

PART THREE

NOTES

VIET NAM: A "LABORATORY"

"The only place in the world where there was a real challenge was in Viet Nam, and now we have a problem in trying to make our power credible and Viet Nam looks like the place".

(John F. Kennedy quoted by David Halberstam — *The Best and the Brightest*, Random House, New York, 1972).

It is quite possible that in the decade of the 1960's the decisive struggle will take place in this area (the Third World).

(Robert S. McNamara. *Statement to 87th Congress. Hearings*. Washington D. C. 1962)

We have recognized the importance of the area (South Viet Nam) as a laboratory. We have had teams out there looking at the equipment requirements of this kind of guerilla warfare. We have rotated senior officers there... They are carrying their experience back to their own organizations.

(Maxwell D. Taylor. *Hearings*. 88th Congress. Washington D.C. 1963)

The South Viet Nam conflict is regarded as a test case for US capacity to help a nation to meet a Communist "war of liberation".

(*Pentagon Papers*. Washington 1971)

MASSACRE OF CIVILIAN POPULATIONS

One of the great and crucial questions in this war is how many of these casualties are Viet Cong, and how many are civilians? It is generally estimated that there are two wounded for every one killed on the battlefield. Thus by the end of this year the Viet Cong or somebody in its area of operations must be presumed to have suffered upwards of 400,000 casualties. Since the entire Viet Cong force is estimated at between 150,000 to 160,000, this means that we have "overkilled" the Viet Cong about two and a half times. Obviously this isn't true... The conclusion that must be reached is that many of the people being killed are not Viet Cong, even though they may be listed as such. A truly staggering amount of civilians are getting killed or maimed in this war.

(Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, Doubleday and Company INC. Garden City, New York, 1967. page 227).

The Department of Defense has never really come clean on the impact of US bombing on the civilian population and facilities in North Viet Nam. Contrary to official US views, massive damage did occur throughout the country to medical facilities, schools, housing, churches, cultural centers, etc. At least 1,000,000 persons became homeless and civilian casualties numbered in the thousands.

(Excerpt from Report by the US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, January 27, 1974).

Since the beginning of 1965 the Americans have poured between 14 and 15 million tons of ammunition on... , the equivalent of 720 bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima.

(Le Monde, January, 25, 1973)

THE SUPER BOMB

(Excerpts from Prof. A. H. Westing's Report. International Conference on Medicine and the Indochina War. Paris December, 1971).

The BLU—82/B general-purpose high-explosive concussion bomb turns out to be one of the most awesome and least publicized weapons to have been spawned by the war. It is a bomb with record-breaking dimensions; It is 4.5 feet in diameter, over 11 feet long and weighs 15,000 pounds. Within its thin steel case are 12,600 pounds of a special, dense blasting agent (DBA-22M) consisting of a gelled aqueous slurry of ammonium nitrate and aluminum powder (plus a binding agent). This formulation provides a concussive blast *surpassed only by that of a nuclear bomb*.

Often referred to in Viet Nam as the "Daisy Cutter" and sometimes as the "Cheeseburger", this super bomb is delivered by C-130E aircraft (of the 463rd Wing of the Seventh Air Force flying out of Cam Ranh Bay air base).

One press report claims that 160 drops occurred prior to June of 1970 (Los Angeles Times, June 1, 1970).

According to an official Seventh Air Force source, the blast of a Daisy Cutter is of such intensity that all terrestrial and arboreal wildlife (as well as any luckless humans) are killed outright by the concussive shockwave.

The lethal zone from one such bomb thus covers an area of about 776 acres. Beyond this circle of death, concussion injury diminishes to a distance of another 1,660 feet or so.

UNEXPLODED DEVICES

— Apart from bombs and shells, numerous types of mines have been used:

— *The portable land mine* embedded with tiny steel pellets designed to explode instantly if touched.

— *The Gravel Mine* which is laid from helicopters, airplanes or can be spread from a truck. The 126 million US dollars requested for it in fiscal year 1968 is evidence that it is one of the major weapons in the Viet Nam war.

— *The Claymore Mine*, a kind of green plastic box the size of a large book, filled with explosives and thousands of BB-sized steel balls. When exploding, it sends out a hail of steel and plastic fragments that literally mow down the grass in a path six feet wide and a hundred feet straight ahead. ⁽¹⁾

(1) *Weapons for Counter Insurgency*. NARMIC. USA, 1970.

Many devices are covered with a layer of plastic to make them undetectable.

According to preliminary statistics, a year after the liberation of South Viet Nam, over one million bombs, shells and mines of all kinds were defused or recovered, and more than 30,000 hectares of land were cleared. In Quang Tri, the most affected province, from 2 to 3 of the lethal devices were detected in every square metre, sometimes as many as 8, as in Trieu Phong district. The population destroyed 885,870 of these devices using 332,000 working-days on the job but more than one hundred persons were killed during the clearing-operation.

THE "ROME PLOW"

(Excerpts from Prof. A.H. Westing's Report. International Conference on Medicine and the Indochina War, Paris, Dec. 1971).

In recent years a new technique has emerged (to destroy the jungle). Born about 1965, developing into major proportions in 1968, and growing ever since, a vast program of systematic forest bulldozing now exists...

The basic tool of the land clearing operations in Viet Nam is the 20-ton D-7E Caterpillar tractor fitted with a special 3-foot splitting lance or "stinger", and with 14 tons of added armor...

The bulldozing began on a very small scale in 1965 and was devoted primarily to the clearing of

roadsides and other lines of communication in order to discourage enemy ambushes. It was not until mid-1977 that the tractors organized into small units... The employment of massed tractors organized into companies for extensive forest clearing began in 1968, and the program has expanded ever since. In its primary mission of denying forest cover and sanctuary, the "Rome plow" appears to be without equal...

Where bulldozing is done in more hilly terrain, erosion can become a severe liability. Moreover, with the elimination of the enormous water-holding capacity of an extant forest, the heavy rains characteristic of Viet Nam can produce severe flood damage...

FORCED URBANIZATION

The United States has stumbled upon the answer to "wars of national liberation". The effective response lies neither in the quest for conventional military victory nor in the esoteric doctrines of counter-insurgency warfare. It is instead forced-draft urbanization...

(Prof. Samuel P. Huntington. *Foreign Affairs*. June, 1968).

Air Force records show that there were no herbicide spraying missions ever carried out in the rich agricultural region of the Mekong Delta. Rather, most crop destruction missions were directed at regions under undisputed control of the liberation

forces. The same is true of the defoliation missions. Therefore, it appears that the primary purpose of the herbicide mission was to drive people out of the liberated zones. Not only bombings and forced relocations but also chemical spraying was used to create refugees who would come to the city, and hence, come under control by Saigon.

(Prof. Don Villarejo. "Only we can prevent forests. Defoliation may last 120 years". Focal Point. September, 1974).

PART FOUR

POST-WAR SOUTH VIET NAM *(Reportage)*

I have visited the southern part of our country more than once since April 30, 1975. Our car crossed the Hien Luong bridge on the 17 parallel unhampered every time we drove along Highway I towards the South. We then drove through a series of coastal plains and over mountain passes in Central Viet Nam before reaching the Saigon area. From there we followed Highway 4 until Ca Mau, but from this town to the cape of Ca Mau we had to go by boat as the area is swampy and there is no suitable road.

The road is good and if you do not leave it you see nothing which reminds you of the war, only the beautiful scenery of the plains and mountains, the beaches along the coast and the towns all along the road. The one exception is the omnipresence of military installations, huge bases, posts, fortifications, radar installations, airstrips, watchtowers, guns, machine-guns and barbed wire fences that stretch endlessly with five or ten layers.

After crossing the Hien Luong bridge in Quang Tri province, we at once came upon the Con Tien-Doc Mieu base on top of a hill overlooking a vast area. This is the 'McNamara Line', which crosses Highway I in several places and spans the long distance from the coast to the Truong Son range. Behind Dong Ha lies the Ai Tu base, now a heap of

rubble stretching along the nearby hills. South of Hue, in Huong Thuy district, with its interminable barbed-wire fences, is Phu Bai airport. This is not just an airport but a cluster of military bases called 'Ap Nam', which covers tens of square kilometres between the airport and the remote mountains, and straddles Highway 1. At the foot of Hai Van Pass, on the coast, is the Lien Chieu oil depot. Then stretching scores of kilometres along Highway 1 lies the huge military air base of Da Nang. These installations account for one-third of the area of the city itself (which amounts to 80 square km). In the south of Quang Nam province barbed wire fences appear again along kilometre after kilometre surrounding what was Chu Lai air, army, and naval base between Highway 1 and the sea. In Binh Dinh province barbed wire stretch from Phu Cat district to An Nhon district around the Phu Cat air base. Next along the road you see the Tuy Hoa airport (Phu Yen province) and the Cam Ranh airport, part of the huge air, army, naval base which surrounds the well known Cam Ranh bay. As you drive nearer to Saigon you can see more military installations. At Bien Hoa, a town 30 kilometres from Saigon and a former US and puppet industrial-military complex, there are countless barracks, military bases, depots, including the huge Long Binh depot which stretches scores of kilometres, from Bien Hoa into the neighbouring province. Inside and around Saigon there are numerous army and police bases. One training centre alone (the Quang Trung training centre for instance) covers scores of hectares of land. As you go out

of Saigon towards the north you can find, besides the Tan Son Nhat air base — the biggest air base in South Viet Nam — the Dong Du base, which was the last refuge of the US 25th Division, their "Tropical Lightning Division". Farther south, you see more military installations, and not far from My Tho, the huge Dong Tam military base, a naval, army and air complex, where the US 9th Division was once stationed. It takes several hours to get round the military base and the Tra Noc airport at Can Tho by car.

We have so far mentioned only some important military bases we can see from the road. The area of each of them is several square kilometres and they do not include well-known military bases like Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhat, Da Nang, Chu Lai and Cam Ranh, each of which extends over scores of square kilometres. The system of bases called Ap Nam in Thua Thien occupies half the district of Huong Thuy; the Phu Cat base occupies two square kilometres within the territory of the three districts of Phu Cat, An Nhon and Binh Khe (Binh Dinh province); the Dong Du base (Cu Chi), 1.5 square kilometre, and the Dong Tam base (My Tho), 6 square kilometres. These bases were the starting points of many sweeps in which thousands of old people, women and children were killed; and raids in which vast amounts of bombs were dropped on millions of civilians all over Viet Nam; of big wanton artillery bombardments of peaceful villages day and night, with thousands of shells at a time. The Dong Tam base alone had 147 105mm and 155mm

guns, which American G.I.'s, called the 'New Zealand Orchestra', and which brought death to a large number of the Vietnamese families living within a radius of 20 or 30 km, in My Tho and Ben Tre provinces.

The very establishment of each of those bases, moreover, entailed untold misery and hardship among the local population. At the Con Tien — Doc Mieu base a local cadre said to me, pointing to the foot of the hill: 'To clear the area to build this base US-puppet troops drove the population of 4 villages out.' I looked in the direction of his finger: nothing remains of the rice-fields and dwelling houses; instead, there is now a vast area covered with shrubs and wild grass. In the area covered by the Ap Nam base there used to be dozens of villages and hamlets belonging to Huong Thuy district. The Phu Cat air base was built on the land of scores of villages belonging to three districts. In order to build the bases of Dong Tam and Dong Du, the Americans razed to the ground dozens of villages in an area of more than a hundred square kilometres without giving the population any warning: one fine morning scores of tanks, armoured cars and bulldozers arrived together with several battallions of US-puppet troops. They pulled down the houses, burned everything and herded men, women and children into lorries and helicopters to take them to an unknown destination... Some days later, the whole area, with its dense population, its luxuriant vegetation and its fertile soil, together with all the crops and properties, was levelled by bulldozers and dust exhausters.

A great deal of work has now been put into tidying up part of these bases. Military helicopters have been made use of to clear away barbed wire fences. And many people have been killed or injured in the process: mines of all kinds were planted inside and outside the fences, and many peasants who have returned to their villages after liberation and begun tilling the former mine fields have had accidents. I visited Cat Trinh Commune (Phu Cat district, Binh Dinh province). The Americans had razed five hamlets of the commune to build the Phu Cat air base. A commune committee member told me that ten peasants working in the field near the airport had been killed by mines. How many others, I wondered, had been killed in other communes in Phu Cat district and other districts around this base?

The large bases are only part of the picture. As we travel from the 17th parallel to the cape of Ca Mau, we can see green villages on either side of the road. Each of these populated areas once hid scores of US and puppet posts, sources of death and suffering to the population. The density of US military installations in the countryside in the South was beyond what we had imagined. In the two provinces of Ben Tre and Ca Mau in the Mekong Delta there were altogether over 1,700 enemy posts and positions at one point. In Can Tho, in the centre of the Mekong Delta, there were 635 enemy posts and positions. Hoai Nhon district had 416, Hoa Vang district (Quang Da), 132; Tran Van Thoi district (Ca Mau), 152. Long My commune (Giong Trom, Ben Tre), 13; Hoa An commune (Hoa Vang, Quang Da), 14; Hoai

Chau commune (Hoai Nhon, Binh Dinh), 17; Hoai Thanh commune (Hoai Nhon, Binh Dinh), 18; My Hiep commune (Phu My, Binh Dinh), 24; Thanh Thoi commune (Thanh Phu, Ben Tre), 27; Particularly in Khanh An (Tran Van Thoi, Ca Mau), a commune with 5 hamlets and 3,000 inhabitants there were 15 posts and positions. Each post was garrisoned by anything from a group to a company of US puppet troops. Thuan Hung commune (Chau Thanh, Soc Trang), with nearly 10,000 inhabitants, was occupied by a force of 4,000 enemy troops. In Huong Thuy district where the Ap Nam base was located, a cadre told me that there used to be 3 US-puppet troops for every two inhabitants. Special mention should be made of Quang Da province. The Americans once mustered a force accounting for one-fifth of the expeditionary forces in this province, namely 100,000 G.I.'s of different arms, not including 10,000 South Korean troops and over 30,000 puppet troops (this figure reached 100,000 later), in 173 bases and posts 82 of which were American. Hoa Vang district accounted for from 40,000 to 50,000 US troops and tens of thousands of puppet troops. On the average there was one US or puppet soldier for every 3 or 4 inhabitants, and in some hamlets as many as 2 US soldiers for every inhabitant.

As in other tropical countries, verdure covers everything in Viet Nam. And we should know how to look underneath the often luxuriant vegetation.

Our car approaches Hoai Nhon district, the northernmost district of Binh Dinh province on Highway I.

Binh Dinh province was looked upon by the US quislings as the most 'insecure' of the 44 provinces of South Viet Nam, and as we drive along the familiar bamboo and coconut trees lining up on both sides of the highway, our guide says: 'This area was terribly devastated'. We are not surprised by the remark since we have been told about the atrocities of the war in Binh Dinh province in general, and in Hoai Nhon district in particular. But that it is made while we are driving along a road lined up with green trees seems rather odd. We turn right into a side-road, and after 20 metres the scenery has changed completely: destruction and devastation can be seen clearly on both sides of the road. The most striking features are the charred trunks of coconut trees stretching for kilometres. Among the trunks are bits of broken earthenware and battered household utensils. Nearby, a small upturned altar lies next to a broken stone mortar. This is what remains of Gia An and Gia Thuan hamlets, and their once so luxuriant groves of coconut trees.

But the ruins are not always so clearly visible. In many villages and hamlets in Binh Dinh, Cu Chi and Ca Mau we can see the same deceptive verdure. At Rang hamlet (Trung Lap commune, Cu Chi) we walk along a grassy path with rice-fields on both sides, and on seeing a grove of bamboo and banana-trees, one of us asks the chairman of the hamlet revolutionary committee: 'This area has not been bombed, has it?' 'What makes you think that?' retorts the chairman. 'There is not a single plot of land that was not hit by bombs or shells. Our hamlet is about

10 hectares in area, but at one time it was hit by 5000 shells in a space of two hours. You can see the craters all over the hamlet. That pond over there was dug by a one-ton bomb. And look here, you can see the traces left by enemy bulldozers. After bombing the place, the enemy brought dozens of bulldozers and flattened everything. What you see here is completely new! Things have changed. The place we are standing on used to be the foundations of Mr X's house. Mr Y's was next door. That stump over there used to be a large banian tree, and now only a few branches remain on its trunk. None of the paths are the same either." Indeed, many revolutionary regroupees returning from the North after 20 years' absence could not find their way home; they did neither recognize their old villages.

In coconut villages in Binh Dinh and Ben Tre, as we walked among the groves of coconut trees still standing, we were surprised when we heard people say that they were short of coconut. "The foliage of the trees was so thick", said one of them, "that it covered the sun all day and it was impossible to dry our paddy. Even at night when there was a moon, the village was pitch dark". Another added: 'Before the palms were so thick that children could play and grown-ups could hold meetings on them.' In Ca Mau, we were sailing in a boat along a canal lined with coconut trees, mango trees and jack-fruit trees when an old man said: "Branches intertwined over our heads here and monkeys were able to walk on the branches from one bank to the other."

In other provinces, groves of cajeput trees, of pine trees, and fields of mulberry gave way to fields of hemp or green rice. Out of the millions of coconut trees which have escaped the 'massacre' as if by a miracle, very few can bear fruit, as they are scarred by bullets and bomb fragments. I visited a mangrove forest at Vien An, on the coast of Ca Mau. The trees had once grown upright and tall, and very close to one another, but now the forest was transformed into a wasteland which stretched as far as the eye could see, with some scattered stumps here and there. Fish and shrimps floated to the surface after the Americans had sprayed toxic chemicals on the canal. I visited another forest of cajeput trees near the Gulf of Thailand, trudging dozens of kilometres through the reeds, through woods of young cajeput trees and charred ones before I could reach the forest proper. But the trees were not as thick and tall as before. The name of U Minh (forest of darkness) no longer makes any sense. Before it was dark, but the Americans defoliated the forests and poured napalm on them and the peat layer which covered the ground, and left it to burn for months on end.

Of course, the people suffer much more than nature itself. How can we begin to relate the dramas of all the villages and communes we visited. All the northern communes in Hoai Nhon district (Binh Dinh province), were levelled by 117 bulldozers and tanks between 1968 and 1970. Nhi Long commune (Cang Long district, Tra Vinh province) was the target of saturation bombing by B.52 bombers 9 times, and 23 large scale sweeps by US troops; Hoa

Hai commune (Hoa Vang, Quang Da) was the scene of 202 sweeps in 1966 and 1967; the people in Dien Tho commune (Dien Ban, Quang Da) were forcibly evacuated and re-evacuated 20 times, and the commune itself was razed 17 times during 1968 and 1969. In Dien Hong (Dien Ban, Quang Da) on average every square metre received one bomb, and the commune itself was levelled 5 times. Khanh Lam commune (Tran Van Thoi district, Ca Mau province) has an area of less than 40 square kilometres; it is near the lower U Minh forest and has more than 10,000 inhabitants living in 8 hamlets. It was the target of 7,475 raiding sorties, over 500 sweeps and attacks. Enemy planes came here 23 times to spray toxic chemicals and dropped seven-ton bombs 17 times. B.52 bombers carried out saturation bombing 9 times. So you should not be surprised if you are told by a southerner that his village has been rebuilt for 44 times!

And what happened to the lush paddies and orchards? If we look at them closely, we see that the fields have been reclaimed recently and have yielded only one or two crops. The small green banana trees and sugar canes have taken the place of age-old coconut trees, mango trees, dorian trees and milk-apple trees and are only one or two years old. There are fields of elephant grass or reeds which grow above the head of those who happen to come to the area. At Cu Chi, near Saigon, fields of tough grass called 'American grass' have deep roots now. American pilots have dropped fire-bombs on this place after having poured oil on it. And now wild

grass and shrubs are growing on the area where prosperous villages, fertile fields and orchards stood formerly.

During the war large areas of land became fallow while others were turned into military bases, barracks, strongholds. It is no easy job to plough the land again. At Cat Trinh commune (Phu Cat, Binh Dinh) there are hundreds of fields lying fallow because under the grass there are still a lot of unexploded enemy bombs, shells or mines of all kinds. At Trung Lap hamlet (Cu Chi) there are two hectares of land covered completely with large craters. According to the chairman of the committee of Phu Vang district (Thua Thien) of the 10,000 hectares of arable land 5000 are fallow and the grass which covers the surface is so thick that only tractors can be used to till the land. At Binh Duong commune (Thang Binh, Quang Da) 350 of 400 hectares are fallow. In 1970, during the 'erase Binh Duong from the map' operation, involving 10,000 GI's, all 3,000 draught animals were killed and everything razed to the ground. When I arrived at the commune at the end of 1975, I noticed that the members of the commune committee were quartered in peasants' houses. In response to my questions they said that the only brick house left was used as a children's school (on a three-shift basis). When I visited the peasants' huts I saw that household utensils were lacking, for the US and puppet troops had destroyed everything during their sweeps. The peasants had to buy firewood to cook their meals at the district market, ten miles away.

In order to make a close study of the destruction caused by the US-quislings over a large area, one must stay for some time in Quang Tri province, on the southern bank of the Ben Hai river (17th parallel). This region has an area of 4,700 square kilometres and a population of about 350,000 souls, and was razed by 4 divisions of the US Expeditionary Forces (including the US 3rd Marine Division which landed there as early as May 1965). 1.2 million tons of bombs and ammunition were used against this province (that is one-tenth of the total used against the South during the 20 years of war). It is estimated that the amount of bombs and ammunition used by the US in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces was the equivalent of that used during the Second World War in the whole Pacific area. Quang Tri's old citadel (formerly the provincial capital), only two kilometres square, was hit by an amount of bombs and shells equivalent to the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb. Now the town of Quang Tri has completely disappeared. In this province almost all the plain hamlets were destroyed, except three which were spared from attacks and three others which were only slightly damaged. The Hai Lang district with a population of 80,000 was turned into a white belt, and was the scene of over 4,000 sweeps between 1965 and 1969. Altogether the enemy dropped 300,000 tons of bombs, razed 3,000 hectares of fields and orchards, destroyed 182 dykes and killed or injured 3,000 people. At Gio Linh, 96 of 101 hamlets were razed, with 2,000 persons killed and over 7,000 injured from

1966 to 1970. During about the same period B.52 bombers carried out saturation bombing against 4 communes. The Trung Hai commune was hit by 90,000 bombs and shells, on the average of 280 bombs or shells per person. In Cam Lo district 50 of 83 hamlets (with 4,000 households and 700 hectares of land, mostly rice-fields) were razed, and 1,300 draught animals were killed. In Gio Linh and Cam Lo district thousands of people were affected by the toxic chemicals which devastated an area of 540 square kilometres.

Now with the return of peace and the greenness burgeoning in Quang Tri, it is estimated that as many as 2 million bombs, shells and mines still remain buried in the whole province: an average of two to three bombs or shells per square metre. At Trieu Phong the figure is higher. A lot of effort is required to defuse the mines and bombs; and they take their toll of lives too. In a space of one year after liberation 322,000 working days were spent to defuse nearly 885,870 bombs and mines at the cost of hundreds of people killed or injured!

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Son My (My Lai) is now well known all over the world. But there is more than one Son My. There is now more and more evidence proving the atrocity of US crimes. In Hoai Nhon district (Binh Dinh), the Americans killed 6,109 persons, injured 4,120 others and forcibly removed 3,325 from the area

during a sweep in November 1965. In another sweep in August 1972 they killed 570 persons and injured 1,000. 2,000 civilians were killed at An Lao (Binh Dinh). 400 families were killed at Yen No and Cam Ne (Hoa Vang, Quang Da) in 1964. 1750 persons were killed at Ba Lang An (Son Tinh, Quang Ngai) in 1969. South Korean troops killed 900 persons at Binh An (Binh Khe, Binh Dinh) in two days; they also killed 500 persons at Binh Duong (Thang Binh, Quang Da) on March 10, 1969. At Kinh Lai Hieu (Phung Hiep, Can Tho) the US 9th Division killed more than 400 civilians in 1968. At Binh Hoa (Binh Son, Quang Ngai) South Korean troops killed 360 persons at one fell swoop in March 1967. There is no end to the atrocities committed by the enemy.

During our trip to the southern part of our country we heard countless stories of these crimes. On a small bridge near the office of the Phu Vang district revolutionary committee (Thua Thien) Diem agents exhibited the head of a cadre for weeks in 1965. At Rach Rang (Tran Van Thoi, Ca Mau) the enemy beat a woman to death and dragged her along the canal by her long hair tied to the stem of a motor-boat. South Korean troops smashed the head of a child against the trunk of a banyan tree at Tan Giang (Binh Dinh). Then they tore his body from limb to limb and threw it into the fire. Scores of people were buried alive in a well at Gia Huu (Binh Dinh) by Diem agents. Scores of women were suspended by their hair on bamboo trees at Hoa Vang (Quang Da). The tyrants buried hundreds of people up to their necks in a field and made

buffaloes draw harrows over them mangling their heads horribly. The butchers ate the livers of the people they killed on a mountain-peak in Que Son (Quang Nam), intending in this way to terrorize people !

At Tam Ky (Quang Nam) south Korean soldiers who found a pregnant woman in a house, first bet on the sex of the baby and then ripped open her belly to see who had won their bet. Puppet troops forced an old woman to eat the flesh of her son they killed in a communal house at Hai Thanh (Quang Tri).

Everybody has heart-rending experiences to tell you during your visit to southern Viet Nam, and more often than not you can hardly believe your ears. One boy at Binh Duong (Quang Nam) told me that when he was eleven, the US puppet troops tried to force him to show them to the underground shelter of revolutionary cadres. When the boy said that he did not know where it was, the soldiers fired at him and the bullet grazed his ear. Then they cut off his ears and ripped open his belly. He was later rescued by the people.

It is impossible to count all the people herded into concentration camps, all those arrested and beaten. Almost the whole population of southern Viet Nam have been victims of the US-puppet reign of terror. The deputy chairman of the Revolutionary committee of Hoa An commune (Hoa Vang, Quang Da) told me that 99 per cent of the population (except those under ten years) of the commune had been arrested, beaten, detained or jailed for periods

ranging from 3 months to 13 years. The deputy chairman himself was arrested 15 times. 40 per cent of the population had been tortured. Now 200 of the 6,000 inhabitants are invalids. The over-forties feel unwell whenever there is a change in the weather. There were 14,000 inhabitants in Binh Duong commune (Thang Binh, Quang Da) in 1954. As a result of the mounting terror, there were only 8,200 left in 1964, 4,200 in 1968, 3,000 in 1970, and 2,000 in 1971. As many as 4,000 people have been killed during the last 20 years. Now, after liberation and the return of the refugees, half of the population of 6,000 consists of children (2,100 school-children). Most of the 600 men are crippled or invalids, and the rest are sick. The chairman himself is very weak, and has a large scar on the chest caused by a bullet. In Hai Chu commune (Hoai Nhon, Binh Dinh) the population dropped from 22,000 in 1965 to 11,000 in 1972, and 10,500 in 1974 to rise now to 13,000. 3,000 persons have been killed. Due to the spraying of toxic chemicals 35 per cent of the population suffer from intestinal diseases, 5 or 6 are blind and many miscarriages have been reported.

CITIES OR CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

If we drive along Highway 1 and Highway 4 as far as Ca Mau, what strikes one is the number of cities and towns which have mushroomed along these important communication lines. A discerning eye can see through this 'prosperity' the ugly sores of the war and neo-colonialism.

Let us leave Can Tho and travel along Highway 31,60 km to Vi Thanh, capital of former Chuong Thien province. At first glance, the town looks like hundreds of others in southern Viet Nam. Though small, it has many tall concrete buildings huddled together, many streets with crowded shops and many TV antennas; it is as busy as many other towns on the banks of canals in the Mekong Delta, with boats sailing back and forth. But the streets are regularly laid out in blocks, punctuated by military posts, barracks, fortifications and offices. On the map the town looks like a huge barracks.

The twenty-year old history of Vi Thanh town speaks for itself. In 1954, after the signing of the Geneva Agreements, there was no town on the bank of this canal, only a small market place called Ca Nhum with some shabby huts surrounded by flooded fields and plantations of sugar-cane and banana-trees. Realizing the military importance of this area, the Saigon puppet administration sent troops to Ca Nhum, on August 17, 1954. On July 20, 1956, the Diem administration started a fierce exterminate Communists, denounce Communists' campaign in Long My district; and a most savage campaign aimed at herding the people into concentration camps was launched on a large scale. The whole population of Long My district comprising about 13,000 households, as well as a number of households in the neighbouring areas, were forced to leave their home. They were herded into an area on the bank of the canal. This new settlement stretched from Vi Thanh to Hoa Luu commune to

the east. Thus, the population of 15 whole communes of Long My district were concentrated in a small area, the notorious 'Vi Thanh prosperity zone'. Ngo Dinh Diem came in person to this 'prosperity zone' to attend the inauguration ceremony, proclaiming it a model for the whole western area of Nam Bo. From then on military posts, fortifications, barracks and organs of coercion and war mushroomed and trade and transport offices were subsequently set up. As for the people of Long My, they had to live in a concentration camp. Men and women, old and young, were forced to do labour, digging canals and carrying earth year after year. Tens of thousands of people were mobilized for the construction of the town. Old folk, women and children died of illness, tortures and exhaustion. Thus it was from a market place or, to be more precise, from a swamp, that Vi Thanh town grew up to become the capital of Chuong Thien in June 1966. This new town lies two-thirds in Can Tho province to the west and one-third in Rach Gia province to the east. Before liberation, Vi Thanh was not just a town. More than 2,000 puppet troops were stationed in the town, and at times, there were from 30 to 50 US 'advisers'. To the north-west of the town there was a military airfield with as many as 60 or 70 aircraft, and around the town were many posts and barbed wire entanglements. Vi Thanh town has 43,700 inhabitants now, and 30 per cent of them are small traders. There is hardly any industrial production.

This is a typical example of how towns came into being and developed in southern Viet Nam under US puppet rule. This does not apply, of course, to all cities and towns in the South. Some towns have rapidly grown up from smaller ones. But all of them have one common feature: their growth has an extremely odd and false character, they lack self-supply production and relied entirely on US hand-outs. They are built on the same pattern: posts on the periphery, around a military CP as vital centre. The military machinery assumes the defence and serves as an instrument of coercion. The posts are used to defend the town and keep the population locked in; the population are kept there for military and political purposes, used as a 'human shield' for the puppet authorities. The towns are really concentration camps, products of the US-puppet policy of 'pacification'. Saigon itself has been built on the same pattern: the periphery is inhabited by the unemployed, the 'evacuees', the refugees'. And in this over-populated area recruits for the defence of the city and the machinery of coercion were easy to find. In these impoverished over-populated areas denationalisation, demoralization and depravation develop swiftly; and social and moral structures serving as foundations for neo-colonialism are easily established.

Let us have a look at some of those cities:

HUE: A town with a population of 120,000 in 1955, it grew to 210,000 souls in March 1975. It had no industry of any importance but did have some tens of thousands of pedlars, 40,000 unemployed,

nearly 10,000 prostitutes, 3,000 drug addicts, 5,000 women suffering from venereal diseases and 6,717 illiterates.

DA NANG: Its population grew from 50,000 in 1955 to more than 1 million on liberation day. It boasts a weaving factory and has hundreds of thousands small traders; hundreds of thousands are unemployed; there are tens of thousands of prostitutes, drug addicts, hooligans, tramps and tens of thousands of illiterates.

SAIGON: Its population grew from 500,000 in 1943 to 1 million in 1953 and 3.5 million in 1973, including nearly 500,000 puppet administration officials and puppet troops. Its industry accounts for 80 per cent of the GNP of the whole of South Viet Nam and includes assembling, repair and processing industries. For the whole industrial production only 200,000 workers are involved as against 300,000 traders, and 11,000 merchants. On liberation day there were over one million unemployed, more than 300,000 prostitutes, more than 200,000 drug addicts, 200,000 hooligans and tramps, 330,000 suffering from venereal diseases, 200,000 consumptives, 300,000 illiterates and 1 million destitutes.

CAN THO: grew from 60,000 inhabitants in 1954 to have 300,000 inhabitants in 1975. A huge military base. It has only one industrial enterprise: a brewery and soft drink factory; nearly 10,000 prostitutes and tens of thousands of unemployed.

For additional data we can cite Nha Trang with 220,000 inhabitants (10 times as many as in 1954), Qui Nhon with 210,000 inhabitants (20 times as

many as in 1954), Vung Tau with 120,000 inhabitants (14 times as many as in 1954.)

Let us study one of the districts of Saigon, the 11th. A district of working people with an area of about 5 square kilometres. Since 1968 it served only as a defence perimeter of downtown Saigon. Of its population of 230,000 inhabitants, 21,000 are Nung montagnards who were forced to evacuate from North Viet Nam in 1954; more than 50,000 are of Chinese descent; 127,000 are Buddhists, over 42,000 are Catholics and 13,000 are believers of other religions. It is in this district that one finds the houses of 2000 officers, 400 policemen and 7 of the most blood-thirsty generals of the old regime. Here too, was the centre of many spy rings, intelligence organizations and reactionary parties. There are 78 pagodas, 4 parish churches and 230 bars here, and tens of thousands of prostitutes, hooligans, common law criminals and drug addicts. In one of the 6 sectors 50 per cent of the young people are drug addicts. According to a census, 25 per cent of the population of the district suffer from venereal diseases and 80,000 are jobless.

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This is how Saigon was built into a first-rate neo-colonialist city: a society of consumers which produced nothing, but depended entirely for its goods on its suppliers. It was a city where the frenzy of living, anxiety for the morrow, fear of the

police, and superstitions haunted the high skyscrapers as well as the slums. Once the American handouts were cut off, Saigon industry found itself without raw material, without fuel, its agriculture crippled, and the economy of the country swung back thirty years. Having devastated South Viet Nam, the Yankees abandoned it, leaving behind them a society turned upside down, a shaky economy and a frustrated population.

But now the country has been liberated, and the nation-wide revolutionary movement has proven itself strong enough to deal with the problems facing the whole people.



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