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## THE CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM

### INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of the Civic Action Program is to bring the Central Government and its action down to the village level as well as to bring the village up into the governmental administrative network. The results of such action will be to raise realistically the intellectual and living standards of the populace in order to win them over to the National Cause.

Civic Action is a solution to the gaps existing in the governmental system prior to the Geneva Agreement. The system of administrators went down only as far as the district, the authority of whose administrator ranged over some ten villages (80,000 to 100,000 inhabitants). Public services, then, strong at capital and province levels, weak at district level, were virtually non-existent at village level.

This absence of public powers and services had two disastrous consequences:

1. Services of a social and economic interest were unable to reach the village where conditions had deteriorated steadily since the outbreak of World War II.

2. Communism took advantage of dissatisfaction on one hand and absence of Central Authority on the other to use the village community as its special ground for propaganda, adherence to its cause, and guerrilla action.

### NECESSITY FOR CIVIC ACTION

The gaps currently existing in the governmental system indicate the following pre-requisites for their solution:

1. To forestall the above consequences from occurring again, it has been agreed in the Vietnamese Government to instate the village - give it importance, administration, material and moral support. In this way the government will not only be better able to swing the populace to the National Cause but also to keep its finger on the pol-

itical pulse of large areas of land and consequently know where guerrilla action and control of the populace by the enemy is possible, impossible or presently attempted.

2. The type of government brought to the village has to be realistic. The administration of villages cannot be merely functionaries but must be hard-core pro-National Cause, cadre who actually live with the people, as well as be self-administered type of government whereby the village notables take on the responsibility of the community, make its decisions and plans of action, collect the taxes and with the help of the Central Government foster self-help programs which contribute to the betterment of the community. As the Central Government cannot itself support extensive and rapid elevation of standard through Free Vietnam, the instigation of self-help is necessary to the very existence of such a program as well as its perpetuation.

3. This effort must be accomplished and judged by the communities in one short year. Consequently the normal organs of government must be complemented and reinforced in a coordinated effort to accomplish this enormous task. Ministerial functions of the government must be combined into small mobile representatives of the Central Government to be sent directly to the villages communities to instigate this program, and live with the people to see that it is being carried out with their aid.

Such action would be very difficult to carry out under the normal governmental system ie. through the various ministries and down through the chain of command from the Central Government to the Regional Delegate to the Provincial Delegate to the District Delegate and then to the Villages. In the first place these organs of the chain of governmental command are not geared for a quick concentration of action of this nature as the strain on the already understaffed elements would be too great. Their action is slower than is necessary here. Also, up to now, these agencies have been concentrating on action taken by the Central Government while the action to be taken here is broader more realistic type of government which envisages self-help on a very large scale.

Therefor, Civic Action provides the mechanism whereby ministerial action combined with village self-help programs is brought directly from the Central Government to the village without any intermediary

chain of command except that action in the various provinces are under the control of the Province Chief.

#### CIVIC ACTION TEAM COMPOSITION

The Civic Action teams will be composed of ten men - that is two men from five different ministries carrying out the governmental action assigned to them. The five team subdivisions are:

1. Public Health. The two men from the Ministry of Public Health will construct a small clinic, use the village medical kit already provided by USOM, replenishing it with the necessary medicine, or furnishing one where none exists. The Civic Action men will then train the man most eligible in the town in the use of this kit. If a man has already been trained by USOM, then this man will be designated to run the clinic, dispense medical aid and request new supplies, etc.

2. Education. The two men from the Ministry of Education will build a school, provide school supplies, give text books outlining courses and conduct classes during the day for children and during the night for adults after work. A man in the village will be sought who will volunteer to continue these classes once the Civic Action team leaves.

3. Social Action. The two men from the Ministry of Social Action will organize groups giving the necessary materials to these groups to see that they are perpetuated. Young men, for instance, will be organized into an athletic group, build a volley ball court and be given a volley ball. Young women will be formed into a sewing group working for the good of the community and be given needle and thread etc. There will be a singing and theater group as well. The control of these groups will be under the person designated by the Civic Action men to carry on their work when they leave.

4. Information and Propaganda: The two men from the Ministry of Information will build an information hall (usually part of the building housing the clinic). Texts will be distributed and banners and posters will be put up here and throughout the village. A radio will be brought playing in public certain broadcasts and when possible leaving one to be operated by the village propaganda designate. He will receive material from the Ministry of Information direct from then on.

5. Census, Security and Surveys. Two men from the Ministry of Interior will be charged with taking a census of the community if it has not already been done. These two men will make surveys of the area deficiencies, forwarding these along with recommendations and petitions made by the village council. They will be forewarned about what to inspect and look for, such as unused stores of supplies ~~mis~~management, etc. The basic needs of the community and general political alignment will be registered as well. These men make reports in duplicate, sending one to the Civic Action representative at the Province level and another to the Province Chief (See METHOD OF WORK).

It is important to note that success of public education at the village level depends on the capabilities of the government to pay for it. This program does not base its action on setting up a system too costly for the government to sustain resulting in a risk of termination and adverse psychological effect. These teachers are volunteers. The community itself will sustain its own elevation of standards (See METHOD OF WORK).

#### COORDINATION

The Civic Action Program is a complementary and reinforcement organism. Civic Action does not take unilateral action but will take part in the formation and execution of plans of action developed by the various ministries when such plans of action involve the improvement of material or moral conditions of the populace. Directives to the Civic Action teams as to the execution of its work will be in accord with the directives of the various departments of the government.

This coordination of effort will be carried to the field where the Delegates of the Ministries at the Province level will be in constant contact with the Civic Action representative there.

The activities of the teams will vary in accordance with the designation of the zones wherein they work. The pacification, transition and Civil Zones will each have a different effect upon the teams according to the Presidential and Governmental decrees and directives governing these zones. Therefore, in a pacification zone, the Civic Action teams will be under the control of the military commanders. The Chief of Province or military commander governing a transition zone will control the action of the teams under their jurisdiction. In the Civil Zones, the Chief of Province will control Civic Action.

After a brief introductory period where the concept of the action is explained, a sense of pride in the community is engendered, self-help is instigated and three buildings are constructed by members of the team and community. These constructions are simple, being built in the manner of other village huts, but giving maximum open space within for meetings. One building will be the school, one the clinic-information hall and finally the village meeting hall where theater groups can perform and where village council meetings will be held.

The aspect of self-help is extremely important here. In the first place, such an effort of uplifting the community cannot be supported by only government aid. The construction of the three buildings and salary for five people (those designated to continue Civic Action) in each of the thousands of communities in Central and South Viet Nam would take too long. If each community, however, contributes to its own betterment with the instigation and limited support of the National Government, the community itself will see to the perpetuation of the effort.

The Civic Action teams will work as much as possible through the village Council of Notables, who will have their meeting hall and their responsibilities and powers made clear to them under the present governmental system. These village leaders will have the opportunity to send forward specific requests, reports and suggestions to higher authority. They will be increasingly aware of their part in the National Governmental Complex.

Requests made, with the general agreement of the village notables, will be sent on in duplicate as will the reports from the teams themselves.

One report will go directly to the Province Chief and the other will go to the Civic Action Representative of the Province.

This representative is not always permanent but sees that Civic Action is set up in a province and sees that it is working smoothly before he leaves. He often may be there at the request of the Province Chief or Central Government. He is primarily an expeditor. His job is to see what requests are made, what action will be taken by the Province Chief and what requests fail to be complied with. He also must ascertain what material is on hand and attempt to get that material distributed to the villages needing it the most. Should there be no means in the area to fulfill urgent requests, the expeditor then sends his reports to the Civic Action Commission whose contacts in Saigon implement the efforts of the Province Chief and Ministry Delegates to receive the necessary support for the villages and population from the Central Government.

The Commission for Civic Action is responsible to the Ministry of National Defense and through that organ or through its own direct contacts with USOM, USIS, MAAG, TRIM and even private philanthropic organizations will make every effort to see the needs of the population fulfilled.

#### SELECTION AND TRAINING

The most important element contributing to the success of the Civic Action Program is the effect the individuals of the teams have on the community. They are to be the Can Bo, cadre or hard-core, anti-communist, pro-National Cause elements of governmental action at the village level. They are not merely functionaries, but dynamic men of action who live with the people, eat their food, dress like them and talk their language. They know the problems and offer realistic solutions.

The teams will have five persons from the province wherein they work. They are selected from exhaustive questionnaires made out by the Civic Action Commission in Saigon and sent to the Province Chief. The Province Chief allows only loyal, anti-communist young men under forty to take the exam. Later in Saigon about 10% are chosen for training on the basis of their questionnaires. It is not expected that all the members will pass the course as the students will be tested for loyalty, zeal, ability, etc. in order that eventual team members will be the best available personnel.

The other five members of the teams will be North Vietnamese refugees who are tried anti-communists, well indoctrinated, hard working and fully cognizant of the communist threat.

The training of the Can Bo will be intensive in indoctrination, stressing why such action is necessary, why communism works to the detriment of his country, how to recognize it, how it works and how to combat it.

His other practical training will be in keeping with ministerial directives governing the work he will be doing. For aspect of his training, the ministries are expected to provide experts for specialized instruction.

During training and work on closely supervised pilot villages, team spirit is engendered by their living together and by unified training and group activities. The result is a cohesive unit, the elements of which are easily aware of each others actions, whose efforts are concerted and who present a unified and relatively invulnerable anti-communist front. There will be sessions of auto-criticism, as well, to continually keep the standard of their effort and their motivation high. From time to time the teams will be brought back for retraining and reindoctrination.

At the present time the training center is in Saigon where professional instruction is more easily acquired, keeping the organization of Civic Action simplified. This training center can turn out presently 100 Can Bo or ten teams monthly. This can be substantially increased when this program receives backing.

#### PRESENT SITUATION OF CIVIC ACTION

The Commission for Civic Action was set up in May 1955 with a provisional allotment from the Vietnamese Government of 10,000,000 Piasters. With this small sum, Mr. Gung, Commissioner General for Civic Action has set up his Saigon Headquarters as 301 Vo Tanh (to the left of the road to the Ton Son Nhut Airport). He has established the administration and training organization there, has trained and processed 21 teams which are presently operating in eight provinces in highly Viet Minh influenced areas. Also two teams have worked in Binh Dinh during the pacification operations.

Only slowly can Civic Action presently expand its operation due to the careful screening and painstaking training of its personnel and due to the lack of long range monetary support. However, already the organization has fostered considerable adhesion to the National Cause and has done much in its effort to swing Viet Minh influenced areas away from communism through its integrated effort of convincing the populace of the National Government's concern for the people. An index of Civic Action's effect is the fact that more and more Province Chiefs, who originally strived to convince the Government that they themselves could carry out such action, are requesting Civic Action teams to come and work in their provinces.

## ESTIMATED SCOPE AND NEEDS OF CIVIC ACTION

The Civic Action Program plans to place one team in each district meaning a total of 150 teams. The teams will be furnished with material which they will leave behind in the villages as well as have material that they will be using themselves.

Each team has a basic salary cost of 30,000 Piasters a month while the material varies in cost. Until the new budget is prepared this sum cannot be accurately gauged but it should amount to another 30,000 Piasters a month.

On top of this amount there should be considered the salary of the Province Representatives, central administration and training.

Transportation for the most part will be handled locally by the existing means such as the army or civic guard elements. However, the team leader will have a bicycle to make trips to the District Chief and to survey other villages for Civic Action work.

Whatever the new budget will amount to (it is expected to amount to between 3 and 4 million dollars), Civic Action will not be able to step up its program until its acceptance.

## CONCEPT OF CIVIC ACTION

Such social action has been tried by GAMO teams in the north, but the Civic Action Organization has been changed to insure greater success. For instance, the GAMO teams attempted to work using men from outside the province whereas Civic Action will use, when possible, men from the area in which they will operate (See SELECTION AND TRAINING). Also such action before the Geneva Agreement was too cursory. GAMO teams entered villages and their influence lasted only as long as they stayed there. Civic Action's influence will be more permanent, as its eventual purpose is to establish a system of administration which will bring the village up into the governmental complex.

The basic concept of this Civic Action Program is to elevate the living and moral standard of as many cohesive communities as possible while at the same time achieving a desired psychological effect. One main principle here is to convince the populace with words backed up by deeds and actions. The very necessary functions of security, propaganda and popularising the National Government; its actions and elements, is a pill sweetened by constructive effort and help.

The element of pride that a Vietnamese has for his community is heightened by offering him material support; tools buildings and means for bettering it. The pride a Vietnamese has for himself, his family and children is heightened by offering him moral support; education, group activities and means to direct commendations to higher authority (See METHOD OF WORK). At the same time pride in country and government is instilled by psychological action. This pride can be utilized as an effective weapon for anti-communism. By combining, therefore constructive action with propaganda action, the psychological impact on the populace is greatly strengthened.

## METHOD OF WORK

The Civic Action teams will move into a village for a period of two weeks. They are self-sufficient and will arrange for their own facilities, etc.