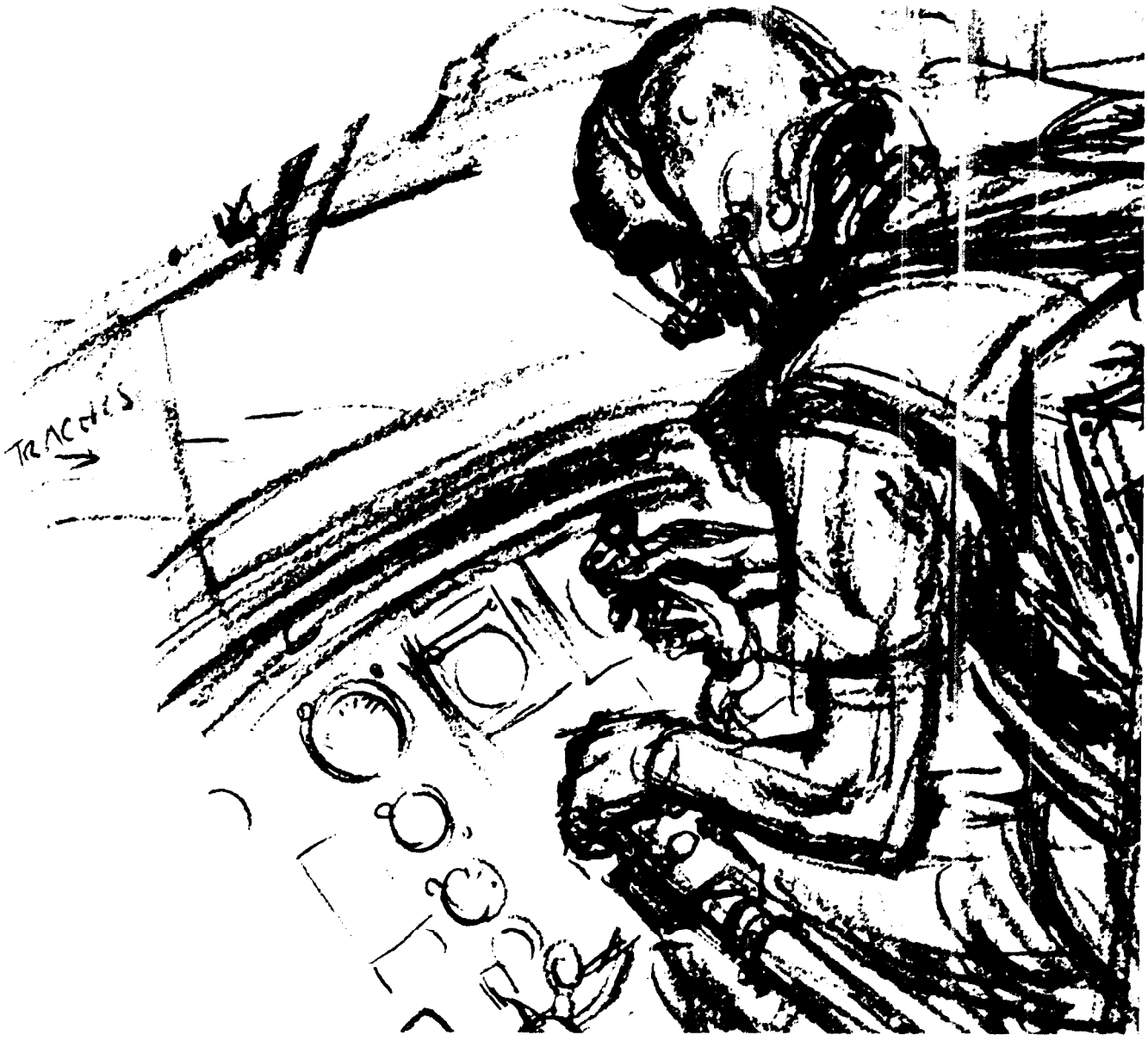
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Know Your Enemy:

THE VIET CONG

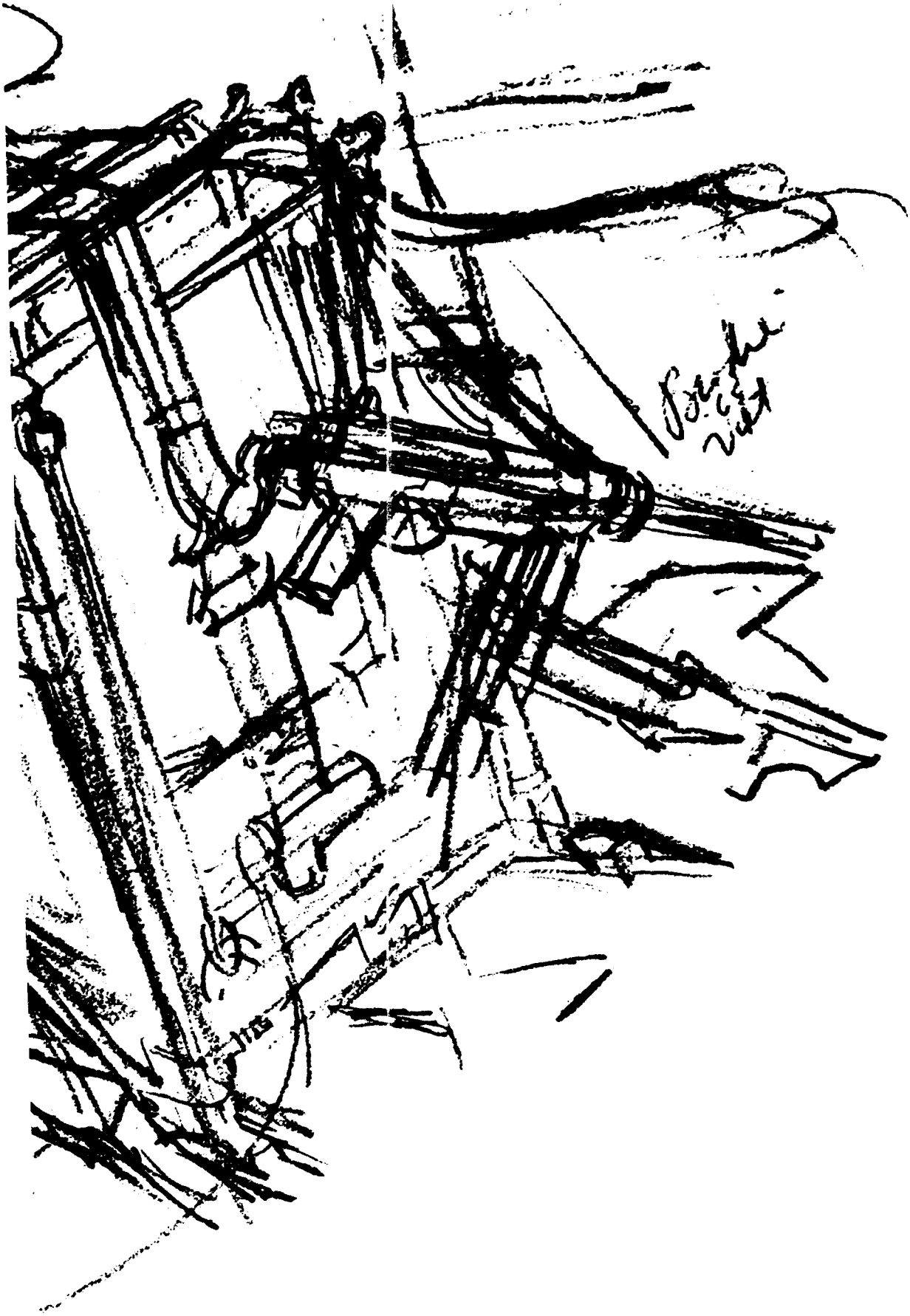
ARMED FORCES INFORMATION AND EDUCATION • DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

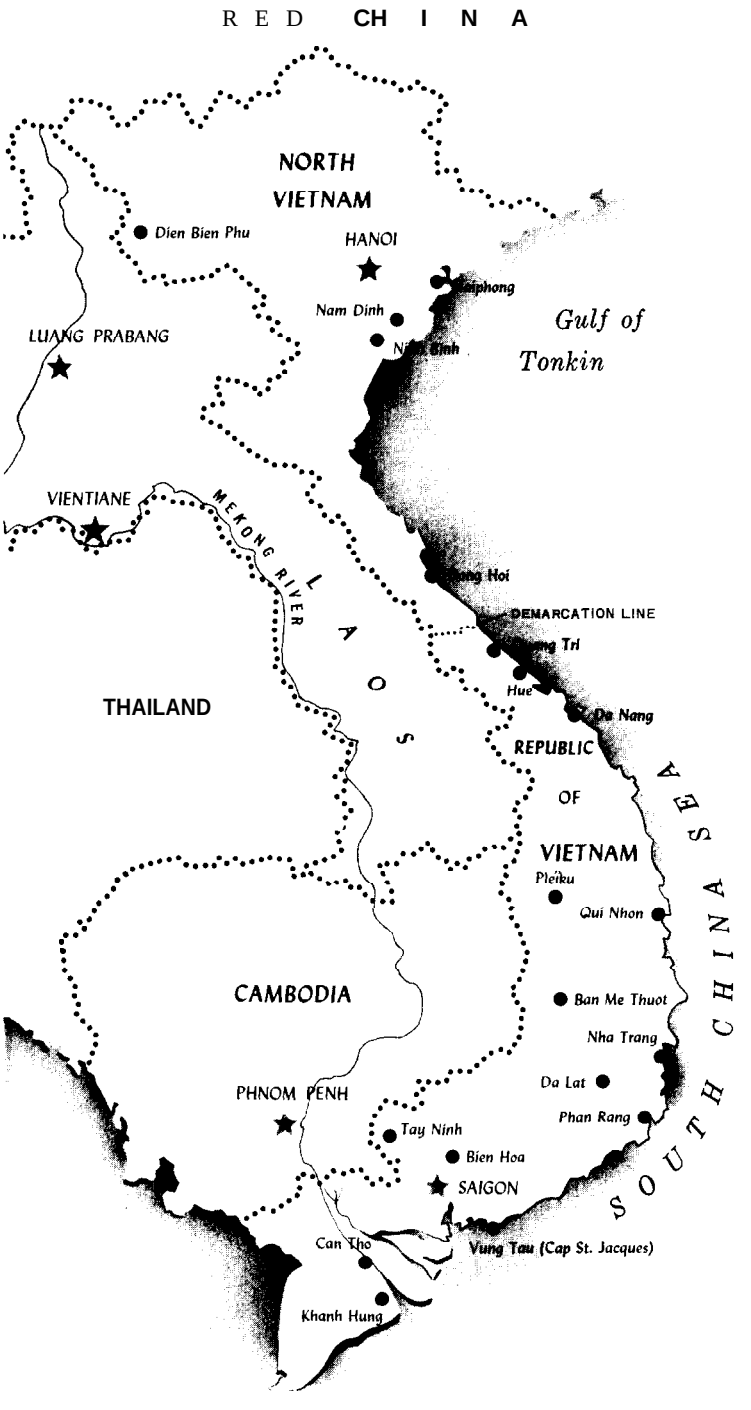


Viet Cong Means Trouble

Literally translated, the phrase Viet Cong (VC) means Vietnamese Communist, and those who are Viet Cong employ the whole Communist arsenal of deceit and violence. A Viet Cong is a man, woman, or child—a tough fighter, with words or weapons, for what he is taught to call the "liberation" of South Vietnam-the Republic of Vietnam. Viet Cong also applies to the military and civilian components of the "Front" (the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, or NFLSVN). To its deluded followers the Front is the government they serve-but to the vast majority of South Vietnamese it is an instrument of terror and oppression manipulated by the Communists of North Vietnam.

The Viet Cong, the Communist "Liberation Army" within the Republic of Vietnam, has expanded its





numbers enormously, despite increasingly heavy casualties. Its so-called main force has grown from about 10,000 men in 1960 to over 65,000. Several regiments of the North Vietnamese Army have been sent by Hanoi into South Vietnam as part of the Communist buildup of forces in the south. As befits "regulars," many are armed with late-model imported weapons and wear uniforms, helmets of wicker or steel, and even scarves for unit identification. From isolated companies their formations have grown to battalions and regiments.

The strength of the Viet Cong guerrillas has not increased as rapidly. The estimated more than 100,000 guerrillas and militia, mostly based in the vicinity of their home villages and hamlets, are essential to the success of the main force and to the whole Viet Cong effort. Better armed and trained than before, the irregulars still wear the "calico noir," the traditional black pajamas of the Vietnamese peasant (worn also by the regulars as fatigue uniforms). They guide, support, reinforce, and provide recruits for the "liberation" movement. They also make possible the rule of the Communist Party in the countryside, enforcing the dictates of the local puppet Front organizations.

There are substantial areas in which the Front is the only effective government. It operates schools and hospitals, clothing factories and arsenals. Millions of Vietnamese support the Front out of friendship or fear, most often the latter. Due largely to the militia and the secret agents of the Party, an estimated one-fourth of the people of South Vietnam pay taxes to the Front, even though they may also pay taxes to the legitimate Government. This is an impressive record for a shadow government.

Initial Resources

What makes the Viet Cong and their way of warfare so significant is that they started with so little in material assets, although they had a belief in a well-proven doctrine (of subversion), a thorough knowledge of its tactics, and the moral support of their fellow Communists throughout the world. They had no industrial capacity. They had no substantial armed forces, only a few thousand experienced guerrillas, and perhaps 100,000 supporters-mostly in remote areas seldom visited by Government representatives.

On the other hand, the Viet Cong had hidden stores of weapons and ammunition left over from the war against the French. They had many trained and dedicated Communists to provide leadership, and access to the resources of the Communist regime in the North.



Vietnam and the Vietnamese

Vietnam as a whole is very nearly ideal for the type of warfare the Viet Cong is waging. On one side of this long, narrow strip of mountains, plateau, river delta, and seacoast is the South China Sea. On the other are the rugged, undeveloped, and largely mountainous frontiers with three other countries-Communist China, Laos, and Cambodia.

Substantial areas of the interior are covered with dense tropical rain forest, giving ideal concealment to secret installations and troop movements. Much of the coastline is swamp or mountain, mangrove or forest, equally useful to those who would overthrow a government. The delta produces an abundance of rice and is crisscrossed by myriad canals and streams. Modern ground transport must use the single coastal railroad or the limited basic network of highways, all very easy to sabotage or ambush.

The people are equally well suited to this kind of war-most of them are rice farmers, accustomed to hard work, meager rations, and an absolute minimum of material comforts. Their philosophy is essentially fatalistic and undemanding. They do not like war or soldiers, yet Vietnam has known far more war than peace in the 2,000-plus years of its history. Vietnamese are known in Southeast Asia as energetic and aggressive, capable of great sacrifice for an ideal (even the false ideals of communism). These qualities make them excellent fighting men.

The Vietnamese people-North and South, Communist and non-Communist-share the same basic racial background. For this reason it is extremely difficult to identify an enemy unless he is in *uni*-form or shooting at you. Moreover, this makes recognition of friends (or non-enemies) most important, for mistaking one for an enemy makes him, his relatives, and his friends your enemies. The child on the water buffalo *may* be a Viet Cong spy—but it is better to treat him as a friend in case of doubt.


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Finally, the Vietnamese Communists-North and South-were united in their determination to use whatever means were necessary to bring the whole country under Communist domination. Without massive U.S. and free world support, South Vietnam might already have been added to the list of lost countries.

As in conventional wars, each side expanded its armed might after the war had started. When it became obvious that the Republic of Vietnam in the South could not be taken without military force, Hanoi began sending a growing stream of infiltrators, arms, and supplies into South Vietnam by land and sea. The infiltrators were trained in the North to assume key positions of leadership. Communist China and other Communist countries have supplied weapons and ammunition, primarily through North Vietnam, the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), whose fight for freedom we support, have increased their numbers and improved their equipment at a pace far greater than have the Viet Cong. However, while the Front was experiencing its greatest growth, in 1963 and 1964, the free Government of South Vietnam was undergoing great political stress and frequent changes of administration. These factors have undoubtedly facilitated the growth of the Front, but they have not stunted the growth of the RVNAF, nor shaken their determination to resist Communist aggression and preserve the freedom and independence of the country.

The success of an unconventional army and a shadow government build up by Communist direction, largely from the people and the resources of a state they seek to destroy, is cause for concern. We must understand the reasons for this, and learn how to defeat such attacks, or they will be repeated again and again. The Viet Cong fighting man is not "10 feet tall," either figuratively or literally, being actually on the average only five feet three inches in height. Nor is he an incredible fanatic-many thousands of Viet Cong desert or go over to the side of the Government every year. His effectiveness cannot be attributed entirely to the outside support he receives-the RVNAF have received far more assistance from abroad.

Yet the Viet Cong has developed into a kind of fighting man who is capable of waging an unconventional war under conditions that would seem hopeless to the average orthodox soldier. To understand the Viet Cong and his way of warfare one must first know something of his country and his background.

The Growth of the Viet Cong



Roughly 40 years ago, the Communists under Ho Chi Minh, now president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North, began planning their campaign to take over Southeast Asia. Their first step in Vietnam was to seek to seize the leadership in the opposition to French rule. Vietnam was a part of French Indochina at the time. When the Japanese moved in after the fall of France in 1940, dominating the French and occupying all of Indochina, Communists and nationalists alike believed that the time for Vietnamese independence was near. Under Communist leadership and later Communist control, a coalition independence force was formed. This was the Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam), which launched an eight-year struggle against the French soon after they returned in 1945.

Like the later Viet Cong, the Viet Minh grew from a modest start-but they became larger and much more formidable than the Viet Cong are today. By mid-1954 the Viet Minh had nearly 160,000 regulars and perhaps an equal number of militia. The French, stunned by defeats in conventional battles such as that at Dien Bien Phu and unable to solve the problems of the new kind of war waged by the Viet Minh, were ready to negotiate. At an international conference in Geneva in the summer of 1954, presided over by representatives of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, war-torn Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel. The northern half, controlled by Communists, became the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam; the free southern half became the independent Republic of Vietnam.



Under the terms of the armistice agreement, Communists and anti-Communists were given an opportunity to move to whichever half of the divided country they preferred. Nearly a million from the North were able to move south to freedom during the brief period allowed. Some 90,000 people, mostly men and boys of the Viet Minh army, or future recruits, went north. Tens of thousands of Communists and sizable stocks of arms and ammunition were left in the South to assure an ultimate Communist takeover.



The 17th parallel was not intended to be a permanent "political or territorial boundary." The delegates at Geneva agreed on a "free general election by secret ballot" to be held throughout Vietnam at the end of two years. This would allow the people to decide for themselves their political future, and it would reunify the country. The Communists in the more populous North, with their police state control, were confident of winning the election. The election was not held because the South doubted the possibility of an honest vote in the North and because the election would not have been held under proper international supervision.

Hanoi Adopts Stronger Measures

After 1956 the Communists began to prepare for a stronger effort in the South. This meant reorganizing and expanding their personnel there, both military and political, for the struggle to achieve a "political solution." Such a solution, which the Communists would still welcome, means replacing the strongly anti-communist Government with a controlled neutralist coalition. Occasional assassinations and other acts of terrorism seemed necessary and proper, but initially the main emphasis had been on a campaign of subversion and propaganda to undermine the legal Government. It is difficult to say how much their decision to act more vigorously and openly was influenced by the impatient Communists in the South and how much by their comrades in the North who were alarmed and embarrassed by the obvious contrast between the prosperity of the South and their own impoverished dictatorship.

Viet Cong terrorism was intensified *in* 1958, and by the end of that year the Viet Cong had an armed force of more than 2,000 regulars supplemented by militia. In 1959 it was decided that the political struggle

must be aided by a major armed effort. Open warfare began in 1960, with the overrunning of an RVNAF regimental headquarters at Trang Sup on **20** January.

Hanoi Creates a Screen

The Lao Dong (Communist) Party of Vietnam held its Third Congress in Hanoi in September 1960. Attended by Party representatives from all over Vietnam, the Congress acted to establish the appearance of a local rebellion in the South, while at the same time simplifying and formalizing control of it.

To give the whole Viet Cong operation the necessary appearance of being a true struggle for liberation by an oppressed people, to impart the illusion of legitimacy to actions taken and about to be taken, and to represent the movement in public activities, the Communists decided to set up a "National Liberation Front."

In December **1960,** a group of individuals claiming to represent virtually all walks of life and all major ethnic and religious groups of South Vietnam met in the forest northwest of Saigon. There they announced the formation of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, a shadow government, which faithfully issued the manifestoes already decreed by the Communist Party Congress in September.

Another act of Communist deception was the creation of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) in the South. The object of this was to screen the extent of Communist domination of the Front and make it appear that the Front is composed of several organizations. The original members of the PRP were all Communists, but qualifications for admission were made less strict than for the PRP's counterpart in the North, the Lao Dong Party.

Hanoi's Political-Military Machine

The Communist regime in Hanoi directs, controls, and supplies the entire Viet Cong political and military effort to conquer the Republic of Vietnam. All control -political and military-comes ultimately from the Central Committee of North Vietnam's Lao Dong (Communist) Party, which maps out broad strategy. The Reunification Commission of the Northern government controls the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, and the Military High Command in the North is responsible for the military training of the men who infiltrate into the South. In addition, a central Intelligence organization in Hanoi-the Central Research Agency-maintains an elaborate intelligence network in South Vietnam and directs the extensive undercover activities of the Viet Cong.

The two Communist administrative headquarters in the South, inherited from the Viet Minh, have been merged into the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). This central "brain" coordinates all Communist activity in the South and all relations with the highest Communist Party and government echelons in North Vietnam.

In South Vietnam itself, the Communists have created a show of legitimacy through the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. At the national headquarters level, the Front has a central committee and presidium, which take their orders from the control committee of the People's Revolutional Party (PRP)—the Communist Party in South Vietnam.

The Front's national central committee sets policy and also is responsible for planning and organization building. The next level in the Communist-dominated Front hierarchy consists of the 3 interzone headquarters, which determine *agitprop* (persuasion and propaganda) policy guidance and which are responsible for political indoctrination and training. Under the interzone headquarters are 7 zone headquarters, which are their sub-offices.

Next in the Front's structure are the approximately 30 provincial committees-its chief operating units.



These committees direct the "liberation associations" the Communists use to spread their indoctrination and propaganda and to gain the often-unwitting support of the South Vietnamese people. The committees, of course, also transmit to subordinate levels the orders sent down from the central committee. In addition-and this is a major role for the provincial-level Communists—they assign military duties to the Viet Cong units operating in their provinces.

The Front's committees and cells in South Vietnam's districts, towns, and villages make up the largest part of the Communist spiderweb spread like an evil shadow over the land. In the "liberated," or Viet Cong-dominated areas of South Vietnam, they are in the open, free of Government interference as they carry out their so-called political struggle, recruit and train men for their local Viet Cong units, and carry out the military or guerrilla tasks they are assigned.

In the areas controlled by the legitimate Government, of course, the Communists and grass-level front members must remain under cover and work in secret in their efforts to overthrow the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Since the Communists are using the National Liberation Front to camouflage their anti-Government activities, their People's Revolutionary (Communist) Party organization parallels the Front structure, and that Communist apparatus keeps a tight control on the Front from the top-level central committee to at least the provincial level.

The military arm is completely integrated into the Front structure from the very top to the lowest level, with military representatives found at all organizational levels of the Front. Since the Vietnamese Communists consider the war in South Vietnam to be primarily a political struggle, the primary duty of the Viet Cong military forces is to support that political aggression being conducted by the Communists in the name of the National Movement to Liberate South Vietnam.

A 64-page Front indoctrination booklet on the organization of its armed forces declared that organization must conform to political lines; that the Liberation Army (Viet Cong) *is* a fighting army and therefore must be highly centralized with inferiors obeying superiors—there must be discipline; and that the army's political tasks are fundamental, maintaining unity between cadres and men, and between the army and the people.

The booklet pointed out that these three principles insure that military action is subordinated to political



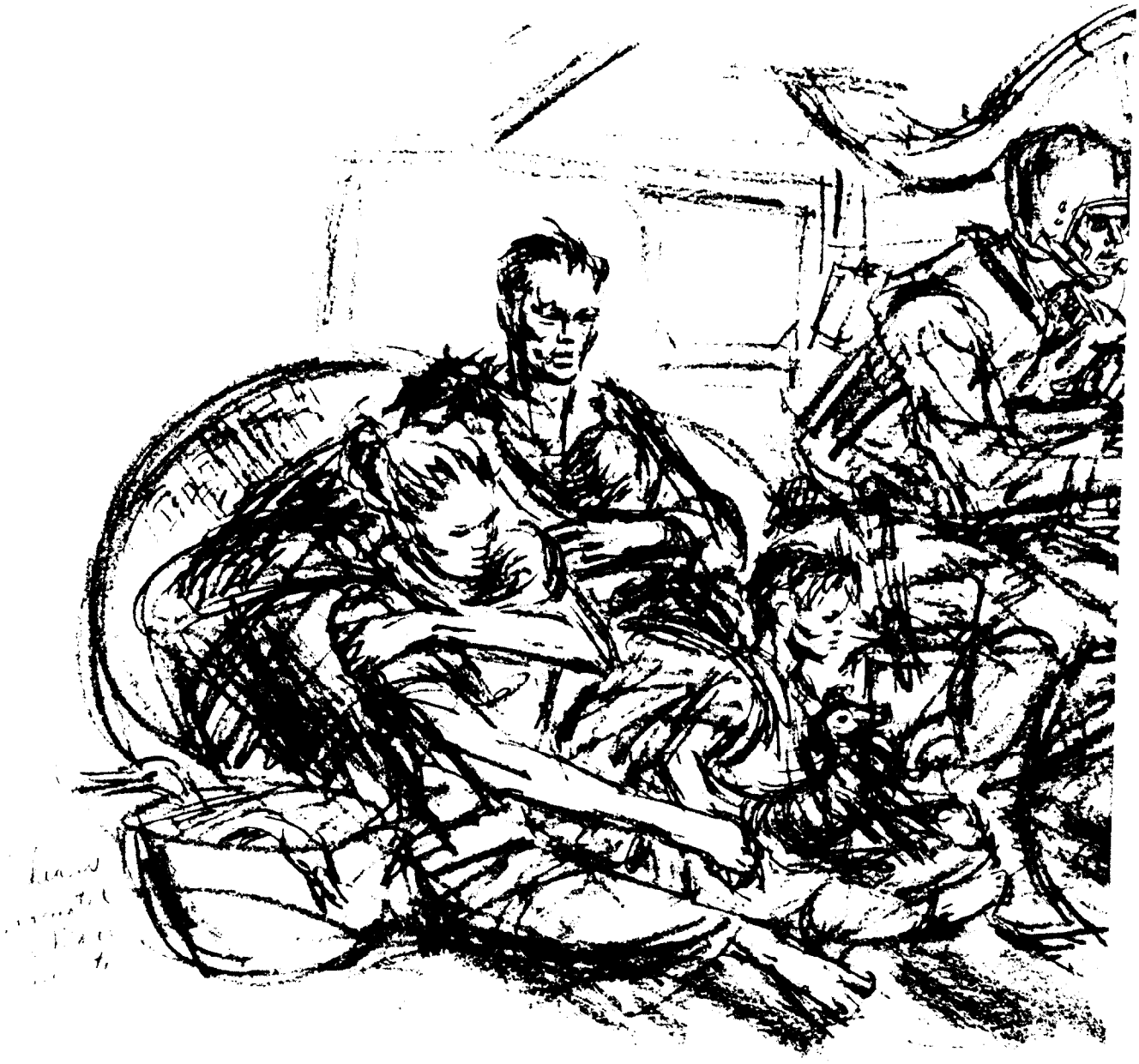
action, that the army is united, and that the people are closely united with the army.

To insure continuous political orientation of the army and maintain political control over the army's officer corps, political officers, or commissars, are assigned to all Viet Cong units. They are the political watchdogs and indoctrinators of the Front's Liberation Army.

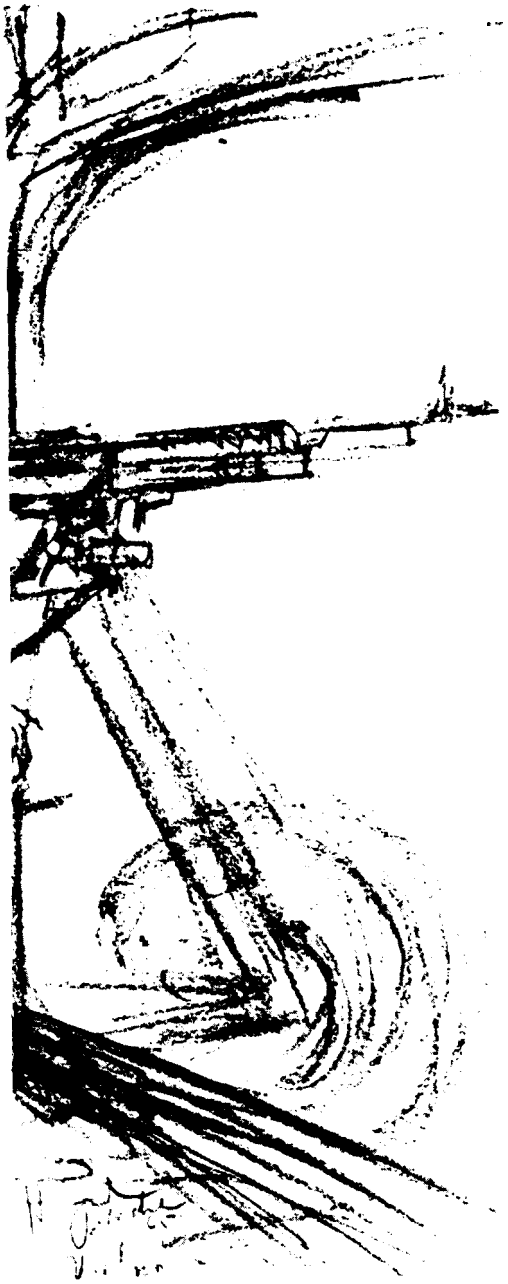
The Viet Cong, the so-called Liberation Army, in South Vietnam *is* about one half of the total Communist armed forces in all Vietnam. The other half comprises North Vietnam's People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).

The Viet Cong forces consist of two basic elements, the paramilitary, and the full military. The paramilitary Viet Cong is generally a local civilian who is a part-time soldier or guerrilla, whose military duties do not take him far from his community. In addition, he is not highly indoctrinated politically.

The Front's name for its paramilitary force was originally the Popular Army. However, since this force is engaged almost exclusively in guerrilla warfare, the name has been expanded to Guerrilla Popular Army (GPA). At the hamlet level, the GPA unit is either



a cell, a half-squad, or a squad-3, 6, or 12 men. The GPA unit at the village level (a village consists of several hamlets), is the platoon, made up of 3 or 4 squads-36 to 48 men. There are two basic classes of GPA members. The first is the village guerrilla, frequently an older man, who is generally used as a village defender. He has little training and is armed with scanty or primitive weapons. The second is the combat guerrilla, who is younger and better trained and armed. He is frequently called upon to aid guerrilla mobile columns or full military units in their operations in the vicinity of his village or hamlet. The combat



guerrilla units also serve as manpower pools for the Viet Cong's full military units.

The Viet Cong's full military element also is divided into two types-the Regional Forces and the Main Force. They are not set up or operated like orthodox army units. Their units are self-contained, not uniformed, and rely primarily on guerrilla tactics. Since they are dependent for much of their logistical support on local populations, their commanders can't simply forward supply requisitions to a depot. Instead, when they need weapons, ammunition, or other military hardware they attack a Government base or unit and try to capture what they want.

The Regional Forces, also called Territorials or Regionals, are units established by Front district committees, which provide their leadership and direct their activities. A Regional Force operates pretty much in one general area.

The elite units of the so-called Liberation Army are the battalions of the Main Force. They have acquired the name of "Hard Hats" because of the metal or fiberboard helmets that distinguish them from the Regional Forces and the paramilitary guerrillas. These battalions are directed by the Front committees at the provincial level and range farther afield in their military operations than do the units of the Regional Forces. As members of the Main Force, the "Hard Hat" Viet Cong don't have to perform non-military work, such as producing food or transporting supplies. By the end of 1965 there were over 65,000 of these Hard Hats fighting in South Vietnam.

This organization seems cumbersome and the chain of command indirect and slow, in contrast to orthodox military practice of establishing a direct military chain of command from top to bottom. However, the Viet Cong's political and military structure conforms to the classic Communist pattern of strong central authority at the top and operations at lower level decentralized, with Communist Party control over the government at all levels, and political control over the military at all levels.

The Cadre-How He Operates

Although few, except those immediately affected, realized the war was on in the late 1950's and early 1960's, those who were the victims of the savage campaigns of terrorism, assassination, and kidnapping in rural Vietnam were well aware of it. So too were the thousands of cadres-trained, dedicated, hard-core Communist leaders and military officers-who fanned out in the countryside to win support for the insurgent forces. A cadre's role can be described as a combination priest, policeman, and propagandist. He is the Party and the Front in the countryside hamlets and villages. How they operate is graphically described by one of them, Captain Lam.



"We seek to do three things. The first is to drive a wedge between the people and their government-to make the people hate their government, and the Americans. Our second objective is to get people to join our (VC) armed forces. The third is to persuade them to increase their production of food, and give the increase to us.

"Our cadre go into each village to study the situation and the people. Once they know the people and their problems, our cadre can explain how these problems are the fault of the government, and how the people can achieve their ambitions by following us. In this way we make the people hate their government, and can destroy the government in their village. Then we guide them in forming their own government (under our control) and in organizing their own armed forces, which of course are our auxiliaries.

"Of course we cannot do this right away in those villages and districts where the government is strong. There we concentrate on educating people politically to hate their government, and on forming both open and secret organizations which can support us, or embarrass the government. Every little bit helps. Any voluntary action of the people, from organized protests to simply slowing down on work ordered by the government, is a clear gain for us.

"Our cadre live in the village, or, if this is not safe, very close by. They appeal to the ideals, the patriotism, and the emotions of each individual according to his situation, and try to recruit him for the cause. If a person is arrested by government forces we try to contact him as soon as he is released, sympathize with him, arouse his hatred of the government, and recruit him. Many times we bring hungry, tired troops into a village so that the people may see how we are suffering for them, and arouse their sympathy. We try in every possible way to create hatred for the government and the Americans, to separate the people from the government and to make them see that we are their only hope."

Today, with the increase in Viet Cong forces, more emphasis is placed on terror and murder ("destroying the village government") and less on persuasion. Organizing and involving everyone possible in a maximum effort, coupled with incessant propaganda, is still emphasized as essential to Viet Cong success.

The Diversity of the Viet Cong

The nearly half million men and women who make up the civil and military components of the Viet Cong army and its shadow government, the National Front, are as diverse and divergent in origin and in motivation as those of any army and government anywhere. Perhaps the most important thing that sets them apart from their fellow Vietnamese is the way in which they are incessantly told, and caused to repeat, the reasons for everything they do, including supporting the Viet Cong. The best illustrations of their diversity, and their common knowledge, is found in some of their own statements.

Consider the story of Captain Lam. One of the real "hard core," the backbone of the movement, he took advantage of the Government's Chieu Hoi program which welcomes the return to loyalty of those misled by the Communists.

"I left my village in Central Vietnam in 1947, when I was eighteen years old, to join the Viet Minh. Two years later, because they said that all leaders in the struggle against the French should, I joined the Communist Party. As its Political Officer, I went North with my company in 1954, after the division of the country.

"In 1960, I was promoted to Senior Captain, and ordered to go to help liberate the South. After nearly six months' travelling I reached my destination and became at first a political member of the Province Committee and later a District Commissar [Secretary of the District Committee). We were very successful in organizing and expanding the Viet Cong, but after two years, and the change in governments, I began to see the real difference between the way the people live in the North and the way they would live in the South if it were not for this war. I lost my faith in the Communist claim that we were fighting for the people, and decided that the only right thing was to join the forces of the Republic of Vietnam, so I did."

By way of contrast, consider the words of Sergeant Vo Anh Long, a 31-year-old squad leader in a main force battalion: "I was a farmer until May 1960. The Government controlled my village, but the Viet Cong used to come at night and collect taxes. They would tell us, and we believed them, that they were good men who loved and wanted to defend the poor people like us, that they struggled and sacrificed even their lives to give rights to the poor people.

"Finally they told me, and five other young men, that if we stayed in the village the Government would take us away for the army, but that if we came with

VIET CONG OATH OF HONOR

1. I swear I am prepared to sacrifice all for Vietnam. I will fight to my last breath against imperialism, colonialism, Vietnamese traitors, and aggression in order to make Vietnam independent, democratic and united.

2. I swear to obey absolutely all orders from my commanders, executing them wholeheartedly, promptly, and accurately.

3. I swear to fght firmly for the people without complaint and without becoming discouraged even if life is hard or dangerous. I will go forward in combat without fear, will never retreat regardless of suffering involved.

4. I swear to learn to fight better and shape myself into a true revolutionary soldier battling the invading American imperialists and their servants, seeking to make Vietnam democratic, wealthy, and strong.

5. I swear to preserve organizational secrecy, and to keep secret my unit's plans, the name of my unit commander, and all secrets of other revolutionary units.

6. I swear if taken by the enemy I will not reveal any information even under inhuman torture. I will remain faithful to the Revolution and not be bribed by the enemy.

7. I swear in the name of unity to love my friends in my unit as myself, to work cooperatively with them in combat and at all other times.

8. I swear to maintain and protect my weapons. ensuring they are never damaged or captured by the enemy.

9. I swear that in my relationships with the people I will do three things and eschew three things. I will respect, protect, and help the people; I will not steal from, threaten, nor inconvenience the people. I will do all things to win their confidence.

10. I swear to indulge in self-criticism, to be a model soldier of the Revolution, and never to harm either the Liberation Army or Vietnam.

them for a week of training we could become local guerrillas and defend our village. We went with them, but then they told me that because of my ability I must go to a long training course. We marched for months to reach the training camp, where I studied for six months and then was graduated as a squad leader.

"I soon realized that the life of a Viet Cong was hard, but the cadre kept emphasizing that we were living gloriously, that we must be prepared to die splendidly. Although I knew that I had been fooled, I accepted this. We studied and had self-criticism sessions almost every day. Each of us belonged to a three-man cell, so that every man was watched by two others.

"I stayed with them for four years, fighting in many battles. Eventually I could no longer stand being away from my family, and so I ran away and joined the Government side."

A few more statements further illustrate the diversity.

*'My uncle told me that I must join the district force, because otherwise the Viet Cong might burn down my mother's house."

"I was farming in the North, but last year when I was 20 the PAVN {People's Army of (North) Vietnam} drafted me, gave me six weeks' training, asked my group if it would not help to liberate the South, and marched us down here. Now I am in a transportation unit and have to carry 32 kilos of rice for 12 miles every day. I want to go home."

"I did not want to become a soldier but the Viet Cong came and took *me.* Then I was ashamed to desert, because it would disgrace my comrades in the cell. But I used to get drunk and sleep too late, and after I was criticized several times and did not reform I was banished from my unit."

"I am from North Vietnam. I was an officer of the PAVN. I was ordered to come to the South, so of course I came."

"I was a village guerrilla. The Viet Cong hamlet chief told me I must watch for the Government troops. One night the district force came and attacked the Government outpost. I had to help them. After the battle they gave me a gun, and said that now I must fight to save my life. When a RVNAF company came I tried to hide but they found me."

Viet Cong Discipline

Scholar or street urchin, professional officer or farm boy, they all tell the same story of relentless indoctrination-of discipline playing on every human emotion, constantly applied. The soldier is required to memorize basic codes of conduct (a 10-point oath of honor and a 12-point code of discipline) which put him in the position of a hero, a patriot, a friend, and protector of the people. He is never allowed to forget this role. Perhaps the most effective reminder is his unit's daily indoctrination and self-criticism session. In this, his indoctrination is continued and reinforced, his supposed motives are reviewed and discussed by the group, and he is told by his leader what his future actions will be. After this, he must explain his reactions, and he must publicly confess and criticize his own shortcomings and weaknesses in thought and deed.

After every fight there is an almost immediate critique, with no holds barred, which gives every man a chance to let off steam. It also lets the cadre know what his men are thinking. This contributes to the effectiveness of the constant surveillance program, maintained primarily through the cell system (usually three-man) which is applied to every possible unit.

Appeals to the mind and the heart are the principal

VIET CONG CODE OF DISCIPLINE

1. I will obey the orders from my superiors under all circumstances.
2. I will never take anything from the people, not even a needle or thread.
3. I will not put group property to my own use.
4. I will return that which is borrowed, make restitution for things damaged.
5. I will be polite to people, respect and love them.
6. I will be fair and just in buying and selling.
7. When staying in people's houses I will treat them as I would my own house.
8. I will follow the slogan: All things of the people and for the people.
9. I will keep unit secrets absolutely and will never disclose information even to closest friends or relatives.
10. I will encourage the people to struggle and support the Revolution.
11. I will be alert to spies and will report all suspicious persons to my superiors.
12. I will remain close to the people and maintain their affection and love.

way in which the Viet Cong seeks to control its members. Regular units employ standard forms of military courtesy, and strict obedience is always expected, but emphasis is placed on making compliance with regulations appear to be voluntary. For those who fail in their duty, if such normal punishments as public criticism, extra duty, and brief confinement do not bring reform, the penalty is often discharge, in terms that make the man feel a traitor and an outcast from the human race. The fear of corporal punishment or death seems to be of less importance although either may be visited on the individual or his relatives.





Tactical Planning and Doctrine

It has been said that the Viet Cong soldier probably is told the reason for everything that he does more frequently and in greater detail than any other soldier in the world. Almost certainly he is required to explain the reasons for his actions more than any other soldier. Every proposed action is discussed from all angles before it is taken-and by everyone concerned except the targets and the innocent bystanders. Concerning the bystanders, one Viet Cong commented on the bombing of the U. S. Embassy, "If a few people get killed from a blast it is a risk of the war. The Front is the benefactor of all the people."

Captain Lam's description of what happens after action against an RVNAF outpost is recommended shows the almost incredible effort to make sure that everyone "gets the word" and performs his assigned duties.

"After studying the proposal, I report it to the head of the Provincial Military Affairs Committee. He then studies it from all points of view, considering especially the political effects, and the relative capabilities of our forces and those of the RVNAF. If he approves of the proposed operation he presents it to the Secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party. The Secretary studies it and if he thinks it sound he calls a meeting of the whole Party Committee to study, discuss, and perhaps approve the proposal.

"Once the proposal is approved by the Party Com-



mittee, the Military Affairs Committee divides the preliminary tasks among its three staffs. The Military Staff sends a reconnaissance unit to study the objective from a military point of view, and to prepare a sandtable mock-up. The Political Staff sends a cadre to contact the civilians in the area, to learn their reaction to the [proposed) attack. It also studies the morale of the troops to see if they are mentally and emotionally prepared. If they are not, the Political Staff must take the necessary measures to prepare them. The Rear Services [logistics) Staff finds out if the civilians can furnish the necessary food and labor, including that needed for removal of the dead and of any booty.

"When all this is done, the Military Affairs Committee holds another meeting. This will be attended by the leaders of all the units that will be involved in the attack. If the majority of the Committee believes that the attack should be made, they report to another meeting of the Provincial Party Committee, which again reviews the proposed problem and the solution and perhaps directs some additional action. The Party Committee will approve the attack only if all conditions—political, military, and logistic-appear favorable.

"After this is accomplished all units begin practicing for the attack, either on a sandtable or an actual stake-and-string replica of the target. This practice will take from five days to a month, depending on the difficulty of the target, until every man knows just what he is supposed to do, how he is supposed to do it, and when. Every detail of the action will be planned out, including when and where the main force units will meet the local force and militia units. The militia are always necessary to guide the troops and to provide laborers to carry supplies, to carry off the booty and our dead, if any, We always try to carry away all our dead, to give them proper burial, which will comfort their families and strengthen the morale of the rest."

Such detailed preparation seems fantastic, but account after account bears it out. *Any* planned operation, whether an attack, an ambush, or a raid on a hamlet, is planned and rehearsed in great detail-and then often called off at the last moment when some factor has changed.

Viet Cong tactical doctrine is explicit. It is summarized in four words: Four Fast, One Slow. This means Fast Advance, Fast Assault, Fast Clearance of the Battlefield, and Fast Withdrawal-all based on Slow Preparation.

There it little that is new or unusual in Viet Cong tactical doctrine, once the basic principle of careful, thorough preparation for any contingency, followed by swift action, is grasped. Attacks on strongpoints almost always feature maximum use of explosives on a primary and a secondary objective, usually mutually supporting, *and* a careful deployment of forces to intercept or ambush any reinforcements that may be brought in. In several recent battles there have been indications of deliberate efforts to entice and ambush helicopter-borne troops.

In the past the Viet Cong have usually sought to avoid defensive combat unless they had the battlefield so organized that it was essentially an ambush. Nevertheless they carefully prepare for defense, with alternate and switch positions, in case they do decide to make a stand. Frequently these positions are incorporated into existing dikes separating rice fields so that emplacements seem to be merely breaks in the walls, and even trenches look like canals. Where the water level will permit, especially in the so-called secret base areas,

elaborate tunnels are often constructed, both for cover and for concealment from ground and air forces. Like the Japanese in World War II, the Viet Cong are tireless diggers.

Controlled land mines, buried in highways and detonated when a Government target is over them, have long been a favorite and an economical Viet Cong method of destroying or at least discouraging their opponents. Occasionally nonmilitary targets are mined, usually by mistake or for some specific political or psychological purpose, such as warning uncooperative civilians. Homemade booby traps, ranging from simple deadfalls and "spike-boards" to explosive foot-mines are often used in preparing for a battle or an ambush, being placed in the covered areas the ambushees would naturally seek.

Like the elaborate trench-works often seen, the hundreds of booby traps around "liberated," meaning Viet-Cong-controlled, villages have some value if a Viet Cong unit decides to fight there. Their most important function, really, is to implicate the civilians in anti-Government actions. Government forces are likely to treat them as Viet Cong. The villagers fully anticipate this, so they feel forced to support the Viet Cong as their only hope. Secondarily, the trenches and the dug-outs do provide protection for the civilians if the community is bombed or shelled by Government forces. Even though these attacks are provoked by the Viet Cong, the people are often grateful to these same provocateurs for "helping us to protect ourselves."

The Viet Cong's emphasis on carefully planned, discussed, and rehearsed actions has its disadvantages. If such an action fails, if losses are heavier than expected or not in proportion to benefits achieved, there is a corresponding drop in morale and combat effectiveness. An unexpected serious attack by Republic of Vietnam forces, especially when the resistance is unsuccessful, indicates poor planning by Viet Cong leaders and seriously impairs effectiveness for weeks or months, longer than the actual damage inflicted would warrant. Only a quick, successful counteraction can overcome this effect.

Viet Cong "Persuasion"

Much is said about the Viet Cong *use* of terror, which seems to be increasing. This is natural as the pace of the war steps up and support requirements grow faster than voluntary contributions. Taxes have been raised repeatedly in some areas. "Draftees" must fill in as voluntary recruiting proves inadequate. Terror-punishment seems to produce the fastest results, but it eventually reacts against those who use it unless they succeed in seizing complete power. Today, in many areas, the Viet Cong are faced with the administrative problems that afflict any government in time of war-and are losing voluntary support as a result.

The Viet Cong have, from the beginning, made every effort to secure the support of members of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces as well as the support of the civilians. Generally similar tactics have been used, emphasizing always the benefits to the individual and the high moral and patriotic worth of such a shift in allegiance. 'Serve your country against the American imperialists," they say. "Don't be fooled because the Americans are more clever than the French; the Americans' motives are the same, but they use you as puppets."

The general preference for the "soft-sell" does not keep the Communists from killing, often by torture, whole garrisons of small posts they overwhelm when it seems appropriate to punish determined resistance or to frighten others in the area. Not infrequently one or two leaders will be brutally murdered as an example to the others. The dependents of the men may meet the same fate. Threats of reprisals against families are sometimes used as well.

Within the last 6 years the Viet Cong's *Binh Van* program--"proselyting," as they call it-has become a major program. A favored practice is the use of girls and women, speaking as sisters or mothers, to serenade small garrisons, calling to them to save their precious lives for their families' sake, and imploring them to have mercy on civilians. None of these programs has had noticeable success. Homesickness has been a major cause of desertion in the RVNAF, and this has plagued the Viet Cong as well.

Prisoners, to the Viet Cong, are objects to be exploited, primarily for political and psychological purposes. Thus, prisoners are often held-and treated as well as could be expected by the standards of an Asian guerrilla army-for two or three months' reeducation and then, if not notoriously anti-Communist or brutal, released. There have been instances in which American prisoners were held for some six months, exhibited in villages and hamlets, put under pressure to get them to sign documents that could be used for worldwide propaganda, and then released. One American prisoner was reported executed in June 1965 in reprisal for the execution of a Viet Cong terrorist.



Viet Cong Capabilities and Liabilities

In little more than five years the Viet Cong armed forces have grown from an essentially guerrilla army to one that includes regiments of uniformed, well-equipped, highly foot-mobile regulars capable of engaging in conventional operations of limited duration. Concurrently, their civil organization has grown from a mere shadow to one of considerable substance, which in some provinces collects almost four times as much taxes as does the Republic of South Vietnam. The Communist Party, under its cover name of the People's Revolutionary Party, has expanded the control it exercises on behalf of North Vietnam-the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Substantial quantities of portable war materials have been brought into South Vietnam by land and sea, as well as 8,000 to 10,000 North Vietnamese soldiers in the year 1964 alone. The Communist buildup in the South is continuing.

As Viet Cong resources and capabilities have grown, so have their liabilities. They have been forced to draft teenagers directly into their regular units. They have felt obliged to redouble their rates of taxation and increase their other demands on the civilians in areas under their influence. Logistics requirements for food as well as weapons have greatly increased. Even regular units spent much of their time in producing their own food until 1964, a practice which increased air surveillance may render unprofitable.

Most significant, and most dangerous for both sides,

the Viet Cong pretense of being truly a South Vietnam "people's army" is rapidly being destroyed by the introduction on a growing scale of North Vietnamese forces and equipment-and by their own stepped-up actions as well. If this effort to achieve a quick victory fails, as our increasing support of the free Vietnamese is intended to assure, they say they are quite prepared to continue for 10 or 20 years if necessary and possible.

The war in Vietnam "is a different kind of war," said President Johnson on July 28, 1965. "There are no marching armies or solemn declarations. Some citizens of South Vietnam, at times with understandable grievances, have joined in the attack on their own Government. But we must not let this mask the central fact that this is really war. It is guided by North Vietnam and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism."

The Viet Cong is a tough enemy, but no tougher than his opponents. He is not a superman, nor is he invincible. It is impossible to predict how long it will take, but the Republic of Vietnam and the United States are committed to stopping his aggression.

Our military effort in Vietnam is an essential element in achieving the objectives of freedom, peace, and progress in that war-torn country which has fought so long and valiantly for those goals.

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Washington

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