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THE TERROR IN SOUTH VIETNAM

by Kenneth Gee

IN the midst of all the commentaries, rhetoric, teach-ins, slogans, polemics, and analyses — in all the great avalanche of words that the war in Vietnam has released, only passing attention has been given to the depth and effectiveness of the Terror as one of the battery of politico-military techniques applied against the South Vietnamese government and its supporters. It is not that the Terror is an unfamiliar political method. Library shelves groan under the weight of books dealing with its application historically, in the French Revolution, in Czarist and Post-Revolutionary Russia, in Spain and Eastern Europe. But concerning Vietnam, and amongst liberal intellectuals especially, a pervasive pressure — at its worst a kind of unspoken blackmail — has inhibited free discussion of the Terror.

For Terror is an emotive word, and in our intellectual tradition, we try to avoid emotive words. In truth it is the only apt word for one particular form of political violence, and nobody complains of its use to describe the theory of Robespierre, the deeds of the Decembrists, or the massacres of Stalin. But using the word in relation to Vietnam, one has the feeling that other lips are soundlessly forming the word 'propaganda' or even 'C.I.A. propaganda'.

Yet the most sceptical of intellectuals had to accept the truth of Stalin's Great Terror, and even to acknowledge the blindness with which (if an Irishism may be forgiven) we looked upon the events in Spain until George Orwell wrote *Homage to Catalonia*. Now some of the heat has gone from the war in Vietnam, and political assessments are better able to compete with emotive (often called "moral") judgments. It is possible to formulate some propositions about the Terror, as a specialized form of the violence with which the Communists have sought the monopoly of political power in the South that they attained in the North. It may be possible too to see some-

thing of the future of the Terror in the continuing struggle for South Vietnam, and in the coming struggle for Asia.

* * *

In Moscow, at the turn of the century, a Terrorist, a follower of Nechayev and a member of the Society of the Axe, explained on his way to the scaffold that he could not throw his bomb into the Archduke's carriage, because he had noticed at the last minute that it contained two young children as well as his prospective victim. The Terror had to be suspended. His colleague Voinarovski, in similar vein, said: 'If Dubassov' (his victim) 'is accompanied by his wife, I shall not throw the bomb.'

On December 5, 1967, the Viet Cong overran the hamlet of Dak Son near the Cambodian border. After shooting down ten members of the militia guard, they used grenades and flame-throwers to kill 114 villagers, most women and children, since the men were away in the Army. Finally, with a thoroughness worthy of the Great Khan, they set fire to the village, burning to death the survivors hiding in the matting huts. The holocaust was so horrifying as to feature in the American Press, usually reserved for pictures of 'napalmed' children.

The Russians were *prima donnas* amongst assassins, believing that their act of individual terrorism, followed by immolation on the scaffold almost as part of a rite, would free the enshained but divine spirit of the Russian people. Hence their combination of sensitivity and ruthlessness. They died before Lenin tore apart the romantic and apocalyptic vision of Bakunin. The Viet Cong who razed Dak Son despised romantic individual action in killing, as in all other activities. Their Terror was a disciplined political act, by men with collectivized minds. The very choice of the target lay not in mindless cruelty, but in a scientific political assessment. For the people of Dak

Son were Montagnard tribesmen, hostile to the Communists, and they were destroyed *pour encourager les autres*.

Douglas Pike, in *Viet Cong*, and Geoffrey Fairbairn in his *Revolutionary Warfare and Communist Strategy* have pointed to the selectivity of Viet Cong Terrorism, which is 'pin-point' or 'target' terrorism, even though the target may be social groups—specifically, the officials of the Saigon Government, the leaders of political organizations threatening the monopoly of the Viet Cong, and above all the traditional leaders of the rural villages that are the fundamental unit of Vietnamese society.

In Vietnam, the destruction of the administrative personnel of the villages, and the terrorizing of all who might be tempted to replace the dead, was the target of first priority. For the autonomous, tightly-integrated villages were the bricks and mortar of rural life, i.e. of life for the great majority. To destroy the villages was to atomize Vietnamese society.

From the time of the Ly kings in the eleventh century, the web of command had stretched downwards from the Imperial Capital to the village Council of Notables. The villagers had a remarkable autonomy—the law of the sovereign gives way before the custom of the village. But the writ of the central administration from the days of the Lys to the rule of the French, ran through the Notables, who collected taxes, kept order, cared for the indigent, supervised religious observance and distributed the common fields. The destruction of the bamboo hedge of the village, symbolizing separateness, was the most condign of royal punishments.

When Diem halted the expected disintegration of the South after 1954, the Hanoi régime knew that only extensive violence could shake this plum into its basket. Viet Cong assassinations had begun

with the murder in December, 1955, of the village Chief of Dong Nhut, but the régime was surviving. On May 13, 1959, the Lao Dong (Communist Party) Central Committee announced: 'The time has come to struggle heroically and perseveringly to smash the Southern Government.' and General Giap declared, 'The North is the revolutionary base for the whole country.' The Terror began.

The aim of the Viet Cong (which means Vietnamese Communist and accurately indicates where power resides in this 'coalition') was twofold. First, to destroy the traditional structure of the village so that its cadres could flow into the resulting vacuum, thereby setting up a Parallel Hierarchy (Bernard Fall's phrase) existing beside the administration of Saigon and ultimately replacing it. The second aim was to destroy the autonomy of the village by destruction of the village leadership, since the principle of village autonomy was incompatible with the highly centralized forms that are the Viet Cong's legacy from Leninist theory. The creation of the Dual Power is perhaps reminiscent of that horror story of entomology, wherein the wasp lays its eggs within the caterpillar's body, upon whose living substance the larvae feed, reducing the host finally to a dying husk.

It must be said that the Viet Cong operated in a milieu which in some cases was congenial to their purposes. The village structure was always hierarchical, sometimes prone to nepotism, sometimes corrupt. Into these communities, set hard into ancient patterns, came the enforcement apparatus of the Viet Cong, the élite Dich-van, or Moral Intervention Squads. Their methods ranged from persuasion, through the spectrum of non-lethal violence, to kidnapping and assassination. They concentrated on two types of village leader, the most efficient and popular (because he might become a focal-point of resistance) and the most disliked (because his punishment would meet with some approval). With systematic violence went (in the early days) a close knowledge of village grievances, and attention to genuine as well as completely spurious causes — the latter called by Geoffrey Fairbairn 'disguised causes' because they were completely incompatible with the Communists' real political position.

At the risk of seeing a glaze of incredulity come over some readers' eyes, the following conservative figures (from Douglas Pike's *Viet Cong*) are given of the killing of village leaders before the massive American presence in some ways altered the nature of the war.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of assassinations and kidnappings*</i>
1957-60	3,700
1962	10,700
1963	9,200
1964	2,000
1965	2,000

*Note: Most kidnappings ended in death.

The falling-off in later years was due simply to the falling-off in available victims; in hundreds of villages, there were no leaders left to kill.

These bare figures require the following illumination:

First, every kidnapped or murdered man was a key man in the village structure, i.e. in the actual or potential resistance to the Viet Cong. Secondly, for every dead man, many others were terrified into acquiescence. Sometimes the family of the Notable was liquidated too, in a way reminiscent of Stalin's Terror. Who would take over in such circumstances?

Thirdly, the assassins went to extraordinary lengths to emphasize, either by a 'trial', or by public announcement, or by pinning a note to the clothing of the corpse, that the killing was no individual act of spleen, but a studied political action, as indeed it was.

Finally, the executions were not intended to create a vacuum, or to allow some mystical spirit of the People to soar aloft, as in the hallucinations of the Nihilists. They were a vital step in the creation of the Parallel Hierarchy.

Visualize the situation of the recalcitrant village, perhaps controlled by a religious or political grouping inimical to the Viet Cong. Night after night the Viet Cong would emerge from the surrounding jungle, firing harassing rifle shots over the houses, accompanied by threats and taunts over loud-speakers. The sins, real or imaginary, of the village leaders would be catalogued. Fire crackers exploded all night in the village hedge, banishing sleep. The fields of the Notables were planted with poisoned bamboo slivers (punji). Trip wires attached to grenades were stretched across village paths. The police may well have fled, to spend the night in the provincial capital—and who can blame them? The villagers became disorientated, not knowing whether the threats would be followed by armed attack, or whether government troops could come to their aid if it did. As well as village leaders, key personnel such as teachers, policemen, and malaria-eradication teams, were the chosen targets. The film *High Noon* may give us some inkling of the situation in hundreds of villages of South Vietnam, as the villager saw the structure of authority, the only

one he and his ancestors had known, disintegrate. And always there was the promise that if the village accepted the rule of the cadres, the Terror would stop.

Finally, sometimes assisted by elements within the village, the Viet Cong would prevail. The village leader, popular or unpopular, would be left dead in his own field or in the village square. On his chest was pinned an obituary note, charging that he had 'betrayed resistance fighters to the French', or 'collaborated with the traitorous U.S.-Diem clique' or the like. It had ceased to matter to the villagers whether the charges were true or false.

The real discontents of the village, and even the adoption of disguised Causes, could never have projected the Communists into power. The truth is that there are few rural communities in all Asia who could have survived the sophistication, persistence, and ruthlessness of the Communist techniques of violence.

The Terror extended to the roads, the blood stream of the Central Administration. Typical was the murder on September 24, 1960, of Father Hoang Ngoc Minh of Kantom Province, who was dragged from his car, attacked with bamboo spears, and finally killed with a submachine gun. On March 22, 1961, a truck carrying 20 girls returning home from a ceremony in honour of the Trung Sisters (to the Vietnamese, each a Joan of Arc) was blown up and the fleeing girls cut down with rifle fire. Nine were killed. Their offence was that they were members of Madame Nhu's Republican Youth Corps. Rural buses, groaning under the weight of passengers, were a common target, and no one who has seen such a bus has any difficulty visualizing the slaughter that must have followed the explosion of the land mine.

It is not the purpose of this article to become a catalogue of horrors, but three examples given by Dr. R. G. Wyllie, the Melbourne physician, in a letter from Song Nai Provincial Hospital in November, 1966, illustrate the 'target' nature of the killings.

A 20-year-old girl crouching in a hut overrun by the Viet Cong, received ghastly injuries to her face with a cane-cutting knife. Her face was dissected with great forearm and backhand strokes, which cut through the full thickness of the facial bones, and fatally damaged the brain. She had been a school teacher. A young man in uniform had been made to stand side-on to his attackers, and his jaw, nose, cheek bones and eyes pulped by machine-gun bullets. He died of uncontrollable haemorrhage. He had been a village policeman. A pregnant woman was brought in

with her dead three-year-old child. Both her legs, almost torn off by machine-gun fire, were immediately amputated. She aborted after the operation, but recovered, to live without legs, children or husband. Her husband had been a village chief, and he had been strangled in front of her eyes. Dr. Wyllie adds that in all his period at the Song Nai Hospital, he had never seen nor heard of a hamlet chief who survived a Viet Cong attack.

In the 'liberated' villages of the South, the Viet Cong dominates every aspect of village life, as the Lao Dong Party does in the North. This is instructive, in view of theories as to the 'independence' of the Viet Cong. The self-government of the village is replaced by a rigidly centralized administration, described by the Communists (they lack a sense of humour) as 'democratic absolutism'. There is the dreary repetition of slogans, many incomprehensible to the villagers. There are the tireless Tuyen Van Giao, the agit-prop teams. There are the study sessions, the self-criticism, the 'thought reform'. There is the absurd division of villagers into categories, so that an extra quarter acre of land can mean dispossession as a 'landlord element'. There are the 'people's courts' with foregone verdicts; there is imprisonment and death for villagers described, in the jargon that Asian Communists have made uniquely their own, as 'counter-revolutionaries', 'recalcitrant people opposing the revolution', 'reactionary elements', 'spies and secret agents of the imperialists', 'dangerous henchmen', 'cruel agents of the puppet regime', 'counter-revolutionary plotters'. This selection is taken from a Central Committee Directive of December 24, 1965, 'Concerning Problems Requiring Thorough Understanding in Repressing Counter-Revolutionary Elements'.

Hatred is pressed into service against political and religious rivals. This is certainly not unique to the Viet Cong, but it is important for us, in our great garden suburb, to be reminded how the business of politics is elsewhere conducted. The 'struggle movement' creates a frenzy of hate, which is to be the great energizer of the political struggle. 'To guide the masses towards the Revolution', says another Directive to cadres, 'the agit-prop arm must make the masses' hate the enemy, building on the hatred that already exists'. 'Promotion of hatred must be permanent, continuous and directly related to the struggle movement as closely as a man is to his shadow.'

* * *

Meanwhile, in the cities the Terror has been less effective. Che Guevara has point-

ed out in his Bolivian Diary the difficulty of conducting guerrilla warfare in crowded urban areas. The government is stronger, and it is more difficult to isolate the victims and cover them with calumnies prior to liquidation. But political assassinations pay dividends. In Saigon, on December 7, 1966, the Viet Cong assassinated Deputy Tran Van Van of the Constituent Assembly. Tu Chung, editor of *Chinh Luan*, perhaps the most respected newspaper in South Vietnam, was denounced by the Viet Cong as a 'scabby sheep'. He defied the Viet Cong in his editorials, and was shot down on December 30, 1965. The list could be prolonged over many columns. The Terror aimed to demonstrate the inability of the government to protect the citizen. Grenades were rolled down the aisles of theatres, others were dropped into stationary cars at traffic lights, or wrapped in orange peel and delivered with bags of fruit. Plastic bombs were left in buses, explosives hidden in the frames of bicycles, lethal satchels left in restaurants.

The government has created the Revolutionary Development Teams, young people of extraordinary courage, who attempt to recreate the village structures destroyed in earlier years. At Suoi Chan village, on April 16, 1967, three young women members were tied to a pole and shot. Team members are the new targets. In the first six months of this year, 3798 civilians have been killed in assassinations or other terrorist acts, and our Press has scarcely reported it.

That there is anything left of the administration is the miracle of Vietnam, and a tribute to the depths of anti-Communist feeling which so many western intellectuals seem determined to ignore.

* * *

But what sort of person is the Terrorist, and what makes it possible for a Viet Cong boy to turn his flame-thrower on to the villagers of Dak Son? History teaches that the capacity of human beings for ferocity is unlimited, but particular cases warrant examination.

'The dedicated community of irreconcilable youths' is one description . . . 'a doomed man, knowing only one science, the science of destruction . . . by day and night having but one thought, one aim — inexorable destruction'. But these are the words of Bakunin, ignoring the Marxist rule that the destruction of an existing order is useless without the substitution of the new society, the dictatorship of the proletariat. And neo-Bakuninism may be (as Lewis F. Feuer has wittily said), 'the hallucinogenic of the Alienated Intellec-

tuals' but it cuts no ice with the practical terrorists of Vietnam.

A man closer to their hearts said: 'Chaque minute, il meurt des centaines de milliers d'hommes sur la toute de la terre. La vie et la mort de cent, de mille, de dizaines de milliers d'humains, furent-ils nos compatriotes, cela représente peu de chose.' This was Vo Nguyen Giap in a conversation reported in *Bernard Fall's Le Vietminh*.

This opens discussion on another function of the Terror common to all terrorist groups, but widely discussed in the publications of the Viet Cong.

Violence, and especially the violence of terrorism, is designed to commit the cadre inescapably to the cause, to bind him psychologically with the blood of his victim. After all, the hard core of the Lao Dong were not recruiting persons like themselves, the faithful of a religion that sees violence as the midwife of history. They were recruiting village boys and the youth of the frustrated urban petit-bourgeoisie, with the traditional Vietnamese horror of having 'no food in life, no coffin in death'. How could they be moulded into the 'dedicated society of irreconcilable youths', how could they be made to believe that today's children may be burnt so that tomorrow's may be saved? Or to put 'an abstract idea above human life, even if they call it history, to which they themselves have submitted in advance and to which they will decide quite arbitrarily, to submit everyone else as well' — to use the restrained words of Camus. Or to see the dead around a mined bus as the cracked eggs without which (as every fellow-traveller sorrowfully affirms) the omelet of the New Society cannot be made?

The Terror is designed to transform the sensitive Vietnamese individual into part of the dehumanized collective. The act of Terrorism is seen as the crucible that will reduce all followers to a malleable flux. This is a theme propounded over and over again in Viet Cong theoretical tracts and directives to cadres. The mental process is clear: committed by the death of his victim, the cadre can no longer resile from the ideology that supports the unnatural act.

Yet in spite of everything, Viet Cong 'self-criticism' documents show that the irreconcilable terrorists were few in number. Many cadres suffered from 'timidity and unwillingness in attack' and 'laxity and indifference in carrying out assignments'. Thus the decimation of a whole generation of village leaders was probably the work of remarkably few men. And the Tet offensive, in which many of the most

dedicated cadres were killed, struck a blow at the Viet Cong from which it has never fully recovered.

* * *

Another aspect of the Terror in Vietnam comes closer to home. In the long run it may be of crucial importance. This is the refusal of large sections of liberal-intellectual opinion, especially in Europe and the United States, to accept the existence of the Terror as a deliberate political weapon of the Communists, let alone face its ultimate significance. Where it was acknowledged at all, it was immediately obscured behind a Double Standard that 'progressive' opinion immediately threw up, which demanded that every criticizable activity of the South and its allies be attacked with masochistic fervour, while the extermination of the natural leaders of the Vietnamese countryside, documented beyond challenge, was simply glossed over. It was as impossible for 'our side' to do right as it was for the Viet Cong to do wrong.

The orgy of self-flagellation was not limited to Communist Party members whose emotions are turned on and off by the Party like a tap, nor to fellow-travellers who respond to the same plumbing. The anger of liberal, especially academic, opinion fell upon the unfortunate Diem, whose administration was being systematically destroyed by the Viet Cong. This devout Catholic of limited political talents headed the liberal demonology, in spite of (or one suspects because of) his success in restoring some order out of the chaos of the South. But Ho Chi Minh, whose works (now available in English) reveal him to be a typical Stalinoid apparatchik, underwent canonization. He had shot, imprisoned or exiled almost the whole of the leadership of rival nationalist parties, not to mention the able and influential Trotskyites, but his poetry was printed with reverence.

The Viet Cong became a romantic band of Robin Hoods, beloved of the peasants, fighting the oppressor with his own French and American weapons. Forgotten was the fact that all main-force units of the Viet Cong were armed, as early as 1963, with a Chinese version of the outstanding Russian AK 47 rifle.

Kennan, an opponent of the war on the ground that it expended American resources unwisely, as well as John Roche, have pointed out the absurdity of rationalizing opposition to the war into a romanticizing of Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Cong. The traditional arguments of the absolute pacifists were (sometimes deliberately) confused with the highly

selective 'pacifism' of people who would disdain the proposition that the Viet Cong should lay down their arms and turn the other cheek. Political assessments, permissible in themselves, were gift-wrapped as 'moral' judgments, and some intellectuals embraced the ancient heresy of Scrupulosity, proclaiming their own guilt and unworthiness and happily carrying the burden of their fathers' colonialism. The G.I. went into battle assured, by 'Ramparts' at his rear, that he was a murderer and a baby killer, and his opponent a patriot as white as the driven snow.

The Saigon Press corps, with a few honourable exceptions, joined in the orgy of self-flagellation with the fervour of a medieval procession exorcizing the plague. The accidents, mistakes, and cruelties of a particularly savage war become the stuff of which headlines were made. Our own Press showed us the girl prisoner who had been 'tortured' with an overdose of water, for the trivial peccadillo of having radioed to the Viet Cong mortars the positions of her captors' mates. But of the systematic terrorization and liquidation of opponents of the Viet Cong in the villages scarcely a word was heard.

There is, of course, truth in the proposition that the armies of democratic countries should not stoop to the techniques of their totalitarian enemies. We would, one hopes, condemn a commander who sanctioned a Lidice massacre, or Stalin's mass murder in the Katyn Woods; and any cruelties of our own or our allies' forces are a fit subject for the probe of a free public opinion. But how can this justify the refusal of whole sections of the liberal establishment to contemplate the scientific massacre of a whole social class, and the vital role that this has played and will play in the still undecided struggle for South Vietnam?

What is reflected here is a crisis in liberalism itself, and an erosion of its critical faculties. We are suffering from a Credulity Syndrome, in which anything is capable of belief, so long as it comes from a 'progressive' source. This is described by Malcolm Muggeridge as a 'pitiable gullibility'. In the death-struggle between the free and totalitarian societies, many intellectuals have become comfortably neutral, asking that their 'detachment' be praised. They wish to be pro-freedom, but shrink from being 'anti' its opposite, because to be 'pro' feels nicer. There is a self-indulgence about many of their political attitudes. Nor have they allowed themselves to be dragged (as Adlai Stevenson recommended) 'kicking and screaming into the 20th century'. The habit of fellow-travelling has never left

many Left-intellectuals, who have never ceased to hope that Stalin's terror will turn out to have been misreported, or was perhaps just a bad dream, and that sometime, somewhere (and why not in Vietnam?) Communism would don a human face. The young, solaced by Guevara and Marcuse, attack the most liberal of universities. The Negroes say openly that the term 'honky pig' embraces the white liberal as well as the white policeman. The liberal locomotive, well fuelled on the rhetoric of 19th century politics, had by the early 1960s run out of steam. It huffed and puffed, and sometimes shrieked with its whistle, but the wheels were scarcely turning.

Into this waste-land fell the Vietnam war, echoing like a stone dropped into a well. To some, the war was a heaven-sent opportunity to demonstrate their own purity, and their unflinching courage in attacking the actions of their own government and soldiery. And to others, resistant to these temptations, the war proceeded in a confusion of issues, some real, some spurious. The very facts themselves have been hard enough to come by, let alone any conclusions validly drawn from the facts.

So it has remained to this day. Yet everybody knows that the war is filled with portents for the future, if only they can be divined. One thing is clear. The techniques of warfare applied by the Communists in Vietnam will not be limited to that unhappy country. They are to be found, as Geoffrey Fairbairn has pointed out in *Revolutionary Warfare and Communist Strategy*, in Burma, Malaysia, Laos, and Thailand. And this leads finally to the examination of the future of the Terror, perhaps the most effective weapon in the Communist armoury in Vietnam.

* * *

At Hué, occupied for some days by the Communists during the Tet offensive, mass graves containing some 1000 corpses have been unearthed. The figures cannot be 'Saigon propaganda' since many foreign correspondents have confirmed the scope of the massacre. This has obliged some opponents of Saigon to say that what may happen in the heat of a civil war is no pointer to the future should the unthinkable happen, and South Vietnam finally fall into the hands of the Communists. These people have completely missed the point.

What was significant at Hué was not merely the magnitude of the killings, but the choice of the victims. For many of the

victims were members of the Dai Viet Party, a militant nationalist group that had fought both the French and the Communists in North Vietnam, in spite of the assassination of its leader, Truong Tu Anh, by the Communists in 1946, and the subsequent decimation of much of the leadership. After the Geneva Agreement, a branch of the Dai Viet had established itself strongly in Hué in the Central Highlands. And there, during Tet, 'Target' terrorism excelled itself.

The physical destruction of all possible political rivals has long been a Viet Cong aim. Here is a Directive of December 2, 1965, for the instruction of cadres from 'Regional to District Commissar Levels' and 'Party Schools and Political Training Courses':

(b) IN AREAS TEMPORARILY UNDER ENEMY CONTROL.

1. We are to exterminate dangerous and cruel elements such as . . . (henchmen owing blood debts, etc., . . .) and key and dangerous members of such parties as the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, the Party for a Greater Viet-nam and the Personality and Labour Party.
2. We are to establish files immediately and prepare the ground for later suppression of dangerous henchmen whom we need not eliminate yet or whose elimination is not yet politically advantageous.'

The Dai Viet Party has already been mentioned. The Vietnamese Nationalist Party (V.N.Q.D.D.) had lost 12 leaders under the French guillotine after the Yen Bay mutiny and their army and leadership in the north had been liquidated, after savage battles, by General Giap in 1954. The Personality and Labour Party had been associated with Diem.

After the French left South Vietnam, there was an immense florescence of political groups. Some had arisen in the struggle against the French, others were newly formed. Often they coalesced not around ideologies or even programmes, but around personalities. Some have represented a *tendance* rather than a political structure. Others were held together by a loose cement of religion or regionalism. Around them newspapers, some with a minute circulation, have been born, flourished for a short time, and as often as not died of political malnutrition.



Exhumed bodies (in plastic bags) of victims of VC terror are exhibited for possible identification by relatives and friends. (Thua Thien Province, March, 1969).

It might be said that South Vietnam is afflicted with too much politics. Yet this political fragmentation has meant that South Vietnam has never been a monolithic society. Among the political aspirants, some groups and individuals of great ability and patriotism are now emerging. The problem for the Communists, should they win in South Vietnam, will be to decapitate and extinguish this turbulent but virile politics, and to secure the South in their totalitarian strait-jacket.

It will be done by the Terror. The graves of Hué foreshadow the future, should Hanoi prevail. Hué refused to go over (as was expected by the Communists) during the Tet offensive. Hué was

punished with mass graves of civilian dead.

In his mammoth Address to Cadres in September, 1968, Truong Chinh, probably leader of the pro-Peking faction in the Communist Party, said:

'It is absolutely necessary for the peoples' democratic dictatorship to use violence against counter-revolutionaries and exploiters who refuse to submit to reform. Therefore we must pay continuous attention to consolidating the repressive apparatus of the peoples' democratic state, the peoples' army, the peoples' control institute, the peoples' tribunal and so forth.'

Behind this hackneyed jargon ('people's democratic dictatorship') is ritualized rhetoric for the dictatorship of the Communist Party) the threat rings out loud and clear. Should the Communists win, political diversity will be replaced by the Party monolith. All political groups and personalities who will not submit will be rooted out as effectively as they have been in the North. One may doubt Communist efficiency in many ways, but not in the extermination of opposition to their power.

But it is precisely this shadow that lies over them, that sustains the people of the South, in spite of setbacks, inadequacies, disunity, and the other tribulations that plague them, in their struggle against the Communists. Some Western intellectuals may bask in comfortable neutrality, others

even side with the totalitarian enemy, but the people who live in South Vietnam know what the Communists are capable of. They have experienced what this article has attempted to describe. They have seen the dead. They have seen a market place after a Communist rocket has fallen. They know what happens when a grenade is thrown into a crowded school room. Especially since Tet, they know what a Communist victory will bring.

General Giap has said: 'If we win in South Vietnam, we will everywhere.' The South Vietnamese have endured and still endure the cruellest terror since the Great Terror of Stalin. But Giap and the Communists have not won in South Vietnam. The administration and the army of the

South is becoming stronger, and there is reason to think that the Terror is becoming counter-productive. Only the sudden collapse of the resolve of her allies can now deliver South Vietnam to the Communists. Unless this happens, an independent and non-Communist South Vietnam will emerge from this dreadful war, and Giap's boast will come to nothing.

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Vietcong Terrorists Return at Funeral of Victim

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 5 (AP)—The farmer kneeling before the body of his wife looked up at the old wall clock, which he had set 15 minutes fast to give him an earlier start on the day. "Last night she was alive," he said to himself.

The Vietcong had come for her—three of them, fearlessly silent. They called her a spy and took her away, and then there was a shot. Her husband had not gone to look for her until the morning because he was afraid.

Now she lay in a coffin in their house in a place known as Hamlet 4. The family had gathered, including their 14-year-old son and their nephew, who had not come into the hamlet for a year because the Vietcong wanted them as "enemies of the people."

The mourners stared blankly. Then there was a noise at the doorway and the farmer saw three familiar unspeaking figures step into the light and approach the two boys.

Every week the Government issues a report on the toll of South Vietnamese civilians killed, wounded or kidnapped by the Vietcong as

part of their policy of political terror.

Though 32,000 have been slain in nine years, according to the Government, with 129,000 wounded and 60,000 kidnapped, the report is generally ignored, for there is more interest in the statistics of battle.

Every month the names of the victims are submitted as part of an official protest to the International Control Commission, established in 1954 to oversee the agreement that ended the war between the French and the Communist-led Vietnamese forces. The protests come to nothing.

The list has become at once so vast and so routine, the deaths and maimings somehow remote, even unreal: a mine on a rickety bus on a lonely road, a grenade into a bamboo and thatch farmhouse, a bomb in a fish market, a rifle shot from the darkness, three silent intruders at a funeral.

To the Vietcong, terror is an important political instrument in the strategy of war. In their view it somehow gives parity of a sort with allied firepower, and it re-

moves those who would obstruct the Vietcong's ability to exist among the peasants—to strike, rest, heal and supply, and to organize to strike again.

Perhaps most important, it undermines confidence in the Government in Saigon by demonstrating that it cannot protect the peasants.

They Count on Fear

Vietcong defectors have testified that the terrorists are ready to risk the people's hatred and disgust as long as they can count on fear. They have learned that fear is the emotion through which they can exact the most cooperation and obedience.

The terror, then, is not a list of figures—it is real.

Nguyen Van Doc, 42, bound and blindfolded, was taken with his fellow hamlet chief, whose name is Dung, to the paddy field near Chang, 35 miles northwest of Saigon. They had run patrols that uncovered small Vietcong arms caches and both had been accused in leaflets.

They had been spending the night at a friend's house 50 yards from a Government battalion headquarters, but

the three Vietcong took them without resistance.

Squatting in the field, hearing the faint but terrible cocking of pistols, Mr. Doc thought how they had considered giving up their jobs after threats by the Vietcong.

"But we decided we were already riding the back of the tiger, so we might as well keep on," he recalled. "If we had got off, we'd have died anyhow. We were condemned. I know the Vietcong."

He waited for the sentence to be executed. They were talking to Mr. Dung, telling him to confess his crimes. Suddenly they all were inexplicably gone. Mr. Doc ran before he heard shots, then dived into a deep rice paddy and lay still.

The next day he and the villagers found Mr. Dung's body.

Mr. Doc now lives at the village headquarters at nearby Tammy and visits his wife and seven children one day a week, and only for an hour.

"I guess I'll have to stay here forever," he said.

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