

VIET

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REPORT

"THERE IS STILL
TIME FOR
AMERICANS
TO HELP HIM
[THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE]
DETERMINE
RIGHTLY
THE FATE OF
HIS COUNTRY."

-- Major-General
Edward G. Lansdale
"Vietnam: Do We
Understand
Revolution?"



"SO LONG AS
THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE
PEOPLE HAVE
NOT YET COMPLETE
INDEPENDENCE,
THERE CAN BE
NO REAL PEACE
IN VIETNAM."

-- Statement of
the Central
Committee
of the NLF,
January 5, 1966

NGUYEN HUU THO

President of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam

TWO PROGRAMS FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

LANSDALE vs. THE "VIETCONG"

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VIET-REPORT

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EDITORIAL

Although the collapse of the international junket for peace was foreseen from the start—undiplomatically, by its own architects in Washington—it was instructive. In Washington the Doves leapt at the bait like Hawks. Never in the history of the war had a “peace” in Vietnam been so popular, or so misunderstood. Presumably, Hanoi would make its move (whatever that was supposed to be) if we could just sound like we really meant it. What the Doves failed to ask was, What did—and do we mean?

It is important to clarify once more the real issues facing the U.S. (1) Who do we think we are fighting? (2) What future will we allow the South Vietnamese? (3) What future do we see for ourselves in Southeast Asia? (4) If we should “win,” what have we won?

These were Hanoi's questions, too. And Hanoi's conclusions—although made with marked tentativeness—are that by their deeds they shall be judged. During the lull the U.S. introduced 11,000 new troops into South Vietnam; in Saigon U.S. officials were pointing

(continued on p. 25)

TWO PROGRAMS FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

POP vs. POPULAR REVOLUTION

Communists have "let loose a revolutionary idea" in South Vietnam, according to pacification expert Major-General Edward G. Lansdale. The job for the United States is to help Saigon find a better "idea," and sell it to the countryside. What follows is an analysis of both—from the texts of the architects themselves: Lansdale and the NLF.

by John McDermott

I.

The peace offensive is over. With the renewal of bombing in the North all chances of negotiations for an end to the war have now vanished and the real adversaries—Washington and the National Liberation Front—have settled down to a new round of fighting, one which in all probability will last many months. Not before those months have elapsed and the fighting has forced an adjustment in the positions of either the United States Government or of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF), or both, will there again be opportunities for mediation between the parties, and a beginning to the end of the ordeal of the Vietnamese people. The positions of these two parties, especially their estimates of one another's intentions and capacities have now become more than ever the center of the Vietnamese conflict. There is the military issue, of course, but far more important are the political questions: namely, how does each relate itself to the political life of South Vietnam? What are their relative prospects for success? And, based on these, what might each reasonably expect in the long run from the other?

HOW THE NLF LOOKS TO THE U.S.

To observe now that the U.S. government has come a long way in recent years in developing a realistic attitude toward the NLF suggests a strange irony. Still, it is so, but there remains a great distance yet to be traversed, and a persisting gap between realistic speculation and conditioned practice. Washington seems finally to recognize that the Front is largely independent of the North Vietnamese regime in at least two important respects. The judgment of most independent observers has been that the Southern rebellion is just that—a rebellion—and that Hanoi's approval and assistance have trailed events in the South rather than initiated them (see note on Chaffard in sources below). This recognition is a welcome sign of realism, as is Washington's new aware-

ness that at least at the present time, Hanoi has no particular means to force the NLF to bring an end to the fighting (Max Frankel, *N.Y. Times*, 1/1/66). Although the rapid increase in North Vietnamese aid to the South in the past five months gives the Hanoi government some sort of leverage on the Front, the practical extent of that leverage is unknown—a cipher of considerable interest for the Administration.

Similarly Washington now realizes that the Front has strong support in the South Vietnamese countryside. Even Premier Ky has acknowledged this. Saigon, after all, represents only the Generals, and apparently not even all of them either. Open political opposition is absolutely prohibited, though periodically it breaks to the surface. Only in October three demonstrators for peace were shot in Saigon's public square on a charge of "neutralism"; even the Catholic refugees from the North, formerly one of the pillars of the pro-war forces have become appalled at the bloodletting and desire an end of it (see page 25).

Still the Administration retains the belief that support for the Front comes only by default, that it is almost purely due to the mistakes and shortsightedness of Diem and of the French before him. Of course, this is a comforting fiction. It relieves officials of the responsibility of facing their own mistakes. They can escape acknowledging how a failure of such proportions as the Vietnam failure stands as an indictment of American competence in Asian affairs. Four administrations, seventeen years of paying the bills, two wars, almost 2,000 American deaths and now a huge expeditionary corps with still no end of it in sight; but Washington persists.

Coupled with this official fiction is one which is equally reassuring: what support the Front has comes only because of terror and manipulation. Murdering their opponents and those who will not cooperate, coercing those within their power, the Front merely exploits pent up grievances as a device to seize power. This

belief also serves to reassure because it harbors the idea that once we Americans really get going, once we learn the knack of it, *we* can represent the real interests of the people and thus win their support and destroy the communists.

At the same time, Washington is demonstrating what appears to be a real interest in the immediate aims of the Front, namely the establishment of a "neutral and democratic" regime in the South. So far this recognition only reveals itself through curiosity about the Front's stated desire for a coalition government in Saigon. G. Mennen Williams' recent interview with M. Boumedienne of Algeria was reported to be concerned with this proposition and, in addition, at least one private and unofficial emissary has explored this question at the implied request of "official circles" in Washington.

Nevertheless, the Administration believes that such a "neutral and democratic regime," such a coalition, would be but a prelude to the seizure of power by the Front's guiding force, the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam, the communists; and this is the core of its distrust. The suspicion is not a matter of political neuroticism on Washington's part. From its founding in 1941 until early 1949, Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh posed as a noncommunist nationalist movement and went to considerable efforts to maintain the pose (see Sachs in sources). Ho dissolved the Indochina Communist Party in 1945; in the same year he refused to say whether or not he was a communist (see Hammer). Early North Vietnamese Cabinets included prominent roles for noncommunists, including the foreign ministry. As late as March 1949, Ho denied his government was "communist dominated." Thereafter there followed a rapid shift into a radical Stalinist position so that by November 1949 the Vietminh was openly proclaiming itself a communist-led organization, in evident response to communist victories in China and growing U.S. support of the French in Vietnam. Gradually at first, and then more rapidly, the Party moved not only to improve its control over the Vietminh organization but also to monopolize such control. Then, in the classic pattern, after purging all possible rivals, the communists turned to purging themselves, a process which increased in ferocity until late 1956 when Ho had to call it to a halt.

For its part the National Liberation Front has equally good reason to mistrust Washington. There is—for Washington—the embarrassing matter of the Geneva Agreements and the even more embarrassing reports of the International Control Commission (see *Viet-Report*, Vol. I, nos.



2 & 3). The Front believes that Washington desires the permanent occupation of South Vietnam, and statements such as those of Secretary Rusk in his press conference of January 21 (text in *N.Y. Times*, 1/22/66) and of Ambassador Harriman in his ABC television interview of January 23, strongly justify their belief. They are convinced that Washington's professed desires for peace are insincere and point to the continued U.S. build-up during the peace offensive, particularly to the arrival of the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division in that period (*Liberation Front Statement* of January 5, 1966). What it sees is a U.S. publicly refusing to recognize the Front as an independent entity; instead -- committed to its destruction.

For themselves, the Front leaders obviously believe that they represent the wishes of the South Vietnamese people. Their success in the nine year war against Diem and his successors is most often cited as proof. In their view South Vietnamese have "voted with their lives" in support of the Front. As they put it: "Starting with empty hands" they managed to destroy Diem and no successor can restore power to Saigon. The Liberation Army totaling less than 200,000 together with its irregular forces, often poorly equipped, has met, matched, and often beaten the 800,000 man force of its opponents including now almost 200,000 troops of the modern, well equipped U.S. Army and Marine Corps (see *NLF Statement* of March 22, 1965).

The leaders of the NLF appear to believe that they can force the U.S. out of South Vietnam. Pursuing economic analysis far more sophisticated than that of some of their American supporters, they see the high cost of the war as a definite disadvantage in the mind of

the "U.S. ruling circles." They appreciate the effect of American opinion against the endless bloodletting--both American and Vietnamese. It is also clear to them that the U.S. cannot long tie up almost a third of its ground forces in an isolated peninsula, thus stripping the nation of its strategic reserve. They appear to be well informed on American opposition to the war and believe that in the long run it will be decisive against the Administration.

In short, like the Americans who oppose them they are convinced of the righteousness of their cause and for them, too, this warrants an overwhelming confidence and an intractable stubbornness.

U.S. STRATEGY--OLD AND NEW

With the end of the bombing pause and the peace offensive the Administration reverts to its double-pronged effort to pressure the Soviet Union diplomatically and Hanoi militarily, in hopes that they will exert maximum pressure on the Front to give up its effort. However, the Front is far more diplomatically isolated than Washington believes, and receives only marginal assistance from the outside. (James Reston estimated it at only seven tons of supplies per month at the end of the summer, about 4,000 tons less than the Vietminh were receiving from the Chinese in June, 1954 [see Tanham].) As Chaffard has indicated most of that assistance, including the assistance of North Vietnamese troops, is effective only in the Central Highlands, an area far from the political heartland of the Front, the Mekong Delta.

The growing U.S. military involvement in the South seems designed in part to force the Front into still greater military dependence on the North. Then might a commensurate increase in Northern leverage over Front policies occur, a leverage which the U.S. apparently envisions as a useful one. The air war in the South, already far more fearsome than the more widely heralded attacks on the North, is to be greatly stepped up and a vast increase in American ground forces--perhaps as many as a half-million more troops--is being seriously considered (Frankel, *N. Y. Times*, 1/30/66). A long war, perhaps of six or seven years duration, is now considered very possible by some administration officials.

This intensification of the military effort in the South is only part of a characteristic response by our foreign policy officialdom when things go badly: it is the perennial formula--continue what you are doing but do it more. As such it hardly deserves to be called a new strategy. No, the novelty of the new approach is not here. Rather it lies in a "new" emphasis on pacification programs in the Vietnamese countryside, a "new" attempt at what is called, euphemistically enough as we shall see, "winning the minds and hearts of the people."

At the center of these plans is a figure from an earlier day in Vietnam, retired Air Force Major General Edward Lansdale, CIA man, former advisor to the temporarily successful anti-Huk campaign in the Philippines, former intimate to Diem and the latter's chief U.S. advisor from 1954 to 1956.

Saigon Daily News

Of The Nation's March Toward True Democracy

II.

LANSDALE ON REVOLUTION

In the October 1964 issue of the influential quarterly *Foreign Affairs*, General Lansdale published an article, "Vietnam: Do We Understand Revolution?" which, though now somewhat dated, is the fullest and most articulate statement of the ideology of U.S. participation in communist-suppressing and nation-building efforts, such as we are now engaged in in Vietnam. The article itself appeared at a timely juncture in the debate over our Vietnamese policy. The summer of 1964 was a period of disastrous military and political setbacks for

the "free world" in Vietnam. The NLF had moved into mobile warfare and seemed ready to stage military operations designed finally to crush the Saigon Army. Little emphasis was then being paid the political aspects of the war (the collapse of the 1955-62 internal pacification plans acknowledged, but temporarily dismissed). Fitful efforts to keep the various members of the military junta from ousting each other by new coups, and to replace them by a civilian administration which would mask the otherwise military character of the effort, summed up Washington's political involvement. Long-run decisions on the U.S. effort in Vietnam were, of course, suspended by the presidential campaign.

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although within the administration plans were already being made for an increased introduction of U.S. troops. General Lansdale's article became a part of intra-administration debates and his subsequent appointment, as Ambassador Lodge's assistant for pacification efforts, indicates quite clearly the effect his views had within the government then.

The theme of the article is fairly simple: the U.S. must assume a more responsible direction of the anticommunist political effort in South Vietnam. Lansdale believes that the basis of communist success in South Vietnam "consisted of an idea and of an organization to start giving that idea reality" (p. 75). Its aim was to win the people of South Vietnam to its side "... by destroying their faith in their own government and creating faith in the inevitability of a Communist takeover" (*ibid.*). For Lansdale, like Mao and his disciples, it is "people" and not armies or weapons which are decisive in the kind of war being waged in Vietnam. Thus a purely military response to the problem is totally inadequate; the communists continue to score success after success in spite of all our efforts, since such responses...

...fall short of understanding that the Communists have let loose a revolutionary idea in Vietnam and that it will not die by being ignored, bombed or smothered by us. Ideas do not die in such ways (p. 76).

General Lansdale recognizes a truth too seldom recognized by Americans generally, that the great idea for which all Vietnamese "north and south" are ready to give up their lives is national independence.

The tragedy of Vietnam's revolutionary war for independence was that her 'Benedict Arnold' was successful. Ho Chi Minh... and a small cadre of disciplined Party members trained by the Chinese and Russians, secretly changed the goals of the struggle. Instead of a war for independence against the French colonial power, it became a war to defeat the French and put Vietnam within the neo-colonial Communist empire (p. 80).

In the early years after Geneva, Ngo Dinh Diem scored victories for genuine Vietnamese independence, but gradually he grew distant from the people and this, according to Lansdale, combined with communist terror weakened the "psychological" bonds between the people and the government, and brought success to the communists and the overthrow and death of Diem (p. 81).

The Vietnamese have since been unable to build the political sinew necessary to stave off the communist drive. Thus Americans must take

Weakening the "Psychological" Bonds of Six Years Ago in South Vietnam

"Another reason that past pacification plans did not work, officials add, is that the efforts were given lip service by everyone from United States Cabinet members to junior military officers but were never given real priority."

Charles Mohr in the N.Y. Times, January 24, 1966

"A plaque of wood on each house indicates the number of people in the household, and their relationship to the household head.... The primary reason for the plaques is the security problem. If military or police officers find people residing in the household who are not shown on the plaque there is cause for suspicion" (p. 10). "The inter-family groups [consisting of about five families] are the smallest official units in the village. The function of the inter-family chief is to report to the [next higher] chief the number of visitors in his group. He records the name and length of stay in the hamlet of any outsiders.... The primary function of the inter-family groups... is security. The heads of these groups are supposed to watch the movements not only of non-residents, but also those of the group members. Any irregularities are to be reported to the [next higher] chief, who reports to the village security officers" (p. 12).

"There is constant suspicion that one's friends, neighbors, or comrades in arms may be Vietcong. Since there are indications of justification for this fear [sic], one of the government's most important means of combatting the Vietcong, the use of informers, has been temporarily crippled.... Nine police and military organizations are located in My Thuan: (1) Rural police unit; (2) Surete (VBI) district agency; (3) One company of Civil Guard; (4) The Self-Defense Corps district unit; (5) The Cantonal Self-Defense Corps unit; (6) The Village Self-Defense Corps unit; (7) The Village Guard-Youth (18-35 years of age); (8) Village Guard-People (36-50 years of age); (9) Commando Training Camp of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1,000 trainees)" (p. 18).

"... the village chief serves as Chairman of the Farmer's Association, the Social Welfare Committee, the Village Youth Organization, the Farmer's Union, the Women's Association, the Agricultural Affairs Committee, the Community and Rural Development Committee, the Students-Parents Association, Civic Action, and the Government Employees League" (p. 23). "Political groups such as the National Revolutionary Movement, the Youth of the Republic of Vietnam, or the Government Employee League are quasi-voluntary organizations. These are officially recognized government sponsored groups. Their main goals are the generation of enthusiasm, the gaining of a large active membership, and the creation and maintenance of a dynamic leadership" (p. 28).

"... each person [in My Thuan] carries an identification card issued by the provincial and district authorities to facilitate control" (p. 80).

-- Survey in April 1960, My Thuan: The Study of a Delta Village in South Vietnam, by John Donoghue and Vo Hong Phuc, Saigon, 1961 (mimeo).

a heavy part of the responsibility "...in finding the motivation for conducting a successful counter-insurgency effort" (p. 77). He acknowledges there are difficulties involved in motivating such an effort but offers the Malayan experience and that of the Philippines as an example of past successes (*ibid.*). The problem is to find a cause which the people will fight for. When the "right cause" is found and "used correctly" the battle is won, for then ...

... the anti-Communist fight becomes a pro-people fight, with the overwhelming majority of the people then starting to help what they recognize as their own side, and the struggle is brought to a climax. When the pro-people fight is continued sincerely by its leaders, the Communist insurgency is destroyed (p. 78).

Lansdale understands that the result of U.S. assistance without U.S. political tutelage is likely to result in a dictatorship (p. 79)—an excellent point—since U.S. aid enables the rulers of the recipient nation, ensconced behind their U.S. trained army and police and propped up by U.S. largesse to their bureaucracy, to ignore domestic protest. He grants there are difficulties involved in offering political advice "... with a higher content of American political idealism in it. Some might do the task badly, lacking the required perceptivity and understanding of the political backgrounds of either the host country or our own" (p. 79). However, the experience

"Another reason that past pacification plans did not work, officials add, is that the efforts were given lip service by everyone from United States Cabinet members to junior military officers but were never given real priority."

Charles Mohr in the N.Y. Times, January 24, 1966

"The five-family system [lien gia] was established in Khanh Hau in 1956.... The stated aims of the five-family groups are to promote mutual aid among the villagers, and develop a spirit of communal solidarity.... It also serves as a means of maintaining security. Each group is given a number, and each family within the group is given a number which must be written on a small plaque on the front of the house. Each group also selects its own leader who is responsible to the hamlet chief. Periodically the leaders of the five-family groups meet with the hamlet chief to report on their groups and receive instructions or information that is to be passed on to the families. There are also periodic meetings of all the five-family leaders in the village. All male villagers over 18 years of age are required to attend monthly communist denunciation meetings at the [Council House] and their attendance is checked by the five-family group leader."

— Same survey of 1958-9, *The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community: Sociology*, by Gerald C. Hickey assisted by Mr. Bui Quang Da, Saigon, 1960, pp. 90-2.

of the Philippine effort and of both the Japanese and German post-war occupations offer evidence that this difficulty can be overcome. (*Ibid.*). What then must we do?

At this point in time and experience, perhaps the most valuable and realistic gift that Americans can give Vietnam is to concentrate above everything else on helping the Vietnamese leadership create the conditions which will encourage the discovery and most rapid possible development of a patriotic cause so genuine that the Vietnamese willingly will pledge to it 'their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor' (p. 82).

Lansdale is uncertain just what that cause should be. He describes it only abstractly:

Among the attributes of such a cause are that it shall give hope for a better future for each Vietnamese, that it shall provide a way for all Vietnamese to work for it, and that it shall have such integrity that it will induce Vietnamese leaders to start trusting one another (pp. 82-83).

Of his immediate suggestions, the most important is that we should encourage the Vietnamese to stabilize their government. Once achieved (Marshal Ky is an outcome) the U.S. could ensure its success.

... through American advisors counseling individual Vietnamese on how to make the project work most harmoniously for the good of all, while being alert to curtail intemperate moves towards a coup or studied disobedience (p. 83).

Other suggestions for immediate actions follow: we should promise eventual free elections in South Vietnam, find a role for political leaders who are not in the government, direct the AID Program more toward the villages, encourage the Vietnamese by avoiding tactless criticism, and press the Vietnamese military to make "civic action" more an integral part of its fighting effort. Whatever else, Lansdale concludes, we must always keep in mind the average Vietnamese:

He is the key piece in the whole war in Vietnam, both its subject and its object, the pawn and in an ultimate sense the decider. There is still time for Americans to help him determine rightly the fate of his country (p. 86).

THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

The National Liberation Front was founded in southern South Vietnam in December 1960. From the beginning it has been committed first to the overthrow of Diem and now of his military successors. The Front itself is the successor of a number of groups which had been fighting the Diem regime for a number of years. These included elements of the religious sects which

had been broken up but not destroyed by Diem in 1955, former Vietminh fighters driven into the *maquis* by Diem in defiance of the Geneva amnesty (see Devillers), mountain peoples (*montagnards*) resisting Saigon's attempts at resettling them, and various other groups including political refugees from the cities. These groups found support in the rural areas--driven to revolt by the policies of the Diem regime--and it has been primarily on that rural base that they have been able so successfully to challenge Saigon. The Front remains to this day the chief instrument of South Vietnamese resistance to the Saigon regime, though it is by no means the only one.

The Liberation Front attempts to present itself to the world as a vast national coalition of political parties, religious sects, mass organizations and ethnic groups opposed to Saigon. And to some extent this is true. It includes the People's Revolutionary (communist) Party (PRP) and the Democratic and Radical Socialist Parties. It has some support from the Cao Dai and Binh Xuyen, from the *montagnard* and from other groups such as the Cambodian and Chinese minorities. Noncommunists play important roles in the Front. Its President is Nguyen Huu Tho, a former Saigon attorney, and member of the Democratic Party. Four of its six Vice-Presidents are noncommunist, as were its first two Secretary Generals, Nguyen Van Hieu (now heading its Prague office) and Huynh Tan Phat. (The Secretary General's office is now unoccupied.) Hieu formerly acted as the Front's "foreign minister," but that role has recently been assumed by another noncommunist, Tran Buu Kiem. Many other noncommunists including a Catholic priest and a Cao Dai sect leader are members of its Central Committee.

Behind the noncommunists, however, is the reality of the PRP, which almost surely dominates the Front. Vo Chi Cong, listed as the representative of the PRP to the Central Committee of the Front, is one of its Vice-Presidents. Tran Nam Trung, also a communist, is a Vice-President and was formerly the representative of the all-important Liberation Army to the Presidium of the Front. Communists appear to control the Army and, according to Chaffard, staff most of the second line positions within the Front bureaucracy. Most of the Front's overseas representatives, as in Peking, Moscow, Havana and Algiers, are PRP.

In addition, a more careful examination of the groups and persons affiliated with the NLF reveals either that they are long-time auxiliaries of the communist party, such as the Democratic Party (see Viet) and the Radical Socialists or were formerly members of the southern Viet-

minh, even during its most sectarian days.

There appears to be little organized Cao Dai support and even less Hoa Hao. Of the Trotskyists, so important to the highly political southern Vietnamese scene prior to World War II, there is no information.

There is little hard information on the relationship between the Liberation Front and the Hanoi government. Obviously there is a close relationship between the PRP and the Hanoi Party, though clearly it is not hierarchical. Chaffard comes closest when he describes it as a federation with headquarters in Hanoi and branches, among other places, in North and South Vietnam. To this description it should be added that there is considerable local option and some highly visible quarreling (see *Courier*).

II.

THE PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

The NLF Program (published below, pp. 11-14) has often been described as a hodgepodge of promises to everyone, bearing little relationship to the reality of South Vietnamese life, but I think such a description falls very wide of the mark. Certainly the Program has propaganda functions and should be read in that light. In addition, it is only an outline and not a detailed blueprint for the future. But, with these limitations in mind, it must also be said that the NLF Program is a document which:

- does represent real grievances and proposes realistic solutions to them,
- does anticipate genuine problems in South Vietnam's future without glossing over them,
- does take a national rather than a sectarian view of things, and
- does have roots in the continuing political history of southern Vietnam.

Several examples serve to support the claim. The most important of these has to do with the land problem in South Vietnam. Though South Vietnam, in contrast to the North, is very sparsely settled, much of the land is concentrated in large holdings with the result that well over half the agricultural population hovers around and below the subsistence mark (see Hickey). In light of this situation, lands owned by the villages themselves--called *cong dien*--have played an important part in southern life. With considerable regional variation, about 12 percent of South Vietnam's rice land is held in this way (my computation, from Hickey). Traditionally under the control of the village councils, the *cong dien* served two functions. A small part of it was rented out to support the village tem-

ples, but mostly the land was rented at very low rates to the village poor. It is difficult to estimate how many persons found in this land the difference between subsistence and outright starvation, but I would offer 15-20 percent of the rural population of all of South Vietnam as a conservative estimate. These communal lands were controlled by the village councils, and the fact that the councils were elected by the villagers tended to institutionalize a measure of protection for the landless poor. In 1956 Diem replaced the elected village officials with Saigon appointees and, under American pressure to improve local finances (see Woodruff), ordered the new councils to rent out the land at the highest rates possible (*N. Y. Times*, 9/5/65), thus in a stroke creating chaos and untold misery in the life pattern of the poorest 2 million of South Vietnamese people.

The appearance of the Front's point IV(3)--the call for redistribution of communal lands--has further significance, however. There it appears only as part of a more comprehensive agricultural program which in itself tells us still more about the Front. Contrary to popular American notions, Vietnam's rural areas are inhabited not just by "peasants" but by a highly complex rural society, with wide and important differences in education, social role, and cultural level. The NLF Program does not attempt to appeal only to part of this society--the landless laborer or those with plots too small to support their families. The appeal of the Program is reformist and not revolutionary. It foresees that South Vietnam's agricultural situation requires a consideration of many problems, of the too poor and the too rich, of accession rights, of the problem of land deserted by its owners, of the problem of those who have been forced off the land into "strategic hamlets." What the NLF will do in the future is, of course, another question. The Program may be just propaganda--but it is at least propaganda which reveals a close and sympathetic knowledge of the agricultural situation and of the interests of the various strata of rural society. Certainly, for example, a closer and more sympathetic knowledge of the situation than that shown by Diem and his American advisors 10 years ago.

Something analogous to this can be shown in the section dealing with the problems of the middle classes, for example III(2). Since Vietnam ceased to be a French colony and became instead an American "responsibility," there have been serious and continuing inflationary pressures stemming from the fact that Saigon has been supporting a military establishment far

too large for South Vietnam's economy. The standard U.S. foreign aid device used to combat this problem of too much money chasing too few goods is the Import Subsidy Program. That is, Vietnamese nationals are encouraged to purchase imported goods by means of artificially low prices. The difference between the low sale price and the higher cost price of the imports is made up by direct U.S. subsidy. A great deal of the heralded South Vietnamese economic miracle of a few years ago is easily traceable to this artificial device.

The subsidy does stem inflation but has still another effect as well. Money sent out of Vietnam for imported goods is money which does not flow into the hands of Vietnam's middle classes--its traders and small manufacturers. Worse, the government bureaucracy, which is the chief beneficiary of the subsidy, begins to Westernize its tastes, aggravating still further the plight of those who provide Vietnamese-style goods. Thus cheap imports, whatever the purpose, do what cheap imports always do to underdeveloped countries--they destroy the "national bourgeoisie," they inhibit the growth of domestic manufactures, and as a result turn the importing country into permanent dependence on the exporting power.

There is still one further effect. Almost all the benefit of the Import Program goes to urban-dwelling persons. But then with the destruction of local manufacturing enterprise, the urban areas cease to provide these services to the countryside. Henceforth city and country are no longer related by reciprocal advantage, by the mutual provision of goods and services to one another. The city takes--taxes, draftees, rice, etc.--but it provides nothing in return. It is precisely this situation to which the Front Program turns its attention. Here again it reveals a knowledge of the real conditions of the Vietnamese people and makes a hesitant beginning of constructive response. And here again, too, it provides for that large part of Vietnamese society left out of the Saigon-American scheme of things.

Section VII of the NLF Program deals with the problem posed by the *montagnards* and makes several proposals for dealing with it. The Vietnamese inhabit primarily the low-lying wet-rice lands near the coast. Inland and upland are mountain peoples, ethnically distant from the Vietnamese proper and living at a very different cultural level, proud, self-subsistent and stubbornly attached to ancient modes of work. There is a tradition of bad feeling between the two groups. The French deliberately aggravated this feeling to consolidate their own con-

trol of Vietnam, and Diem's brutal efforts at assimilating the *montagnard* exacerbated the situation. The relationship between the two groups is so bad that there have been armed clashes, the most recent precipitated this summer by American officials who seemed to encourage separatist inclinations among certain of the *montagnard* tribes (*N.Y. Times*, 9/15/65). In spite of the difficult history of this problem, there are compelling reasons why the Vietnamese must respond to it in a constructive manner. Whoever controls the Highlands has strategic control of Vietnam (hence the presence of American units in the Highlands now). No Vietnamese with a national viewpoint can overlook this. The Highlands offer rich mineral and agricultural opportunities for the future of Vietnam. The Front proposal for an autonomous zone for the *montagnards* recognizes the historical dimensions of the problem. It attempts to provide sufficient advantage to both peoples to prevent the loss of this important zone—an objective, for example, which neither Diem's reliance on forceful assimilation nor American-inspired separatism is likely to achieve.

At the core of the Front's Program is the call for the election of a National Assembly through universal suffrage. This demand has long been an important issue in South Vietnam. It was, for example, the common property of all parties during the grim depression days of the early thirties. A freely elected National Assembly was promised by Leon Blum's Popular Front French government of 1936, but nothing came of it. After World War II the French were able partially to restore their power in southern Vietnam on the promise, made in the Accords of March 1946 between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Hanoi), that the southern Vietnamese would be allowed to decide their own future through free elections. Again nothing came of this promise, as nothing came from the series of similar promises made by the Bao Dai government after the French reneged on the March Accords and restored the former emperor to power in the South. The Geneva Agreements also promised self-determination for the southerners—but again to no avail, as Diem's police state refused to allow parties other than the Diemist National Revolutionary Movement to compete in the elections. The Front recognizes that promises of free elections, such as that contained in point 9 of the U.S. "14 Points," are meaningless in themselves. The population of South Vietnam has been promised elections for the last 35 years, but four times those who have made the promises have been able to bypass them, precisely be-

cause there was no organized South Vietnamese group prepared to insist that the promise be kept and to exert realistic sanctions to back up that insistence. Thus, when the Front states that it must have "a decisive voice" in any preparation leading to elections in the South, it is responding to exactly that need. Again its Program exhibits a realism and a familiarity with a concrete issue long important to politically informed South Vietnamese.

Section IX of the Front Program, which treats of the modalities for eventual Vietnamese reunification is also worthy of note. As General Lansdale has noted, independence is and has been the great issue in Vietnamese politics, and since 1954 Vietnamese concerned with independence have been primarily concerned with reunification. This is natural. A divided Vietnam is politically weak and economically dependent on others. United, this nation of 32 million would face the future well endowed with the natural resources to make that future a fruitful one. As the Vietnamese are an ancient people with still lively national traditions, the current division is galling to national pride. In the Program, as elsewhere (see Chaffard), the Front's leaders have shown a sensitivity to the difficulties implicit in restoring national unity. There are now three governments in Vietnam—Saigon's, Hanoi's and the Front's, with three armies and three bureaucracies, three sets of laws and three tax systems. There are also three differing social systems. While recognizing the urgency of the problem, the Program's espousal of "reunification by stages" is realistic and practical. This proposal, like most of the Program, does not gloss over difficulties; it takes a national and not a sectional or sectarian viewpoint and it reflects the long-expressed wishes of the South Vietnamese people.

LANDSALE VERSUS THE FRONT

In contrast to the suggestions put forward by General Lansdale, the Front Program shows to even more advantage. South Vietnam's political history did not begin in 1954 nor does it begin now in 1966. Frequently issues which concern Vietnamese are issues which have been of concern to them since late colonial times. They have been shaped in the historical political struggles since Wilson's 14 Points—not Johnson's—seemed to promise independence for colonial peoples. I have argued that the Front's Program reflects this historical continuity of Vietnamese politics. By contrast, General Lansdale understands that his program "...involves exporting American political principles" (p. 79). He is willing to espouse a proposal which in-

Continued on Page 29

THE PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

DECEMBER 1960

Since the French colonialists invaded our country, our Vietnamese people have unremittingly struggled for national independence and freedom. In 1945, our compatriots throughout the country rose up, overthrew the Japanese and French domination and seized power, and afterwards heroically carried out a resistance war for nine years, defeated the French aggressors and U.S. interventionists, and brought our people's valiant resistance war to glorious victory.

At the Geneva Conference in July 1954, the French imperialists had to undertake to withdraw their troops from Viet Nam. The participating countries to the Conference solemnly declared their recognition of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Viet Nam.

Since then we should have been able to enjoy peace, and join the people throughout the country in building a Viet Nam independent, democratic, unified, prosperous and strong.

However, the American imperialists, who had in the past helped the French colonialists to massacre our people, have now plotted to partition our country for a long time, to enslave the southern part through a disguised colonial regime and turn it into a military base in preparation for aggressive war in South-east Asia. They have brought the Ngo Dinh Diem clique—their stooges—to power under the signboard of a faked independent state, and use their "aid" policy and advisers' machine to hold in their hands all the military, economic, political and cultural branches in south Viet Nam.

The aggressors and traitors have set up the most dictatorial and cruel rule in Viet Nam's history. They repress and persecute all democratic and patriotic movements, abolish all human liberties. They monopolize all branches of economy, strangle industry, agriculture and trade, ruthlessly exploit all strata of people. They use every device of mind poisoning, obscurantism and depravation in an attempt to quell the patriotism of our people. They feverishly increase their military forces, build military bases, use the army as a tool for repression of the people and war preparation in accordance with the U.S. imperialists' policy.

For more than six years, countless crimes have

been perpetrated by the U.S. Diem dictatorial and cruel rule terrorizing gun shots have never ceased to resound throughout south Viet Nam; tens of thousands of patriots have been shot down, beheaded, disembowelled with liver plucked out; hundreds of thousands of people tortured, thrown into jail where they slowly perished; countless people have been victims of arson, forcible house removal and usurpation of land, and drafted for forced labour or pressganged; countless families are distressed and disunited as a result of the policy of concentrating people in "prosperity zones" and "resettlement centres," of exacting rents and taxes, terror, arrest, plunder, ransom, widespread unemployment and poverty, which are seriously threatening the life of all strata of people.

There must be *Peace!* must be *Independence!* There must be *Democracy!* There must be *Enough Food and Clothing!* There must be *Peaceful Reunification of The Fatherland!*

That is our most earnest and pressing aspiration. It has become an iron will, and a prodigious strength promoting our people to unite and resolutely rise up to overthrow the cruel rule of the U.S. imperialists and their stooges for national salvation.

In view of the supreme interests of the Fatherland, with the firmness to struggle to the end for the people's legitimate aspirations and in accordance with the progressive trend in the world, the *South Viet Nam National Front For Liberation* comes into being.

The *South Viet Nam National Front For Liberation* undertakes to unite people of all walks of life, all social classes, nationalities, political parties, organizations, religious communities, and patriotic personalities in south Viet Nam, without distinction of their political tendencies, in order to struggle to overthrow the rule of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen in south Viet Nam and realize *Independence, Democracy, Life Improvement, Peace and Neutrality* in south Viet Nam, and advance toward *Peaceful Reunification of The Fatherland*.

The program of *The South Viet Nam National Front For Liberation* includes the following ten points.

- I. *To overthrow the disguised colonial regime of the U.S. imperialists and the dictatorial Ngo Dinh Diem administration—lackey of the U.S.—and to form a national democratic coalition administration.*

The present regime in south Viet Nam is a

disguised colonial regime of the U.S. imperialists. The south Viet Nam administration is a lackey which has been carrying out the U.S. imperialists' political line. This regime and administration must be overthrown, and a broad national democratic coalition administration formed including representatives of all strata of people, nationalities, political parties,

religious communities, and patriotic personalities. We must wrest back the peoples' economic, political, social and cultural interests, realize independence and democracy, improve the people's living conditions, carry out a policy of peace and neutrality and advance toward peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.

II. To bring into being a broad and progressive democracy.

1. To abolish the current constitution of the Ngo Dinh Diem dictatorial administration—lackey of the U.S. To elect a new National Assembly through universal suffrage.

2. To promulgate all democratic freedoms: freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, of movement. To guarantee freedom of belief; no discrimination towards any religion on the part of the State. To grant freedom of action to the patriotic political parties and mass organizations, irrespective of political tendencies.

3. To grant general amnesty to all political detainees, dissolve all concentration camps under any form whatsoever. To abolish the fascist law 10-59 and other anti-democratic laws. To permit the return of all those who had to flee abroad due to the U.S.-Diem regime.



4. To strictly ban all illegal arrests and imprisonments, tortures and corporal punishment. To punish unrepenting cruel murderers of the people.

III. To build an independent and sovereign economy, improve the people's living conditions.

1. To abolish the economic monopoly of the U.S. and its henchmen. To build an independent and sovereign economy and finance, beneficial to the nation and people. To confiscate and nationalize the property of the U.S. imperialists and the ruling clique, their stooges.

2. To help industrialists and tradespeople rehabilitate and develop industry, both large and small, and to encourage industrial development. To actively protect home made products by abolishing production taxes, restricting or ending the import of those goods which can be produced in the country and reducing taxes of import on raw materials and machinery.

3. To rehabilitate agriculture, and to modernize farming, fishing and animal husbandry. To help peasants reclaim waste land and develop production; to protect crops and ensure the consumption of agricultural products.

4. To encourage and accelerate the economic interflow between the town and the countryside, between plains and mountainous areas. To develop trade with foreign countries without distinction of political regimes, and on the principle of equality and mutual benefit.

5. To apply an equitable and rational tax system. To abolish arbitrary fines.

6. To promulgate labour regulations, that is: to prohibit dismissals, wage cuts, fines and ill-treatment of workers and office employees, to improve the life of workers and public employees, and to fix wages and guarantees for the health of teen-age apprentices.

7. To organize social relief:

- Jobs for unemployed.
- Protection of orphans, elders and disabled.
- Assistance to those who have become disabled or without support due to the struggle against U.S. imperialism and its stooges.
- Relief to localities suffering crop failures, fire and natural calamities.

8. To help displaced persons return to their native places if they so desire, and to provide jobs for those who decide to remain in the South.

9. To strictly prohibit forcible house removals, arson, usurpation of land, and the herding of the people into concentration centres. To ensure the country-folk and urban working people of the opportunity to earn their living in security.

IV. *To carry out land rent reduction and advance toward the settlement of the agrarian problem so as to ensure land to the tillers.*

1. To carry out land rent reduction. To guarantee the peasants' right to till their present plots of land and ensure the right of ownership for those who have reclaimed waste land. To protect the legitimate right of ownership by peasants of the plots of land distributed to them.

2. To abolish the "prosperity zones" and the regime of herding the people into "resettlement centres." To permit those forcibly herded into "prosperity zones" or "resettlement centres" to return home freely and earn their living on their own plots of land.

3. To confiscate the land usurped by the U.S. imperialists and their agents, and distribute it to landless and land-poor peasants. To re-distribute communal land in an equitable and rational way.

4. Through negotiations, the State will purchase from landowners at equitable and rational prices all land held by them in excess of a given area, fixed in accordance with the concrete situation in each locality, and distribute it to landless and land-poor peasants. This land will be distributed free of charge and with no conditions attached.

V. *To build a national and democratic education and culture.*

1. To eliminate the enslaving and gangster style American culture and education; to build a national, progressive culture and education serving the Fatherland and the people.

2. To wipe out illiteracy. To build sufficient general education schools for the youth and children. To expand universities, vocational and professional schools. To use the Vietnamese language in teaching. To reduce school fees; to exempt fees of poor pupils and students, to reform the examination system.

3. To develop science and technology and national literature and art; to encourage and help intellectuals, cultural and art workers to develop their abilities in service of national construction.

4. To develop medical service in order to look after the people's health. To expand the gymnastic and sports movement.

THE FOURTEEN POINTS (USA)

The following are the 14 points of the United States negotiating position on South Vietnam, as outlined in press briefings:

- (1) The United States accepts the 1954 and 1962 Geneva accords as a good enough basis for negotiation.
- (2) It would welcome a conference on South-east Asia or any part of Asia.
- (3) It is ready for unconditional negotiations.
- (4) It is also ready, if Hanoi so prefers, for informal unconditional discussions.
- (5) A cease-fire could be the first order of business at a peace conference, or be preliminary to such a conference.
- (6) It is willing to discuss the North Vietnam four-point program.
- (7) It wants no military bases in Southeast Asia.
- (8) It does not want a continuing American military presence in South Vietnam.
- (9) Free elections will be supported.
- (10) The reunification of the two Vietnams can be decided by the free decision of their peoples.
- (11) Southeast Asian countries can be non-aligned or neutral; the United States wants no new allies.
- (12) It is prepared to contribute \$1 billion to a regional development program in which North Vietnam could take part.
- (13) The Vietcong would have no difficulty in having their views represented at a conference after hostilities have ceased.
- (14) The bombing will be stopped if it is stated what would happen next.

-- N.Y. Times, January 2, 1966.

VI. *To build an army to defend the Fatherland and the people.*

1. To build a national army to defend the Fatherland and the people. To cancel the system of U.S. military advisers.

2. To abolish the pressganging regime. To improve the material life of the army men and ensure their political rights. To prohibit the ill-treatment of soldiers. To apply a policy of assistance to families of poor army men.

3. To award and give worthy jobs to those officers and soldiers who have rendered meritorious services in the struggle against the domination of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. To observe leniency toward those who had before collaborated with the U.S.-Dien clique and committed crimes against the people, but have now repented and serve the people.

4. To abolish all the military bases of foreign countries in south Viet Nam.

VII. *To guarantee the right of equality between nationalities, and between men and women; to protect the legitimate rights of foreign residents in Viet Nam and Vietnamese living abroad.*

1. To ensure the right to autonomy of the national minorities.

To set up, within the framework of the great family of the Vietnamese people, autonomous regions in areas inhabited by minority peoples.

To ensure equal rights among different nationalities. All nationalities have the right to use and develop their own spoken and written language and to preserve or change their customs and habits. To abolish the U.S.-Dien clique's present policy of ill-treatment and forced assimilation of the minority nationalities.

To help the minority peoples to catch up with the common level of the people by developing the economy and culture in the areas inhabited by them, by training skill personnel from people of minority origin.

2. To ensure the right of equality between men and women. Women to enjoy the same rights as men in all fields: political, economic, cultural and social.

3. To protect the legitimate rights of foreigners residing in Viet Nam.

4. To defend and take care of the interests of Vietnamese living abroad.

VIII. *To carry out a foreign policy of peace and neutrality.*

1. To cancel all unequal treaties signed with foreign countries by the U.S. henchmen which violate national sovereignty.

2. To establish diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of political regime, in accordance with the principles of peaceful co-existence as put forth at the Bandung Conference.

3. To unite closely with the peace-loving and neutral countries. To expand friendly relations with Asian and African countries; first of all, with neighbouring Cambodia and Laos.

4. To refrain from joining any bloc or military alliance or forming a military alliance with any country.

5. To receive economic aid from any country ready to assist Viet Nam without conditions attached.

IX. *To establish normal relations between the two zones and advance toward peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.*

The urgent demand of our people throughout the country is to reunify the Fatherland by peaceful means. The South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation undertakes the gradual reunification of the country by peaceful means, on the principle of negotiations and discussions between the two zones on all forms and measures beneficial to the Vietnamese people and Fatherland.

Pending national reunification, the Governments of the two zones will negotiate and undertake not to spread propaganda to divide the peoples or in favour of war, not to use military forces against each other. To carry out economic and cultural exchanges between the two zones. To ensure for the people of both zones freedom of movement and trade, and the right of mutual visits and correspondence.

X. *To oppose aggressive war, actively defend world peace.*

1. To oppose aggressive war and all forms of enslavement by the imperialists. To support the national liberation struggles of peoples in various countries.

2. To oppose war propaganda. To demand general disarmament, prohibition of nuclear weapons and demand the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

3. To support the movements for peace, democracy and social progress in the world. To actively contribute to the safeguarding of peace in Southeast Asia and the world.

THE FOURTEEN POINTS (NLF)

1. As a state having sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, South Vietnam will not join any military bloc or treaty, or any bloc or treaty of a military character and will not accept protection by any military bloc or treaty. It will not enter into military alliance or alliance of a military character with any country, and will not sign with any country treaties contrary and harmful to the neutrality of South Vietnam.

2. All foreign troops and military personnel must withdraw from South Vietnam.

South Vietnam does not accept the presence on its territory of foreign armed forces and military bases.

3. South Vietnam will carry out an internal and external policy of complete independence and sovereignty, not depending upon any bloc or state. All blocs and states must neither intervene in the internal affair nor bring pressure to bear upon South Vietnam under whatever forms and in whatever fields, political or military, economic or cultural, diplomatic or internal.

4. South Vietnam will carry out the five principles of peaceful coexistence in its relations with all countries, regardless of their ideological system and political regime. It will establish friendly and diplomatic relations with all countries on condition that they respect its sovereignty and treat it on an equal footing. South Vietnam will not allow any country to use its territory to threaten other countries' security.

With regard to the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos in particular, South Vietnam will maintain friendly relations with them and fully respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of these two neighbours.

5. South Vietnam will build an army with the sole aim of safeguarding the Fatherland's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and security. With adequate effectives and equipment, the army of neutral South Vietnam will be a defensive and peaceful army.

6. South Vietnam will fully realise democratic liberties for the people. Freedom of thought, worship, opinion and organisation will be guaranteed to all citizens, political parties, mass organisations, religious bodies, and nationalities.

7. South Vietnam will accept aid from all countries directly and without any political conditions attached, and provided such aid aims to help develop the economy, culture and welfare of the South Vietnamese people.

8. South Vietnam will carry out a policy of democratic and independent economy, free itself from foreign manipulation and prohibit all forms of monopoly by foreign capitalists.

9. Foreign nationals of any citizenship will be allowed to reside and earn their living in South Vietnam, and will be protected by South Vietnam laws on condition that they do not harm the interests of the South Vietnamese people.

Foreign capitalists of any citizenship will be allowed to do business in South Vietnam, and their interests will be guaranteed, provided they respect South Vietnam laws.

10. South Vietnam will carry out cultural exchanges and broaden cultural cooperation with all countries.

11. The Vietnamese nation is one. But, because Vietnam has been divided into two zones with differing political regimes, due concern must be shown to the question of Vietnam's reunification and adequate consideration given to the characteristics of this situation and of the two zones. This question will be decided upon by the people of the two zones on the principle of equality, non-annexation of one zone by the other, negotiations between the authorities of the two zones and step by step reunification. Priority consideration will be given to the restoration of normal relations between two zones, with view to the readjustment and development of the economy and because of the sacred sentimental urge of the people in both zones.

The future political regime of unified Vietnam will be decided by the people of both zones.

12. South Vietnam is ready to form with the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos a peace [sic] and neutral area in South-East Asia, in which each member enjoys full sovereignty.

13. South Vietnam will actively unite with all States and organisations working for peace and friendship among the nations. It will contribute the realization of general disarmament throughout the world, liquidation of nuclear weapons, cessation of A-bomb tests and dissolution of hostile military blocs.

14. The independence and neutrality of South Vietnam must be respected and guaranteed by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and by all countries and parties concerned.

THE PROFESSOR, THE POLICEMAN AND THE PEASANT

PART ONE

America brings Democracy to the "backward nations" in increasingly ingenious ways. In Part I of his analysis of the role of the Michigan State University Group in South Vietnam, Martin Nicolaus documents the 1955-1962 efforts at "pacification" -- through "research," "technical assistance" and "guidance." In question, the MSUG Division of Police.

Out of MSU, too, came a little-known but ever more influential public servant: the professor as international social worker. Part II (*March Viet-Report*) will explore this world of the MSUG Division of Public Administration.

by Martin Nicolaus

On a day in April 1960 in a small town in South Vietnam, the following event took place: an American professor interviewed the chief of the local secret police in the latter's headquarters, while (according to the professor's report) "curled up on a mat in the corner was a twenty-year-old peasant in tattered clothes. His feet were in manacles, the left side of his face was swollen and his eye and cheek were badly bruised." The youth was "suspected of Vietcong membership."¹ He had been interrogated by the secret police chief. The professor, who was doing basic research under contract to the U.S. government and to the Saigon government, noted these facts but asked no further questions about the peasant. Neither the police chief nor the professor indicated that the peasant's presence disturbed them or struck them as strange.

Yet it does seem strange for an American professor to have an amiable interview with a secret police chief in the latter's interrogation center, and even more strange that the interview took place while a young man who had been convicted of no crime lay bruised and manacled in the corner. A closer examination of the event yields even more alien facts: the interrogation room had been paid for, and the police chief's equipment, including the manacles that held the peasant, had been supplied by an American

university, -- the same university that paid the professor's salary. The professor, the policeman and the peasant were here assembled in exactly their intended roles, playing the parts the university had designed for them: the professor researching, the policeman interrogating, the peasant silent, bruised. This indeed seems like an extraordinary episode in the annals of American academia. And the fact that the professor did not think the event was worth special comment -- that seems inexplicable, inexcusable, scandalous.

Nevertheless, it happened, and it happened regularly. Not that the professors regularly encountered manacled peasants in their interviews; that was not a typical event. Still, this encounter in April 1960 is like a microcosm of the larger drama that had been unfolding since 1950 and ended only in 1962. The peasant lying manacled in a corner of the room symbolizes, perhaps in an exaggerated way, perhaps not, the predicament of a great many South Vietnamese peasants: they were all being bound, beaten or manacled in one way or another, although not all of them took it as silently as this one, as the professors well knew. The secret police chief was also playing a typical role -- getting information out of peasants was his job. The professor, too, was doing his job: asking

some questions, not asking other questions, writing down the responses, and not expressing opinions outside his field of professional competence. And the manacles, together with related equipment, were supplied to the police by the university on a regular schedule; there was nothing extraordinary about it. This one event expresses Michigan State University's Vietnam Project in a nutshell.

Nor, for that matter, is the episode an isolated instance in American intellectual history. Certainly the majority of university projects overseas do not involve such collaboration with the secret police--American or foreign--and they do follow a stricter definition of what is "technical" assistance. But the needs which the Michigan State project was designed to serve exist now, or are growing into existence, in many parts of the world. The conditions that made it possible to use American professors as they were used in Vietnam persist. The Michigan State University Group (MSUG) was not an unrepeatable event. More and more it appears as the prototype, the pilot model of a growing family of overseas "research projects" of which the controversial Project Camelot in Latin America was the latest member, but not the last. The MSU project reflects not only a few individual professors, not just one particular university, not merely an especially dark period of American history--although these things were at work too; its roots go back further and deeper into the "normal," the established and enduring life of American professors, universities, and American foreign policy in general.

A STRANGE BEGINNING

Credit for being the first to piece together and publish the outlines of the MSUG story belongs to *Ramparts* magazine's staff writer and sometime foreign correspondent Robert Scheer. Since the publication of Scheer's booklet, *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam*,² in which Scheer made several allegations that disturbed Michigan State University, new evidence has come to light³ which makes it possible for the first time to substantiate some of these charges with a solid network of proof. This is how the Vietnam project began:

In Tokyo in July 1950, Ngo Dinh Diem, then one of many exiled Vietnamese politicians, met Wesley Fishel,¹ who had just accepted a position as assistant professor of political science at Michigan State University (then called Michigan State College).⁴ The circumstances surrounding the meeting are obscure, but it was hardly accidental. Diem had been a frequent guest at American consulates-general in Asia

since 1946, and it was rumored that certain elements of the American government--the CIA most frequently mentioned in this regard--were in fact grooming him for the job of eventually replacing Bao Dai, the playboy emperor of Vietnam.⁵ Nor is it likely that Wesley Fishel was simply another young Ph.D. off on a lark in Japan, and just happened to run into Diem in a tearoom. In any case, this meeting proved to be an extraordinarily fortunate coincidence for both men. The two exchanged letters when Fishel returned to the United States, and a bare seven months later their friendship had blossomed to the point where Fishel had Diem made a "consultant" to Michigan State's "Governmental Research Bureau."⁶ How a mere assistant professor in his first year at MSU was able to pull such strings for his friend is one of the several little mysteries that surround the MSU project and the person of Wesley Fishel. Only one and a half years after their initial meeting in Tokyo, Diem and Fishel--both without any overt official standing--were engaging in international diplomacy on behalf of the U.S. government. In 1952, Diem "asked the French to permit Michigan State College to furnish technical aid to the Vietnamese government, the costs of which would be borne by the United States government, but the French refused."⁷ After that, Diem moved his base of operations from MSU's East Lansing campus eastward into Cardinal Spellman's territory, and began the series of publicity triumphs (recounted in Scheer's booklet) which catapulted him into power in Saigon in mid-1954. Less than two months later, his friend Wesley Fishel hurried to Saigon as Diem's special advisor and as a member of U.S. Special Ambassador Lawton Collin's personal staff.⁸ "Not surprisingly," in the words of Professors Scigliano and Fox, both of whom were high-ranking members of the MSU project, Fishel's discussions with Diem led to a request that Michigan State "undertake to help Vietnam in its current difficulties."⁹ A team of four officials from the East Lansing campus, headed by Arthur Brandstatter, chief of MSU's School of Police Administration, made a whirlwind, two-week tour of Vietnam and returned in early October 1954 with a recommendation that MSU undertake a huge project of technical assistance to the Diem government.¹⁰ During subsequent negotiations between Diem, Fishel, MSU, and the U.S. Foreign Operations Administration (now called, less candidly, Agency for International Development), the size of the project was somewhat reduced, but its scope remained broad. Its purpose was to give the Diem government assistance in strengthening nearly

all aspects of its functioning, with particular emphasis on the economy, the civil service, and the police.¹¹

However, in early 1955, the Diem government was so near collapse that the MSU project almost died stillborn. The majority of Diem's cabinet deserted him, the army was in near revolt, and the city was under virtual siege by one of the armed sects, the Binh Xuyen. Even Special Ambassador Collins sent a pessimistic report to Eisenhower, suggesting that a new man be found to replace Diem. However, firm support for Diem came from the CIA's ubiquitous Colonel Lansdale, and (via CIA chief Allen Dulles to his brother, John Foster, to Eisenhower) Collins was overruled, and Diem's future was assured.¹² The persons in Saigon who did the most to keep Diem in power during this crisis, according to the French journalist Georges Chaffard, were certain American military counsellors and unnamed "activists" from Michigan State University.¹³ Their efforts were successful; Diem rode out the crisis, and in the spring of 1955 the U.S. National Security Council formally endorsed Diem. According to Scheer, who says he got it from Fishel, at this time "no less a personage than Vice-President Nixon called John Hannah, the president of Michigan State, to elicit his support."¹⁴ Hannah, an important figure in the GOP and a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, was told (according to Scheer quoting Fishel) that it was "in the national interest for his university to become involved."¹⁵ According to Hannah, however, there was no request from Nixon. Hannah claims that the request came from "authority even higher than Nixon's."¹⁶ However that may be, Michigan State's interests, Diem's interests, and the national interest were already thoroughly intertwined before this phone call to Hannah took place.

According to Scheer, the MSU project filled a special need of American foreign policy at this time. "The Geneva Accords had prohibited increases in the strength of either side through the introduction of 'all types of arms' or build-ups in troop strength. The presence of the International Control Commission... offered the prospect of unfavorable publicity to the United States if its Military Assistance and Advisory Group, United States Operations Mission, or CIA agents operated openly. The Michigan group would serve as 'cover'."¹⁷ It is true that the Geneva accords (Article 17a) forbade arms increases, and it is a fact that the International Control Commission could have created heavily damaging publicity. But whether or not the Michigan group served as "cover"

is a question that should be suspended for the moment, waiting until more of the evidence is in.

In May 1955, the Michigan State University Group was officially born with the signing of two contracts, one between MSU and the Diem government, the other between MSU and the U.S. government. The contracts were for two years, and were renewed with modifications in 1957 and 1959.⁸ The first MSUG advisors under the contract arrived at the end of May, 1955.¹⁹ For a project of its size, it was prepared in a remarkably short time. Actually "the team of MSU professors," as one is tempted to call the group, were neither predominantly from MSU nor were most of them professors. It was an academic program neither in numbers nor in purpose, only in publicity. From 1955 to 1962, the term of the project, MSUG had 104 American staff members altogether, who served various lengths of time. Of these 104, 32 were clerical or administrative personnel. Only 72 were full-fledged MSUG advisors. Of these 72 advisors, 33 were in the police division, 34 in the Public Administration Division, and 5 were short-term consultants. Of the 33 police advisors, only 4 came from the MSU campus, the remainder being recruited from law enforcement and other agencies. Of the 34 non-police advisors, only 11 were from the MSU campus. Only 25 of all 72 advisors were actually professors, and almost all of these were in the non-police division. The only reason to call the group the "MSU professors" is that all five of the Chief Advisors were political science professors at Michigan State, and Michigan State faculty held all other controlling positions in the project. But professors from Yale, Pittsburgh, UCLA,²⁰ and other universities also took part. While Michigan State lent its name and its respectability to the project and acted as coordinating agency, the real direction of the program came from the U.S. government and from the Saigon government. In doing its utmost to cooperate with these powers, MSU did no more than many other American universities would have done, and are doing.

Compared to the cost of a jet fighter-bomber, MSUG was a trivial operation, but compared to the cost of most "research" projects even in the physical sciences, MSUG was a behemoth. The cost of salaries, transportation, and overhead for the American staff alone was \$5.3 million, and the equivalent of an additional \$5.1 million in Vietnamese piastres was spent on the staff of about 200 Vietnamese scholars, translators, typists, chauffeurs, and security

guards. To this tidy subtotal of \$10.4 million must be added another \$15 million more, according to the estimate of Scigliano and Fox. This amount approximately represents equipment and material aid funds controlled and disbursed by MSUG.²¹ Nearly all of this amount was spent by the Police Division, but there is no way of knowing by how much the estimate is too low, since certain activities of the Police Division were never formally reported to MSUG's Chief Advisors.²² But if the estimate is anywhere near accuracy, it means that MSUG spent the neat sum of about \$25 million, or about two dollars for every man, woman and child in the country. The entire cost, of course, was borne by the U.S. government.

Wesley Fishel became MSUG Chief Advisor in early 1956. Scheer quotes Fishel as having said "...I surfaced—to use a CIA term—to become head of the MSUG program,"²³ but Fishel denies that he ever used such language.²⁴ In any case, it was not a bad job for a man who had begun academic life as an assistant professor only six years before.

All these factors are worth keeping in mind when asking the question whether MSUG acted as "cover" for the CIA.

AN URGENT REQUEST

The first MSUG advisors to arrive in Saigon were police experts, and the first task undertaken by MSUG was a police project, so it seems fair to begin to describe the behemoth here. MSUG was divided into two Divisions: Police and Public Administration, with the Chief Advisor responsible for both. As the project became organized the two Divisions worked quite separately from one another and the Chief Advisor acted as the only channel of information between them, at least formally; but in the first few months the two groups worked together. Throughout 1955 much of Saigon was in ruins from the pitched street battles; frequent plastic bomb explosions rocked the residential districts, and some MSUG members happened to be living in a hotel that was raided during a riot, and suffered considerable property damage.²⁵ In the midst of this atmosphere of crisis and chaos came an "urgent request" from the American Embassy in Saigon that MSUG devote all its energies to strengthening the police and security organizations, particularly the *Surete* and the Civil Guard, and to reorganizing the refugee commissariat.²⁶ Since the first advisors on the scene happened to be a secret police specialist and a civil guard specialist, MSUG readily acceded to the re-

quest. The first real professors who arrived were assigned to the refugees.

The Vietnamese secret police was nothing more nor less than a branch of the French *Surete*, a name that means to Vietnamese approximately what Okhrana meant to the Bolsheviks and Gestapo meant to German Jews. When the French abandoned Vietnam in 1954-1955, the Saigon government inherited the organization lock, stock and barrel, and set about patching its war wounds. The first step was to abolish the dreaded name *Surete* and replace it with something more suited to a brave new nation. The MSUG advisors had the answer: the secret police was henceforth called the Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation, or VBI.²⁷ They then devoted a great part of their energies to increasing the organization's efficiency. Its scattered facilities and records were consolidated and expanded in a former French army camp which was renovated for the purpose. Here, under MSUG guidance and with MSUG-supplied funds, the VBI built an interrogation center, detention center, laboratory, records and identification center, and communications headquarters.²⁸ They undertook to modernize the *Surete's* fingerprint files by reclassifying them from the French to the American system. After a year of work, they had reclassified 600,000 files in the "criminal and subversive" section, and expected the job to take another two years, which gives an idea of how many people the *Surete* had its eyes on—perhaps from ten to twenty per cent of the population; not bad for an antiquated outfit, but not good enough by American standards.²⁹

In order to improve on this percentage, the University Group in 1959 took charge of the national identity card program, designed to



I'm not very keen for doves or hawks. I think we need more owls. — Senator George Aiken (Rep., Vt.) 1/29/66.

furnish every South Vietnamese over 21, for a small fee, with an obligatory, nearly indestructible plastic-laminated ID card bearing his photograph and thumbprint. MSUG imported specially-designed laminating machines and portable photography studios, and it trained, equipped, and advised the heavily-armed identification teams which sought, unsuccessfully, to dog-tag every peasant in the country. After a number of identification teams were ambushed, the program was abandoned.³⁰

MSUG established a special training school under the jurisdiction of the VBI high command, in which the Americans gave instruction in subjects ranging from jeep driving to the use of different types of tear gas. They wrote or had translated manuals on weapons maintenance, riot control, and related subjects.³¹ They gave advice on all aspects of the VBI's operations, including the location of training camps and the so-called detention centers.³² However, despite the advisors' best efforts, when the project ended in 1962, the VBI (in the words of MSUG's Final Report) "still fell far short of the revised set-up which had been recommended."³³

The U.S. Embassy's urgent request for help with the Civil Guard was a matter of special importance, but MSUG was less helpful here. The Civil Guard, an ill-equipped body of about 50,000 men staffed with military officers, quartered in army encampments and under control of the province chiefs, played a key role in Diem's strategy for seizing power in a largely hostile countryside. Regular units of the Civil Guard would sweep through an area to soften it up and to overcome whatever resistance was encountered, and then remained, using the old French forts to keep the area pacified. The MSUG advisors wanted to reduce the organization in size and to convert it into a rural police force, to take it out of military control and base it in the villages, somewhat on the model of Franco's *Guardia Civil*. USOM and MAAG, on the other hand, wanted the Guard to be "organized into company, battalion, and regimental groups, and armed with rifles, automatic rifles, and machine guns."³⁴ As a result of this conflict, which was won by USOM and MAAG in 1959, MSUG's role in the Civil Guard was confined to some training and some supply activities.³⁵

MSUG advisors also trained and supplied the municipal police; reorganized traffic patterns in Saigon; gave training in pistol marksmanship to the palace guard and to other "special groups"; and advised the government on counter-insurgency.³⁶

But all these training and advisory activities

paled in importance compared to what Scigliano and Fox call "the core of the police program," the provision of "material aid."³⁷ From 1955 to 1959, according to Scigliano and Fox, the University Group was for all practical purposes the sole supplier of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and equipment to the entire South Vietnamese secret police, municipal police, Civil Guard, and palace guard.³⁸ Scigliano and Fox state that "the major items, some of which came from local stocks of American material that had been given to the French Expeditionary Corps, were revolvers, riot guns, ammunition, tear gas, jeeps and other vehicles, handcuffs, office equipment, traffic lights, and communications equipment."³⁹ Even MSUG's Final Report, available on request from MSU, admits these facts: "The Division arranged to supply, wherever possible, motor vehicles, small arms weapons and tear gas...Schedules of distribution of weapons to patrolmen and maintenance of training was also established."⁴⁰ But "patrolmen" is a characteristic euphemism. The most substantial portion of these supplies and funds went to the secret police directly; and even more, indirectly, in the name of Michigan State University.⁴¹

The weapons supply program was the biggest and most successful part of the entire MSU project. It received the lion's share of the project's costs, and the greatest number of man-hours were devoted to it. Most of all of the Police Division's training programs centered around the weapons and equipment supplied by MSUG; Scigliano and Fox note that the Vietnamese were eager to be instructed in the handling of riot guns but turned a deaf ear to attempts to instruct them in the rules of evidence or the rights of prisoners. Americans refrained from trying to impose their cultural values in these matters on the Vietnamese, although some instructors were "guilty" of the attempt.⁴² Even when the training programs had been largely completed in 1958, the Police Division still found it necessary to maintain a staff of more than 20 advisors to handle the distribution schedules.⁴³ During the peak period of MSUG's operations, mid-1957 to mid-1959, the Police Division staff outnumbered the Public Administration staff--despite the latter's much wider range of tasks--by a ratio of about 5 to 3, and the Public Administration Division never had as many as 20 advisors in it at any time.⁴⁴ If one did not know that the program was sponsored by a respectable American university, one could easily come to the conclusion that MSUG was primarily a para-military aid program with a research bureau thinly spread over it, like icing on the cake.

Finally, the accusation that MSUG acted as a cover for the CIA can now be regarded as definitively proven. Although both MSU and Wesley Fishel have denied Robert Scheer's allegations to this effect,⁴⁵ —Scheer lacked decisive evidence, after all—recent testimony by three top-ranking MSUG members makes these denials extremely dubious. Ralph Smuckler, MSUG Chief Advisor from April 1958 to December 1959 (immediately after Fishel's tenure), stated in a newspaper interview that "a few" of the Police Division's "borrowed helpers were from the CIA." But, he continued, "these were cloak and dagger operations, and the use of CIA agents was a drop in the bucket compared to the overall project."⁴⁶ Smuckler is presently Acting Dean of International Programs at MSU. MSU political science professors Robert Scigliano (Assistant to Chief Advisor, July 1957 to September 1959—covering most of Fishel's term) and Guy Fox (Chief Advisor, May 1961 to June 1962), both colleagues of Fishel, have this to say in their recently-published book: "The non-professorial advisors in the police program were overwhelmingly from state and municipal law enforcement agencies, although there was also a group of CIA agents."⁴⁷ Further: "Lack of adequate information makes it impossible to assess the work that several persons conducted with a special internal security unit of the *Surete* between 1955 and 1959. Although attached to MSUG, these persons were members of the CIA and reported and were responsible only to the American Embassy in Saigon."⁴⁸ Scigliano and Fox also complain that MSUG's intimate involvement with police work "blurred for too many persons, including its own staff, its primary mission as an educational institution. The last point applies with even greater force to MSUG's somewhat forced hospitality as an organizational cover for certain intelligence functions of the American government until mid-1959. Not only was the cover quite transparent, but what it did not

conceal tended to bring the whole MSU endeavor under suspicion."⁴⁹ What the rather vague phrase "somewhat forced hospitality" refers to is not clear; but what is clear is that MSUG's function as a cover for the CIA unit was written into MSUG's original contract. In mid-1959, after reviewing its progress, the group "refused to provide cover for this unit in the new contract period."⁵⁰ At that time the CIA unit moved from MSUG to under the wings of USOM, which also absorbed the weapons distribution program.⁵¹ As soon as these transfers had been accomplished, the Police Division staff dwindled rapidly to the vanishing point; its mission had been successfully accomplished.⁵² In the light of these circumstances, MSU's protestations of innocence and ignorance are simply not credible.

It is a fact that article 17(a) of the Geneva Agreements prohibits the introduction into Vietnam of all types of arms and munitions, and it is another fact that from 1954 to 1957 the United States maintained an official posture of strict respect for the Agreements, even while supporting the Diem government's refusal to honor them by holding the 1956 national reunification elections. During Eisenhower's second term the official line changed to open disregard for the Agreements, and about a year later the International Control Commission began growing increasingly ineffectual because of an irreconcilable split between the Canadian and the Polish delegations, so that the Commission no longer represented a publicity threat. Could these facts be related to the fact that the CIA and USOM-MAAG shed their professorial cloaks and began to distribute daggers openly at about the same time? Then, too, by 1957, the manacled peasant had begun his flight from Diem's repression into the *maquis*⁵³; for the peasant, his urban sympathizers, together with the sects and certain ethnic minorities, and for the Diem regime, the gloves were off.

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- The Detroit News*, loc. cit.
- Final Report*, p. 2. Scigliano & Fox, p. 5.
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- Scheer, p. 251; also *Final Report*, p. 61.
- Final Report*, p. 48.
- ibid.*, my projections.
- ibid.*, p. 49.
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- Scigliano & Fox, p. 6.
- Final Report*, p. 47.
- Scigliano & Fox, pp. 17, 23.
- Scigliano & Fox, pp. 17, 19.
- Final Report*, p. 48.
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- Scigliano & Fox, p. 15.
- ibid.*
- ibid.*, p. 16.
- Final Report*, p. 47.
- Scigliano & Fox, pp. 16, 21; *Final Report*, p. 47.
- Scigliano & Fox, p. 19.
- Scigliano & Fox, p. 18; *Final Report*, p. 66.
- Final Report*, pp. 65-67.
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LYND / HAYDEN / APTHEKER

INTERVIEW the DRV, the NLF, the U.S.S.R.

On January 9 Staughton Lynd, Thomas Hayden and Herbert Aptheker returned from a three-week fact-finding mission to Prague, Moscow, Peking and Hanoi. Professor Lynd traveled as a correspondent for *Viet Report*. The following is the fourth in a series of interviews with NLF and DRV officials held during the trip. Subsequent issues of *Viet-Report* will publish their interviews from Prague and Peking.

Moscow, December 23.— We spoke with members of the Soviet Peace Committee, with an official of the DRV embassy in Moscow, and with a representative of the NLF stationed in Moscow.

Soviet Peace Committee members: One member of the Committee said that the main Russian grievance against China over Vietnam was that China has not allowed the coordination of aid from the socialist countries. He did not think Chinese pressure was decisive in preventing the DRV from negotiating. Another member of the Committee questioned whether China gave much aid to Vietnam. All members of the committee stressed that the Vietnamese must say for themselves what help they need and how peace should be made. Russia has given military aid and also, through the Peace Committee, medical supplies, canned food and clothing. Two members of the Committee estimated that one to two million Russian men would volunteer to fight in Vietnam if such help were asked.

DRV official: U.S. so-called unconditional negotiations in fact make two conditions: (1) The U.S. is not ready to withdraw; (2) It will not negotiate with the NLF. The four points of the DRV amount to independence and reunification. This proposal represents a compromise as compared with the Geneva Agreements: it envisions two provisional governments for a considerable period, during which South Vietnam would be neutral. President Johnson wants Vietnam divided forever.

He referred to Ho's interview with Felix Greene and his own interview with an *Asahi* correspondent printed in *Vietnam Courier*, December 16, 1965, as authoritative.

Questioned as to whether point four in the DRV program meant a negotiated or elected

coalition government, the ambassador said it did not mean either. True, the 1960 NLF program invoked by point four calls for a coalition government. But how to form a coalition government should not be decided by international agreement. The people of South Vietnam must have the right to determine their own affairs.

As to troop withdrawal, the ambassador said negotiations could begin when the U.S. solemnly recognized the DRV Four Points and the NLF Five Points. The Five Points include the statement that the NLF is the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people, which means that they must be included in negotiations.

The DRV Embassy official responded to a question about supervision of a peace agreement by the ICC [International Control Commission; established by the Geneva Agreements to supervise their execution] or some other international body by saying that the DRV has always recognized the ICC and reported violations to it. As for the future role and composition of the ICC, that would be determined by an international conference composed of the same parties as at Geneva.

Herbert Aptheker suggested that the NLF present its case to the U.N. The answer was that the U.N. has no authority in Vietnam because it was not involved in the Geneva Agreements. Generally speaking the people of Vietnam lack confidence in the U.N., as in the instances of Cuba, the Congo and the Dominican Republic. The DRV would appreciate help in gaining access for its representatives to countries from which they have been excluded, such as England and Italy, but they would prefer to present their case outside the U.N. The DRV welcomed the November 27 March on Washington, but it disagreed with those slogans of the March which called on the U.N. The slogans

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considered correct were: (1) Recognize the NLF; (2) Bring the troops home; (3) Stop bombing; (4) Cease military activity in South Vietnam; (5) Problems of Vietnam should be settled by the Vietnamese. Also, the march slogan "eventual withdrawal" was in violation of the Geneva Agreements, which prohibited the presence of foreign troops.

NLF representative: [This 56-year-old man was first imprisoned in 1930. Of the persons we have thus far met, he is the most soft-spoken and the most militant.]

The American people form the rear of one battle in which the people of Vietnam are the front line, he said. Both peoples suffer from the war.

The strategic aim of the United States is permanently to occupy South Vietnam and turn it into a "new-type colony." The South Vietnamese people could never agree to any troops, or any U.S. military base, remaining in South Vietnam. Even a small base would mean that the U.S. was preparing for another attack. If the U.S. were to succeed in colonizing South Vietnam, the people would have to undergo even more suffering than they have since 1956. A South Vietnamese base could also be used to attack North Vietnam.

Face-saving? The U.S. has unmasked its face, lost its face. Withdrawal may mean failure but the U.S. will have to withdraw in the future from other places as well. "Special War" was an experiment in South Vietnam directed against the national liberation movements of the whole world. If after 20 years of struggle, with the widest support from world public opinion, South Vietnam were to allow American troops to stay it would open no prospects for other countries. If troops stayed the war could drag on indefinitely.

The problem is that the Americans still hope an occupation is possible. They recognize the failure of special war, recognize the failure of escalated war, but are still not hopeless because they have not understood the strength of people's war. They still hope to improvise a victory.

American conditions for negotiation amount to surrender and permitting the Americans to remain.

Generally speaking, the aims of the NLF are lower than their strength: they could win ten points, so to speak, but put forward as a program only seven or eight. To some extent this permits face-saving for the United States.

The revolutionary forces in South Vietnam are much stronger than in 1954, at Dienbienphu. Compared to the French antiwar move-

ment in 1954, the American antiwar movement is broader, as the French movement was based only on the workers. Never in U.S. history has a government been so isolated from the people. Never before have the contradictions among U.S. ruling circles been so strong. Many Americans oppose U.S. policy who do not support the NLF struggle. In the current war the U.S. is supported by fewer countries than in Korea. France wants to take advantage of an American defeat. England has not contributed effectively. A worldwide front against the war is taking shape. Thus, the revolution is stronger than in 1954 at the same time that its demands are less.

An instance of the compromise by the NLF with regard to the Geneva Agreements was that they said nothing about South Vietnam, but the NLF concedes the possibility of a neutral South Vietnam. The NLF has not put forward a method for reunification, preferring to let that question be settled by the people. Also the NLF program provides for a coalition government in South Vietnam, as the Geneva Agreements did not.

Because these demands are lower than Geneva, we will not concede more.

The South Vietnamese people cherish peace more than any other people in the world. The desire for peace may be seen in the fact that in the intervals of fighting we continue to build. The free zone represents four fifths of the territory of South Vietnam. The war cannot prevent the people from building a new life.

We are educating those who collaborated to come back with the people, he said. In the past five years we have helped fourteen authorities to create written alphabets. Life in liberated South Vietnam is at a higher level than during the resistance war against the French. In long term resistance we can at the same time fight and build a new life. No matter how many troops it sends, America could never reoccupy the liberated zone. We compel them to fight hand to hand. American modern weapons cannot be fully used. In a colonial and agricultural country there are limits to the effectiveness of such weapons. The U.S. has two alternatives: withdraw or lose.

Because the day for negotiations has not come yet we cannot talk about concrete conditions. However, in general a coalition government should include all patriotic mass organizations and also individual collaborators who reject American aggression. As to the NLF's future economic and social program, it has already begun to apply it. Two million hectares have been distributed to individual farmers. The re-education of collaborators goes on in every village.

S.O.S. FOR VIETNAM

In the summer of 1965 Dr. Vo Thanh Minh, a Vietnamese self-expatriated intellectual, Professor Edith Guild, a Romance Language Professor from York University in Toronto and I, a Unitarian Universalist minister from Long Island, embarked upon an independent mission to Southeast Asia to try to determine the conditions necessary to conclude the war in Viet Nam.

Our qualifications were minimal, as were our goals. "Our mission is non-political, non-violent, and non-partisan. It is devoted exclusively to helping all sides in the tragic Vietnam war to agree to a cease fire that anticipates negotiation, eventual withdrawal of foreign troops and war material, and the self-determination of the peoples of Vietnam to choose their own form of government." So ran an official statement we released to the press in Hong Kong.

We first went to Phnompenh, Cambodia, in the hopes of contacting representatives of the DRV. Professor Guild and I dissociated ourselves from Dr. Vo in the hope

that separately we might be able to make the contacts that together we failed to do. This attempt proved equally abortive. Professor Guild returned to Toronto, and I made an inspection trip to Laos and South Vietnam en route home.

When Dr. Vo's visa to Cambodia expired he was escorted to the South Vietnamese frontier. Immediately upon setting foot in South Vietnam we understand he was arrested. Appeals to Ambassador Lodge on behalf of Dr. Vo's safety have perhaps forestalled the extreme penalty which Marshal Ky's regime reserves for "neutralism." Only now have we had word from Dr. Vo from a house arrest in Pleiku, northern South Vietnam. He has transmitted this SOS for Vietnam published below.

My friend Professor Stanley Millet asked me what Dr. Vo means when he impassionedly writes: "Peace-loving men and women of the entire world! Fly quickly to Saigon, to Hanoi, to Hue, to Pleiku... to help your martyred Vietnamese brothers and sisters." What does he mean? He means

exactly what he says. He seeks people like himself, people like the civil rights sit-in'ers in the South, to place their bodies, their physical bodies in front of the war effort being mounted by the United States Department of Defense in cooperation with the President and the State Department.

Dr. Vo Thanh Minh is a very simple human being. He sees simple solutions to complex problems. And very likely he is correct. The solution to the Vietnamese war may well be simple. It may involve a massive demonstration against the atrocity to humanity *not* in Washington, *not* in the United Nations Plaza, *not* in front of missile factories but in Vietnam itself. I join Dr. Vo Thanh Minh in a call for a movement of concerned people to mount yet another mission to Vietnam. Here in Vietnam, North and South, may be the logical places to protest the escalation of a war so graphically and movingly described below.

● Farley W. Wheelwright, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Central Nassau

by Dr. Vo Thanh Minh

Pleiku, Christmas 1965-- The war in this tortured country has attained a degree of barbarity never before experienced in human history. All modern devices for slaughter are being laboratory-tested on the flesh of innocent people, while awaiting the opportunity to use nuclear weapons which would threaten to exterminate the human species. Such unfortunate cities as Danang, Chulai and Pleime in the South--to mention only those more severely hit and where thousands of victims fall--have become universally known. The same is true of Vinh, Honco and Xongbi where tons of explosives are unloaded at each bombing. The fauna and the flora are not spared in the disaster. Innumerable traces of horror left by napalm bombs and toxic gases in the Vietnamese jungle give those flying over it the impression of an enormous human body suffering third degree burns.

Death and destruction are so atrocious that even those responsible for the war began some time ago to talk of negotiations. However, they speak of them in Moscow, Peking, Washington,

London, Paris... and their diplomacy is so tortuous, their bargaining so slow, that a cease-fire will certainly not come tomorrow. Yet, the Vietnamese people and all peoples of the world demand peace with a loud voice, *immediate peace, peace at all costs*. The brief Christmas truce has merely spared a few thousand human lives and there is very little hope that the second truce proposed by the Vatican for the New Year will take place. In any case, it is not with truces of 12 or 30 hours accepted for propaganda purposes or for the sake of holiday merriment, that one can restore peace to this country. We need something far more serious, more sincere, more logical, more practical.

Though international contacts and initiatives taken abroad on behalf of Vietnam are necessary and desirable, what is more necessary and desirable is that the Vietnamese people themselves be allowed to participate in their own rescue. Nothing is more disheartening to this people than to perceive that its own fate is being decided by foreign powers, hostile to one

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another and which manipulate Vietnam as a mere pawn in a chess game in pursuit of their own interests. Not all Vietnamese are simply pawns or political minors. They are tired of hearing continual references to such remote and dubious rescuers, whereas all their own efforts to remedy the situation at great peril to themselves, lead to arrest, imprisonment, exile or execution as great criminals.

Peace-loving men and women of the entire world! Fly quickly to Saigon, to Hanoi, to Hue, to Pleiku... to help your martyred Vietnamese

brothers and sisters. It is in Vietnam itself that the Vietnamese problem must be treated; and the participation of Buddhist, Christian, Neutralist and other patriots is indispensable. A truly popular delegation could be formed quickly and sent to engage in preliminary talks with the belligerent parties. Better than anyone they know how to find the precise words and convincing arguments to force the belligerents to sit at the negotiation table. *Let those who insist on pursuing a war so long abhorred by all of humanity, beware.*

(continued from p. 2)

to bases like Camranh Bay where the Seventh Fleet could triple its grip on Asia for years to come. An indefinite U.S. military and "political" occupation of South Vietnam was happily confessed by Saigon with the blessing of Secretary Rusk. And now, of course, almost the entire administration has gone to Honolulu to convince Premier Ky of U.S. sincerity in promoting anticommunism in South Vietnam.

"Now that we have passed the point of no return," said Senator Aiken just before the resumption of the bombing, "we ought to take a hard look at where we're going." Judging from the alacrity with which the bombing was turned back on, the "look" that Aiken and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had finally begun to direct toward Vietnam, was "harder" than the credibility of the peace offensive could afford. Members of the Committee, Senators like Church and McGovern and Fulbright had begun to ask the crucial question: Would the United States allow the National Liberation Front to participate in a settlement of the war? It is tragic that the renewal of the bombing cut this question off in its infancy. Ambassador Goldberg's appeal to the UN may be useful if only because it seems to be driving the question out into the open again.

In the meantime, what about the National Liberation Front? If there is to be any realism in Washington's future flirtations with a settlement, it must grapple with the situation of the nine million South Vietnamese who for better or worse are with the "Vietcong." It is significant that Washington has recently confessed its confusion over Point 3 of Hanoi's "Four Points"--

that "the internal affairs of South Vietnam... be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front"--but it would be unfortunate if it should remain uninformed of just what this "program" entails. Altogether too little is known of the NLF--and the Front itself has hardly tried to remedy the situation.

Who are they? What do they want? How do they intend to get it? To begin to answer these questions, *Viet-Report* introduces with this issue an intensive examination of both the official and unofficial record of the NLF and their fighters, the "Vietcong."

Opposed to program of the Front, the United States has devised its own "revolution," a truly "pro-people" revolution. The internal "pacification" program which is now unfolding in South Vietnam (not for the first time) is the brainchild of Major-General Edward G. Lansdale, Assistant to Ambassador Lodge and political advisor to the Ky government. So that our readers could compare the NLF program with a statement of the American alternative, we sought permission from General Lansdale to reprint his influential article "Vietnam: Do We Understand Revolution?" from the October 1964 *Foreign Affairs*. Lansdale has failed to respond to our cable, and in accordance with the decision of his publishers--that he enjoys too "sensitive" a post today to publish his views at-large without his personal agreement--we are withholding it. Instead, in "The Two Programs", John McDermott has quoted liberally from the article. We hope that General Lansdale's views are adequately represented.

VIETNAMESE CATHOLICS CALL FOR PEACE

When Washington's policy in Vietnam appears inscrutable, it may be wise to look to Saigon for the hard evidence. Saigon shares one feature with the Vietcong: it cannot afford to worry about "face." Its survival is at stake.

In this Asian capital of the free world where offenses ranging from "hooliganism to support

of neutralism" are crimes punishable by the firing squad (*N.Y. Times*, 7/23/66), we have much to learn about ourselves, about what we see fit to offer the needy, and about what sanctions we are prepared to level should our "commitments" not be honored by them. That is a concern of Martin Nicolaus and John McDermott elsewhere in this issue. Here, we have the occasion to

learn something about South Vietnam itself as experienced by South Vietnamese. The authors of the statement below are not ordinary South Vietnamese -- "ordinary" in the sense the war has forced us to use the term, for either "Vietcong" or Saigonese. They are Vietnamese Catholic priests who, balking at a traditional allegiance with the capital powers -- whether mandarin, French or American -- have organized for perhaps the first time in recent history around a platform of peace, at any price.

Theirs is not a revolutionary statement. What is extraordinary about it are the conditions out of which it rises. Mailed to Professor Robert

Browne (*Viet-Report* advisory editor) from Bangkok -- to which it had been carried by hand from South Vietnam -- it expresses the full horror of the war as it is visited upon those, who like Dr. Vo Thanh Minh (page 24), find themselves isolated from all centers of power in the dispute. Their appeal begs many practical questions; its passion is clear. They would accept -- even welcome -- "diversity of ideologies and beliefs"; that is what peace means. What the war has meant, and continues to mean for them, is not the possible triumph of one ideology over another, but the triumph of death over man.

CALL FOR PEACE

Saigon, January 1, 1966

We the undersigned, Vietnamese Roman Catholic priests, free from all religious and political partisanship, considering the present situation of the country and following the increasingly pressing appeals of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, wish to express the deep anguish of the men who refuse to betray mankind, of those Vietnamese who share the sufferings of their compatriots, and also of the servants of Christ Jesus who died to bring love and salvation to all men.

Too much human blood has already flowed in Vietnam; the fratricidal war is at its pinnacle of cruelty.

In their struggle for military victory, both North and South are progressively eroding the country's autonomy; the Vietnamese problem is moving further and further towards an impasse, since its solution no longer depends on the free decision of the Vietnamese people.

The disorders of war and the presence of foreign troops are placing the mass of people in economic, social and moral conditions demeaning to human beings.

Along with all men of good will, we wish to consider the sacred destiny of the human species, the dignity of Man, the right to freedom, the brotherhood of all men, and to remember each of our brothers who today, in the North as well as in the South, are prey to the ravages of bombing, to the oppression of ideology, to misery, to suffering, to the degrading seduction of money, and who are divided and torn by prejudice, vested interests and politics.

In the name of these men, we wish to express aloud the aspira-

tions of all those who in the depths of suffering have almost lost their voice...

- We cannot countenance this absurd drama in which brothers of the same nationality, sharing the same sincere love of their country and its people, the same devotion to a great cause, the same thirst for peace, must fight and kill each other in hatred.

- We cannot accept the fact that the desire to unify the country or to construct some better future should serve as a pretext for continuing this fratricidal war. That is why we request that the authorities North and South immediately take all appropriate steps to end the war.

- That there be no waiting for any guarantee whatever before deciding sincerely to respect the lives and liberty of the Vietnamese of North and South and the brotherhood which unites them.

- To renounce the pretension of seeking by force of arms a guarantee of negotiations and the end of hostilities, and to renounce the ambition of implanting or suppressing any ideology by subversion or bombardment, since such acts can only lead to genocide and the prolongation of the present underdevelopment and alienation of the country.

- That the authorities on both sides engage in a dialogue in justice and loyalty, toward a peace whose effective realization is the only way in which both sides will be able to commit themselves entirely to the creation of material and moral conditions necessary to any free and democratic choice of the Vietnamese people about their future.

- That the great powers respect the rights of people to autonomy and to self-determination, and that they not contribute to the increasing murderousness of the Vietnamese war, which is leading to an impasse whose only resolution can be global conflict.

- Since under the present conditions of war the North and South as well as the great powers who support them have effectively shown that they cannot by themselves end the war by an illusory wait for the victory of one side and the surrender of the other, it follows that almost the only way to end the hostilities, to negotiation, and to peace (with a minimum of bloodshed) is to recognize both the mediation and arbitration of the United Nations, to turn to it for aid and to collaborate sincerely with that organization.

With all our hearts we ask men of good will in both the North and the South to rise above all forms of oppression; to courageously and frankly express the will for peace of the Vietnamese people, so that the responsible authorities will not longer be able to pretend ignorance or enjoy a tranquil conscience while refusing to engage in negotiations for peace.

But peace can come to stay only if and when the Vietnamese realize the dangers which threaten the people and the land, so that the good of the community and the survival of the people may take precedence over individual or group interests.

The people's survival, its interests, peace -- all of these have nothing to fear from the diversity of ideologies and beliefs, but, on the other hand, do have something

to fear from those who, in their names, go so far as to prevent free choice and freely-held beliefs among their compatriots. Also to be feared are those whose only religion and ideology are themselves, their money, their own passions and their private interests.

The time has come to mobilize all the faith and spiritual energy that are left in man and in the people, not for the purpose of spreading hatred, but rather to extinguish all traces of discord and jealousy, to tighten with all our

hearts, all our families, all groups the bonds which already now permit us to build the structure of a new society with truth, justice, liberty and love as the foundations of an authentic world of peace and happiness. In this world, man shall no longer have to fight man for the right to live and to think. Rather, all men shall cooperate to exploit natural resources, equally sharing the conditions and means of material and spiritual progress necessary to personal and communal accomplishment.

Up to now, in the name of humanity, we have echoed the voices of those who have almost lost their own. To conclude, we speak again in the name of humanity for those who have decided not to let themselves be subjugated in unhappiness, for those who do not accept defeatism, for those who seek victory—but not the victory of arms, exploitation, and hatred.... We seek the victory of truth, justice, liberty, and love, the only victory which can bring peace with true honor for mankind.

If History Behaved

by William Ross

OUR VIETNAM NIGHTMARE. Marguerite Higgins. Harper & Row: 1965. 314 pp. \$5.95.

THE LOST REVOLUTION. Robert Shaplen. Harper & Row: 1965. 404 pp. \$6.95.

Even the conscientious American reporter, trying to cover the war from every angle in Vietnam, finds a crucial part of the circle cut off from him. Restricted to areas occupied by the U.S. and Saigon, everything he knows about the National Liberation Front and the forces against the government comes to him by hearsay or through the means of official intelligence reports—hardly known for their reliability in South Vietnam. The effect is that the Vietcong are not real except as enemy soldiers in battle. The Vietcong among the people or as the leaders of a nationalist revolution are never seen. They are the enemy, tools of Hanoi and China, and instruments of a worldwide program of "national liberation." The sophisticated observer may sense that this picture is not quite true, but he has little way of getting a complete picture and in the end is forced to use the clichés himself. The two books under review, while as different as black and white in the quality of analysis they offer about the events in South Vietnam, both suffer from this one-sided view.

Marguerite Higgins, who won a Pulitzer prize for her coverage of the Korean War, wrote *Our Vietnam Nightmare* after making "ten

trips to Vietnam." Some of her visits coincided with the stays of David Halberstam and Malcom Brown, who themselves won Pulitzer Prizes for their exposure of the Diem regime and coverage of the Buddhist crisis which led to his overthrow. In her "minority report" Miss Higgins (married to General William Hall until her recent death) makes it clear that her view of the war and world politics is that "the only good Communist is a dead Communist." Therefore, she finds little use for a discussion of the background of the war or an analysis of the social and economic factors which have played a role in its development. Disagreeing with the Halberstam analysis which pointed to the growing authoritarianism of the Diem regime and a continuous persecution of the Buddhist population as a source of great weakness in Saigon, she claims that the Buddhist crisis was a hoax and that Diem's strongarm tactics were the only way to control a country that was fighting a war. In the Buddhist crisis she claims to find much evidence showing that the whole affair was planned and put into effect by the Vietcong and self-seeking monks with the aim of overthrowing the government and preparing a Vietcong victory. She claims that demonstrators were paid; that some of the monks who burned themselves were mistakenly persuaded that there was religious persecution and were drugged before going to their "barbecue"; that the Buddhist leaders burned temples themselves and invited the press to their demonstrations with the aim of gaining a

sympathetic American ear; and that Thich Tri Quang, the Buddhist leader, was a demagogue, a Vietcong agent, and "un-religious." The evidence she presents for all these assertions is scanty and emotional, dominated by a rage against anyone who was opposing those who were fighting the Communists. For example:

No Vietnamese or American could prove that he [Thich Tri Quang] was a Communist or that his motives were pro-Communist. Proof, in the Occidental sense, presumably would require a plaintiff to produce an authenticated Communist-party card of membership, complete with photographs and fingerprints. But that Communist ends were being served by Buddhist-instigated street mobs and Buddhist-abetted intrigues among the military was undeniable.... Is a Vietnamese government of integrity and capability to be brought down once again by a numerically tiny minority of knife-wielding, rock-throwing hoodlums manipulated by Buddhist political priests of dubious purposes who use the privileged sanctuary of a few pagodas for instigating chaos? Is this the way to run a war—or even a capital city (p. 259)?

In contrast to the often incoherent account of Marguerite Higgins, *The Lost Revolution* is intelligent, well-informed, and analytical. It may be the best book available on the early role of the United States in Vietnam. Robert Shaplen was head of the Far East Bureau of *Newsweek* after the end of World War II, and in contrast to many other books by reporters on Vietnam, he begins his chronicle with this period. According to Shaplen, it was Ho Chi Minh's hope, during this time when the Vietminh were fighting the French and the Japanese, that the United States would support him. Many of Roosevelt's speeches during the war, advocating freedom from colonialism for Asia, are cited as offering Ho support in this view. The failure of the Truman administration to pursue this line, Shaplen concludes, ended our chances of supporting a really nationalist regime in Indochina, and constitute in his mind an important element in the "lost revolution." This chapter, and the succeeding one on the French reoccupation, war, and eventual defeat contain some of the best writing I have seen on this period in Vietnam.

The next period, including Diem's early history and the origins of the war receive poorer treatment. Diem's background and early role as a nationalist leader are covered adequately, but his involvement with the "Vietnam Lobby" in the United States is barely noted. For a war in which early American involvement has played such a misunderstood role, the few pages devoted to its origins is inexcusable. Too little attention is paid to the fate of the Vietminh and to the rebellion of the peasants, and too much to Diem's battles with the sects. No evi-

dence is given for the supposed early role of the communists in the war.

Shaplen returned to Vietnam near the end of the Diem regime and found himself in a position to view close hand the plots and counterplots that led to the overthrow and assassination of Diem and his brother. This story, and the subsequent rise and fall of Khanh, are given lavish treatment—some of the information is reported here for the first time. The sequence of crises in American and Vietnamese strategy are given in detail: the failure of the original agrarian reform, the failure of the "agrovilles," the failure of the "strategic hamlets," the mis-evaluation of the political forces in South Vietnam, the weakening of the military effort and the increasing desertions from the army—all leading to the collapse of first the political, then the military strategies in 1964 and the mass intervention of American forces. The evidence is here, but the conclusion which would seem to follow is not entertained. Patriotism seems to have triumphed over honesty, or at least over the sometime logic of unhappy endings.

But even this history is from one perspective: Diem fell because he was authoritarian and couldn't control the Nhu's; the agricultural programs failed because of some planning mistakes and corruption of village officials; American plans were bad because of poor contact with the Vietnamese and a lack of experienced personnel in Southeast Asian affairs—or, as Schlesinger implies, they were too busy to bother with the Vietnam of the Vietnamese. Certainly these are all indications of the cracks in the dam. The pressure is what is missing.

Shaplen gives no consideration to the actions of the NLF or Hanoi during this period. What was the source of the rural revolt before the NLF even existed? Were the peasants attracted by the programs of the NLF, or were they indifferent? Was the Vietcong "terror" really a terror or did the villagers consider them "justified" assassinations? Was Diem really considered a nationalist leader in the South? How did the southerners view Ho Chi Minh? What were the military and political strategies of the NLF, and what mistakes did they make? Who were the personalities who shaped these policies? These subjects are barely touched on in the book, and while some lack of information is understandable, it is unforgivable that the author does not recognize the lack. He turns his microscope on Saigon politics but the wrong end of the telescope on the people. No wonder Americans cannot understand why we are "losing the war."

volves providing South Vietnam "...with a dynamic political answer with which to meet and overcome the foreign ideas introduced by the communists as the political base of their attack" (p. 79). But whose ideas are foreign? The Front's? Or Lansdale's? The General himself acknowledges that the saving ideas must come from the United States -- and, of course, there is the rub. For Lansdale and for many Americans, ideas which come from the United States are nowhere foreign: the American experience is universally relevant. That is why one could run through the Lansdale article and replace the name "Vietnam" with the name of any other country--say "Nigeria" or "Peru"--and it would make little difference. The article does not deal with history; it deals only with "principles." Yet those same principles, when applied by Lansdale through Diem ten years ago, brought about the *cong dien* tragedy. I think that that is a clue to precisely how relevant they are to the Vietnamese scene today.

But more. The Front's Program is concrete. It discusses problems and it proposes solutions. Does Lansdale? On the contrary, it would be hard to write a more abstract program. He does not suggest what it is which will motivate the Vietnamese to fight the communists; no, he argues only that *a way must be found* to make the Vietnamese find a way to do the job (p. 77). Does he have concrete roles for Vietnamese political leaders kept out of the government by Ky? No, *a way must be found* to make them useful (p. 83). Does he have suggestions for achieving cooperation among the Vietnamese governing factions? No, *a way must be found* to make them cooperate (p. 84).

What actually happens when General Lansdale's 1964 *Foreign Affairs* abstractions meet the 1966 Vietnamese realities is even more instructive. His new "pacification plan" received only recently (*N.Y. Times*, January 21, 23 and 24, 1966) a good deal of publicity. There it is indicated that plans already are far advanced to train 42,000 Vietnamese--in 80 man teams--for pacification of the rural areas. The training is being carried out by the CIA. Each team includes an "armed propaganda platoon" which will provide security in the hamlet in question and then undertake "agitation and propaganda." "Meantime, the census grievance team--described by one source as the 'key to the whole idea and the major vehicle to achieve control of the population'--will go into action" (*N.Y. Times*, 1/21/66). The same news story goes on to relate that the team will "...undertake a systematic interrogation of everyone in the hamlet." The villagers will be asked to list

BEFORE THE "NEW" PACIFICATION PROGRAM

"The hamlets are divided into 'lien gia' or inter-family groups. In Cam An, as in other villages in Quang Nam [Province] the size of the 'lien gia' varies from 12 to 40 households.... The primary functions of the 'lien gia' are to disseminate news and information and provide security" (pp. 11-12). ... "The police councillor on the village council is responsible for law enforcement and security in the village. He holds all police power and judicial authority.... He issues authorization for villagers to travel outside the Province (suspected subversives are barred from that privilege).... He makes monthly reports to the district chief on the number of villagers who have joined the Vietcong since the Geneva Agreement.... He is responsible for the surveillance of the 'cau luu' or 'offenders under investigation.' These people, 51 in all, are suspected of being Vietcong sympathizers, either because some relatives have joined the Vietcong or because they were denounced as suspects by other Cam An inhabitants during public meetings in 1955" (p. 14).

"During the week of observation, four declarations of loss of identity cards were made, accompanied by requests for new ones. Usually the village council made the applicants wait for several days before their cases were reviewed. The deliberate delay was imposed by the village chief to point up the seriousness of losing these important papers" (p. 20).

—Survey in February, 1961. Cam An: A Fishing Village in Central Vietnam, by John Donoghue, Saigon, 1962 (Mimeo).

"...in October, 1956 the [Diem] Government abrogated the traditional autonomy of the village by appointing village chiefs and councils. This was in itself a return to the French system and was much resented, but Diem went yet further. Within the villages the central government appointed chiefs for each hamlet. Within the hamlet 'khom' were organized--groups of 25 to 35 families, whose chiefs were also appointed. Within the khom, lien-gia which consisted of about five families each were organized into cells, again with appointed chiefs. Chiefs were responsible for the loyalty of their people, and to this end an extensive mutual spying system was instituted. All were to be fingerprinted, and identity cards were issued. Permission to leave the village had to be obtained in writing, and countersignatures were required before a man could leave the province. In short, a totalitarian regime was imposed upon the countryside."

PROFILE OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY
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their grievances and then to tell all they know about the Vietcong. Some of the villagers will be pro-Vietcong and these will be "asked" to renounce their allegiance or even to become double agents, spying on the Front for Saigon. "Or, if the man in question is an important cog in the Vietcong machine and stubborn, another source said 'he might just have an accident--you could assassinate him.'" (*N.Y. Times*, 1/21/66).

Interrogations will continue, reaching "each peasant in the hamlet once every 10 days. The project will work something like a dental clinic; the peasant will be given his next interrogation appointment as he ends his first session" (1/24/66). The project, which is "advised" by General Lansdale (1/24/66) plans to issue identity cards and set up family registers (1/23/66). "A map of each hamlet will be prepared, with red markings to show the houses of known Vietcong sympathizers or of citizens with relatives in the guerrilla movement" (1/23/66). In addition there will be an attempt "to organize every group of four to eight houses into an 'inter-family group.' One family head in each neighborhood grouping will be appointed as the group head" (1/23/66). There is some public relations talk of building "democracy"; we should take it with a grain of salt. For the project "will also organize a system of interlocking organizations—one for youths, one for women, one for farmers—to try to make every member of the hamlet a member of some kind of Government-sponsored organization with some discipline and control over him. 'It's a little bit totalitarian,' a source remarked, 'but the idea is to tie each person to some kind of controlled organization.'" (1/21/66).

The source is not named. Could it be this familiar voice which summed up the pacification program thusly: "The Vietcong have an ideological doctrine and discipline and you have to try to match them.... You cannot expect to defeat a political idea by giving someone an icebox" (1/23/66)? We have heard it before.

Clearly we are giving the Vietnamese "...political advice with a higher content of American idealism in it" (Lansdale, p. 79), but will it work? It is not new. Almost exactly the same program was pursued by the Diem Administration (see boxes) when the same General Lansdale—along with Wesley Fishel's Michigan State Advisory Group—was advising Diem on "pacification" ten years ago. And they were only copying some devices pioneered by the French. The present program differs from these earlier efforts only in that it will be pursued behind a military shield of U.S. troops and will include the "census grievance teams." I don't think it will work.

But it would be far worse if it did. The Lansdale program goes far beyond any political control program known to this century, the century of the totalitarians. Interviews with the political police every ten days, the next appointment automatic—as simple as going to the dentist. Not even Stalin ever envisioned such a system. This is worse than Stalinism; it is meta-Stalinism. Suppose the scheme did work. Would

we then be faced with Americans returning from Vietnam, filled with an enthusiasm to improve *our* political health? It happened this way in France within the last decade. Indeed, that would be grim irony. Or, should we rest easy, assured that General Lansdale is on the side of freedom because he cites so readily "the spirit of the British Magna Carta, the French 'Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite,' and our own Declaration of Independence" (p. 76)?

There are two more important contrasts between the Front Program and that of General Lansdale. By demanding Vietnamese independence from the Americans and eventual reunification, the NLF offers a nationalist program. It specifically counters those who, like General Lansdale, are prepared to interfere in Vietnam's internal life in order to guarantee that the "average Vietnamese" will "determine rightly the fate of his country" (p. 86). Secondly, it is the NLF Program which is "pro-people," not General Lansdale's.

I cannot speak for the future. The communists who dominate the Front may only be waiting for us to leave in order to erect their own police state. But for the present and for the past the foregoing analysis is true.

Paradoxically enough, to consider the charge leveled most often against the Front—that it practices terror and murder in the villages—will show this most clearly.

As I have mentioned above (and documented elsewhere, see boxes), the Diem regime tried to establish precisely the same control apparatus in the villages ten years ago when the same General Lansdale was advisor to Diem on "pacification." Diem moved his administration into the villages in late 1956 and early 1957 and one can trace from this date on the gradually rising arc not only of rural insurgency but also of assassinations of government officials. Within every village the battle was fought out—between the communist-led Vietminh which had led the resistance against the French and the new administration which so often included Vietnamese officials who had collaborated with the French; between the heroes of the War of Independence and the newcomers from Saigon, with the latter trying to erect a police state. The thousands of dead village officials—and the thousands of dead Vietminh cadres—are the casualties of that grim face-to-face war. To call the latter murderers and the former victims is to falsify history. Generally it was the other way around.

The strength of the Front rests in the fact that its leaders were the leaders of this resistance to Diem's "pacification plan." Other leaders could have led this resistance. But some went into exile, some conspired in Saigon, some,

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other means, it can act to influence the behavior of the Front. It can drive the Front into total dependence on Hanoi, Peking, Moscow--as Mr. Truman appears to have driven the infant Vietminh to Peking in the late 1940's by automatically including it in the "international communist conspiracy." Or it can act both positively and negatively to bring a peace of reconciliation and a society of internal peace to the Vietnamese as it has already done in both eastern Europe and Algeria. It would be a measure of Washington's realism to explore more fully than it has done so far the opportunities for such a solution in Vietnam.

A measure of realism is also required of the Front. Hanoi responded to President Johnson's April 7 speech by offering a set of proposals--the "Four Points"--within 12 hours; the Front only spat defiance (see *Courier*). They must learn that there are elements in the American government which might wish to work out agreements fully respecting Vietnamese sovereignty and bringing to an end the American intervention, *provided* they were able more clearly to see--and rely on--the Front's future international and domestic policies.

Of course, the greater burden for this kind of realism must rest on Washington rather than on Nguyen Huu Tho and his colleagues. After all, Washington is fighting mostly for its prestige while the Front is fighting for its very life.

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