

TRANSCRIPT OF LECTURE  
FETC/AID - UH

Session 10

Reel 6, Side 1

Bohannan:

OK gentlemen, lets saddle up and ride once more; draw sabres and charge these dam airplaines that are interrupting all the time.

Let us go back to the question of the applicability or non-applicability of other experience in counter-insurgency. Dr. Fall very kindly said that I would tell you all about the non-applicability of the Philippine experience in Vietnam. Well, I can't let my old pal down. When I first knew him he was, oh, supposedly, on a grant from the Sorbonne; but he used to show up in uniform now and then; and he was awfully close to a group of Frenchmen whose principal interest in life was to see to it that the Americans didn't get a toehold in Vietnam.

Incidentally, the hottest war I know of ever being fought in Vietnam, was fought in a compound out in Cholon, headquarters of an outfit called TRIM, a Franco-American training mission, incidentally now the headquarters of a Filipino group over there and is my address in Saigon. One of the hottest wars that I know of was fought in that compound, a very nice war, not a shot fired between the American. The special American training mission and the French training mission. The special American training mission was headed by Col. Hillandale. The French training mission was headed by Sainteny, head of those who tried to reestablish French influence with Uncle Ho in Hanoi, in 1945, who believes with a great deal of justice that the Americans sold him down the river, and sold Vietnam down the river, at that time. Most of the Frenchmen who were in the group later turned up with the OAS in Algeria. The Americans are scattered all over the landscape, most of us have gone to hell. Some of us - one was Rufe Phillips who started this

Rural Affairs, now the Field Operations, but Brother! it was a happy little group out there.

OK. Non-applicability of Philippine experience. What was the Philippine experience? Essentially this. A long implanted, small, Communist Party, seeking to organize, capitalizing on unrest, some of it deeply entrenched, partially justified, partially not justified, saw the war, the Japanese occupation, as the opportunity really to strike a blow (not for Uncle Ho, tempting as the rhyme is,) but for Communism as they saw it. They organized an armed force. They tried to draw into it leaders from other elements, non-Communist leaders. They did get some in, they did not meet, except that they did not meet with very general success in getting non-Communist leaders to join them. So far, the story is exactly, on all fours with that of Vietnam. They built up their armed forces during the war, they attacked, particularly in the closing days of the war, other indigenous resistance forces, trying to destroy them, trying to drive them into an alliance with them, or an alliance with the Japanese, so that they might be publicly disgraced after the war. Again exactly what they did in Indochina. Get some of the boys who were in the Dai Viet Officers Candidate Training School which was re-aided by the Viet Minh in mid-1945 to tell you how sweet and fraternal were their Communist brothers in the Resistance Movement.

After the war, they sought to achieve a role in the government. As far as appointive positions were concerned they failed. They did succeed in electing a number of people to Congress as a result of fraud and violence to a very considerable extent. The elections were invalidated on the grounds that they were so tainted with fraud and violence, probably legitimately invalidated. They kept their forces in the field. They alternated between relative quiescence, and fairly active military operations, from 1945 to 1950. During that time the government of the Philippines alternated between the so-called "Mailed-Fist Policy": "We will stamp out every one of these rebellious bastards!", and granting them amnesty.

They were fought primarily by small conventional forces, generally speaking operating in accordance, supposedly in accordance, with US conventional tactics.

There was one special operations unit active against them. It was extremely effective. It worked for three years, in two provinces, to try and catch the over-all leader of the Huks, Luis Taruc. They did not succeed. They did, they deliberately set out, to make themselves the terror of the area, and they applied, they sought to build an atmosphere of terror very sedulously and very effectively. Actually there was not very much that they did that was wrong, given the facts of life in this kind of war, but it looked awful bad.

The papers, the Manila press, the only significant press in the Philippines, probably the most unbridled in the world, at least in any relatively civilized country, constantly cried out against this group, and the Armed Forces in general, as being the new Gestapo, the jack-booted minions of Fuehrer Castaneda, and so on, and so on and so on. And the result of the efforts to apply terror - in one province alone the Huk multiplied three times in these three years; multiplied their numbers threefold, despite the fact that many of their leaders were liquidated, in one way or another.

By 1950, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines decided that a "revolutionary situation" existed, declared all-out war, and called for the general uprising, set up a timetable which would lead to the overthrow of the government and a Huk seizure of power by the end of 1951. It was quite unrealistic, incidentally.

The general situation was that their strength, in active armed men in the field, was approximately half that of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. They had the support of the active support, of perhaps thirty percent of the people in the theatre of operations, the big rice bowl North of Manila, comparable to the Delta area in Vietnam. The government had the active support of damned few

people in the country, although unquestionably the majority of the people of the country were strongly opposed to the any overthrow of constitutional government. Nevertheless active support, partly because of the behavior of the government, partly because of to a larger extent because of, the propaganda of the Huk and their sympathizers, was in such bad odor, that as I was told by at least three separate leaders of guerrilla groups in a position to take a hand in this, I was told by them in 1950: "You know, we're not going to get, to call out our boys and get mixed up in this thing now. If the Huk come in and take Manila, that's fine, then we will call out our boys and we'll drive out the Huk, and we will be rid of both the administration and the Huks."

Well, you all know the general outlines of the quite dramatic conclusion to which this campaign came. Magsaysay, appointed Secretary of Defense, given almost plenary power by the President against the Huks. He worked primarily through the Armed Forces of the Philippines. He said that every soldier had three jobs: To kill or capture Huk; to collect intelligence; and to act as a representative, an ambassador, from the government of the Philippines, to its people. He offered to the Huk a clearcut choice between as he called it: "The left hand of friendship, and the right hand of force." He established a very informal sort of Chieu Hoi program. Wherever the Huks had a slogan, a cause, he set out either to capture it or to render it foolish. The Huks said they were fighting for land for the landless: "OK, any of you guys that really want land, that is what you are fighting for, come on in, son; we will give you the local equivalent of forty acres and a mule, five ~~Hectares~~ and a carabao, set ~~you~~ up in business, on your own land, land which will be yours in three years if you go to work and cultivate it. And we will support you until you get your crop in."

Landlord-tenant relations? "Poor man can't get any justice from the courts, the courts are only open to the rich." OK, boys, any of you who think you want to go to court, you don't think you

can get a lawyer who will defend your case adequately; I will assign an officer from the Staff Judge Advocate General to represent your case for you, and, by God, if you don't get a fair hearing, I will do something about it!"

One thing after another that was a cause for complaint; a real or fancied grievance; he sought either to do something about it, or to demonstrate that it was not a legitimate grievance. The big popper on the whip came in the 1951 elections. The 1949 elections had been marked by a great deal of fraud and violence. To read the newspapers, to listen to the radio commentators, to talk to the average man on the street, you would have thought that all of the fraud and violence was on one side, the government side. As a matter of fact it wasn't. The careful examination of the poll returns will show you that the province in which the most frauds very obviously were committed was the home province of the losing candidate. But anyhow, everybody "knew" that Quirino had stolen the elections. And as time for the elections approached, the whole Huk apparatus zeroed in on : "Don't Vote! This election is going to be an absolute mockery. The only way we can have free elections is for us to take power. We have got to establish the New Democracy before you can get the kind of government in which you have been taught to believe." Could be?

And here is the key point gentlemen. The people in the Philippines, right down to the tao, the peasant in the hamlet, had a damn sight better understanding of how government was supposed to work, his relationship to it, and its relationship to him, than has the average educated leader in Vietnam today, much less the tao. Magsaysay said, "Be damned to this nonsense of elections being dishonest. We are going to see to it that they are fair, peaceful." Quite a number of efforts were cranked up to convince the people that the elections were, that the elections when held would be honest. This is where, incidentally, the wartime guerrillas, the non-Communists, really got into the act. Their veterans organization was the nervous system for this effort, to ensure not only that the

elections were free, but that nobody had any doubt in his mind about it. The result of the elections convinced everyone that elections could and would be held just the way they should be; that their votes would be counted. We didn't realize it at the time, but that was the turning point of that campaign. From there on the Huk had no place to go except to hell - and they promptly went there. The thing was practically ended. Applicability, non-applicability -- well, in this ricebowl area the Huk movement was just as well entrenched as the Viet Cong are in the Delta area today. Their numbers stayed, until the thing were obviously on the downgrade, their numbers stayed roughly half those of the government forces in the field against them. Their weaponry was substantially the same as that of the government forces. Neither side had recoil-less rifles, for example, but the fighting was just as hot, just as bitter, as it is in Vietnam. Neither side ran out of arms or ammunition. As far as I can see, from my limited knowledge of Vietnam, my fairly deep experience with this Huk business, there is just one significant difference between the war, the insurgency, in the Philippines, and that in Vietnam. And that one significant difference is the point that I emphasized just a few minutes ago. The average Viet -- the average Filipino peasant, has a pretty good knowledge of what his status as a citizen should be, what his rights as a citizen are, and his duties a pretty good notion of his relationship both to the local and to the national government as it is supposed to be. The leaders have a very deep knowledge of the practical workings of self-government, of practical politics -- in fact at times I have felt inclined to try to organize a small task force of Filipinos, to take them back to the States, to take over national election there. They know how to do it much better than the average American would. This gentlemen, is to my way of thinking, is the real difference between the situation, in the insurgency in Vietnam, and the one we had in the Philippines.

Our time is just about up, I don't want to keep you from your next class, so I will not entertain questions from the floor at this time. I will be around here for another two and a half days, and I will be glad to entertain and return questions, rocks, brickbats, dead cats, or whatever else you want to throw.

Meantime, I want to thank you very much for the attention and interest which you have shown, and to wish you the very best of luck in your job. I think that you are going to be abominably badly prepared for it. You are not neither personally or educationally equipped to do the job; neither is any body else that I know of. I don't know anybody who is fully qualified for any job from assistant to the assistant to the assistant of the province rep, on up in Vietnam, but of every group of Americans or Filipinos that I have worked with, getting ready to go there, I think that you show at least as much promise as any of them, so: Good luck.

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(The End)