

FRIENDLY TALK TO THE MILITANTS
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Fellow Militants,

By order of the President of the Republic and on behalf of the Central Commission of Strategic Hamlets, while we celebrate the First anniversary of the program of Strategic Hamlets which marks a year of struggle of our people for the salvation of the fatherland and national construction confronted with the threefold war against underdevelopment, disunity and communism,

I bow with respect before the memory of the combatants who have died for the fatherland and extend an affectionate thought to the families who have made the sacrifice of their children and of those who are dear to them for the revolutionary policy of Strategic Hamlets.

The training course which begins today will apply itself "to establish the balance sheet of the achievements of the policy of the Strategic Hamlets", and to draw lessons from the successes obtained as well as the failures met on all fronts during a year of struggle against feudalism, colonialism and communism, against underdevelopment, and disunity. I wish on this occasion to suggest some themes of study to foster your work and to contribute to making it more fruitful. Upon the results of your reflections depends of course the drive of our people towards progress today and tomorrow.

1.- We must first of all become conscious of the necessity to go back to the sources of the policy of Strategic Hamlets in order to be able to execute this policy correctly and seriously and at the same time to make known the high meaning of our struggle.

Doubtlessly you remember that while addressing the participants of different classes held here as well as those who have come to listen to me during my visits to the villages, I have constantly sought to "situate" the policy of Strategic Hamlets.

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I fixed it in our intimate reality, in the historical movement of the Vietnamese people undertaken more than 2000 years ago, seeking in the march to the North of the "One hundred Viets' tribes" of prehistory, in the march to the South of our people in the Middle Ages, during modern times and in our contemporary epoch, in the march to the North which was started recently with the exodus of our compatriots from the Highlands -- all these movements having unfolded with the village as the framework -- concrete dimensions for a historical perspective of the movement of struggle of which we are a part.

This preoccupation, this approach does not aim at satisfying a few intellectual bourgeois whims. It is not either destined to justify any regime, for the concept and the process of development of the policy of strategic hamlets have already given the impetus to a total re-examination of the doctrine, of the organization as well as of the technique of all regimes, in particular of the present regime of the Republic of Vietnam.

And it is precisely this vast revisionist movement which is underway at the present time in these sessions of study of our civilian and military cadres which constitutes, in my opinion, the biggest success and the most concrete achievements of the Strategic Hamlets policy during the past year. The effort tending to integrate all our policies in the historical movement of the nation is an essential task, for it permits each of our cadres to fix himself and his personal effort in relation to the general context of the national struggle and thus to know better the national line and to ensure a maximum of efficiency and of consequence of his action, while widening his vision of the world for a more complete development of his human personality.

For this struggle requires a historical point of departure and a point of present impact for each activity, particularly at so decisive a stage : Why act ? What is the purpose of this struggle? its goal ? and its ties with the age-old effort of our ancestors ?

In the midst of the present National Resistance, we are not strangers coming here from an unknown world; this present with all its cultural, political, economic and social conditions is not the creature of one day. Behind us, behind our people is a heritage of struggle and of march toward progress. In front of us, in front of our people opens a long road which calls us forth. No one can accomplish our destiny for us, a destiny determined in some measure by this historical situation. We must but know this situation and take it in trust, for it is that which explains and justifies the effort that we are making.

Within the context of this vision, to carry out correctly the Strategic Hamlets policy constitutes a historic task. In other words, it is directly from the historical movement of our people and in the real context of struggle that the Strategic Hamlets policy has originated in answer to the requirements of our revolutionary struggle.

These requirements comprise, on the one hand, a background, the revolutionary aspirations of the entire people that we hope to be able to achieve in a system and style of a new life with new values; and on the other hand a form, the establishment of Strategic Hamlets to ensure the protection of this new life with new values.

To build a new society, a new life with new values, to live by his own means, to work in his own security and with his own strength, starting from the infrastructure of the hamlets and quarters to pervade all the superstructure of the State -- is not this the profound and real aspiration of our people ?

Thus the strategic hamlet policy was born from the revolutionary conscience in its direct confrontation with a concrete historical society, our own.

Therefore, this is neither a simple military formula aimed at countering the armed efforts of the communists -- nor a simple anticommunist tactic; which could be imported from abroad as is contended by communist propaganda in their efforts to diminish the far-reaching revolutionary and political impact of the Strategic Hamlets policy, and as many people who have been intoxicated by such propaganda tend erroneously to think.

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I know too well that a new way of life cannot be reached within a day or within a month inside the strategic hamlets that we have built. The conditions which would allow such a new way of life remain to be created : (a) the material conditions as well as (b) a psychological awakening of the conscience of the population in favor of the new way of life. The difficulties and hardships remain numerous : they will require much effort ; many sacrifices and a great deal of good-will, of know-how, and of initiative on the part of the militants, smitten with a fighting spirit and clairvoyance.

It is not a matter of living from day to day; this is a continuous and long-range effort. Who can contend or affirm that it is possible to gather all the conditions for a completely new way of life, involving millions of men and women, within a few months or within a year -- even without war, in time of peace ?

We can say, in all frankness, that due to the war imposed on us by the Vietcong, we have been able only to lay the foundations and to create some of the conditions which are required to achieve the new way of life with the mass of our rural population and of our workers, in the first stage of de-colonization and in the fight against underdevelopment, disunity, and communist subversion in its multifarious manifestations.

We can say without fear of exaggeration that we are meeting the greatest possible amount of obstacles on our way, obstacles which try hard our people, placing them face to face with a historical challenge which demands from each one the total mobilization of our creative potential - in our endeavour to help our Nation solve its present problems. But we are firmly convinced that our people will win, thanks to our joint efforts in all walks of life as our people have joined together on other occasions in the course of our history, and thanks also to the spirit of solidarity and the material aid from other peace-loving and progress-minded peoples - and to whom we are happy to voice here our profound gratitude. We are ready to accept all suggestions, all constructive ideas from wherever they may come, provided they can be integrated into the revolutionary movement of the Vietnamese people. We shall not allow ourselves, however,

to be disturbed by criticisms or observations which are made unilaterally or which are tendencious for reasons beyond our comprehension.

I earnestly request that our cadres of all levels, who are in charge of the implementation of the Strategic Hamlets policy, understand in depth the scope and the meaning of this policy as I have just attempted to describe it. Such understanding will help us serve the Nation effectively and serve the people in a more concrete and realistic manner.

To the end of serving the people in a realistic manner, I should like to emphasize for all of our cadres on all levels that it is the life of the population which is the end, the Strategic Hamlet is but a means. We cannot, and must not, confound the end with the means.

We have been able to establish thousands of Strategic Hamlets; millions displaced by the war have been offered the possibility of living in those Strategic Hamlets. Therein lies an important success in the war against the communists who, while imposing war upon us, seek as they themselves admit, to reduce the South of our country to "a state of turmoil" in order to create a situation favorable to their taking the reigns of power and to offering all Vietnam to international communist imperialism.

In spite of this major success, we can never lose sight, however, of the fact that this constitutes no more than success in creating conditions favorable to the realization of the essential goal, which is to build a new life for the people in a new society.

That new society, that new life, finds its newness not only in the brick houses which are springing up throughout the countryside, in the spruce offices of the administrative committees, in the dispensaries and schools, in the public gardens and parks for the children. Do not our capital and our cities take pride in such installations? But can we be sure that the people of the capital and of our cities are therefore endowed with a new life?

The new life of which I am thinking is a life which would unfurl in liberty, justice and fraternity; a life, stamped with youth and joy, one which would expand from a base of community work with a view to harmonious development of the nation in all of its aspects and on all levels of the people's life.

What have we achieved in the economic field and in our efforts to produce ?

What have we achieved in our community life within the family and society ?

What progress has been realised in political and cultural activity ?

What is the status of the militant life of the people ?

And what levels has the life of the people attained ?

- Material level with new economic conditions ?
- Psychological level with the conditions provided by a new education ?
- Spiritual level ensured by the fulfillment of all the conditions cited above ?

During the course of this year we must begin to concentrate our efforts on the dynamic creation of conditions favorable to the development of a new life for the peasants and workers in our Strategic Hamlets and Strategic quarters. We must be able to know and to assess all the aspects and all the levels of the life of the people.

That each peasant has his daily rice and sufficient clothing must be our major concern.

The bead of sweat that forms on a worker's brow must be for us the most precious value.

The hardships and sorrows of each of our compatriots must be our very first concern.

The political, economic and social aspirations of the people must be the objects of our daily explorations.

All this must be the substance of our knowledge, understanding, research and study if we want to serve the population in an effective way.

And it is for all these reasons that we will not let an artificial life be imposed on our population. We would rather, with the people and among them, work to build a new life which draws its source from the very land of our ancestors and its essence from the very resources of the nation; a life in conformity with the sensitivity, character and will of the people, adapted to the actual geographical and social conditions while kept open to the rhythm of progress of our modern times.

This life will be built on a democratic and personalist foundation. Transforming each Strategic Hamlet, and quarter, as well as each section of all the services of the central administration into centers of democratic civilization, into generators of combatants and heroes, whose light will flood the entire country.

That new life is achieved within the framework of Personalism, struggle, community efforts and work from the lowest to the highest echelons and from top to bottom, so that as progress is being made the people may enjoy liberty and prosperity which they will have conquered through their own effort and struggle, as I have said and explained more than once.

Let us build this new life in close unison with the people, with enthusiasm, joy and vigor. Such is the road, such is the most realistic and efficient way to consolidate and expand the Strategic Hamlets and quarters already established and to complete the program during the coming year.

Let us always remember that the wall of hearts is the most solid of walls :

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The goal having been defined, and the/outlined, the success or failure of the undertaking in practical reality depends on the cadres themselves at all levels.

This does not mean that the cadre will play his decisive role with simple orders or by dint of memoranda. Each activity and each operation performed by a cadre is bound to fail or succeed depending on whether or not he has enough enthusiasm, moral integrity, intellectual acumen, sense of leadership and organisation adapted to changing circumstances. All these qualities sum up a cadre. Without them a cadre is not worthy of the name.

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Thus, if in the course of the past year we held a series of seminars to train men in measure of the greatness of their task, we also emphasized the basic problems such as those related to cadres, leadership, conscience and dialectic of the struggle...

All our efforts were aimed at training a great number of cadres and at helping each cadre to acquire a sufficient intellectual and moral capital to successfully face the struggle. That includes among other things :

a)- A moral foundation with a personality endowed with the necessary virtues for struggle.

b)- An intellectual foundation which would enable a cadre to grasp a situation and to apply to it the dialectic of the struggle.

c)- A technical foundation with methods appropriate to mobilizing the people in the struggle.

The first task of a cadre is to perfect himself, to enrich his experience and to seek to learn incessantly in all fields to be able to implement the Strategic Hamlet policy and serve the people efficiently while combating Communist subversion, expanding his perspectives and developing his human personality in and by the struggle.

To achieve these two objectives at the same time a cadre must now more than ever live close to the people and mingle with the mass in order to be able to truthfully reflect the life of the people in all its aspects and at all its levels, and to timely and in time solve the problems born from this quest and conquest of a new life.

I would like to cite two examples at this point.

A communal charter -- the constitution of a Strategic Hamlet or strategic quarter -- has now been established in each Strategic Hamlet and quarter. As we give them this charter we mean to give the residents of the hamlets or of the quarters the right to administer themselves and to manage the life of the hamlet or the quarter themselves.

Has this communal charter had any impact on the political life of the hamlet's population ? How have political relationships among the residents altered ? Is there among the hamlet's administrative committee, hamlet council and the people that relationship of democratic

cooperation freely consented and applied or does the ancient relationship of forces between a governing minority and a governed majority still prevail, contrary to our wishes and desires. Under which conditions could a new relationship emerge ? With the Communal charter, how are the political relationships between the local authorities and population altered ? Again, with the communal charter how much progress has been achieved in the political, economic, social and cultural life ? Has it developed with its own resources in a structured development or is it just an artificial varnish ?

In each hamlet, the cadre in charge of the Strategic Hamlet must know how to evaluate, hold and mobilize the hamlets human and material resources in a practical way to gradually improve these relationships in a democratic and Personalist sense.

I now come to my second example. We advocate a democratic judiciary regime in the strategic hamlets.

To this end, one must consider the problem of initiation to democratic practice together with that of popularizing the study of the Constitution and basic knowledge of laws related to the daily life of the peasants and workers in order to allow these people to understand what a democratic judiciary regime is and to experiment with it themselves in their daily life. This task of popular education also contributes to awakening the awareness of the people and to arming it against all possible abuses of the legal authorities as well as against all deceitful maneuvers and Communist terrorism. The cadre must remember that if the government has advocated a democratic judiciary regime in the Strategic Hamlets, it behooves him to awaken the awareness of the people to this policy and to loyally represent to the central administration the incertitudes and practical difficulties alike which emerge during the actual implementation of this policy within the concrete context of his locality. It is upon the testimony of cadres that the central government can in an adequate way solve problems born from this movement towards a new life under the protection of the law in Strategic Hamlets and quarters.

I am sure that the cadres at all levels will stand at the vanguard of this movement of research and initiative, for this movement will decide the outcome of the fight in which we are engaged.

The Strategic Hamlet policy has stricken the hardest blows to the enemy. The number of Strategic Hamlets and quarters completed, the number of people rallying to the national cause are all the more eloquent evidence of the enemy's serious failure last year.

On the social and political level alone we see clearly that the enemy was more and more severed from the population and rejected by the rural community.

The enemy has been reduced to gradually withdrawing to the forests and beyond the frontiers, to try from there to launch terrorist raids and looting against the civilian population. The enemy can no longer use the rural society as a springboard for his guerrilla action. He can no longer find human material among the people for his subversive war. Having failed in their guerrilla action the communists have been forced to adopt a war of movement in which they can no longer rely on the popular forces, thus revealing the adventurous and bellicose character of their true and cruel nature.

Having failed in the political field and in their efforts to seize the South or as they put it to "take care of the South", they have adopted the tactic consisting of using the pressure of war within the country to create on the international level conditions favorable to bargaining over the South with the assistance of their international masters. They want to convert Vietnam into a mere pawn on the world chessboard at the mercy of International Communism. Such an undertaking, such a policy derives from the nature and traditions of Communism which, not so long ago, took advantage of the blood of our people's resistance forces to bargain the division of our country with the colonialists. Such is the meaning of the policy of neutralisation of the South that they and their valets now advocate.

The Vietnamese people have indeed not yet forgotten the price the Communists charged them to achieve their devilish designs.

In 1954, they justified the division of the country by claiming "respect for the people's desire for peace".

In 1962, again due to the same respect, the Communist Central Committee defined its policy as follows : "To destroy the Strategic Hamlets is a total struggle in which the whole population and the whole army must participate -- a long and uncertain struggle. If the enemy succeeds in achieving these aims, it will be able to isolate and defeat the popular forces. To foil the enemy's maneuvers, we must, for a long time to come, continue a cruel combat and endure long privations".

This is a confession indeed !

A confession that the Communists failed right from the very beginning in their attempt to convert our Strategic Hamlets into combat bases for themselves. It is the admission to an act of war with an international purpose, against the peaceful aspirations of the people of the South. Let us all keep in mind this confession of the enemy, in our struggle for the right Cause.

The Strategic Hamlets policy is linked to the "Open Arms" campaign, which promotes the return to the Nation of the persons who have been lulled or exploited by the communists. The "Open Arms" campaign has a deep meaning, it is not an isolated step directed at the enemy. It is the expression of a policy which is in conformance with the sensitiveness and the will of the people, because it renders possible the limitation of the war which the enemy imposes on us, the limitation of the devastations caused by the enemy. It is evidence that the life of every fellow countryman bears an invaluable meaning to us, and that our Spirit of national brotherhood commands **us** always to welcome all those who for different reasons have been exploited by the communists, but have in time decided to abandon them and return to the national cause.

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With the Open Arms Campaign, the cause of our struggle will shine brilliantly in the eyes of all the people, for the spiritual foundation of that campaign is the rallying of the entire people to the Just Cause.

With the " Open Arms " campaign, we open our arms wide to accept the sons of the Nation who have been betrayed by a foreign doctrine.

Finally, I wish to remind all our cadres most emphatically, that the Strategic Hamlets policy and the Open Arms campaign carry a rich social and political revolutionary substance which is the expression of the creative genius of our people even though many are those who have not discerned it, being accustomed to judging by appearances and to being prisoners to form.

This substance is enriched daily through our movement of total revision of the doctrine, the organisation and the technique of the present regime. To contribute to this enrichment by his daily experience, by constant research and reflection, learning from the masses, such is the honor which the Revolutionary cadre cannot afford to miss.

I hope that all the cadres present here as well as those who at this moment are at work in their hamlets, will attain that honor.

To enrich the philosophical, political, cultural, social and economic content of all policies, to probe deeply in to that content in order to achieve it and to combat all formalism, such are the principles of action which will lead us to certain victory.
