

Vietnam Feature Service

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Pacification's new theme:

SELF-RELIANCE IN VIETNAM

In Vietnamese, tu cuong means self-reliance. Throughout the Republic of Vietnam this year tu cuong is the "now" phrase on many a lip. The country's 1,100,000 fighting men are becoming more self-reliant on the battlefield, assuming greater defense responsibility as U.S. forces gradually withdraw. Local leaders in the nation's 2,151 villages and 10,522 hamlets are becoming more reliant on their own resources and less dependent on the central government's. Tu cuong is the rationale behind the decentralization program of the Saigon government, which

provides rural villages with their own budgets to spend on development projects and which is now upgrading larger population centers to the status of autonomous cities or "urban villages" with increased administrative powers. It is the inspiration behind moves to boost Vietnamese exports and replace imports of a number of basic goods with home-manufactured products. It is the justification for new emphasis on loans instead of grants in rural reconstruction as well as industrial development. And tu cuong is the popular name for the official campaign that used to be called pacification, a revamped campaign with new directions. In March 1971 this new phase was launched in each of Vietnam's 44 provinces with ceremonies, rallies or seminars, and in Tay Ninh a visiting official aptly summed up the theme: "If 1969 was the year of pacification and 1970 the year of development, then 1971 must be the year of self-reliance." ^{1/}

^{1/} Ngo Khac Tinh, then Minister of Information, addressing 5,000 pacification cadres from Military Region III in Tay Ninh's stadium. (The 1971 campaign started in March instead of January because Vietnam follows the lunar calendar.)

The pacification campaign, called the revolutionary development campaign and half a dozen other names since the launching of the strategic hamlets campaign 10 years ago, has been given a new name because events have made pacification too limited a goal. Military pacification has been virtually achieved in most of the countryside, "big-unit" fighting flares only in remote, unpopulated regions, rural development in every province is in full swing, and wider horizons loom. Greatly increased security for the nation's 17,910,300 citizens permits the focus of attention to swing away from military campaigns and centralized government operations, swinging instead to local community efforts and the development of a sound socio-political structure, undergirded by a viable economy at the grassroots. The pacification campaign is now officially called the Community Defense and Local Development Plan. It has three objectives: local self-defense, local self-government, and local self-development. To the extent that Vietnam's communities achieve these goals they will attain tu cuong.

Growing Security

Before any successful pacification campaign, regardless of its name and theme, can be launched in a rural community the people must first be assured of relative security from communist oppression and terror attack. The progress made in rural development in the past three years has been in direct ratio to the progress made in improving security conditions in the countryside. In the wake of the communists' 1968 Tet offensive the Saigon government could assure relative security for less than 60 percent of the country. Today more than 95 percent of the people live in communities rated either relatively secure, secure, or completely pacified. In Military Region III, for instance, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army in mid-1968 controlled the majority of the population in the 11 provinces surrounding Saigon. Today they control not one of the 3,475 hamlets in this crucial region. To the south, in the rich Mekong Delta, the war is not yet over for all of its 6.3 million inhabitants. But security is growing so fast that the highest ranking U.S. civilian there two months ago predicted that 1972 should see all of Military Region IV without any hamlets

under communist control. "By the end of this year," said John Paul Vann, then the MR IV deputy for CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support), "all of the hamlets in the Delta will be at least relatively secure."

Kien Hoa, a Delta province 110 kilometers south of Saigon, remains a trouble spot, but the enemy is obviously on his way out. Last October President Nguyen Van Thieu stopped for lunch at the seaside village of An Thanh, in the province's remote Mo Cay district at the Mekong's mouth. This was no minor news item for the society pages, because Mo Cay is no resort; at that time the district still saw the Viet Cong in control of 25 percent of the population. An Thanh itself until a few months earlier had been known to the local people as "Viet Cong Market." But then came its pacification, with central and provincial government personnel and resources moving into the village in the wake of the troops to help the people rebuild their lives -- people who had known Viet Cong or Viet Minh control ever since the end of World War II.

President Thieu walked the lanes of An Thanh, stopping to talk to many of the people. He saw the new electric generator

installed near the village square, the newly completed eight-bed maternity clinic, the fish market under construction, the bustling traffic on the road, and he listened as the people told him of the revival of trade and the prosperity they were beginning to taste for the first time. They told him that with the crushing of local Viet Cong guerrilla bands and the rooting out of the VCI -- the Viet Cong "infrastructure," the cadres who had exercised administrative control by terror, confiscatory taxation and forcible recruitment of young and old for guerrilla and labor battalions -- An Thanh was coming back to life. Many of the former residents who had fled to government-controlled areas were returning; they were refloating their fishing skiffs and bringing their fallow fields back into production. Committees of villagers were mapping new self-help projects, the people supplying the manpower and the government the materials. They were recruiting youths and over-draft -age men, as well as females of all ages, for their own unpaid People's Self-Defense Forces, arming them with World War II carbines, M-1 rifles and a few shotguns to insure that the Viet Cong did not try to reinfiltate their village. And they were preparing for the first time to elect their own officials.

Thus President Thieu found in An Thanh another opportunity to see at the grassroots the forces at work that can culminate in the three objectives of the 1971 campaign: local self-defense, self-government and self-development. After decades of communist domination the people of An Thanh may not be self-reliant yet, but they have taken the road that leads to tu cuong.

Freeing the Delta

Speaking of Kien Hoa, the province's deputy chief, Tran Huynh Chau, explained: "Before the communists' Tet offensive in 1968, at least 60 percent of the population in this province supported the Viet Cong. But the communists broke their promise: they violated the cease-fire for the Tet holiday season that they themselves had proclaimed. They have been losing the trust of the people ever since. Now more than 80 percent of the population is under government control." Chau agrees with Vann that by 1972 the last of Kien Hoa's Viet Cong-controlled hamlets should be freed-- and be rated at least relatively secure.

A determined campaign by the ARVN, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, is crushing the remnants of organized communist military rule in the U Minh Forest to the south, one of the Viet Cong's

last sanctuaries. Elsewhere in the Delta a village recently was overrun by the VC and a relief column ambushed; there are occasional guerrilla sorties against hamlets, several militia outposts have been overrun, and the VCI has not been completely eliminated. But the growing prosperity of the farmers and the strengthening of government and local armed forces, including the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF), have made Viet Cong control of the Delta a lost dream.

"The Viet Cong," says Vann, "have become associated in the people's minds with hardship and sacrifices. The Saigon government has become associated with military security and the inflow of economic resources. Ideologically, both sides have small support. The people would rather be left alone to pursue their lives. The result of this ideological disinterest is that the one who controls the population is the one who is stronger. This one is the side that has the guns." When the people themselves take up guns to protect themselves against the VC, as they are doing in PSDF units throughout the country, they are making an irrevocable commitment to the side

most likely to give them a better life.

The communists concede that for them the rice-rich Delta, long considered the "prize" of the war, is a major problem area. A document captured in March 1970 and attributed to General Hoang Van Thai of the North Vietnamese Army states: "We must admit that the enemy was partially successful in his pacification scheme in the Delta through his capabilities of expanding his sphere of control over the population and the land and of reducing friendly liberated (i. e. , VC-controlled) areas. Communist political and military activities in the Mekong River Delta decreased, and the people's confidence concerning the revolution became weaker. "

A year later, in March 1971, President Thieu estimated that throughout the Delta the Viet Cong controlled only 6,700 people and 19 hamlets. Even more impressive than statistics, however, is the evidence of pacification's success as seen by the traveler. In the Delta, as in the great majority of the nation's districts, roads once used only by heavily armed military convoys are now traveled by a wide variety of vehicles: tri-lambretta scooters and trucks taking produce

to market, civilian buses, passenger cars, and the ubiquitous Honda motorbikes. It is now possible to drive from Dong Ha, near the Demilitarized Zone in MR I, all the way to Ca Mau at Vietnam's southern tip in MR IV. In villages the roads pass through, the people are turning from building bunkers to building new markets, fish ponds and schools. Barbed wire is being removed from pacified hamlets as the infiltration threat wanes. Private investors are expressing their confidence in the security provisions and in the future by building new plants in the provinces.

Self-Defense

While this great increase in national security since 1968 can be attributed in large part to the battlefield successes of the major military units, both Vietnamese and allied, the Saigon government is convinced that national security will continue to grow only if much of the burden is shifted to local forces, only if the first of the 1971 campaign's objectives, local self-defense, is achieved on a nationwide scale. Major operations on and beyond the country's borders with Cambodia

and Laos have seriously crippled the ability of the communists to regain military strength within South Vietnam. With their Cambodian sanctuaries disrupted and their Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos partially severed, the communists have proved incapable of launching large-scale offensives. These factors, combined with massive recruitment campaigns by all Republic of Vietnam armed services since mid-1968 and a stepped-up training and re-equipping operation under the Vietnamization program, have changed the missions and the roles of Saigon's security forces throughout the republic. The regular ARVN units have been freed from territorial defense to operate offensively against main-force communist units remaining in Vietnam and those operating in Cambodia and Laos. Much of the credit for the increased security that has enabled ARVN to assume the offensive role must go to the territorial forces -- the Regional Forces and the Popular Forces, many retrained and all re-equipped. These troops total more than half the strength of the RVNAF, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. They account for half the enemy killed, and are principally responsible for providing the local security that makes pacification possible.

The soldiers of the RF, recruited and fighting in their home provinces, and the men of the PF, recruited in their home villages for defense of their villages, have shown time and again that they are capable of holding their own against the enemy, including his regular, main-force units.

The RF/PF troops no longer are limited to static defense assignments because local security responsibilities have been assumed more and more by the PSDF units in the wards of crowded cities and the hamlets of rural villages. In May 1971, according to Le Cong Chat, Vice Minister of the Interior, there were more than four million PSDF members divided into two groups, one group of 1,400,000 responsible for combat assignments and the other group in support roles. The combatants guarding nearly 4,500 hamlets and wards have been armed with 600,000 individual weapons, rotating them one to the other as the guard changes at their posts. More than 75 percent of the members have been trained so far. Emphasis in the latter half of 1971 will turn from recruiting new members to the upgrading of the quality of PSDF units through retraining and re-equipping programs.

And the role of the PSDF members will be expanded. In addition to defending their homes, they will be trained to collect information on the VCI, help with local development projects and organize community gatherings.

"The importance of the PSDF cannot be overemphasized," says a Thua Thien pacification worker. "They now provide the primary defense in the local communities and they are a strong, viable force uniting the people against the enemy. They have a vested interest in the success of pacification and the survival of their government, because in taking up arms against the communists they made their commitment."

Pacification Cadres

Since the beginning of the pacification program the men responsible for much of the work of expanding self-defense, self-government and self-development in the hamlets have been the cadres sent throughout the country by the Ministry of Rural Development. These RD cadres -- trained under the famed revolutionary philosopher, strategist and soldier, Colonel Nguyen Be, at the Vung Tau Training Center --

assist the hamlet people in organizing their local defense forces, in preparing for elections and in launching self-help projects.

Originally, when they were grouped in 59-man teams, the lightly armed RD cadres used to take over responsibility for perimeter defense when they moved into a hamlet. Now that work is done by the PSDF. It was the RD cadres who did much of the early training of PSDF members. Currently they share the training mission with whatever military forces may be deployed near a pacified hamlet -- ARVN, RF or PF. Uniformed in black pajamas, the RD cadres for years acted as the paramilitary forces closest to the grassroots; nearly 3,000 of them lost their lives in clashes with the Viet Cong from 1966 through 1969. But with increased security around the country they have worked themselves out of their defense role. As one official explains the change:

"Rural development cadres are not the 59-man, self-contained teams they were at one time. Now the cadres are broken down into 10-man groups working under the operational control of the village chief. Under this leadership the 10-man groups assist the village and hamlet administrative

committees to carry out programs aimed at the three national goals: local self-defense, self-government and self-development. "

The RD cadres also contribute their talents to the Phung Hoang program to root out the VCI. Under Phung Hoang, intelligence data on VCI activities and personnel are fed into district coordinating centers by the RD cadres, by military sources, by the police and often by the people themselves. When, for instance, a number of independent sources pinpoint a man as an underground "tax" collector for the Viet Cong, he is arrested if accessible, or his description is circulated so police forces can apprehend him. "Neutralizing" the VCI is the job of the police, military, paramilitary, intelligence, propaganda and civic forces cooperating in Phung Hoang. A VCI cadre is neutralized by being persuaded to come over to the government's side, by being captured and sentenced to jail, either by a military court or a provincial committee, or by being killed if he attempts to fight his way out when arrest looms. But because the success of Phung Hoang is based on the efficient collection and correlation of intelligence data, every effort is made not to kill a VCI cadre; he is

more valuable alive as a source of information. In a typical month (April 1971) Phung Hoang centers in all provinces reported 1,958 VCI neutralized, including 816 killed, 541 defecting to the Saigon government's side and 601 given court sentences. Roughly 71,000 VCI have been neutralized since the Phung Hoang program was started in 1967, according to President Thieu, but officials estimate there still are more than 63,000 at large in the country, most of them replacements for neutralized VCI. Of them, 34,864 had been identified by name and position as of November 1970.

Police Role

Increasing security also has changed and expanded the role of the National Police. Collecting information on the VCI remains a significant responsibility, but in addition the police are being deployed increasingly in rural areas to perform regular village police work. By February 1971 more than 11,800 policemen had been assigned to 1,800 villages, but the ordinary crime rate in Vietnamese villages traditionally has been low. The work load remains heavy in the cities as war veterans, student groups and religious factions continue to

express dissent via public demonstrations. In Saigon and Qui Nhon recently, quick and effective police action quelled disturbances before violence spread.

Police administration is improving. A new system has been introduced to keep track of persons from the time of arrest through processing, transfer, prosecution and sentencing or release. An accelerated program brought the number of Vietnamese over 15 registered for identification cards to nearly 7,600,000 by March 1971.

One of the biggest problems of the National Police has been recruiting enough qualified personnel. Because the highest priority still is assigned to military recruitment, the police have received a number of relatively uneducated recruits. The recent transfer of 50 field-grade officers from the ARVN to the National Police introduced some new leadership which is expected to improve recruit training. By the end of 1971 total National Police strength should exceed 122,000.

For the remainder of the year the police will put special emphasis on their efforts to identify and root out VCI cadres where they still operate. Provinces known to have the highest

numbers of unsurfaced VCI will have additional policemen assigned to them. In some areas descriptions of known VCI cadres will be posted in village markets in an effort to enlist public support in tracking them down.

Also important to the pacification campaign is the Chieu Hoi or "Open Arms" program launched in 1963 to encourage the VC and VCI to turn their backs on communism and rally to the side of the Saigon government. Air-dropped leaflets, showered by the millions, are the principal carriers of the surrender appeal. Besides reducing enemy ranks, the program provides valuable intelligence information. Up to the end of 1970, a total of 173,064 Hoi Chanh (returnees) had defected to the GVN, the government of the Republic of Vietnam. The peak year was 1969 when 47,023 Viet Cong changed sides. The fighting slacked off in 1970, reducing opportunities for potential Hoi Chanh to rally, and the year's total dropped to 32,661. During 1971, 10,524 Hoi Chanh had turned themselves in by mid-June, bringing the program's cumulative total to 183,588.

Once an enemy soldier or political cadre has rallied to the government's side, he is reoriented politically and socially

so he can re-enter the mainstream of the nation's life. Normally the Hoi Chanh stays at the local Chieu Hoi center for two months after defecting. There, following an indoctrination course, he is retrained in agricultural skills or learns a trade. After the Hoi Chanh leave the center, half of them go into the military or paramilitary services of the Saigon government. Others work at their new trades in the cities. Many, particularly those beyond draft age, are resettled in Chieu Hoi hamlets of their own where the government assists them in becoming self-supporting. The Chieu Hoi Ministry reported that by May 1971 there were 39 such resettlement hamlets exclusively for Hoi Chanh and their families. With no more than 500 in each hamlet, so far 17,280 persons have been resettled, taking ownership of 3,865 housing units. Each hamlet also includes an administration office, a dispensary, a conference hall and a primary school. When the settlers elect their own officials, the hamlet is merged into the local district governmental structure; usually it becomes part of the nearest village. The Hoi Chanh settlers thus become part of the society again, living and working as full-fledged citizens of the republic.

In March 1970 the government introduced a new policy permitting certain prisoners-of-war to become Hoi Chanh. For this amnesty provision the government selected POWs who had stated a strong desire to return to normal society and who applied in writing for conversion to Hoi Chanh status.

Local Self-Government

The trend in most countries at war is to curtail civil liberties and build strong, centralized governments to insure mobilization, production and financing. But in Vietnam the central government, as a matter of policy dating back several years, has been engaged in a program to restore self-government to the villages. The ancient tradition of local self-rule, handed down dynasty after dynasty and interrupted only during the reign of President Ngo Dinh Diem, was revived by Decree No. 198 on December 24, 1966. Village councils were given increased authority over budgets, taxes, land transfers, public services and internal legal matters. The councils were given the right to make decisions in more than a dozen civic areas ranging from school construction to

the management of local markets. Officials at higher echelons of government no longer were permitted to tap village budgets or divert local taxes to defray district or provincial expenses. The powers of local officials were strengthened even further on April 1, 1969, when Decree No. 45 made village councils responsible not only for civil matters but for control of the local Popular Forces platoons, RD teams and the PSDF.

An important part of pacification is the holding of village and hamlet elections when the security situation and internal administration permit. By the end of 1970 only 31 out of 2,151 villages had failed to meet security and other pacification program requirements; all the rest had elected local governments of their own. By 1972 all villages should have held elections.

In 1970 elections also were held to choose members of city councils and provincial councils as the decentralization campaign developed. District constituencies were established at the same time to insure that all areas would be represented in future elections.

One measure of the confidence villagers put in their local leaders was evident in the 1970 elections in some 1,000 villages

and 3,760 hamlets. About half of the incumbents were re-elected.

"There seems to be a trend away from the mandarin tradition of choosing elders as village leaders," says a political observer. "Although most of those elected were elder men, there is an increasing number of younger, more progressive men being chosen for office. A number of local militia and RD cadres, and even a few women, were elected to village and provincial councils. The people are giving recognition to neighbors within the confines of their own villages who have demonstrated an ability and a willingness to serve as public officials. No longer do they look to the landed gentry for instructions on whom to vote for."

With so many new officials in local posts, the greatest emphasis during the remainder of the 1971 campaign will be on improving their effectiveness so the villages can become self-governing in all fields: public administration, economic development, and financial self-sufficiency. Newly elected officials attend a basic training class at either the National

Training Center in Vung Tau or -- if they are serving in Montagnard tribal areas -- at the National Training Center in Pleiku. (The highlands center at Pleiku teaches the same courses as the Vung Tau center, with slight modifications to meet local conditions, but instruction is in the tribal dialects rather than in Vietnamese.)

The sprawling center at Vung Tau, located on the coast of the South China Sea some 60 kilometers southeast of Saigon, reflects the striking growth in the role of local government. When Nguyen Be, then a major who had pioneered the principles of revolutionary development as Binh Dinh's deputy province chief, founded the center in 1966, its sole function was to train RD cadres. They are still trained there, but now the largest number of students are village and hamlet leaders. In 1970 some 4,000 such officials attended courses at Vung Tau. They learned how to organize farmers' cooperatives, to advance mechanization of agriculture, to develop rural electrification and to make the most of government support programs in farm credit and village self-development. They learned to develop administrative skills in

managing village budgets, assessing taxes and registering land for distribution under the land reform program. Along with the RD cadres in training, they listened to lectures on nationalism, community spirit, the organization of hamlets to enable them to resist Viet Cong incursions, improvement of local education and the teaching of hygiene and hamlet sanitation.

At Vung Tau during 1971 there will be nine one-month courses organized primarily for village and hamlet chiefs. Each class of 500 will learn about budgets, taxation and public information. Two-week courses also will be held for village commissioners in principles of social welfare and cultural development. At provincial capitals, meanwhile, there will be additional training for 50,000 minor officials and refresher training in general administration. Province and district chiefs also are required now to travel to the villages and hamlets periodically to give on-the-job training to local officials.

With the villages now responsible for collecting and spending more of the taxes levied on their citizens, officials estimate that by the end of the 1971 program some 200 villages

should be completely self-sufficient financially. An additional 300 should be 50 percent self-supporting and 500 should be capable of meeting 25 percent of their budgets.

Tax collection is getting new emphasis this year. The Directorate General of Taxation in Saigon conducted a national survey in 1970 to identify all who should be carried on the tax rolls and more intensive audits are being conducted to pinpoint evaders. As a result, the tax collection rate is improving: in 1966 some 12,200 million piasters were collected, in 1968 about 19,300 million, and in 1970, 37,300 million.^{2/} These levies included registration, excise, indirect and direct taxes.

Self-Development

The third of the three 1971 objectives, local self-development, affects the most people, calls for the largest outlay of financial, material and personnel support, and includes the greatest number of projects. Aimed at improving the people's living standards,

^{2/} In October 1970 the accommodation exchange rate was set at 275 piasters to US\$1. The exchange rate used before then -- and still in effect for a number of official transactions -- is 118 piasters per US\$1.

the program encompasses virtually all facets of Vietnamese life from agricultural development to public health, education, refugee resettlement, veterans' affairs, highway improvement and many other fields. Within this portion of the campaign the programs currently receiving the most attention are land reform and village self-development.

The land reform program, which has been implemented on and off during the past 15 years, was given new life last year when the Land to the Tiller Act was signed on March 26 authorizing the distribution of more than one million hectares of land to some 800,000 landless farmers. Privately owned land is deeded to the actual tillers, with the previous owners being compensated by the GVN. This program, when completed, should reduce to zero the percentage of land tenancy, which now is about 60 percent. Past agrarian reform programs resulted in the distribution of only about 412,000 hectares to 178,200 farmers. In the first year of the Land to the Tiller program, 50,000 farmers became the owners of the land they worked -- an estimated 120,000 hectares. During the 1971 phase 400,000 hectares are scheduled to be distributed. The pace of distribution is

being stepped up as more village land registrars and agricultural commissioners are trained at Vung Tau. Automated data processing of land titles and registers also has speeded up land distribution, first started in August 1970, as well as the compensation of former landlords. Within the next decade some six million Vietnamese --farmers and their dependents -- will benefit from this ^{3/} program.

The Village Self-Development Program (VSD), launched in 1969 but in actuality a continuation and an expansion of basic revolutionary development principles followed since 1965, has been defined as a "process by which the efforts of the rural people are united with the government to improve the political, economic and social conditions of the rural communities and to enable the people to fully contribute to national progress." VSD stresses community initiative and active participation of the people. Since 1969 increasingly more responsibility has been given to

^{3/} See the Vietnam Feature Service release (TCB-083) of July 1970, Land to the tiller . . . LAND REFORM IN VIETNAM.

village authorities and the villagers themselves to determine their own communal needs and how best to meet them. Since 1970 the villages undertaking VSD projects have been required to match the central government's input of resources with cash, labor or local materials, except in cases where an equal contribution would pose an unusual hardship for the people.

In selecting self-help projects, the villagers have a wide choice. Smaller projects -- those costing up to 200,000 piasters and requiring no approval higher than the village council's -- have included digging wells, building small bridges and erecting public sanitary facilities, first aid stations, maternity clinics and fish ponds. Large projects -- costing more than 200,000 piasters and usually requiring provincial-level approval -- have included the building of schools, dams, markets and hospital facilities.

In Phu Khuong district of Tay Ninh province, for instance, the villagers began the program in 1969 with chicken and pig raising projects. The next year they launched a group project that saw the purchase of a tractor, not only for the

use of the villagers in the group but for rental to other farmers. This year the people are working on plans for the construction of ice plants and other small industries in what until now has been a completely rural district.

All provinces have sponsored the organization of cooperative groups like these, called People's Common Activity Groups (PCAGs). A PCAG in Ba Xuyen province used VSD funds plus their own contributions to buy an electric generator. A PCAG in northern Quang Nam province used 26,000 piasters from its VSD fund to help buy a fishing boat and net. A few months later the group had made sufficient profit to buy another motorized craft, another net and some sophisticated fishing equipment. Members of this co-op now get regular dividends in the form of fish and cash.

Now the VSD program is moving in a new direction. While maintaining most of the guidelines of the 1969 and 1970 programs, this year it is adding a Rural Development Credit Program to spur the organization of communal income-producing projects. Placing income-producing projects on a loan basis, instead of the grant basis still

used for the so-called "public use projects," is another step toward the goal of self-reliance.

To get this phase of the program started, all villages will be given an initial fund of 400,000 piasters. Villages with populations exceeding 2,500 will receive an additional 50,000 piasters for every 500 people. All of these funds may be used for public use projects, such as the construction of a school. But at the discretion of the village council, up to half of these funds may be utilized in income-producing projects, such as the purchase or construction of a rice mill. Since all income-producing projects now are financed on a loan basis, the projects must be cleared through the village's credit committee.

The government has called on various banking corporations to join in the VSD effort. Most prominent in this field is the government-controlled Agricultural Development Bank. Last year the ADB granted loans totaling 5,700 million piasters. This year the total is expected to reach a record 8,900 million piasters. Besides the ADB, a system of rural banks has started operations. There are now six such banks, organized by private groups of local people

but backed by government assistance. In the remainder of 1971 a number of new rural banks will open their doors, and the effort will be encouraged until the nation can count at least 200 such ventures.

Distressed Groups

The pacification campaign's efforts to improve the livelihood of the Vietnamese people include special measures for distressed groups: disabled veterans, orphans and refugees, for example. As of April 1971 the Ministry of War Veterans was paying pensions to 75,700 discharged veterans and 483,390 dependents of dead servicemen, while another 45,000 pension claims were being processed. All of the veterans except 28,200 retired as over age were suffering from disabilities ranging from 10 to 100 percent. ^{4/} Physical rehabilitation is provided for them at modern centers in Saigon, Da Nang, Can Tho and Qui Nhon. Vocational rehabilitation -- learning new trades or brushing up on pre-war skills -- is offered at government schools at Cat Lai

^{4/} See the Vietnam Feature Service release (TCB-096) of June 1971 entitled: Operation Helping Hand . . . IMPROVING VIETNAMESE NAVY MORALE.

and Da Nang. But the veterans' greatest need is housing , and the government has started construction of a scheduled 12,000 housing units for disabled veterans and their families .

The national rehabilitation centers have taken care of the veterans' needs for therapy so well that today the majority of patients are civilians. In addition, the Ministry of Social Welfare has a compensation program for civilians who have suffered injury, the loss of a family member or damage to their homes as a result of military operations. Since the program began in 1968 more than 1,300,000 claimants have been paid benefits.

During 1970 the number of orphanages registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare totaled 116 with a population of some 20,000 children, of whom 40 percent had lost both their parents. An undetermined number of orphans were not being cared for in public institutions; most of them were believed living with friends or relatives, or were being sheltered in unregistered orphanages. The nation also has 104 registered day-care centers providing for another 11,000 children.

One of the most encouraging trends in Vietnam today is the return of large numbers of war refugees to their original homes as security improves. Since the government started paying subsistence and housing construction allowances in November 1968, more than 577,000 refugees have returned to their villages and have received all of their allowances. This trend is significant, and officials consider it a sure index of the success of pacification throughout the country.

Relatively few new refugees were being "generated" by the fighting early in 1970, but beginning in April the first of some 200,000 ethnic Vietnamese from Cambodia sought refuge in South Vietnam. In a well executed program, almost all of these repatriates were rapidly processed in reception centers. Some 150,000 were provided with piaster allowances to assist them in integrating themselves into the national society, and 30,000 chose to become settlers in a government-sponsored resettlement program. About 250,000 refugees are currently on the rolls of the Ministry of Social Welfare, but it is hoped the majority will be returning to their original communities before the end of the 1971 program.

Economic Progress

The success of the refugee program's "Return to the Village" campaign has helped increase harvests, because lands that had lain fallow while their owners were in refugee camps or temporary housing now have been brought back into production. The government's goals include doubling agricultural production within the next decade and increasing the income of the farmer by at least 35 percent.

Last year acreage planted to rice rose to 2,430,000 hectares and produced 5,100,000 tons, compared with 4,700,000 tons the previous year from 2,300,000 hectares. This year the planners hope to increase production to 5,800,000 tons, nearly one-quarter of it from newly developed "miracle rice" strains that provide up to twice as much grain per hectare as traditional strains. Vietnam has had to import rice since 1964, but it appears that there will be no need for such imports in 1972, and the nation once again will be self-sufficient in rice.

Training of farmers in improved rice-growing techniques has been an integral part of the accelerated program. At

the National Rice Production Training Center in Bien Hoa province, cadres and technicians who will be going out into the provinces to work with the farmers are receiving intensive four- to six-month training courses. There are also local programs to train farmers, and demonstration plots have been set up in villages and hamlets.

Other measures taken to assist the farmer include the importation of increasing amounts of fertilizer, the provision of low-interest farm loans, the distribution of mechanized agricultural equipment and the increased use of pesticides. A crop diversification program is well advanced. A feed grains program was started in late 1969 with corn and sorghum. Vegetable production is increasing. Other crops, such as fruits and sugar cane, are good possibilities for widening the base of Vietnam's agricultural economy and getting away from overdependence on rice.

Fishing is the second main source of income and fish products are the second most popular food item purchased in Vietnam's markets. The government for some time has been encouraging fishermen to modernize their equipment,

using nylon nets and motorizing more of the fleet. The fish catch has been steadily increasing, but distribution remains a problem because fish is a highly perishable commodity. In 1971 four cities -- Da Nang, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon and Saigon -- will be granted loans to build cold storage facilities and ice-making machines to facilitate storage of local catches and thus to stabilize the supply on the market.

Health and Education

With improved security and gradually increasing rural prosperity, more attention can be paid to the people's health and education. Public health programs are directed at increasing the quantity and quality of medical attention available to the people, encouraging local sanitation and personal hygiene campaigns, and developing prevention and control programs in communicable diseases.

With increased security throughout the nation the medical care program is able to reach a greater number of patients than ever before. Admissions to all Ministry of Health hospitals rose from 526,000 in 1969 to more than

570,000 in 1970. The assignment of Ministry of Defense medical personnel to Ministry of Health hospitals accounted for much of the capability to handle the extra work load. The number of Vietnamese physicians staffing the 26 provincial hospitals participating in the combined program increased from 40 in 1969 to 137 in 1970, and now the program is being extended to the 17 other provincial hospitals in the country. A total of 3,700 medical personnel from the Ministry of Defense -- doctors, nurses, technicians, etc. -- were assigned to provincial hospitals and district health services in 1970, almost doubling the number available for civilian care.

Also easing the critical lack of trained physicians in Vietnam is an increase in the number of graduates from Saigon University's medical faculty, now averaging more than 200 a year. Vietnam has one physician for every 10,000 people. The goal over the next 10 years is to provide one for every 5,000. (In comparison, the ratio in the United States is one to 800.) ^{5/}

^{5/} See the Vietnam Feature Service release (TCB-095) of May 1971 entitled: Improving steadily . . . PUBLIC HEALTH IN VIETNAM.

In each province this year three model "sanitary hamlets" are being established. "In the latter part of 1969," says a health worker, "the sanitary hamlet program had its beginning in Tay Ninh province. In Long Qui hamlet a project coordinated by provincial health officials was begun to clean up the hamlet by improving drainage, installing water-sealed latrines in each home and digging wells with sides and base capped in cement. Much of the credit for this pioneer sanitary hamlet must go to the RD and health cadres who worked with the people for weeks, explaining the need for improving sanitation and instructing them in the construction of latrines. Seeing the results of this project, Tay Ninh officials sponsored another, and now the province has four sanitary hamlets. They act as models, as pilot projects, and people from surrounding hamlets are copying the measures taken in the sanitary hamlets."

In primary and secondary education, the mass enrollment goals set for the decade of the 1960s were well exceeded. Twenty-five percent of all youths in the high school age group are enrolled in the nation's 780 secondary schools, which

this year turned out about 18,000 graduates.^{6/} Eighty-two percent of all children between six and 11 years of age are enrolled in primary schools. Universities are still short of their goals, but they currently enroll some 50,000 students on seven campuses, and enrollment may top 100,000 within the next three to five years if campus space and faculty shortages can be alleviated. So emphasis is switching from increasing enrollment to improving the quality of education.

A pilot system of comprehensive education has been started. All public schools are adopting a continuous 12-grade system which is doing much to decrease the number of dropouts that were so frequent when the system was divided into three separate segments: primary, junior high and secondary schools. Now the transition from primary to junior high schools and from junior to senior high schools

^{6/} See the Vietnam Feature Service release (TCB-084) of July 1970 entitled: Record enrollment for SECONDARY EDUCATION IN VIETNAM, as well as the release (TCB-093) of April 1971 entitled: Decade of expansion for HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM.

is not so marked; there is continuity in learning, and students are more encouraged to go on to higher grades.

In a move towards more decentralization in education, 14 regional sectors were established and their officials were given the power to make most decisions on curricula and teaching methods at the regional rather than the central government level. This permits adaptation of curricula to meet local students' needs, making education more practical and less theoretical.

With the broadening of Vietnam's educational base the planners are paying more attention to another pressing need -- a developing economy's requirements for skilled workers. In the remainder of the 1971 program the emphasis will be on improving technical and vocational education. Veterans and refugees will be given priority in enrolling in existing facilities. New technical schools will be built in An Giang, Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa, Vinh Long and Phong Dinh provinces, increasing enrollment in technical schools, public and private, from 52,000 to 62,000 by the end of 1971.

The Future

Much remains to be done in the pacification program -- in the hamlets and villages, in the cities, and in the economic and transport infrastructure knitting them all together. Improvement of public works is a constant, on-going campaign. Major General Cao Hao Hon, chief of the Coordinating Center of the Central Pacification and Development Council, the GVN's agency overseeing pacification, stresses the vital role that the road and bridge-building program plays in pacification, among other public works efforts. Building roads and bridges "extends the lines of communication between the producer and the consumer, the government and the people, among government agencies, and among various communities," he says. By the end of 1970 some 2,282 kilometers of highway -- approximately 56 percent of the primary road system -- had been reconstructed or upgraded. In 1971 much of the reconstruction work is being done on a self-help basis with the goal of repairing an additional 3,200 kilometers of national and inter-provincial roads. More than half of the 1,240 kilometers of the railroad's main and branch lines are now

operational. In 1970 the railroad carried 720,000 metric tons of cargo, an increase of 35 percent over 1969, plus 2,400,000 passengers, a 40 percent increase. Other goals of the 1971 campaign include:

- * Raising Saigon's electricity output by 50 percent and the provinces' output by 100 percent;

- * Supporting the formation of more rural electrification cooperatives similar to the three pilot projects presently operating;

- * Increasing the supply of drinking water, particularly for 100,000 inhabitants of Saigon and 300,000 in the provinces now receiving insufficient potable water;

- * Encouraging the formation of a privately owned public transportation system to take the place of the bankrupt Saigon municipal bus company.

While pacification generally is thought of as a campaign with its roots in the rural countryside, it has been extended to urban areas as a matter of necessity, for some 40 percent of the nation's population now lives in the cities. A long-range urban development program is part of pacification because

studies have shown that the majority of those who moved to the cities as a result of rural insecurity have no intention of returning to their villages when hostilities cease. Many of these people are living in crowded urban slums, where the crime rate is rising and where traffic, particularly in Saigon, is a major problem.

So they may qualify for special programs and so the policy of governmental decentralization can benefit urban as well as rural areas, the number of autonomous cities recently has been increased. To the original autonomous cities of Saigon, Hue, Cam Ranh, Dalat, Vung Tau and Da Nang have now been added Qui Nhon, Can Tho, My Tho, Nha Trang and Rach Gia. In addition, some large population centers are being designated as "urban villages." In order to qualify as an urban village, the community's population must be over 20,000, the local economy must be based on commercial and industrial activities, and most of the inhabitants must be salaried rather than earning their incomes from agricultural production. "Because urban populations obviously have different needs than the rural population, the expansion of

the number of autonomous cities and the creation of urban villages will facilitate more logical development planning for these areas, " says a pacification official.

Short-range goals in urban planning include preparing zoning maps, improving traffic circulation, increasing the scope of public utilities, building housing units and boosting tax receipts so the cities can become more self-supporting. Thus will the goal of tu cuong be achieved in the cities as well as the countryside.

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