of the people (some of whom had materialized a few movements), as well as of the Party members and cadres. On the contrary, we let these capabilities remain unused, and they eroded and died away.

From the late 1954 resolution to July 1956, the Regional Committee's policy did not make any basic changes even though the situation had greatly changed, such as when the U.S. kicked France out. Diem established a regime ruled by his family, and the chances for meetings to negotiate and for the general election were nil.

In mid-1956, through Central's guidance, the Regional Committee now fully recognized that South Vietnam was becoming a new-style colony of the U. S. ; it fully recognized that the South Vietnamese regime was authoritarian and fascist; it clearly saw the schemes of the imperialists and the comprador feudalists; and it recognized that the South Vietnamese people would have to wage a revolution. But, its line remained basically unchanged. As proof, it kept on leading the Nam Bo people to struggle and demand meetings to negotiate and the general election. It kept on using outdated ways and means. At that time, the Regional Committee indeed mentioned the preservation of the armed forces of the anti-Diem religious sects with the intention of profiting from arising opportunities, but it did not clearly set forth the essential role of the armed struggle in respect to the revolutionary line. It also mentioned the problem of arming the people for self-defense, but very summarily.

The Party's indecisive attitude on the problem of armed struggle kept the Party organizations from carrying out armed activities in a straightforward manner so as to nurture the prevailing contradiction between France and the U. S. (in respect to the conflicts between Diem and the religious sects). We now see that it was something which could have and should have been conducted. For the same reason, we did not resolutely build an armed force so as to change the nature of the struggle in South Vietnam; we failed to maintain, develop and heighten such an

important movement as the rural masses' movement of self-arming for self-defense against banditry in the years 1955-56.

During the above period, the Regional Committee put forth guidelines for organizing the Party and the mass struggle. Its policy was that any locally-known comrades should move to other areas or stop operating. The Party chapters were only composed of comrades with legal status. Such a policy, as it is reviewed now, did not take into account all the characteristics of the Nam Bo Party organization (which had a large strength, but the majority of whose cadres had overtly led the people during the resistance). It was impossible to move at one time all the known comrades to other areas, or to have them stop operating. In this way, the Party strength was greatly impaired. Besides, the moving of known Party members could not be done as we wished because of the tight control then being established by the enemy. Indeed, after the above policy was carried out, many areas became white areas, devoid of Party structures, and many comrades were captured even though they had moved to new areas. The Regional Committee then alleged that the localities did not follow directives correctly, and it uselessly busied itself in summarizing experiences. It was, however, the completely erroneous organizational policy which caused the above losses.

The same thing occurred with regard to the guidelines in organizing the masses. It was wrong to be only overt and legal. Practice proved that under the South Vietnamese fascist regime the rural masses could not be organized through the exploitation of legal movements. Under the situation, if we had not advocated bringing people into clandestine and revolutionary organizations, we could neither have launched any strong revolutionary mass movements nor used any form of revolutionary struggle capable of stopping the enemy and driving him back.

Summary: During this period, the Regional Committee's line had the following shortcomings:

The assessment of the nature of the imperialists and feudalists, and the evaluation of their long-range schemes were both inaccurate.

Therefore, it was not clearly pointed out that South Vietnamese society was colonialist and semi-feudal, and that the South Vietnamese people would have to maintain the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution under new conditions.

Besides, we did not consider the basic principles of Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerning a revolution in a colonialist or semi-colonialist country and the basic line of our Party in order to set forth an appropriate revolutionary line and suitable methods of organization and struggle. The new characteristics in South Vietnam's situation which fitted into this category had to be taken into account also.

On the contrary, we considered a tactical line as a strategic policy, and worse, we gave Party members and cadres, as well as the people, an illusion of peace and a false hope in the Geneva Agreement.

~~All things considered, therefore, we deviated from the strategic revolutionary line which had been set since the foundation of the Party.~~

~~All things considered, the Regional Committee's basic line was deviating toward rightism. Seriously criticizing itself, the Regional Committee recognized that one of the causes of the above mistakes was that, even though the Geneva Agreement had brought us many big successes, its assessment of the Agreement's capability to provide peace and reunification to the country was too optimistic. Therefore, the concept of the revolution and the revolutionary standpoint were shaded.~~

Late in 1956, following Central's guidance, the Regional Committee reassessed the nature of South Vietnamese society and set forth that ~~revolution was the only correct way to lead the South Vietnamese people toward taking over the administration. But, the form of the South Vietnam revolutionary movement and the means to develop it were not yet satisfactorily decided upon. The Regional Committee still asserted that the South Vietnam revolution would develop along the lines of a peaceful political struggle, that we were able to use the people's political power to compel the enemy to fulfill democracy, and that we could force the South Vietnamese administration to carry out partial changes, such as letting progressive elements participate in it. Then we would transform the enemy administration or promote the people to struggle and force the U.S.-Diem to hold a new National Assembly election, in order to shuffle the administration,~~

etc. It, indeed, also mentioned the possibility of overthrowing the U.S. -Diem administration similar to the August Revolution, but it mentioned it as one of many other possibilities. And, worst of all, this statement, which did not reflect any significant emphasis, was made as the last of the possibilities

During the study phases of the South Vietnam revolutionary line, Party members and cadres were often enthusiastic about the problem of overthrowing the U.S. -Diem administration, but they were concerned over the methods of how to carry this out. There was much discussion, but they were not satisfied with any one method. The Regional Committee, however, neglected this problem and methodology in its ideological guidance, considering them as unimportant.

Now, as we review the situation, it is clear that the Regional Committee made a very big mistake in not recognizing that methods are important aspects of the revolution. Revolutionary goals without appropriate revolutionary ways and means are unrealizable goals. Erroneous revolutionary methods, which lead either to rightism or leftism, all jeopardize the revolution and distort and deviate its line.

In light of the conference of the 81 Parties, this question is clearly recognized today. The experience of the South Vietnam revolution in the recent past also proves it.

Previously, the Regional Committee held the following assertion to explain why it adopted the peaceful policy: "If the world situation can guarantee peace because the balance of power in the world has changed to the advantage of the peaceful and democratic bloc, and if the revolutionary movement can develop peacefully in many countries, the South Vietnam revolutionary movement can also develop peacefully." This rationalization was wrong even though the Regional Committee had pointed out that our peaceful line was completely contrary to that of the revisionists, and that its substance was revolutionary to the utmost. It was inappropriate to form a policy based on the world situation for a country which had its own given characteristics, even though the world situation always influenced every revolution in every country. Even the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party stated that the possibility to carry out a revolution through peaceful means only applied to a number of capitalist countries which were structurally democratic. South Vietnam, which has been a

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U. S. colony ruled by the U. S. -Diem, should follow its own revolutionary laws. The general possibilities in the world could not be regarded as an applicable possibility in South Vietnam. In answer to the question of whether the South Vietnam revolution can be carried out through peaceful means, the Regional Committee then primarily discussed the movement's supporting the South Vietnamese people's aspirations for peace. Now, we see that that kind of explanation was inadequate because the declaration of the 12 Parties correctly said: "Whether the revolution will take a violent form or not does not depend on us alone. It primarily depends upon the attitude which the enemy will take." At that time, the South Vietnamese regime was clearly fascist. On the one hand, it stubbornly refused to carry out the Geneva Agreement, and on the other hand, it shed the revolutionary movement's blood and destroyed it by fire. Under such circumstances, we should have reasonably drawn the appropriate conclusions regarding the possibility and the form of struggle. But, we did not at all raise the matter of violence and armed struggle. Therefore, basically, the Regional Committee's leadership was not practicably suitable to the prevailing situation. Concerning the possibility of an armed uprising, we also considered it too lightly and regarded it as one of the many other possibilities. We did not realize that it was not true that the South Vietnamese people were resigned to live in peace. (In reality, they could not do so.) At all costs, the people would not accept peace under oppression and face a slow death.

Indeed, if we had raised the question of armed activities immediately during the early days after the restoration of peace, we could not have won over the people. However, after one or two years of trial, the people saw that the political struggle alone could not solve the situation. Under such circumstances, not to firmly propose a change in the struggle line meant that we were behind the situation.

In early 1957, the Regional Committee held its 2nd Conference. The Conference's resolution mentioned the problem of armed activities, but it considered the building of the armed forces as preparatory to a situation when war would break out again. Besides, the problem was raised because in South Vietnam there were the anti-Diem armed forces of the religious sects. The Regional Committee did not recognize that armed struggle was part of the revolutionary struggle in South Vietnam and was itself based on the revolutionary laws of South Vietnam.

In August 1958, the Regional Committee held its 3rd Conference. This Conference's resolution still confined itself to the substance of the document "The South Vietnam Revolutionary Line." The entire Regional Committee, however, recognized that the possibility of changing the South Vietnamese administration had vanished, and it asserted that the South Vietnam revolution should take the "relatively peaceful" line. The problem of armed struggle was raised more positively, but the concept of the struggle means was still indistinct.

In fact, through its daily guidance, the Regional Committee was usually inclined to hinder the thought of armed activity, criticizing it severely and condemning its adherents as opposing the Party's line. The general guidance was obstructing the organization as well as the activities of the armed struggle.

The Regional Committee grasped the line of struggle in South Vietnam more clearly when it received the Political Bureau's directive regarding the counter-measures against the fascist law 10/59 and especially when it received the resolution of the 15th Central conference.

When the basic points of its policy were not decided upon, the Regional Committee leadership tended to emphasize now this, now that and sometimes it moved to the left and other times to the right. For example, during the first two years, the Regional Committee's leadership mainly inclined toward the political struggle, demanding meetings to negotiate, a general election, and little was done for the democratic and civil rights. Additionally, it mounted large-scale and continual struggle phases during which our organizations were exposed and easily attacked by the enemy. This struggle ended in failure. Within and without the Party, members as well as the people were disappointed. From late 1956 on, the Regional Committee adopted the movement of struggling for democracy and civil rights as the principal struggle. This should have been based on the real rights of each locality and at each moment and orders should not have been generalized. It should have been mounted phase by phase and continually. This policy was correct. However, through its leadership, the Regional Committee on many occasions still demonstrated that its aim was political struggle and the people's political indoctrination. Besides, it sometimes paid too much attention to the legality of the movements in regard to its form and struggle methods. Thus, the revolutionary nature of the movements in many areas and on many occasions was eclipsed.

Concerning the protection of cadres, the Regional Committee did not try ~~hard to take protective measures, and the methods of protection were ineffective. In short, it did not take up the question of armed activities for self-defense in order to protect the key cadres.~~ It only stressed that cadres had to mingle with the people and that the people should shield and defend them. This concept was right. But, it was a terribly big mistake not to have advocated armed activities for self-defense in a situation when the enemy ferociously and continually was searching for our cadres to kill them. All things considered, this mistake was also part of the general trend of rightist thinking in the Regional Committee. Regarding the people's movement of fierce struggle for the protection of the cadres, as reported above, a number of Party organizations wrongly considered that by adopting this method, the people were getting away from the viewpoint of legality. Therefore, they stopped it, prevented it from developing, and so it died away for good.

One thing that has to be said here is that during this long period the Regional Committee was very well aware of the reactions of the cadres and the people to the Party's line and principles. The Regional Committee itself was confused. On the one hand, it neglected the lower echelons. It was so apprehensive of criticism from above that it did not pay heed to the opinions and suggestions of the lower levels; and each time it heard a complaint, it did not think it through, but instead subjectively solved it in a rigid manner. Therefore, the various Party organizations were understandably dissatisfied. On the other hand, ~~even up until early 1959, the Regional Committee hesitated to report its own problems and those of the Party installations forward to Central.~~

To compensate for the above-mentioned grave and basic mistakes, the Regional Committee also had a few merits. Generally speaking, it was perseveringly leading the movement, firmly carrying on the struggle against the enemy, keeping the movement steady for a long period of time, and periodically guiding the people to attack the enemy, and by doing so, heightened the prestige of the revolutionary movement and the Party.

In spite of the difficult situation, the Regional Committee always made a big effort to keep on top of the movement and to effectively maintain the leadership channel from the higher to the lower echelons at all times.

PART II

SITUATION IN NAM BO FROM LATE 1959 TO DATE

Up to mid-1959, the enemy and friendly situations in Nam Bo were as follows:

1. The U.S. -Diem administration was relatively stable. It was able to control the rural areas through its oppressive system, and at the same time, it also increased its oppression in the cities. The enemy's administrative system, which reached down to the house-block level, enabled him to control the people fairly tightly, thus restraining and impairing our Party's structures and causing us much difficulty. With his espionage network and his security organization, the enemy forced the majority of the peasantry in many areas, including the former resistance base areas, to cooperate with him in his oppression of the peasants themselves.

The enemy succeeded in achieving his vital and basic objectives: He could draft a great number of youths; he could build up and promptly equip his army from the popular to the regular forces; he could get laborers to build more and more strategic roads, military bases, fortifications, air-fields, etc. in the South; he has and is constructing well-organized agrovilles, such as Vi Thanh, Thien Ho, Thanh Thoi, Ba Chuc, Duc Hue, etc.; he could successfully concentrate people and exploit their labor to a great extent -- his fiscal year 1958-1959 tax collections exceeded his plan, etc.

The U.S. -Diem mercilessly oppressed and terrorized the people, increased their military activities, kept on "opening up people's intestines, pulling out their livers and drinking their blood." They promulgated the fascist law 10/59 and through some exemplary trials, they intended to demoralize and suppress the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam. They primarily aimed their attacks against our Party, the former resistance base areas, and the areas where the struggle was strong.

During this period, the enemy's influence was rising and spreading. He was able to temporarily subdue the opposition activities of the people and the opposition factions. (However, he could repress only the people's larger movements and not the sporadic struggles.)

The above behavior of the enemy proved that he was not strong and was unable to govern the people normally, but instead ruled them insanely through tyranny. Thus, he placed before the people only two alternatives: either to resist until death or yield. Since the U.S. - Diem relied on the policy of violence to the extreme, they became isolated and suffered a complete political failure.

The enemy's key support was his army. However, except for a number of reactionary officers, security agents, reconnaissance troops, and wicked commando units, the great majority of the rank and file soldiery were the people's sons or brothers who did not have any hatred against the revolution, and who only joined the enemy's army either for a salary or by force. Therefore, they did not actively resist the revolution and their morale was very low.

Within the enemy's ranks many contradictions had amassed which would explode at the first opportunity. Most important of these was the contradiction created by the pro-American persons who were purged from the Diem administration or who were not allowed to take part in it. The contradiction between the pro-French faction and the South Vietnamese administration was secondary but still a serious one. Additionally, there was the contradiction between the acting lower echelons and the commanding and planning higher echelons. And shall we also mention the contradiction between the U.S. imperialists and the wicked Ngo Dinh Diem himself?

The brutal and fascist policy of the U.S. - Diem had indeed incited a number of their lackeys to madness. But the majority of their personnel and troops were perplexed and, in addition, feared retaliation from the people and thus carried out the orders of higher echelons reluctantly.

In sum, the enemy failed in his evil scheme to eliminate our Party, the revolutionary armed forces and our movement. Even though the enemy caused severe losses to our Party and revolutionary armed forces, both still survived and our movement remains active.

2. ~~The struggle movement of the Nam Bo people ebbed.~~ It only arose sporadically and weakly in advocating common social welfare slogans. In the first six months of 1959, the struggles condemning the Phu Loi massacre and opposing the election of the National Assembly had political

significance. The Nam Bo Party organization strove on these occasions to put forth all its leadership efforts in order to stir up the people's political spirit, but it failed to gather a large force. Generally speaking, the struggles remained weak. Even the anti-starvation slogans which were the ~~people's most opportune~~ slogans at the time could not create a large movement.

In short, the movement was coming to a deadlock.

The people in the concentration camps, prisons, and agrovilles were persecuted by the U. S. -Diem. Those living in hamlets and townships often experienced a similar fate also. During this period, slogans condemning Communism and praising the 10/59 law had to be posted in every house, Ngo Dinh Diem's picture and the three-striped flag had to be hung, etc. People were forced to attend anti-Communist indoctrination sessions for a long period, and families of cadres and of those who went north took turns in working at hard labor in the agrovilles. Written permits had to be obtained to travel from one township to another. Every meeting or celebration gathering of three or more people had to be authorized by local puppet officials. In many areas the enemy established a curfew from 7:00 p. m. to 6:00 a. m.

Everybody living in the rural areas had to join the Republican Youth Organization, the Farmers' Federation, the National Revolutionary Movement and the People's Self-Defense Group.

The people's material life was hard. It was very difficult to get jobs in the cities and unemployment was growing. In the rural areas the harvests were bad and due to the lack of security and manpower, a lot of land remained uncultivated. Besides, there were innumerable kinds of taxes, fines, contributions and bribes.

The rural situation was gloomy and tense. The urban atmosphere was suffocating.

The people, in general, deeply hated the U. S. - Diem, but they were apprehensive of the latter's apparent power.

In any case, the people in all stratas recognized that the Diem administration could not last. The basic as well as the upper strata of the people in the various religions, among administrative personnel and the troops wanted to overthrow and change the present regime.

So, even though the prestige of the revolution visibly weakened and the enemy subdued the people in all fields, the conditions for bringing the movement forward were still plentifully available.

3. By mid-1959, the Party's structures had severely disintegrated. There were only a few Party chapters left in each province and most of the chapters consisted of three Party members. It was rare to find a chapter with five to ten members. The majority of Party members were known and, being illegal, they lived in the jungles or in underground tunnels all year around. A great number of Party cadres, mostly at the provincial and district committee level, were killed or arrested. Many committees had received reinforcements three to four times. Nevertheless, they were wiped out of existence in the end. During the first half of 1959, Gia Dinh Province lost twenty district committee members. Tay Ninh Province lost four provincial committee members. The Party members' morale remained resolute and faithful, but, in general, they doubted the Party's line. In some areas cadres and Party members were haunted with the specter of death. It was during this period that Party installations were continually uncovered. There was not a single passing day without cadres and Party members being apprehended or killed. Even though committees at every echelon strove to carry out the development of the Party's strength as their primary task and did all they could in this regard, the number of Party members never increased but decreased daily.

We planned to move known Party members to other areas, but the enemy's control was so tight that for most of them no move was possible. In the end they regrouped to advantageous sites and built what were called "pockets." In Ca Mau, for example, more than 70% of the Party and Youth Group members, more than 50% of the key cadres, along with numerous cadres' families and families of those who had gone North, totalling 15,000 persons in all, had fled to the U Minh Forest because they were determined not to be oppressed by the enemy.

Above was the summary of the enemy and friendly situations by by mid-1959, after the election in the South of the 2nd National Assembly.

At that time, the Nam Bo Party organization received the directive from Central on countering the fascist law 10/59.

After an analysis showing that "the enemy was completely defeated politically," that "we won a complete political victory," that "overall, the enemy was on the defensive while the initiative was all ours," etc., the above directive then set forth the methods for the immediate political struggle. These were: "to intensify the economic and democratic struggles relevant to the people's needs, and at the same time put forth political slogans. The more intensive and revolutionary the form of struggle, the more effective the struggle will be." The directive also stressed the stepping up of armed propaganda activities.

Soon thereafter, the Regional Committee received the resolution of the 15th Central Conference and a number of other important directives of the Central which set forth the principles and the direction of the South Vietnam revolution.

The above guidance from Central solved many fundamental questions and disengaged the Nam Bo Party organization from its deadlocked position.

After having assimilated Central's ideas, the Regional Committee set forth the following policies:

1. Considering the situation in which the enemy is openly despotic and fascist, using a large-scale military plan to destroy the movement, and considering the situation in which the people, being seriously oppressed, are becoming perturbed, their morale falling, and their rights and lives being gravely jeopardized, and considering the continual losses suffered by the Party and the revolution, it is impossible to adhere to the political struggle alone if one wants to stop the above decline and change the balance of forces in Nam Bo. The movement has to be brought forward more intensively in the political field and, at the same time, the armed activities have to be stepped up.

2. Armed activities do not simply consist of armed propaganda, but also of motivating the people to take up arms and to fight so as to lower the enemy's prestige, overthrow the enemy administration, resist the enemy, and form the people's revolutionary administration in areas where conditions are appropriate. Base areas have to be built up and urgently expanded as a necessary factor to secure and develop the revolutionary forces, build up the three types of forces, and counter the enemy's sweep operations against the base areas.

In the cities and those rural areas where the Party's strength and the extent of the people's revolution are weak, and where the geographical situation is not favorable, the people are to basically still pursue the struggle politically with armed activities playing a supporting role.

Thus, three zones are defined: the base areas (both in the delta and jungle areas), the strong rural areas, and the cities (as well as the weak rural areas.)

3. ~~Revolutionary organizations, especially the various rural associations, must be formed in the rural areas.~~ In areas into which we move, there must be an overt element that leads the movement and as well an underground element. We must set forth land reforms and programs aimed at improving the peasants livelihood in these areas, etc.

The Regional Committee's policy of stepping up armed activities was based on Central's directives and drawn from the practical experiences in Nam Bo.

As we reported above, the Regional Committee started building the armed forces since early 1957. They were stationed relatively together (three companies) in the jungle areas as reserve forces to be used in the event of an uprising and also to mount large attacks from time to time in order to stimulate the movement. The armed forces in the former base areas in the lowlands were organized as armed propaganda units which carried out propaganda activities and the elimination of traitors along the following guidelines: "more emphasis on political than military," "more emphasis on propaganda than combat," "keep our movements undetected when we move out as well as when we return," "avoid creating a tense situation," and "the organization must be dispersable, light, compact and clandestine," etc. These methods of operation and organization, however, did not bring about any good results during the long period when they were followed. The armed forces in the jungles, operating once in a while, had only achieved for the people a few good results, which faded away and disappeared as long as the movement remained deadlocked. Worse, was that after being organized the armed forces then became idle and during these inactive and idle periods, their main elements could not develop but deteriorated spiritually as well as organizationally. The armed propaganda units in the lowlands also came to a similar deadlocked situation. Wherever our armed forces appeared, the enemy mounted fierce encircling and search

operations, terrorizing and brutally attacking the people. The armed forces were then unable to counter the enemy sweep operations and protect the people because they either had become too weak or had to adhere to the Party's general line and guidelines. Therefore, they could not create a favorable political atmosphere. Instead, they, themselves, encountered many difficulties. Sporadic eliminations of traitors brought about some good results, but there was no broadly stimulating result at all. On the contrary, when the enemy retaliated against the people, the armed propaganda forces were not able to continue their activities against the enemy. Therefore, the people in many areas became apprehensive and no longer wanted our armed forces operating in this manner. They said: "If you conduct these activities, conduct them to the end. Otherwise, cease them." The enemy ordinarily tried to locate our armed forces and then use all his advantages to attack and subdue them. The armed forces suffered losses frequently and had to flee from the masses. And since we had no bases then, they scattered and hid themselves either deep in the jungles or remote in the swamps, and so they became isolated. In areas where the terrain was not favorable, they scattered among the masses and were progressively exterminated.

In order to protect the legal status of the people in general, we decided to restrain our armed activities and avoid as much as possible any connection between the armed forces and the masses' movements.

Therefore, when Central directed the stepping up of armed propaganda activities, the Regional Committee was perplexed. It then recognized that if armed activities were not carried out strongly, the revolutionary movement in Nam Bo would not be able to disengage itself from its deadlocked situation. But how were armed activities to be carried out? If the armed propaganda activities followed the old guidelines, they would not fit the situation and be effective; and the armed forces' own existence would not be insured either, if they operated according to the old guidelines.

By mid-1959, the enemy aimed his attack against the former resistance base areas, and one of the primary targets for annihilation was the armed forces. Therefore, the latter could not remain as they were. On the contrary, if they wanted to survive, to participate and play a role in the general movement, they had to operate more and more strongly, develop their organizations, and be able to scatter and also concentrate. They had to have base areas. There had to be a specific relationship between them and

the people. And the problem which basically had to be solved was that they should conduct not only armed propaganda activities, but, above all, combat. They should take the initiative in attacking the enemy's wicked units and completely wipe them out so as to lower the enemy's general prestige and, in the process, equip themselves. Thus, they would be able to mature and thrive.

~~In October 1959, the Central and Western areas simultaneously carried out armed propaganda activities and some relatively large attacks, including the Go Quang Cung battle in which they annihilated two enemy companies and captured over one hundred weapons, and the raid into the headquarters of An Bien District when they wiped out this enemy stronghold and captured a great number of weapons.~~

After the above battles, our armed forces continued to eliminate traitors, repress reactionaries, and increasingly fight, attacking primarily the wicked enemy popular forces. Now the people rose up; beating their drums and their hollow bamboo stems, they coordinated with the armed forces to hunt down spies and local puppet officials, participated in encircling enemy posts, and, in some areas, they even sabotaged the roads, built obstacles, destroyed and burned down puppet installations, offices of the National Revolutionary Movement, information halls, etc. [words indistinct] active in Kien Hoa.

~~Before Tet 1960, the armed forces of the Eastern area attacked Trang Sup, a regimental stronghold, annihilating one battalion of the enemy's regular forces and capturing nearly 1,000 weapons. This battle was known not only throughout the country but also all over the world. The victory of Trang Sup set off the movement in Tay Ninh, Gia Dinh and Binh Duong provinces. Equipping themselves with the above captured weapons, the armed forces in these provinces began to expand their armed activities. Typically, in Chau Thanh District of Tay Ninh, the people rose up and, after overwhelming the enemy, they took control over many townships.~~

The enemy was bewildered in the face of our activities. In areas where our armed activities occurred, the structure of the enemy's township administrative apparatus was seriously shaken. Some township puppet officials fled. Most hamlet puppet officials resigned and became inactive. All the reactionary organizations were paralyzed to a large extent. Spies were

either punished or fled from their localities and some went on their knees and asked the people for mercy. The enemy popular forces locked themselves defensively in their posts, but some fled about and disintegrated. At the provincial and district levels and even at the central level, there was confusion. The enemy regional and regular forces, being confused, reacted weakly. In short, the enemy reconnaissance and popular force units stopped their old search activities and his army now operated only in large units, not daring to mount small or sweep operations anymore.

Before launching the above campaign, the localities followed the Regional Committee's directive and stopped moving or hiding known Party members, who then formed Party chapters (the A-type Party chapter). The responsibilities of these chapters were to lead the armed activities in the townships and overtly mobilize the people. These comrades, together with Labor Youth members and a number of covert persons formed village self-defense armed units. Those still legal Party members formed another type of independent chapter (the B-type Party chapter) the responsibility of which was to conduct political struggles. After the Regional Committee's policies were carried out, and as the enemy, in face of the situation of our stepped up armed activities, became bewildered, the people's spirit rose high and the Party's structures very quickly regained their strength. For example, before October 1959, the Party organization of Kien Tuong only had one chapter with three Party members, while there were twenty-one townships in total in the province, but after we had moved forward for a short period, there were now twenty Party chapters.