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**POLITICAL STABILITY AND SECURITY
IN SOUTH VIETNAM**

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Samuel P. Huntington

December 1967

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NOTE

This study was undertaken by Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University at the request of the Policy Planning Council of the Department of State. It was financed by the Agency for International Development. In the course of preparing the study, Professor Huntington spent several weeks in Vietnam, travelled widely, and interviewed numbers of American and Vietnamese officials. He also consulted officials in Washington who are concerned with Vietnam. However, the views expressed in this study are the exclusive responsibility of the author.

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POLITICAL STABILITY AND SECURITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Samuel P. Huntington

SUMMARY

Introduction

The principal purpose of this report is to analyse the prospects for political stability and internal security in South Vietnam and the ways in which American policy can promote these ends.

Political stability depends on the level and scope of political organization. The highest degrees of political stability are achieved, on the one hand, by the Viet Cong in the areas in which they have firm control and, on the other, by the ethnic and religious communal groups.

Security means the absence of Viet Cong political control and military activity. It is a function of pacification, urbanization, and group organization.

Pacification, to date, has produced only temporary improvements in security. Urbanization produces permanent improvements at the price of social dislocation

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and future political instability. Accommodation and the encouragement of rural political organization, in contrast, have been the most effective ways of increasing rural security.

In the countryside, in short, increased political stability is the precondition for lasting increased security.

Pacification

Since the late 1950s South Vietnamese governments have attempted to promote rural security by pacification, that is, through the extension of the administrative, military, and physical presence of the government into the countryside. The pre-1965 efforts failed. The current effort is similar in concept but much larger in scope than earlier efforts. It may succeed where the others failed. But there is, as yet, little if any evidence that it is bringing about significant and permanent improvements in rural security.

The acid test of pacification is whether a locality develops the will and the means to defend itself against VC attack or infiltration. To date, with rare exceptions the only localities which have developed these capacities are those organized by ethnic or religious minorities.

In non-minority areas improvements in security produced by the introduction of a governmental presence last only so long as the presence lasts. Once the GVN or Allied troops depart or the RD teams move on to other villages, the Viet Cong infrastructure re-establishes itself in the once-pacified hamlets. The U.S. and the GVN, however, do not have sufficient military forces, administrative personnel, or RD cadres to saturate the entire countryside simultaneously.

Hence, pacification by itself cannot produce comprehensive or lasting rural security.

In addition, existing pacification efforts at times impair rural security by:

- a. promoting economic and social changes which tend to undermine existing local authority structures;
- b. intensifying military activity in rural areas which may (as in I Corps with the VNQDD) weaken if not destroy non-communist rural organizations; and
- c. generating conflicts between local village authorities and the RD teams which are imposed from the outside.

Urbanization

Pacification is the effort to produce a political revolution in the relations between the government and the countryside. Urbanization involves a social revolution: the massive shift of population from rural and traditional ways of life to the anonymity and modernity of the city.

Between 1965 and 1967 the secure population in South Vietnam increased by about 3,000,000. Between 1963 or 1964 and 1967 the urban population of South Vietnam also increased by about 3,000,000. In 1962 the population of South Vietnam was about 80% to 85% rural; in 1967 it was about 65% rural, with almost 6,000,000 people living in localities of 20,000 or more population.

Urbanization has thus been the single most important factor expanding the secure population during the past four years. Lasting increases in security have been produced not by the extension of the government into the countryside but by the movement of people into the cities.

Urbanization, on the other hand, also creates new problems in the cities. Rapid population growth, economic development, and inflation threaten the established urban middle class and encourage their alienation from and opposition to the GVN and the U.S. These tendencies are particularly marked among the leading segment of that class, the university students, who have to date played a less important political role in Vietnam than in many other modernizing countries.

The peasants who migrate to the cities are usually economically better off there than they were in the countryside. The mushrooming urban slums, consequently, do not pose an immediate threat to political stability. In a decade or so, however, when the semi-literate children being brought up in the slums reach adolescence, these slums will erupt in violence and will be a major threat to the stability of governments.

To contain this urban opposition the GVN must develop a well-defined base of support in the countryside. It can only achieve this base by accommodation with rural groups.

Accommodation

Apart from urbanization, the most effective way of increasing security has been through accommodations between the GVN and organized rural groups.

In South Vietnam, in contrast to other Asian countries, the authority of the central government is strongest among the ethnic and religious minorities. These minorities provide the political organization which makes possible rural security which, in turn, makes possible the exercise of governmental authority. An Giang is the most secure province in South Vietnam, but there are no major U.S. or ARVN combat forces in the province. Its security is the product of the political organization of the Hoa Hao.

Security is weakest among that 35% of the population which are CRABVN (Confucianist, rural, animist, Buddhist Vietnamese), i.e., that portion of the population which is not urban and not Catholic, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnard, Cambodian, or Chinese. The low security of the CRABVN areas is due to the absence of effective political

organization above the hamlet. A vacuum of authority exists which the Viet Cong easily moves in to fill.

All minority groups in South Vietnam have at some point opposed the government (often militarily); except for the Viet Cong they have all eventually reached accommodations with the government. The Diem efforts to suppress these groups helped the Viet Cong to extend their control after his fall. The most effective way for the government to extend its authority in the countryside is for it to come to terms with and to encourage these rural groups. Security is the product of group organization not national loyalty.

Rural political organization and rural security can be encouraged in three ways.

(1) Providing support for communal and other rural groups. These include the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, rural Buddhist organizations, and those political parties, such as the VNQDD, the Tan Dai Viets, and the Hoa Hao Social Democratic Party, which have some appeal in rural areas. Material support and organizational support to these groups is essential. In particular,

the U.S. and the GVN should reverse their current opposition to the formation of communal and party military units and to the efforts of these groups to use the RD and other national government programs to strengthen themselves.

(2) Strengthening provincial and local government.

This can be done by: (a) making more local and provincial officials elected rather than appointed, and, in particular, providing promptly for the election of province chiefs; (b) increasing the tax resources of local governments and their legal authority to deal with such local problems, such as land tenure and land reform; and (c) providing greater support for local self-defense forces.

(3) Assimilating local VC organizations into the GVN political system. The bulk of the insecure rural population now lives in areas which have been controlled by the VC and Viet Minh for decades. To root out the infrastructure in these areas would be a costly, time-consuming, and perhaps impossible task. The path of wisdom in these cases may well be to convert the VC structure (through "defections in place") rather

than to destroy it. Once U.S. and GVN military efforts produce a de-escalation of ground fighting by the North Vietnamese, every effort should be made to reach political accommodations with local VC groups.

Conclusion

The U.S. should shift the emphasis in its policies from pacification and urbanization to the encouragement of rural political organization. Non-communist rural religious and political groups should be helped to develop as autonomous centers of power with their own political and military organizations. The provincial and local levels of government should be strengthened. Efforts should be made to assimilate segments of the VC political infrastructure into the political system, much as the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and other groups have been assimilated in the past. The implementation of these policies, in turn, requires a reversal of the current expansion of the American roles in South Vietnam. The United States should lessen its efforts radically to reconstruct Vietnamese society and should instead attempt to come to terms with it.

Accommodation not revolution should be the guide-word of American policy.

POLITICAL STABILITY AND SECURITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Samuel P. Huntington*

I. INTRODUCTION

The principal purpose of this report is to analyze the prospects for political stability and internal security in South Vietnam and the ways in which American policy can promote these ends. Security means the absence of Viet Cong political control and military activity. Political stability, at both national and local levels, involves:

(a) control of the government by leaders who have support from a broad and reasonably constant coalition of social, economic, and political groups;

(b) the existence of political structures and procedures for institutionalizing change, that is, for providing regular ways of selecting leaders, innovating policy, and assimilating new groups into the political system.

Political stability and internal security are major goals of U.S. policy in South Vietnam, but there are others including economic development, social justice, representative government, and the defense of the country against external aggression. These goals often compete for resources and at times conflict directly with each other: a land reform program, for instance, may promote social justice at the expense of economic development and, conceivably, of political stability. Similarly, a Viet Cong victory might produce a high level of

*I would like to express my gratitude to the officials and others in Washington and Vietnam who shared their time and ideas with me and also to thank Allan E. Goodman (Foreign Service Intern, VN/FE) for his invaluable assistance throughout the preparation of this report.

political stability in South Vietnam. But it would probably not be in the interest of the United States to promote stability through this means.

Within South Vietnam security and stability vary from one part of the country to another. Stability is, in large part, a function of political organization. The highest levels of political stability within the country are achieved, on the one hand, by the Viet Cong in the areas and population over which they have relatively firm control, and, on the other, by the ethnic and religious communal groups. Security is a function of urbanization, group organization, and government presence. In a very crude estimate, perhaps 10,000,000 of the 17,000,000 people of South Vietnam were organized politically into relatively stable groups in the summer of 1967. Perhaps 11,000,000 lived in reasonably secure conditions. The breakdown of this population is shown in Tables I and II.

Since the mid-1950s the overriding goal of the GVN and of the United States has been to increase security in the rural areas of South Vietnam. The principal way by which both governments have attempted to achieve this goal is through a program of pacification, that is, extension of the administrative, military, and physical presence of the government into the countryside together with the rooting out and destruction of the Viet Cong political apparatus and military capability. Whatever their differences in nomenclature and scope, all the pacification programs since those of Diem have been designed to effect a political revolution by extending the control of the central government through the village gate and throughout the rural areas.

In the past, the most striking and constant characteristic of these programs has been their relative lack of success. The failures of the Diem and immediate post-Diem pacification efforts are manifest. The success of the current efforts dating from late 1965 has yet to be demonstrated.

TABLE I

POPULATION GROUPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(Rough Estimates in 1,000s, July 1967)

<u>Group</u>	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Total</u>
A. Ethnic Communities	1,000	1,300	2,300
1. Montagnards	50	750	800
2. Khmer	50	450	500
3. Chinese	900	100	1,000
B. Religious Communities	1,000	3,700	4,700
1. Hoa Hao	200	1,500	1,700
2. Cao Dai	300	1,200	1,500
3. Catholic	500	1,000	1,500
C. Other Vietnamese	4,000	6,000	10,000
TOTAL	<u>6,000</u>	<u>11,000</u>	<u>17,000</u>

TABLE II
SECURITY AND STABILITY
(Rough Estimates in 1,000s, July 1967)

Security	Political Stability (Organization)		
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Total</u>
Low	CRABVN* 3,000	VC Controlled 3,000	6,000
High	URBVN** 4,000	Communal Groups 7,000 (Urban-2,000) (Rural-5,000)	11,000
TOTAL	<u>7,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>17,000</u>

* Confucian Rural Animist Buddhist Vietnamese
** CRABVNs who live in cities.

The basic issue is whether the failure of previous pacification programs derived primarily from a deficiency in resources or a deficiency in concept. The concepts underlying pacification have not changed significantly since the Diem era. Far more effort and far more men, however, are now committed to pacification than were ever committed in the past. These massive infusions of military and administrative personnel have clearly increased governmental control in the countryside. The critical test of the success of this infusion, however, is whether the areas and people so secured remain secure once the governmental presence is relaxed. To date, there is little evidence that the tremendously expanded scope of the pacification effort has produced any significant lasting improvement in security in the countryside.

Yet security in general has increased considerably during the past few years. In part this is the temporary product of the expansion of the governmental presence in the countryside. The larger and more permanent increases in security, however, have not been primarily (and perhaps not at all) the result of the conscious pacification efforts of the GVN and the U.S. They have instead been primarily the result of two other processes: urbanization and accommodation.

Population control statistics are notoriously inaccurate and non-comparable. Yet whatever their deficiencies the gross pattern of change is clear. In January 1965, for instance, some 5,954,000 people were classified as "secured", 41.2% of a population of 14,458,000. In January 1967, 9,831,000 people were classified as "secured", 59.6% of a population of 16,500,000. The secured population thus increased by some 3,877,000 people. The increase in the estimate of total population was 2,041,000, or a gain of roughly 14% between January 1965 and January 1967.

Since the annual population growth rate in Vietnam is 2.5% to 3%, a substantial majority of the total increase reflected a re-evaluation of estimates. Assuming that the natural population increase and the re-evaluation increase were distributed equally between secure and nonsecure population groups, these two sources would account for about 840,000 of the increase in secure population, leaving a little more than 3,000,000 to be accounted for by the transfer of population from insecure to secure categories.

Between 1965 and 1967 something like 1,700,000 refugees fled from insecure areas to the security of the resettlement centers, only about one-third of whom were resettled in their villages. All in all, between 1964 and 1967 the total urban population of the country (people residing in cities of 20,000 or more population) probably grew by about 2,500,000-3,000,000. Clearly the 3,000,000 increase in secured population between 1965 and 1967 can, in large part, be accounted for by these population movements.

While the total population under government control thus increased markedly between 1965 and 1967, the proportion of that population living in rural areas may well have decreased. In 1967, it seems clear that at least a majority (6,000,000) of the 11,000,000 people under government control lived in urban areas.

Between 1965 and 1967, in short, security was increased less by the extension of the government into the countryside than by the movement of the people into the cities.

Successful pacification involves a political revolution in the relations between government and countryside. Urbanization, in contrast, involves a social revolution, the destruction or abandonment of a rural, agricultural, and traditional way of life for the anonymity, modernity, and prosperity of the city. While the GVN and the U.S. have been unsuccessful in their efforts at political revolution, the

intensification of the war as a result of the U.S. involvement since 1965 has created a social revolution far more significant than any accomplished by the Viet Cong.

The secure population in the countryside was also increased after 1963 by the accommodations which were reached between the post-Diem governments and the various religious and ethnic communal groups, particularly the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnards, and, to a lesser degree, Cambodians. Under Diem these groups had been alienated from the central government in a manner not too dissimilar from that of the Viet Cong. The post-Diem accommodations between the groups and the central government tremendously increased the number of people recognizing the authority of that government. This increase was not, however, the result of the central government extending its control into the countryside. It was rather a result of the government coming to terms with local and regional groups which had, on their own, created effective political organizations in the countryside. In the countryside, in short, increased political stability is the precondition for lasting increased security.

II. PACIFICATION

An inherent part of the more recent pacification programs has also been the effort to bring about a revolutionary transformation of the countryside by promoting representative government, social welfare, education, land reform, and other activities designed to increase the economic and social wellbeing of the peasants. "Revolutionary Development (RD)", as one U.S. statement puts it, "aims at reconstituting the fabric of Vietnamese society." The elimination of the VC threat to security, changes in the authority structures of village society, and the improvement in rural living conditions are all seen as parts of a comprehensive rural reconstruction program.

This program appears to rest on two assumptions. First, lasting improvements in security can be achieved by the extension of a governmental presence into the countryside. Second, the support of the peasants for the government can be won through the improvement of their economic and social wellbeing. Both of these assumptions may be true. But their truth is certainly not self-evident, and abundant evidence exists to suggest that they could be more false than true. The failures of pacification may well be testimony to the inadequacy of these assumptions.

Many leaders of the RD program and many US officials connected with it stress its revolutionary character. In order to preempt and displace the Viet Cong revolution, they say, the GVN must develop its own parallel revolution and become more revolutionary than the Viet Cong. This may, however, be a self-defeating strategy. The Viet Cong feeds not on the absence of material wellbeing but on the absence of effective authority. GVN efforts to "reconstitute" or revolutionize the countryside may undermine or destroy whatever authority structures remain as breakwaters against the expansion of Viet Cong

influence. The potentially dysfunctional aspects of reform are clearly evident in the case of land tenure. As Mitchell has conclusively demonstrated (RAND RM-5181, April 1967), governmental authority in 1965 was strongest in those provinces which in 1960-61 had the most unequal systems of land tenure. In addition, governmental control was related positively to the amount of French land subject to transfer under the 1956 land reform ordinance and negatively to the amount of Vietnamese land subject to transfer. About half of the Vietnamese land, however, was transferred to peasant ownership, while the bulk of the French land has been kept under state ownership. Consequently, insofar as these variables indicate differences in the distribution of land to peasants, the more land that was distributed, the less the subsequent control by the GVN.

These findings throw cold water on the expectations of many US land reform advocates. They also raise real question about the general desirability of pushing rural reforms which undermine traditional authority structures. Central government control is now strongest in the areas with the greatest inequalities in tenure. If the central government uses its power to attempt to change the tenure situation in these areas, it may well destroy the basis of its power in those areas. The unequal distribution of land is one element in a complex social-economic-political structure. Drastic efforts to change the land tenure situation can undermine the entire structure and thus create a vacuum of authority with the VC "alternative" authority structure will be more able to fill than anyone else. The maintenance of security, which is now a product of the strength of the traditional authority structures, would then become dependent upon the introduction of substantial governmental military forces.

This experience in Vietnam resembles that of many other countries. Typically it is neither the poorest peasants nor the landless peasants who become revolutionaries, but rather those who are at least marginally well

off and who consequently aspire to become better off. US and GVN programs to better the conditions of poor peasants, as the history of other countries amply demonstrates, are likely to increase significantly their susceptibility to VC appeals. If the US and the GVN attempt to "revolutionize" the Vietnamese countryside, they may well promote the victory in the countryside of the real revolutionaries there.

In terms of achieving security the evidence is conclusive that the success of pacification depends directly on the military input. Where there is a substantial ARVN or Allied military presence, VC main forces can be rooted out and defeated and the operations of the political-military infrastructure curtailed if not eliminated. Most of the improvements in the security of rural areas between 1965 and 1967 were the result of the introduction of powerful allied forces into the countryside. So long as a substantial military presence is maintained, a substantial reduction takes place in VC military activity and political control.

The great problem with achieving security through pacification is that its success seems to depend upon the maintenance of a substantial military presence. Extensive inquiry throughout Vietnam failed to uncover any major instance in CRABVN areas where a high level of security was maintained after the Allied or ARVN military presence was reduced. To the contrary are numerous cases where the withdrawal of military forces was followed by a significant deterioration in security. Perhaps the most notable instance was Binh Dinh which, last winter, was highlighted as the province where the most notable improvements in security had occurred during the past year. In June and July 1967 the movement of new NVA forces into the Central Highlands required the deployment there of US troops which had been engaged in the pacification of Binh Dinh. The withdrawal of these forces was followed by a significant decline in the security of Binh Dinh. Similarly in Hau

Nghia in June an American brigade was responsible for the reopening of a ten mile stretch of road between the Bao Trai, the provincial capital, and Duc Hoa, the headquarters of the 25th ARVN division, which had been closed by the VC for three years. In early July the American brigade was withdrawn for use elsewhere. By the end of July American advisors in Hau Nghia reported a significant decline in security conditions along the road, despite the fact that an ARVN battalion was stationed at each end of the road.

What is true with respect to the military in pacification is also true in less dramatic fashion with respect to the RD cadres. So long as the cadres remain in their hamlets and are provided with a minimum security by regular or local military forces, pacification works. Once the cadres move on (and they were initially scheduled to remain only six months in a hamlet), the tendency is again for security to deteriorate. In short, security achieved by the introduction of a governmental presence from the outside lasts only so long as the presence lasts.

The US and the GVN do not have sufficient military forces, administrative personnel, or RD cadres to saturate the entire countryside simultaneously. Military units and pacification teams are necessarily shifted from one area to another; thus security in one place is likely to be a temporary phenomenon. The enemy knows this and the villagers know this. Hence the former rolls with the punches, makes every effort to preserve his infrastructure, and resurfaces once the allied or governmental presence is reduced. The villagers, in turn, carefully refrain from positive commitment to and support of the governmental side, well aware of the consequences which they will face when the governmental presence weakens.

In July and August 1967 the author of this report made an extensive effort to identify instances of successful pacification. Six localities in a similar number of provinces were often cited. These are:

1. Phu My district, Binh Dinh
2. Ham Thuan district, Binh Thuan
3. Tieu Can district, Vinh Binh
4. Long Huu village, Long An
5. Ba Tri district, Kien Hoa
6. Tan Qui hamlet, Minh Duc district, Vinh Long.

In almost all these cases, the presence of an able, energetic, and dedicated district chief was cited as a crucial factor in the relative success of the pacification efforts. In four cases (Phu My, Ham Thuan, Long Huu, Ba Tri), however, pacification had not passed the crucial test of surviving the absence of substantial US or ARVN military forces. In all four cases the external forces were still there and little confidence was felt that their withdrawal would not be followed by a significant decline in security. In two instances (Tieu Can, Long Huu) the relative success of pacification was greatly helped by the presence of communal groups (Cambodians and Catholics in Tieu Can; Cao Dai in Long Huu). Consequently, none of these "success stories" is a case of achieving continuing security for non-communal Vietnamese.

The acid test of pacification is whether a village or hamlet develops the will and the means to defend itself against VC attack or infiltration. Tieu Can passed this test in January 1967 when the RD cadre

and local self-defense forces successfully beat off a battalion-size VC attack. "GVN success", an American observer reported, "can be largely attributed to the development of strong hamlet self-defense forces under the direction of and with the aid of the RD cadre". (Saigon 17807, 11 February 1967). Tieu Can, however, is largely Cambodian and, indeed, the Cambodians quite properly like to point to it as a "Cambodian success story".

The one instance out of the six of pacification "taking" in a non-communal area would appear to be in Tan Qui hamlet, although an RD team and Regional Forces also played an important role in the successful defense. The RD cadre organized local defense forces, and when a VC company attacked the hamlet on 17 March 1967, it was driven off by the combined efforts of the local defense force, the RD cadre, and a Regional Force company. Most important to the successful defense of the hamlet was the intelligence which had been received of the VC operation. Three days before the attack residents alerted the cadre that an attack was in the offing. The evening before the attack a female resident of another hamlet in the same village "informed a cadre in Tan Qui hamlet of the presence of a 'strange' military unit in her hamlet." The cadres alerted the people and coordinated their efforts with the Regional Forces. "Prior warning of the attack by local residents was a direct measure of cadre-resident rapport and resulted in a VC military defeat and the successful defense of the Hamlet". (Fred Abramson, Memo, 19 March 1967.)

In three months of inquiry, Tan Qui hamlet was the one instance where pacification efforts seemed to have been successful in terms of stimulating a non-communal rural locality to act in its own self-defense in the absence of regular armed forces. Undoubtedly other cases exist, but undoubtedly also they are very few and far between. The pacification program to date

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has still to demonstrate that it can be successful in organizing villagers to defend themselves. This relative lack of success may, in part at least, derive from the very nature of the program itself. Its primary focus, after all, has been to produce security by introducing a governmental presence rather than by stimulating and helping the villagers to organize themselves.

In some measure, three conflicts exist between pacification through the extension of national authority and achieving security through the development of local and communal authority.

(1) The existing pacification programs put their primary emphasis upon achieving security through military means and then promoting economic and social development through material means. The marching orders are: Clear, Secure, Develop. The assumption appears to be that communal organization and political stability will, in large part, be products of military security and economic improvement. Success in pacification is measured by the decline in VC incidents and the increase in wells, school rooms, and roadage. As a result, the pacification efforts often fail to bring into existence organized groupings which can provide the institutional continuity and capacity to carry on the projects started by the pacification teams and then to initiate others.

The VC, in contrast, put their primary emphasis on developing an infrastructure and in preserving that infrastructure at all costs no matter what other sacrifices may be necessary. The differences between the GVN and VC approaches are nicely illustrated by their respective RD programs in a district in Phong Dinh Province:

"An analysis of a captured copy of the VC's own "RD" program in Phong Phu District reveals interesting similarities and dissimilarities with our RD program. It, too, builds for the people, cleaning out 4,000 meters of canal, planting 11,452 trees, and cares for the people, operating various med-caps. But, unlike GVN's program, it seems to be highly successful in mobilizing the people to do its work for it, primarily by political education meetings conducted at all levels for all groups. Even the medics undergo study of the "nine resolutions" and the "six bases" of the Revolution. Within the RD program itself, RD (cong tac xay dung and cong tac phat trien) is defined primarily in terms of establishment of new political cells, whose mission it is to proselytize the people and mobilize them to support directly the war against the enemy, i.e. construction of punjii stakes, laying of booby-traps, and destruction of roads.

"In comparing the GVN and VC RD programs, one is impressed by the greater emphasis on political organization and indoctrination of the people by the VC than by the GVN. And while the GVN program seems more comprehensive and efficient in helping the people economically and socially, it fails to involve them directly in the war against the enemy. More than a poorly trained, part-time VIS cadre relaying the news from Saigon over his little radio-loudspeaker unit is needed for a political indoctrination program in the hamlets. And more than a paper program is needed; rather, a program of action that evolves from while at the same time reinforces the indoctrination is essential. Formation of hamlet self-defense units and self-help projects could be good outlets for political expression, if they were given, this orientation.

As the VC know, political indoctrination will not be effective until it is directed at some feasible, immediate, and concrete course of action that command the active participation of the people." (James Culpepper, Monthly JUSPAO Provincial Report Part II Special Joint Report on Revolutionary Development, December 1966, Phong Dinh Province, 31 December 1966.)

(2) To the extent that pacification intensifies military activity in a region, it may also undermine and destroy non-communist rural organizations in that region. In several provinces in I Corps, for instance, the VNQDD has traditionally had a substantial following among the peasants and a good organization at the village and hamlet level. The increase in the military action in I Corps in 1965 and 1966 had disastrous effects upon this effective anti-Communist, rural political organization. It made it virtually impossible for the VNQDD leaders to maintain contact with their rural followers, and it tended to polarize rural loyalties between the Viet Cong, on the one hand, and the GVN military-administrative apparatus, on the other. It also stimulated many VNQDD-oriented peasants to move to the safety of the cities, thereby weakening the organized support for the government to the countryside.

(3) The slowly growing effectiveness of RD teams brings increasing conflicts between the teams and local village authorities.

Much of the criticism of the RD program has focused on the weaknesses of the cadres in terms of training, maturity, experience, and motivation. In the spring and summer of 1967 the RD effort in many areas was still plagued by these problems. In Kontum the RD teams were described as a total failure with often no more than 13 of the 59 men on duty; the Truong

Son teams, in contrast, were considerably more effective. In Chau Doc, the RD team performance was described in April 1967, as "mediocre". (Saigon A-604, 18 April 1967 CONF.) In August 1967, three of the five Chau Doc teams were still rated as no good. In Hau Nghia in July 1967 two of the six teams were rated as effective, due primarily to the good leadership of the district chief. But in general, it was said, the teams were more of a hindrance than a help during the first months on duty; most of the team members were very young; many were draft dodgers recruited from Saigon and Gia Dinh; and the turnover was said to be 84% in less than a year. The provincial RD chief of Quang Ngai reported in April 1967 that his RD teams "are the most corrupt people we have seen anywhere. They are more corrupt than the village officials they want to wipe out. All the peasants dislike them..." (State 174818, 14 April 1967, CONF.) In May 1967 the consensus of American opinion in An Xuyen was that "the RD program has not had much success". (K.S. Richardson, Memo: Notes on a Recent Trip to An Xuyen, 3 May 1967, LOU). The five teams assigned to the province had a total of 75 RD workers; one team had eight members. In January and February 1967 10% of the RD were fired for cause. (B. Kirkpatrick, Memo: Provincial Reporting-An Xuyen, 15 March 1967, CONF.)

While RD performance still leaves much to be desired in many places, much work has been done attempting to remove these deficiencies, and in several provinces American observers reported improvements in the quality of the teams. The increased effectiveness of the teams, however, creates new problems, particularly in the relationship of the team leaders to the traditional local authorities. The RD teams are, in the words of one U.S. official, an "alien intrusion" into the countryside. Village leaders often see the RD teams as much as threat

to themselves and their authority as to the VC and its power. In Chau Doc two out of five teams were reported to be doing a good job, but the success of one had been undermined by the team leader whose arrogant approach had completely alienated the leaders of the hamlet in which he was working. In Tay Ninh seven of eight RD teams were said to be not cooperating with village and hamlet authorities. Similar problems beset two of the three teams in Binh Chanh district of Gia Dinh; the third team, in contrast, was led by an older man (35 to 40) who cooperated very effectively with hamlet officials.

The RD teams function under the direction of the district chief. If the teams are ineffective, the blame is placed on the government. If they are effective in achieving their goals in the village, they show up the local leadership which had not been able to bring these benefits to the hamlet and create aspirations among the people which the local leadership will not be able to satisfy once the RD team moves on. The net effect of RD, in short, often is to undermine and weaken whatever patterns of authority and deference may exist at the village level, without creating anything permanent to take their place.

That this is likely to be the case is suggested by the attitudes of local leaders toward RD. Significantly, the stronger the local centers of power, the more intensely do the local leaders resent and oppose the intrusion of RD cadres. Catholic, Hoa Hao, Khmer, VNQDD, and Buddhist local leaders have all expressed sentiments along these lines. In Kien Phong the Hoa Hao-dominated provincial government was reported to show "little enthusiasm for the national Revolutionary Development program." (Saigon A-432, 8 February 1967, CONF; Saigon A-604, 18 April 1967, CONF.) Current pacification efforts, one Cambodian leader in the Delta said, will certainly fail "unless important changes are made. There must be adequate security at

[REDACTED]

the local level, which means that the GVN must trust villagers enough to arm and equip them well. In addition, RD cadre must truly be local people." (Saigon A-1, July 1967, CONF.) In Thua Thien and Vinh Long, Buddhist leaders spoke in similar terms about the gap between the RD cadres and their outlook and the people in the countryside.

Perhaps the most notable example of the type of conflict which can develop between local groups and the RD officials occurred in Quang Nam in 1966. All nine villages which were given priority in that year's pacification program were dominated by the VNQDD. The Province Chief and his deputies, however, refused to work with the Nationalists and as a result the latter actively opposed the RD program. Their opposition simply reflects the fact, they said, that "We were not consulted in the formulation or implementation of this plan." As one American observer commented: "This statement is essentially correct... Col. Tung systematically refused to work with the provincial council, and finally alienated them completely." At the village level, a similar pattern was followed by the provincial deputy for pacification who, it was said, "runs the pacification program with little regard for the wishes of the village committees -- which in the nine villages of Ngu Hanh Son campaign appear to be VNQDD dominated... Village chiefs are seldom consulted and have no voice in the placement of teams or the teams' modus operandi in their own villages." (R. Holbrooke, Memo, 13 February 1966, CONF) In this case, the local interest group was sufficiently powerful to make its opposition effective; in part due to VNQDD pressure felt higher up, Col. Tung was removed as province chief.

How real and extensive a threat the RD teams pose to local authority is difficult to evaluate. Two things, however, are clear. On one side, there is a very strong desire to overthrow existing local structures of authority, a desire which is implicit in the idea of bringing a

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"revolution" to the countryside and which is forcefully and eloquently articulated by the commandant of the Vung Tao Training Center, Major Nguyen Be. On the other side, there is the fear that this will indeed happen. If these hopes and fears materialize in any way, the result will be to create a vacuum of authority (just as Diem did on a larger scale with the sects) which can be more easily filled by the Viet Cong than by the Saigon government.

The attempt to achieve rural security through the introduction of a governmental presence from the outside cannot help but bring to mind the words Franklin Roosevelt used to describe his efforts to reform the United States Navy: "To change anything in the Navy is like punching a feather bed. You punch it with your right and you punch it with your left until you are finally exhausted, and then you find the damn bed just as it was before you started punching."

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III. URBANIZATION

Scope and Rate of Urbanization

As late as 1962 the population of Vietnam was estimated to be 80% to 85% rural. In late 1967 the most informed guesstimates placed the rural population at about 60% to 65% of the total, although some suggested an even division between urban and rural population. In five years, in short, it would appear that the urban population roughly doubled from 3,000,000 to over 6,000,000. This population movement is probably the most significant social change taking place in Vietnam today. It is, in large part, responsible for the relatively high proportion of the population which remained under government control in 1966 despite the considerable expansion of the area under VC control between 1963 and 1965. The movement to the cities is in part a result of the expansion of the VC and the intensification in 1965 and 1966 of U.S. and GVN military operations in response to that expansion. The net result has been to decrease the safety of the countryside and thus furnish a substantial "push" for movement to the city. At the same time the rapid expansion of US and GVN spending in the urban areas, the availability of jobs, and the increases in wages constituted a substantial "pull" factor adding inducements for urban migration.

Urbanization has been the single most important factor expanding the secure population during the past four years. Urbanization and the resulting increase in security have not in general, however, been conscious goals of US and GVN policies, although in some instances military operations apparently have been designed to "generate refugees". These cases have occurred mostly in the Central Lowlands and they appear to account for only a small fraction of the total number of refugees. Nonetheless, probably the most important political result of the intensification of the war has been precisely the increase in the secure population produced by urbanization.

Urbanization is, at least in the short turn, one way of reducing the insecurity of the rural population. In helping

to solve this problem, however, it also creates others. It obviously and immediately adds to the social problems of the cities. In the longer run it is very likely to increase urban political instability. More immediately it could also increase urban insecurity if Viet Cong personnel and organization follow the peasants cityward. Whatever its other costs and disadvantages, however, urbanization is one effective solution to the problem of rural insecurity.

Most estimates are vague as to the criterion for distinguishing between urban and rural population. In this discussion the term "urban population" refers to people living in population centers of at least 20,000 persons. Inasmuch as the figures for any single city are, in most cases, guestimates, the best way of arriving at a figure for the overall urban population is to group cities in six general categories of size, assume an average population for the cities in that category, and then add the resulting totals for each for the total estimated urban population of 5,960,000. The detailed breakdown of this estimate is shown in Table III. Saigon itself accounts for about 44% of the urban population of the country (15% of the total population) and the capital metropolitan area (the city plus Gia Dinh) constitutes 61% of the urban population and 21% of the total population.* Over 27% of the population of South Vietnam lives in cities of 75,000 or more population, and 35.19% lives in urban centers over 20,000. By this measure South Vietnam in 1967 was more urban than France in 1954 (29.8%), Switzerland in 1960 (29.9%), Italy in 1955 (30.3%), Czechoslovakia in 1961 (25.3%), Belgium in 1947 (32.0%), and

* A substantial minority of the Gia Dinh population does not live in localities of 20,000 or more people. The entire province, however, is such an integral part of the Saigon metropolitan area that it seems reasonable to classify this essentially suburban population as "urban" rather than "rural".

TABLE III

ESTIMATED URBAN POPULATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM, JULY 1967

1.	The Capital District		3,650,000
	Saigon-Cholon	2,600,000	
	Gia Dinh	1,050,000	
2.	Danang		250,000
3.	Three cities, 100-150,000 (av. 125,000)		375,000
	Qui Nhon		
	Hue		
	Nhatrang		
4.	Five cities, 75,000-100,000 (av. 85,000)		425,000
	Ban Me Thuot	Dalat	
	Can Tho	Phan Thiet	
	My Tho		
5.	Seven cities, 50,000-75,000 (av. 60,000)		420,000
	Pleiku	Vung Tao	
	Bien Hoa	Kontum	
	An Loc	Cam Rang	
	Rach Gia		
6.	Twenty-eight cities, 20,000-50,000 (av. 30,000)		840,000
	Long Xuyen	Cho Moi	
	Tan An	Thot Not	
	Vinh Long	Gia Ria	
	Khang Hung	Vinh Loi	
	Quan Long	Cu Chi	
	An Khe	Hoa Da	
	Chau Phu	Duc Long	
	Tan Chau	Go Cong	
	Phu Cuong	Kien Thanh	
	Tay Ninh	Truc Giang	
	Phan Rang	Binh Dai	
	Tuy Hoa	Hieu Thien	
	Phu Vinh	Trang Bang	
	Hoi An	Sa Dec	
	Total Urban population		5,960,000

Norway in 1950 (32.8%), and was almost as urban as the Soviet Union in 1959 (35.5%) or East Germany in 1958 (36.2%). South Vietnam, in short, is now just about as urban as much of Europe in recent years. The image of South Vietnam as a country exclusively composed of peasants and landlords has little relationship to reality.

The most significant changes in urban population took place after the fall of Diem and particularly after the arrival of U.S. combat forces in the spring of 1965. Indeed, there is some reason to think that rate of urbanization for South Vietnam for the overall decade from 1956 to 1966 would be about normal for Southeast Asian countries and that it was significantly lower than normal during the first part of this decade and very much higher than normal after 1963. It is probable that the overall urban population doubled between 1963 and 1967. In 1966 alone 785,000 people are reported to have moved from the countryside to cities. The increases in urban population took place in four areas.

(1) The Capital Metropolitan District. The rate of growth of the district was less than that of several other cities but the absolute amount of growth was, of course, much greater. In 1962 the population of Saigon-Cholon was estimated at 1,400,000. In 1965 the Doxiadis Associates placed it at 2,474,000. Some US and GVN estimates in 1967 placed it lower, at about 2,334,000. If the Doxiadis estimate for 1965 was correct, however, the Saigon population in 1967 must have amounted to at least 2,600,000. The population of Gia Dinh was estimated at 778,000 in 1964 and 1,050,000 in 1967, an increase of 35% in three years. For the district as a whole, the estimates run up to 4,000,000 to 4,500,000.

(2) Lowland Base Cities. In cities which became the sites of substantial American bases or troop concentrations, the population generally more than doubled between 1964 and 1967. The more notable instances of growth were Danang, Qui Nhon, Nhatrang, Bien Hoa and Cam Ranh. In contrast, one of Vietnam's largest cities, Hue, where there was little American impact, had a very small population growth.

Table 2

POPULATION INCREASE, LOWLAND BASE CITIES AND HUE, 1963-1967

	Population Estimates		Percentage Change
	1963	1967	
Danang	120,000	250,000	100%
Qui Nhon	50,000	150,000	200%
Nha Trang	53,000	105,000	100%
Cam Ranh	5,000	50,000	900%
Bien Hoa	30,000		
Hue	104,000	116,000	12%

(3) Highland Cities. The population centers in the central highlands probably had the most rapid population growth of any group of cities. This was due to the deployment of American troops to these towns, the intensification of the war in the highlands, and the conscious efforts by the GVN to resettle Montagnard communities in more secure areas. The overall rate of increase in the principal Highland cities undoubtedly averaged over 200% in less than four years.

Table 3

POPULATION INCREASE, HIGHLAND CITIES, 1963-1967

	Population Estimates		Percentage Change
	1963	1967	
Ban Me Thuot	30,000	85,000	180%
Kontum	18,000		
Pleiku	14,000	50,000	260%

(4) Delta Cities. Urban population increases in the Delta between 1963 and 1967 were significant when compared to normal growth trends but were much smaller than those in other cities. On the average the urban population of the Delta seems to have grown between 30% and 40% between 1963 and 1967. In at least one case, Tan Xuyen, the population may have declined slightly. The lower intensity of the war in the Delta and the corresponding small American presence, of course, explain the difference between Delta cities and other cities and also furnish some measure of the extent to which the more rapid growth of the other cities is attributable to the war.

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TABLE IV

POPULATION INCREASE, DELTA CITIES, 1963-1967

	Population Estimates 1963	1967	Percentage Change
Can Tho	60,000	80,000	33%
Khang Hung	34,000	45,000	33%
Vinh Long	30,000	42,000	40%
Tan Xuyen	34,000	33,000	-
Tan An	22,000		
My Tho	64,000	75,000	17%
Long Xuyen	25,000		
Rach Gia	50,000	60,000	20%

In summary, the increases in population of the principal urban areas in Vietnam between 1963 and 1967 were roughly:

1. Capital metropolitan district 75%
2. Lowland base cities 100-200%
3. Highland cities 200+
4. Major Delta Cities 30-40%

Permanence of Urbanization

The population increases in all cases were undoubtedly due to some combination of the push of rural military insecurity and the pull of urban economic prosperity. The ending or significant reduction in military activity would end the push and dilute the pull. The problem then becomes: How much of the intense urbanization of the mid-1960s will last? Will the peasants who have moved to the cities pack up and move back to the countryside when the war is over? In answer to these questions several points can be made.

Pacification of the countryside will not by itself induce any significant movement back to the countryside. Except in rare and highly peculiar circumstances no major reversals of urban population flows have ever occurred in any country in modern history. Nor is there any reason why Vietnam should prove an exception to this rule. Refugees by definition have been more pushed from the countryside than pulled from it. Hence it is not surprising that in a survey of a national sample of 21,892 heads of refugee families, 73% said they wanted to return to their village. Some 24%, however, said they wanted to remain where they were, and evidence from other sources suggests considerable ambivalence on the part of the refugees. In the Phu Yen refugee survey only 40% said they wanted to return to their villages, and less than three percent indicated that they expected to return. Significantly, much higher proportions of those who had owned more land in the countryside indicated a desire to return to the countryside than of those who had owned little or no land in the countryside. Also refugees who had nonagricultural occupations were much less inclined to want to return to their hamlets than those who had worked as farmers. Substantiating these survey findings was the experience of Qui Nhon where it proved very difficult to persuade

Catholic refugees to return to their villages once they had been cleared of VC. Out of 10,000 refugees, some 2,000 went back. The remainder preferred to stay in Qui Nhon where a family of four, it was estimated, could earn VN \$100,000 a year compared to the VN \$20,000 which it might make tilling its fields. (Saigon A-414, 6 February 1967, CONF.)

Any significant return to the countryside will depend upon a drastic change in the economic conditions in the countryside compared to those in the cities. If the reduction of military activity is followed by substantial urban unemployment, significant rural economic opportunities, and the absence of counterbalancing urban relief, welfare, or public works programs, then some movement back to the countryside is likely. It seems relatively unlikely, however, that all three of these conditions will be met. To be unemployed in the city may well be preferable for many people than to be underemployed in the countryside. In Phu Yen substantial majorities of the refugees who had been in the two lower income groups before migration were receiving the same or higher income in the refugee resettlement areas. A determined governmental program to expand agricultural production and increase rural prosperity might well draw some people back to the countryside. But it would seem that any substantial reverse flow would not occur naturally and would instead have to be the result of deliberate governmental policies designed to stimulate it.

Security and Stability

The growth of the urban population increases security and decreases political stability.

In terms of security it is much more difficult for the Viet Cong to win support, develop cadres, and carry out military and political activities in the city

than in the countryside. In general in the cities the Viet Cong is not in a position to launch its own movement against the government; instead it has to capitalize on the opposition to the government of other groups and to attempt to influence and to manipulate those other groups for its own end.

Since 1965 the Viet Cong has explicitly attempted to strengthen itself in the cities and has recognized the cities as a key arena of struggle. In April 1966 North Vietnamese General Nguyen Van Vinh, Chairman of the Lao Dong Party Reunification Department, said in a speech to the Viet Cong Fourth COSVN Congress that "We should introduce our forces into the cities in order to strengthen our forces there." In the spring of 1967 the Viet Cong leadership called for: more attacks in urban areas, more large scale actions in suburban areas, and the development of organizations in the urban slums which would "create self-defense forces and guerrilla cells and, particularly, try to rally and use extensively draft dodgers." In their urban efforts the Viet Cong have laid particular stress on mobilizing support among the workers and influencing trade unions. They have also emphasized the desirability of winning support among intellectuals and students and have achieved greater success among those groups than among any others. At the October 1965 meeting of the MR 4 Committee of the PRP, for instance, cadres responsible for working with youth and students in Saigon reported that

a great deal of improvement and success had been achieved in the area of student activities. Students in high schools and universities were easy to approach and to influence and had positive struggle goals, based on school conditions, to which cadres could appeal. A report given at the meeting indicated that cadres among the students represented the strongest single force in the city in terms of class segments of the population (TDCS 314/08791-67, 19 June 1967),
CONF/NOFORN)

In 1966 although the VC reportedly "made some progress...especially in expanding their urban organizations and operations, their fundamental objectives probably were not met." (TDCS314/04937-67, 12 April 1967, CONF/NOFORN.) In general, the VC encounter major difficulties in operating within the city. A 1966 VC report on the "Urban Sapper Movement" noted that: "To date, hundreds of enemy bases and rear area installations remain unattacked. A number of cities, such as Hue, Dalat, etc., scores of province capitals, district seats, strategic hamlets, and arteries of communication remain safe or relatively safe to the enemy." In the spring of 1967 another VC report held that "the armed activity in the urban area is still too weak, far from satisfying the requirements and is not compatible with the development of the political situation in the city." (Liberation Armed Forces, MR4, "The Winter-Spring Resolution, 1967," Saigon A-585.)

The VC have to go to extraordinary lengths to protect their urban infrastructure, including keeping their members in almost total isolation from each other. This necessarily decreases the effectiveness of their units. Even so the GVN has had some marked successes in penetrating and destroying VC urban cadres. The arrest of 40 district and region level cadres in MR4 (Saigon) between October 1966 and May 1967, for instance, dealt a crippling blow to VC capacity to operate within the capital metropolitan district. Included among the cadres arrested were: 4 members of the MR4 Party Committee; 2 members of the Di An District Party Committee; 1 member of the Thu Doc District Party Committee; the chief and four other members of MR4 Economic-Finance Section; the chief, deputy chief, and four other cadres of the MR4 Workers' Proselytising Section. In July and August 1967 several VC Special Action Cells in Saigon were broken up and thirty cadres and a large number of weapons captured by the police.

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Obviously the VC can, as they did during the month before the September 3rd election, mount a series of terroristic attacks in the cities. But it also appears clear that they do not have the capacity to maintain a high incident rate for any length of time, and it is very clear that their urban infrastructures are highly vulnerable to counter operations by the police. The difficulty which the GVN has in operating in rural areas appears to be at least matched by the difficulty which the VC has in operating in urban areas.

The opportunity for the VC in the cities thus will come not from the strength of its own organization but from its ability to capitalize upon the political instability which also characterizes the cities. Some indication of the ways in which this can work were, of course, furnished by the experiences of the 1966 Struggle Movement in I Corps. Insecurity will be the byproduct of extreme instability. The potential of the cities for instability in turn is very great. In advanced industrial societies the urban middle class is a great force for political stability. In societies emerging from the traditional context, however, the urban middle class is the source of opposition to the government. Its leading elements--intellectuals, military officers, civil servants, professional men, teachers--imbibe modern and western values and aspirations and become acutely conscious of the extent to which their own society fails to measure up in terms of these standards. They thus tend to be alienated from and hostile to almost any government in power. The city is, consequently, the continuing center of opposition to the government. If the government is to remain stable it normally must depend upon the support of the more numerous and more powerful elements in the countryside. In Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Morocco, as well as numerous other countries, this pattern has been manifested again and again. Political stability depends

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upon the government organizing effective support among rural groups to contain and to limit the opposition which is the constant feature of urban political life. If in addition to the continuing opposition in the cities, the government also suffers from revolution in the countryside, then, as in South Vietnam, the prospects for stability become frail indeed.

In South Vietnam as in similar modernizing societies opposition to the government has been a feature of urban life. In the 1961 presidential election Diem got only 48% of the vote in Saigon, although he rolled up huge majorities in the countryside. In the 1967 election the Thieu-Ky ticket failed to win pluralities in Saigon, Danang, and Hue. In 1963 urban elements led the opposition to Diem and were eventually responsible for his overthrow. In the succeeding two years the governments continually confronted the threats of urban mobs, riots, demonstrations, and coups. In 1966 the struggle movement again had its principal support in the cities and notably failed to recruit substantial rural backing. If the South Vietnamese government could count on the support of the countryside this urban opposition could be contained and defeated. The revolution in the countryside, however, seriously undermines the ability of the government to contain the opposition in the cities. To the extent that the cities grow larger, the long-run sources of opposition within the cities will grow stronger. But to the extent that city opposition comes to substitute for peasant revolution, the jump from the rural frying pan into the urban fire may well be a welcome move from the viewpoint of the government. As of 1967 the opposition in the cities posed problems for political stability but not, as yet, for internal security.

Sources of Urban Unrest:

Middle Class and Students

The principal threat to political stability in the cities comes from the middle class. As in any

rapidly changing economy, the economic position of some middle class elements is improving, that of others declining. A new independent, entrepreneurial middle class is obviously capitalizing on the war to make lots of money. These nouveaux riches, in turn, threaten the older established middle class centered about the civilian and military bureaucracy. This old middle class of professionals and bureaucrats has suffered from the boom and the inflation. The salaries which its members can make at "proper" jobs are only a fraction of what those less inhibited by middle class standards can make at less respectable activities. Caught in the economic squeeze, the members of the old middle class have three ways of making ends meet. They can, first, exploit their bureaucratic positions for their own benefit and engage in corruption. Most observers agree that corruption was far less of a problem during the Diem era than it is now. During the past few years the increased supply of material assistance has multiplied the opportunities for corruption, and the intensified inflation has increased the incentives to it. Secondly, the fixed-income middle class can moonlight and take on additional jobs, frequently lower status ones, in an effort to maintain their economic position. Thirdly, they can abandon their old occupations entirely and attempt to assume business roles where they can ride on and benefit from the economic boom.

Whatever course they take, the members of the old middle class sustain considerable economic hardship. More importantly, they suffer a very severe loss of status in their own eyes and in the eyes of many other groups in society. If these trends continue, the United States may well achieve in five years what the Viet Cong has been unable to do in twenty; the destruction of the established urban middle class which has constituted for decades the hard core of the governmental system.

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As is normal in such situations in modernizing countries, the discontent produced by these changes in relative economic well-being and social status are most explicitly manifested among intellectuals and students. These groups rationalize and generalize the economic sources of discontent into inflammatory ideological and emotional issues. Although intellectuals and students are in some respects the most "modern" and "western" elements in Vietnamese society, they also tend to develop a romantic infatuation with the traditional way of life. They become highly nationalistic and xenophobic and hence blame the corruption and destruction of their old values and ways on the United States. (See below, Section V.) The most easily politicized and most easily mobilized segment of this alienated middle class is most likely to be the students.

Compared to students in other countries of Asia and Latin America at similar levels of development, the students in South Vietnam have not, however, been a tremendously powerful or radical political force. In 1963, to be sure, student demonstrations following the Buddhist protests helped generate the crisis which led to the overthrow of Diem. A year later student groups played an important role in stopping General Khanh. But, in general, the student of comparative student movements cannot help but be impressed by the relative political weakness and passivity of Vietnamese students up to the present time. Several causes appear to be responsible for this.

(1) While there are and have been large numbers of youth in Vietnam, there have also been relatively small numbers of university students. In 1960 the total student population was only 9,000. In 1967 there were about 31,000 university students, distributed roughly as follows:

Saigon	25,000
Hue	2,500
Dalat	1,800

Can Tho	900
Van Hanh	1,000

In South Korea, in contrast, there were 90,000 students in Seoul alone in 1960. These quantitative differences themselves may explain why Korean students have been so much more important and influential politically than Vietnamese students.

(2) Like most groups in South Vietnam, the student movement has been thoroughly fragmented. The bulk of the students are in the capital, but the Hue students like to think of themselves as the political and intellectual leaders. The rivalry between the Hue and Saigon student groups has made it impossible to develop a national student organization and has seriously obstructed student efforts to exercise political influence. In the 1966 struggle movement, for instance, Buddhists and students cooperated closely in Hue, but in Saigon the principal student groups refused to join the movement, and, in the end, the head of the Saigon Student Union was kidnapped by the Buddhists. Further divisions exist within the Saigon student body, among faculties and among conflicting ideological groups. This organizational fragmentation is reinforced by the physical dispersion of Saigon university dormitories and other buildings which complicates communication among students and the mobilization of students for political action. Groups of ex-students or squatters have maintained themselves by force in some dormitories, and, indeed, in 1966 drove off with small arms fire one police attempt to evict them. To date, however, their capabilities for this sort of action appear almost purely defensive.

(3) The great bulk of the students seem to have private concerns and goals, and even student leaders have shown a considerable willingness to be

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seduced into conformist bourgeois behavior by suitable employment opportunities. The preoccupation with relatively selfish, immediate, personal goals which makes any sort of political action difficult in South Vietnam also makes collective student action difficult.

(4) The repressive machinery of the GVN to deal with student opposition seems to be quite efficient. The government has not hesitated to arrest student troublemakers. As of the summer of 1967, for instance, some 80 Hue student leaders were reportedly still in jail as a result of their role in the 1966 struggle movement. Others, who had escaped jail, had been impelled to flee to the hills and join the VC. Consequently, for a short while at least until a new generation of student leaders arises, the most able potential leaders of student opposition have been removed from the scene.

(5) Finally, an impressive number of highly constructive outlets for student and youth energies have been organized in recent years. These activities in part are tribute to the social conscience and responsibility which exists among a small number of students, in part reflect the efforts of Prime Minister Ky in 1965 and 1966 to win support among youth and students, and in part were the result of American initiative. The Summer Youth Program of 1965 which involved some 8,000 students in rural construction activities was the outgrowth of American concern with the student political activity in the fall of 1964. The District 8 urban development program, which began in the fall of 1965, was the product of purely Vietnamese youth and student initiatives. Inspired by these programs and to some extent growing out of them have been numerous additional constructive student activities devoted to promoting education, refugee welfare, rural improvement, urban rehabilitation, and other worthwhile ends. The relative success and appeal of these activities suggests that the politically aware Vietnamese students are, as

of the moment, far less seized by the "oppositional mentality" than students in most other modernizing countries.

These constructive programs are, in themselves, also one indication that the political passivity of Vietnamese students is beginning to decline. In 1967 there were also many other signs of an increasing political consciousness and concern along student groups. Student political discussion and activity was reviving at Saigon and getting under way at Can Tho. These developments coincided, however, with an apparent shift in governmental attitudes toward student political activity. In 1965 and 1966, that attitude was reasonably permissive. At the end of 1966, with the departure from the government of Vo Long Trieu, the GVN began to take a more restrictive line. "All political activities," the Commissioner for Education declared in June 1967, "performed within the school and in the name of the school should be absolutely forbidden." As the District 8 program spread to Districts 6 and 7 and seemingly began to furnish the base for an autonomous center of urban political power, governmental cooperation with the program also began to recede. Similarly, the student-organized Cam Lo refugee camp project which involved some 600 students was stopped at least temporarily during the summer of 1967 by the Youth Department, allegedly for "security reasons". As a result of this general shift in GVN attitude, moderate student leaders in mid-1967 declared that they felt more alienated from the government than at any time since the fall of Diem.

In conclusion on students, several points stand out:

(1) Student and youth groups have been involved in politics but in the past their political activity and influence in South Vietnam has been less than it has been in many comparable countries.

(2) The past two years have seen an increase in student political activity and concern which has been directed, in many cases, into highly constructive development projects.

(3) The GVN became much more alienated from the students and youth in 1967 than it was in 1965 and 1966.

(4) Given the very likely continuing increase in student political concern, the GVN should make every effort to channel this concern into constructive outlets and to encourage and support projects like District 8 and Cam Lo.

(5) Student oppositional political activity will undoubtedly increase in the immediate future; if the GVN fails to divert some of this into constructive channels, such oppositional political activity is certain to become a serious threat to political stability.

Sources of Urban Unrest:

Slum Dwellers

In Saigon and the other rapidly growing cities of Vietnam the mushrooming of the urban slum--the bidonville, favela, rancho, of Africa and Latin America--is perhaps the most notable physical development on the urban scene. In Saigon, perhaps 70% of the population lives in this type of quarter. The social problems of the slums are manifest and depressing. Housing, health, sanitation, education, electricity, and water, are all in short or uncertain supply. In addition little social organization exists in the slums, except in the rare cases where groups of refugees, usually Catholic or Cao Dai, have brought with them the rural authority structures of their hamlets. Not only is

there an absence of community organization, but the family too seems to decay as a social institution. Fathers are less in evidence; mothers and sisters often work and may earn more than fathers. It is not inconceivable that war plus slum urbanization could produce a Vietnamese family situation not altogether dissimilar from that which the Moynihan report found to exist among Negro families in American urban slums. This decay of the family, if it continues, bodes ill for the future stability and economic development of South Vietnam.

For the present and immediate future, however, the rapid growth of the urban slums does not pose any insuperable political problems for the Vietnamese polity. It is a common phenomenon in all modernizing countries that the first generation of migrants into the cities by and large does not become a major focus of extremism or of opposition to the government. Little reason exists to expect that Vietnam will be much different. To date the slums have remained passive politically; in the light of the experience of other countries it appears probable that they will remain so for perhaps another decade or more. Once the second generation of children who have grown up in the slum emerges into adolescence, however, the slums will be ripe for extremism and violence. The reasons for both current passivity and future unrest lie in the relationship between aspirations and achievement.

In general the poorer peasant who moves into the city is better off in the city than he was in the countryside. He brings with him, however, the expectations of the countryside, and consequently he is more often than not satisfied with the rewards of the city, however miserable his urban existence may appear to the long-term (and particular middle class) urban dweller. The richer peasant who, on the other hand, is pushed into the city by the insecurity of the

countryside, may well suffer a decline in his standard of living and consequently he is a more likely source of discontent than the poorer urban migrant. In South Vietnam today poorer urban migrants often earn five to twelve times as much in the city as they did in the countryside. And the rush of population to the city has not diluted the rising tide of urban prosperity. Those who have been in the city are also improving their standards of life there. The same processes of urban growth which make life less tolerable for many middle class elements make it much more attractive for many lower class groups. The poor who become less poor as a result of economic growth are much less of a threat to political stability than those comfortably off who lose a few of their comforts.

This general pattern is well illustrated by the changes in the Xum Chua slum quarter of Saigon between early 1965 and August 1966. The population of the quarter had increased by roughly 30% during these eighteen months. During the same period, however, many improvements had taken place in the physical environment of the slum. New houses, cemented sidewalks and pathways, and three new wells had been built. "A number of people speak with pride of the area," it was reported in the fall of 1966, "and tell of the improvements that have been made in the last five, seven, ten or so years, since the time when their particular houses were surrounded by swamp, there were no sidewalks, water was hard to get. etc." ("Life in a Vietnamese Urban Quarter: Reviewed 1966".) At the same time, electricity remained scarce, no sewage system existed, the city bus system had stopped, medicine and health facilities became more difficult of access, and public school classes remained limited to two hours a day. On the other hand, the economic boom in Saigon had greatly increased the disposable income for most families in the district. "Although people with steady income and those caught between job changes are suffering

with the inflation, the majority of families in this area have a much greater income due to higher paying jobs or more members of the family being employed." In 1965 an estimated 33% of the adult males were unemployed; in 1966 about 5% were. In 1965 the average income was VN \$2,000 per month; in 1966 it was VN \$4,000-5,000 per month. VC agents were reported to be active distributing propaganda (in the summer of 1966 against the Constituent Assembly election), but they seemingly did not pose any real security problem and the effectiveness of the police had increased.

The combination of rural aspirations plus urban prosperity has thus precluded any substantial unrest in the urban slums. This combination can, however, be disrupted by a change in either of its two components. A marked economic decline in the cities, coming after several years of boom, could cause a gap between aspirations and expectations which might lead to riots and unrest. Several social scientists, indeed, have argued it is precisely this pattern of fairly sustained economic improvement followed by a sharp economic downturn which has preceded most significant revolts and revolution in history. The outbreak of peace, consequently, might well be followed by a major increase in urban unrest. Presumably the economic and social conditions contributing to this unrest could be alleviated either by: (a) governmental efforts for the rapid resettlement of urban slum dwellers on farmlands in the rural area; and/or (b) substantial counter-depression urban public works and industrial development programs which would provide a peacetime substitute for wartime employment.

In the longer run, a substantial increase in slum-based urban unrest seems almost unavoidable. The children who grow up in the slums--like those of Harlem and Watts--will have aspirations shaped by the urban environment. In Rio, Calcutta, and elsewhere,

those people who have lived longer in the city or who have grown up in the city are more prone to violence and extremism than those who have just migrated in from the countryside. "The older generation," as Claude Brown said, speaking as a Harlem teenager, "subscribed to the myth that they were inferior and they weren't supposed to get any more than the white society was giving them. This generation doesn't believe that any more, because of TV, because of the upbringing they have had, because of the exposure to the popular magazines and this sort of thing, and this generation wants its share. It demands its share." In ten to fifteen years the semi-literate children now being bred in the Saigon slums will demand their share with potentially disastrous consequences for the political stability of their country. The only way to meet this challenge will be for the government to mobilize overwhelming support from the countryside. The very process of urbanization which reduces the problem of insecurity in the countryside increases the problem of instability in the cities. If the political system has to confront widespread mass unrest in the cities before it has established reasonably effective control in the countryside, it will be faced with a two-front war with which it will be totally unable to cope. To avoid this the government must achieve an accommodation with the principal groups in the countryside.

IV. ACCOMMODATION

Introduction

The theory of pacification has assumed that the extension of governmental control and a governmental presence into the rural areas will create a sense of national identity among the peasants and that the development of national loyalties will, in turn, produce resistance to the VC and hence security. In actuality, however, this assumed sequence--governmental control, national identification, security--which has underlain every pacification effort since Diem has never worked in practice. In fact, continuing security in the rural areas has been the product of communal identification and organization, and the resulting security has then made possible the extension of government control into those areas. The sequence has not been: governmental control, national loyalty, internal security. It has been: communal organization, internal security, governmental control. The exercise of governmental authority has been a product of internal security produced by other factors rather than a prerequisite to the achievement of such security. Governmental authority is, in fact, only effectively exercised in those rural areas where the government has come to terms with the local power structure and with ethnic or religious groups.

The relationship between communalism and nationalism in South Vietnam is almost precisely the opposite of what it is in most other Southeast Asian countries. In Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, and elsewhere the ethnic and religious minorities are the principal sources of opposition to the political system. In South Vietnam, in contrast, the religious and ethnic minorities are centers of support for the system and the relatively unorganized majority groups--the ethnic Vietnamese with Confucianist, Buddhist, and animist religious beliefs (the CRABVNS)--are the principal source of alienation and disaffection. The religious and ethnic communities comprise 40% of the total population of Vietnam and

perhaps 45% of the rural population. (See Tables I and II.) The argument which is often made that only the VC have demonstrated the ability to organize peasants simply does not square with the facts. In 1967 the VC had effectively organized something like 3,000,000 peasants. The religious communities, on the other hand, had organized an estimated 3,700,000 peasants (1,500,000 Hoa Hao; 1,200,000 Cao Dai; 1,000,000 Catholics). In addition, a million more rural residents belonged to and were organized by ethnic communities, primarily Montagnard and Khmer. The ethnic and religious minorities have thus organized socially and politically on the government side a larger proportion of the peasants than the VC have organized on their side.

The corollary to this is the failure of the government to establish effective organization among the ethnic-religious majority in the rural areas (the CRABVNS). Not only are the areas controlled by the ethnic and religious minorities relatively secure, but in the countryside only the areas controlled by such minorities have had a high degree of continuing security in the absence of substantial ARVN or Allied military forces. "What rural areas of South Vietnam have achieved a high degree of continuing security in the absence of either (a) substantial governmental military forces and/or (b) an ethnic or religious minority?" In my travels to fifteen provinces in all four regions, I consistently asked this question and never received any answer.

The continually secure areas in the countryside are those which have been organized by religious or ethnic communities. The most secure province in South Vietnam is An Giang, in which there are no US combat units nor any major ARVN combat units. The security of An Giang is a product of the political control of the Hoa Hao. The VC have tried to penetrate An Giang but have failed to do so, largely because they have been unable or unwilling to adapt their activities to the local conditions. As a result, in An Giang the VC

cadres are separated from the people much as the GVN cadres are elsewhere, and for much the same reasons. In the words of one An Giang VC party official:

"The most grievous and inexcusable element in this estrangement of the VC in An Giang province from the people is the former's lack of understanding of, and rapport with, the significant political/religious groups in the province, the Hoa Hao and the Cambodians. The VC have been guilty of disrespect of the traditions and customs of these people and have viewed the Hoa Hao and Cambodians as something less than equal and, in many cases, subhuman. For example, the VC have forced Hoa Hao peasants living in VC areas to cut their hair short rather than allowing them to grow the hair long and bind it in a 'bun' at the rear of the head, as is the Hoa Hao custom in rural areas. The VC in An Giang have despised the 'primitive and uneducated' Cambodians and have shown real racial discrimination toward the Khymers. The VC have laughed at the deference shown by the Cambodians toward their spiritual leaders, the monks, and have shown lack of respect by failing to take off their hats and by refusing to clasp their hands in attitude of prayer when meeting the Cambodian monks. On the contrary, the VC go out of their way to consider themselves superior to the Cambodians and slight them at every opportunity." (FVS-15, 164, 14 June 1967, CONF/NOFORN.)

This description of the attitudes of VC cadre toward the Hoa Hao and Cambodians duplicates many descriptions of the attitudes of GVN officials toward CRABVNS.

The Hoa Hao are concentrated geographically and hence are able to provide reasonably effective security over the contiguous areas of five or six Delta provinces. The Cao Dai and the Catholics tend to be more dispersed, but even so, relatively small Catholic or Cao Dai

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communities may achieve a high degree of security in areas otherwise subject to VC penetration or control. In Hau Nghia, for instance, the village of An Hoa is dominated by and organized by its large Catholic minority. Although in a part of the province which is highly insecure, the hamlets in the village have been relatively safe from attack. (See Saigon A-569, 30 March 1967, LOU.) The village is reported to have a local defense force of eighty rifles. Obviously the VC could overrun it if they wished to mount a battalion-sized attack and suffer the losses which they would incur in a struggle against united and deeply committed defenders. But this would be a very costly victory. An Hoa, as a result, remains an island of security for much the same reason that Switzerland has been able to maintain itself without invasion in the midst of the major power rivalries of Europe. It is just too hard and solid a nut to attempt to crack.

This experience suggests that the effort to establish internal security through the development of national loyalties may well be a fruitless uphill struggle. Certainly it has shown few signs of success so far. In contrast, those areas which have the most highly developed communal identifications and loyalties are also those where the GVN authority is strongest. Security is a product of group identity not national identity.

This argument derived from the actual way in which security has been achieved in the rural areas inevitably stimulates a rebuttal. Isn't precisely the problem in Vietnam the extent of social and political fragmentation and the weakness of national loyalties in the face of local and communal identifications? As the history of many other countries in Asia and Africa demonstrates, communal loyalties can disrupt and tear apart a national community. These arguments are obviously true in many cases. But clearly the reverse can be true. Communal loyalties can be the building blocks of national loyalty. Identification with a local or ethnic

group may help create a sense of national identity, so long as the latter does not impose requirements which conflict with the former. For two-thirds of his life; Robert E. Lee did not have to choose between his loyalty to Virginia and his loyalty to the United States; indeed, his loyalty to the latter was reinforced by his loyalty to the former.

In Vietnam it is clear that communal loyalties do not necessarily have to reinforce national authority. In the past they have often not done so. Typically, however, the relation of communal groups to the central government has evolved through four phases. In the first phase, the group develops social and political consciousness. In due course, the development of the group produces a challenge to central authority and a confrontation between the group and the central government. This confrontation often takes the form of armed conflict, from which the central government emerges victorious. The defeat and withdrawal of the communal group leads to a period of isolation and then to the renewal of ties between the group and the central government. In due course an accommodation is worked out between the group and the government. The group is reintegrated into the broader community and participates politically in its activities, asserting its claims on the larger community through political rather than military means.

In some measure, almost all the organized groups in Vietnamese society have shared in this pattern of evolution, including the VNQDD and Dai Viet political parties, the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, the Chinese, and the Montagnards. The ethnic groups, of course, had been part of the Vietnamese scene for decades. The parties and sects developed in the 1920s and 1930s. At one point or another, most of these groups (with the exception of the Chinese) developed their own military forces and came into armed conflict with the central government. Diem's great effort in the 1950s was to reassert (or to assert) the authority of the central

government over these groups. He successfully suppressed the parties, cowed the Montagnards, and defeated the private armies of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen. In so doing this he played the role of the centralizing, modernizing monarch, a role similar to that which Louis XIII and XIV played in the seventeenth century France, Joseph II in eighteenth century Austria-Hungary, Mahmoud II in nineteenth century Ottoman Empire, and Reza Shah Pahlevi in twentieth century Persia.

Like these other centralizing and modernizing rulers, however, Diem was not successful in creating new institutional links and intermediate structures capable of tying the key segments of the population to the central government. In fact, after 1963 the Viet Cong were most successful precisely in those areas where Diem had been most successful in centralizing authority. The VC was weakest in those areas where Diem had imposed the least change on the countryside or where the changes which he had imposed had been quickly eliminated after his fall. By attempting to homogenize the population, Diem also alienated it. By weakening traditional structures, party organizations, and communal groups, he helped to create a vacuum of organization and identity which the Viet Cong moved in to fill. In this case, as in so many others in history, the effort to centralize power paved the way for its revolutionary overthrow.

Diem won his military confrontation with the sects, the parties, and the ethnic communities. But he was only successful in destroying Binh Xuyen. Weakened and disarmed, the other groups retreated to a stance of isolation and indifference toward the central government. With Diem's overthrow, the groups re-entered the political scene, worked out accommodations with central government, received many concessions from that government, and thus came to represent semi-autonomous centers of power within the political system. As such they also came to be principal loci of governmental authority in the rural areas. The most effective way of extending the authority of the central government is

not to attempt to expand the power of the government directly but rather to reach accommodations with autonomous sources of power. The experience of Vietnam demonstrates conclusively that it is the latter and not the former which furnishes a viable alternative to the Viet Cong in rural areas.

The crucial differences between the CRABVN and communal areas in their susceptibility to the VC is pointed up by Davison's findings on Viet Cong Operations in the villages. It seems probable, Davison concluded, that the NLF's

success in many rural areas depended on the almost total absence on the local level of any organizations other than the family and the village administration. Scattered observations in the available materials suggest that the Viet Cong formula did not work in Catholic or Hoa Hao villages because in these there was a strong organization interposed between the family and the state. In other parts of the countryside, the individual or the family unit was much more exposed to outside pressure, whether this came in the form of terror or persuasion. The state apparatus offered the only protection, and it was not difficult for the Viet Cong to disorganize and then root out this apparatus. (RAND RM-5267-ISA/ARPA, July 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.)

The great problem with the ethnic Vietnamese who do not belong to a communal minority is thus the absence of any group with which to identify beyond the family and village. Loyalties to family are highly developed; in some cases hamlet or village identifications may also be strong. But beyond these there has been little or nothing. The Diem regime and succeeding governments have attempted to fill this void by developing loyalty to the national government and identification with the Vietnamese nation. These efforts, however, have been consistently unsuccessful. The reason may well be that

the jump from village to nation is too big a one, and that the next step in the broadening of social identifications and political loyalties should be to an intermediate group or structure which transcends the village but is less than the nation. The striking thing about the ethnic and religious minorities is precisely the extent to which they do play this role and consequently provide both political stability and security. Historically, the sects and the political parties, including the Viet Minh, developed to fill this need in the 1930s. The question now is: What potential bases for group organization and identity exist between the village and the nation? In the urban areas these intermediate structures may be provided by modern associational groups, such as unions, business chambers, trade and professional associations, interest groups, and political parties. In the rural areas, however, the principal source of intermediate structures will be the more traditional bases of geography, ethnicity, and religion.

A third path to security, in addition to pacification and urbanization, is thus through accommodation of local and traditional organizations and groups. This has, in fact, been the principal way in which security has been achieved in the rural areas. US policy has, however, tended to ignore this fact and to overlook the possibilities of extending rural security not by the imposition of pacification from above but expansion of existing communal groups and the encouragement of other forms of local organization. All local organization promotes political stability; all non-communist local organization promotes both stability and security. Encouraging the existing social forces in the countryside and promoting the organization of the latent forces there furnish cheaper, more direct, and more promising ways of extending security in the rural areas than do pacification efforts from the top down. The keynote of such a policy must be accommodation with the existing social forces rather than the effort-which has characterized every pacification effort in Vietnam for the last decade--

to impose change on the countryside from without. Security can be achieved by coming to terms with the countryside rather than by attacking it. Rural political organization and hence rural security can be encouraged in three ways.

Providing Support for Communal and Other Rural Groups

The first and most important way is to encourage and to support indigenous rural groups which have some capability for creating political structures between hamlet and capital and thus filling the vacuum of authority which would otherwise be filled by the Viet Cong. Three types of groups have some potential for this purpose. Most important are the ethnic and religious communal groups, but rural Buddhist and partisan groups may also be able to play some role.

a. Rural Communal Groups

As was pointed out above, the only areas where a high level of continuing security has been achieved without massive military forces are those areas dominated by an ethnic or religious communities. These groups have effectively organized more peasants than the Viet Cong. Ethnic minorities obviously cannot expand faster than their birthrate. Religious groups, however, can win converts. The Catholics, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai have all demonstrated considerable staying power and vitality. Their numbers are increasing at least as fast as the population at large. The conversion of other non-affiliated, Confucianist-Buddhist Vietnamese to one of these faiths would clearly tend to promote rural security. Each of these groups is not only a religious organization but also a political and, in some measure, military organization as well.

Of the three religious communities, the Hoa Hao undoubtedly have the best prospects for expansion in the rural areas. The Catholics are, in some measure, still scarred by the antipathies generated during the

Diem period, and significant numbers of Catholics have moved from rural to urban areas. The Cao Dai are fairly widely dispersed geographically. The Hoa Hao are badly divided as a result of the Tuoi-Tuong struggle for control of Central Executive Committee, but they are also undoubtedly the most dynamic of the three religious communities and have demonstrated a sure ability to win converts and to expand their power. After the fall of Diem their strength was concentrated in their traditional strongholds of An Giang, Chau Doc, and Sa Dec provinces. In the succeeding years, however, they significantly expanded their strength in adjoining provinces. In August 1964, for instance, a US observer in Kien Tuong reported that "There are no Hoa Hao in the province". Three years later another observer specifically commented on the clearly increasing Hoa Hao strength in that province. Sixteen of the twenty Regional Force companies were led by Hoa Hao, there were now 2,300 active Hoa Hao members; several key province officials were Hoa Hao; a leading provincial politician had recently announced his conversion. Hoa Hao strength also increased in Chuong Thien in 1964-65, with ten of the twelve Regional Force companies being Hoa Hao. Comparable increases in Hoa Hao strength also occurred in Vinh Long, Phong Dinh, and Kien Phong.

Both the GVN and the US could do much more than they have done to encourage the expansion of these religious groups. The dominant tendency in both governments has been to view them with scepticism if not with suspicion. Yet these groups, along with the ethnic communities, have alone demonstrated the ability to organize peasants in such manner as to render them virtually impervious to the Viet Cong. Assistance to these groups could take at least three forms:

(1) financial, material, and technical support to help the group to expand its political organization in the rural areas; (2) encouragement of and support for communal military organizations; and (3) eventual election of province chiefs, which would stimulate communal (and other) groups to extend their local organizations

and give them appropriate representation in the formal structure of government.

Almost all GVN and many US officials oppose support for communal Regional Force and Popular Force units on the grounds that these are likely to become "private armies" which threaten government authority could undermine governmental authority. This, to be sure, is a potential threat, but in actual fact governmental authority is so weak generally in the countryside that communal military units are more likely to be a means of extending that authority than of subverting it. In the 1950s Diem could perhaps realistically hope to establish tight national control over military forces. Given the military threat posed by the Viet Cong in the 1960s, however, it is in the interest of the government to encourage any effective military organizations which will be a counterweight to the Viet Cong. In actual fact, the GVN has had to accept sect and party dominance of many of its local administrative cadres and military forces. In many Delta provinces the Regional Forces are largely Hoa Hao forces. The Hoa Hao have little use for the RD program, but they argue that if they could expand their military forces, they could bring effective security to more of the Delta. "Give us the money and the guns," they say, and we will raise and organize the troops and produce the results against the VC. (See Saigon A-432, 8 February 1967.) Furnishing them with such support is far less costly and more likely to be successful than attempting to achieve the same security through the use of ARVN or US troops.

Similar gains could be achieved by encouraging the organization of Cao Dai military units. In early 1967 in Tay Ninh, for instance, the Cao Dai leaders in the province requested authorization for more Regional and Popular Forces. The GVN refused to approve this request because it did not want more Cao Dai military units. Until July there were no regular ARVN units in Tay Ninh. Increases in VC strength and activity in the province, however, at that time required some counterforce. Denied

the possibility of raising such forces locally, the province chief had to request an ARVN battalion. He got a company. Here was a clear case where the central government preferred to provide less security with its own forces rather than more security by supporting communal forces. The GVN attitude toward this problem is well reflected in a summary of the views of General Manh, IV Corps Commander: "The Central Government has been reluctant to authorize the recruitment of religious RF companies because they have created discipline problems. More Cao Dai RF companies could readily be recruited for An Xuyen but the Central Government is hesitant. The people who recruit these companies usually get part of the soldiers' salaries." (MemCon, General Manh, Saigon A-34, 10 July 1967, CONF.)

Similar conflicts have come up with the Catholics in II Corps. In 1966 some 10,000 Catholic refugees under the leadership of Father So left their villages in Binh Dinh and took refuge in Qui Nhon. The GVN wanted the refugees to return to their villages. Father So refused to do so, however, until they were authorized to create their own RF and PF units. The GVN refused to authorize this. As an American observer reported: "Col. Vong, the province chief, says Father So wants to create Catholic RF and PF units which would be responsive only to the Catholic leadership. This, according to Col. Vong, would just create another 'private' army 'of which we have had too many in Binh Dinh'." (Saigon A-414, 6 February 1967, CONF.) Thus again, an opportunity was foregone to create a local defense force firmly rooted in a communal group. In all these cases, development of the military power of the communal groups would have capitalized upon a pro-government source of strength and would have created a counterforce to the VC in the rural areas.

b. Rural Buddhist Groups

Historically the strength of Vietnamese communism is, in some measure, a result of the weakness of

Vietnamese Buddhism. After the so-called "Golden Age" of Vietnamese Buddhism (c. 1000-1400 AD), Buddhism fell into disrepute with the rise first of Chinese Confucian influences and then of French Catholic influence. The re-emergence of a Buddhist reform movement occurred in the 1920s and 1930s, at the same time that the Communist and Nationalist parties and the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects were beginning to mobilize supporters. The long decline of Buddhism, however, left it weak in the rural areas and also notably deficient in institutional linkages between local pagodas and the leading monks and laymen at the national level. The reform movement of the 1930s was almost entirely the product of an urban, national, well-educated, clerical leadership. It was not a grass-roots movement, and the Buddhists never developed the strong rural organization which the other sects and parties did.

If the Buddhists had developed the rural strength of the sects or the Catholics, the Viet Cong would never have been able to succeed as they have in the countryside. In those villages where the Buddhists are well organized, the Viet Cong have difficulty establishing their control. In one village, it is reported, a former VC cadre declared that an NLF committee could "not be established because the local Cao Dai and Buddhist leaders declined the invitation to become members." In another village, "the local Buddhist leaders actively resisted the Viet Cong" and the NLF was apparently unsuccessful organizing there. In yet another village, "where there seems to have been a fairly well-organized Buddhist Association, the Viet Cong experienced a serious rebellion, led by the local Bonze." (Davison, RAND RM-5267-ISA/ARPA, July 1967, CONF.) Since the largest proportion of the rural population is at least vaguely Buddhist in its orientation, it is clearly in the interests of the GVN and the US to encourage the Buddhist appeal and Buddhist organization in the countryside.

The organizational weakness of the Buddhists makes such a course difficult, but the pervasive traditional appeal of Buddhism also makes it potentially successful. In 1965 the Buddhists in Central Vietnam did try to organize portions of the countryside, using against the VC the same tactics which had succeeded two years earlier against Diem. But this did not work. The VC in the rural areas, the Buddhists reported, were too tough for such tactics. In at least some provinces, however, a rudimentary Buddhist organization does exist in the countryside. In Khanh Hoa in 1966, for instance, Buddhist councils existed in 52 of 70 villages (5 of which were Montagnard) and in perhaps 200 of 281 hamlets (52 of which were insecure and many of which were Montagnard or Catholic). This structure was not very active, but it still represented a base upon which to build a non-communist rural organization. "The vertical hierarchy of district, village, and hamlet religious organizations appears, below the district echelon, to be largely a skeleton organization with few regular activities that involve a large portion of the local population. When it is not specifically mobilized for a set purpose, it is probably a dormant entity in most rural communities. It represents, however, the most extensive non-governmental and non-communist skeleton in Khanh Hoa's rural areas, and as such is of great significance." (Saigon A-606, 3 May 1966, CONF.) In Khanh Hoa and in other provinces in II Corps and the Delta, the Bo De school system is expanding and represents one other way in which Buddhist influence is beginning to have an impact on the rural population.

Buddhism has traditionally been less political but more secular in the Delta than in I Corps. In Central Vietnam the Buddhist leaders have been bonzes not laymen. This has, in large part, been due to the strength of the VNQDD and Dai Viet parties, which have furnished an outlet for laymen anxious to become involved in politics. In the Delta, on the other hand, lay Buddhist leadership has had much greater status and prestige vis-a-vis the

bonzes than it does in I Corps. As a result, the national organizations dominated by bonzes have been weaker. In Dinh Tuong in 1966, for instance, the national Buddhist organization had little strength. "There is no UBA organization at village level, and communication among UBA district level representatives is poor." This weakness was said to be due "to a tendency of southern Buddhists to look only to their local pagodas, and to their traditional non-involvement in national affairs." (D. Lambertson, Saigon, A-632, 6 May 1966, CONF.)

The failure of the UBA to mobilize support from southern Buddhists does not necessarily mean that these Buddhists cannot be mobilized to furnish support for an organized political movement. Lay Buddhist groups are stronger in the south. In Vinh Long, for instance, the Southern Buddhist Studies Association has been an important Buddhist organization with reportedly some 200 members in Vinh Long city and 70 to 100 members in each of the four other districts.

In building upon Buddhist sentiments and identification, accommodation with local power structures and local peculiarities is again necessary. In 1966 in many parts of the Delta, for instance, young UBA representatives sent out from Saigon to organize a struggle movement were often rebuffed by the local populace because the older local priests did not want their authority undermined and because the local people identified with their local bonzes. The Buddhists' effort to mobilize a struggle movement failed for the same reason GVN efforts at pacification failed. In contrast to these failures to accommodate the local power structure are the successful efforts of some GVN Area Specialists in Chau Doc. In the words of the local American observer:

"The village of Bachuc /Tinh Bien District, Chau Doc/ is the center of the Hieu-Nghia Sect. This is a Mahayana Buddhist sect whose eclectic beliefs derive from Confucian philosophy as well as the

Buddhist canons. The GVN has long neglected this area although it is purely Vietnamese, on the pretext that its location at the foot of Nui Gia makes it impossible to secure. An untrained RD cadre team has been working in the village but has enjoyed no success. Only about 30% of the school age children are able to attend the existing eleven school rooms. Mr. Long [the Area Specialist], being ethnic Chinese and possessing the ability to read and write Chinese, saw the opportunity for the use of syncretism as an approach to self-help. After learning more of the religious ideals he used his ability in the highly respected Chinese language and Confucianism to point out the parallels between the ideals of Hieu-Nghia and the modus operandi of self-help."

"The response of the population has been very encouraging. Mr. Luong has been able to organize an education committee among the Hieu-Nghia, which in turn is now stirring up interest in building an additional school and soliciting pledges of support for paying teacher's salaries. If this proves to be successful it is hoped that agriculture and other committees designed to raise the standard of living will follow. The basic idea is to bring progress through the efforts of the people themselves and keep the presence of outsiders and commodity support to a bare minimum. (R. Flashpolar, "NLD Self-Help," Memo, Chau Doc, 1 August 1967, UNCL.)

Thus, the GVN can strengthen its own authority by encouraging and supporting local Buddhist groups and identifying itself with them.

c. Rural Party Organization

Vietnamese parties, except for the Communist Party, are generally urban phenomena. Where the rudiments of party organization do exist in a rural area, however,

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efforts should be made to encourage and to strengthen that party. This potential exists or existed for the VNQDD in I Corps and in Binh Dinh, for the Dai Viets in Phu Yen, for the Tan Dai Viets in Long An, and for the Hoa Hao Social Democratic Party in other places in the Delta.

One way of strengthening parties in the rural areas is to use the RD program and locally recruited cadres for that purpose. At present the leaders of the RD program vigorously oppose the parties or any other group establishing control over the cadres in a given area. To the extent that the parties are able to use the RD program to strengthen themselves, however, they are also strengthening a counterweight to the Viet Cong. In Hieu Xuong district in Phu Yen, for instance, the Dai Viets used the RD cadre as a way of rebuilding their organization in the rural areas. In Phu Yen eighteen of twenty-four team leaders were reported to be Tan Dai Viet members. In Thua Thien, the Revolutionary Dai Viets made use of the RD cadres for similar purposes. Instead of recognizing this as one way of rebuilding political organization in the countryside, however, most US and GVN officials deplore the "prostitution" of the RD program for this purpose. "In their operations in Phu Thu District and Quang Dien District," the American Sector Advisor in Thua Thien complained, "members of the RD cadre have made statements to the effect that they are a Dai Viet Army and that the desires of the Dai Viet Party will take precedence over any orders given by the RD Cadre Chief. In their operations in Quang Dien District, the RD cadre in some instances are attributing any benefits the villagers derive to the efforts of the Dai Viet Party rather than to the GVN RD program." (Sector Advisor, Thua Thien, Memo: Unit Dependability Analysis, 1 September 1966, CONF.) The Advisor deplored this tendency as potentially dangerous because the area involved is "a predominantly VNQDD area (whose members are also armed)."

The danger of armed clashes between rival non-communist groups is not to be minimized: on March 8, 1967 in Quang Nam, PF troops loyal to one VNQDD faction fired on RD cadre of another faction, killing one cadreman. (Memo, 15 March 1967, CONF.) Yet potential costs of this sort are far less than the opportunities which would be missed by not encouraging party development through the RD program.

Strengthening Provincial and Local Governments

The great problem of Vietnamese politics is often said to be the centralization of power which was the heritage of the Chinese mandarin and the French colonial traditions. There is obviously much truth in this observation, and the failure of successive governments to produce stability and security through the further centralization of authority suggests a reversal of course may well be in order. But on the other hand, the contrary diagnosis is also often made. It is argued that the great problem of the Vietnamese political system is that power is too dispersed and fragmented, that the central government is too weak, and that consequently the centralization of power is necessary. Both diagnoses have a certain appeal. Yet they both cannot be right and they both may be wrong.

The relevance and yet incompleteness of both diagnoses suggests that the underlying problem may lie less with the distribution of power in the system and more with the amount of power in the system. What is needed is not so much the centralization or decentralization of the limited authority which exists, but rather the expansion of the power in the system. Americans frequently make the mistake of thinking of power purely in zero-sum terms. But just as the wealth of an economic system can be expanded as well as redistributed, so also the power of a political system can be expanded (or contracted) as well as redistributed. The problem in Vietnam is that there is simply too little power in the political system. The great need is to increase the

total amount of power in the system by expanding political participation and multiplying the web of organizational ties linking individuals and groups. The strengthening of provincial and local governmental authorities is one means of accomplishing this end. It does not necessarily mean any decrease in Saigon's authority, and it could mean a significant increase in that authority.

The strengthening of local government will tend to encourage identification with local communities and to develop loyalties to local authorities which can provide a political alternative to the Viet Cong. Many people decry the peasant's identification with his village and lack of national feeling, but in actuality one of the major problems in Vietnam is the very weakness of local ties. If villages and hamlets had existed as autonomous and well-organized communities, it would have been much more difficult for the Viet Cong to organize the countryside. One of the major developments enhancing Viet Cong ability to penetrate the countryside was Diem's substituting appointed village authorities for elected ones. So long as the Emperor's law stopped at the village gate, so also did most other outside influences. Once the national government broke down the village barriers and attempted to enforce its rule in the village, the way was opened for other groups to extend their influence into the village also. Just as sects which have a sure communal sense of identification can withstand the Viet Cong, so also local population groups which have a highly developed sense of village or district identity will also stand up against VC influence.

The strengthening of provincial and local governments hence does not necessarily mean weakening the central government. It may, instead, mean the strengthening of the political system as a whole. In the immediate future, the authority and power of provincial, district, village, and hamlet governments can be strengthened through three means.

(a) Making local and provincial officials elected rather than appointed.

Election of local and provincial officials makes them more responsive to the groups within their constituencies, stimulates the organization of the electorate, and broadens popular participation in the political system. All these things tend to expand the power of the system. In this connection, the village and hamlet elections in the spring of 1967 were a first step toward reconstituting local government in South Vietnam. These elections brought some changes in the village and hamlet leadership. They also legitimized the local leaders and give them some basis for developing their authority autonomously of the central government officials. Unfortunately, however, the elections themselves were not presented to the villagers as a return to an old Vietnamese tradition. Here again an effort was made to make the resumption of an old practice look like a major innovation. "...while the selection of village chiefs within the village is a Vietnamese tradition," two American observers in Kien Hoa noted, "doing so by elaborately organized popular elections is not. MICH (Ministry of Information and Chieu Hoi) guidance on the elections did not provide for any emphasis on the restoration of Vietnamese tradition and village administrative continuity from which the Diem regime had departed; instead, GVN propaganda concentrated on the themes of opposition to the VC and new life development in the countryside." (Col. Herman James and Paul Hare, Memo: Village Elections in Kien Hoa, 27 April 1967, LOU.)

The village and hamlet elections were only moderately successful in producing widespread interest and participation by the populace. The more rural and less secure the area, the higher was the ratio of actual voters to registered voters. This suggests that participation was in large part a product of military and administrative pressure, and in some cases it is clear that the votes were voted by the district officials rather than by the voters themselves. The overall

ratio of candidates to positions was low in the village council elections (1.4 to 1) but higher for the better paid hamlet chief position (2.3 to 1). The higher the ratio of candidates to position, the higher also was voter participation in the elections. Consequently, the 1967 local elections can only be viewed as a first step toward the reinvigoration of local government through the electoral process.

The election of province chiefs is much more likely to encourage wider participation and to strengthen religious and ethnic communal groups. Such elections would, indeed, provide a stimulus for all groups to organize the rural population. As it is now, the village and hamlet elections are only held where security is reasonably good, and competition for office is limited. In the national elections, on the other hand, candidates naturally and necessarily give primary emphasis to the much more easily reached urban voters. The result is that neither local nor national elections provide strong incentives for urban political groupings to reach out into the rural areas. Provincial elections, on the other hand, would do this because in the majority of provinces, the rural voters are the numerically dominant group. Whoever could organize the rural voters would control the province. The 1965 provincial council elections demonstrate this quite clearly. The election of province chiefs would thus in most provinces strengthen the voice of rural groups in the governmental structure and, at the same time, stimulate all political groupings to appeal to the rural voter.

Precisely because it would have this result, the election of province chiefs is opposed by many GVN officials. This practice, according to the Deputy Prime Minister in July 1967, would be "very dangerous to the country, because it will transform each province into a 'sub-kingdom' in which the province chief will act under the influence of the reigning regional religious sect without having any concern in the national interests. As a result, the central government can never develop a general policy and we cannot have a

strong central government as needed. The History of Vietnam has proven that Vietnam always needs a strong central government." (Pham Dinh Thung, MemCon, Deputy PM, Dr. Vien, 4 July 1967, UNCL.) Similarly, General Lam Quang Thi, commanding general of the 9th Division, has argued "against the election of province chiefs because that would leave the central government with too little power. He stated that, for example, Hoa Hao Province Chiefs in the Delta might not follow the orders of the central government. He cited the example of Governor Wallace in the United States." (B. Kirkpatrick, MemCon, General Lam Quang Thi, 19 May 1967, CONF.)

The fallacy in all these arguments against the election of province chiefs is, of course, that they conceive of power in zero-sum terms: if the provincial governments become more powerful, the central government must become less so. This monstrous, although common, fallacy ignores the fact there is simply too little power in the system, and that it is precisely the absence of organized power of any sort which gives the VC its opening. The strengthening of any local or provincial organs of governments will, relatively-speaking, weaken the VC much more than it will the central government. Indeed, given the threat from the VC any strengthening of government at the local or provincial level will also strengthen the central government. If the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Khmers, and other groups have access to and control over important segments of the governmental structure, their identification with that structure will be strengthened rather than weakened. More generally the election of province chiefs will expand significantly the non-VC sources of power in Vietnam and hence will make a major contribution to political stability.

(b) Increasing the tax resources of local governments and their legal authority to deal with local problems, such as land reform.

In the past, in theory 60% of the land tax revenues collected in a village were to be assigned to the central

government, 20% to the provincial government, and 20% kept in the village. In actual fact, the amount of revenue coming to the central government from this source in recent years has been very small. If the villages were assigned complete control over the land tax, the local councils could raise or lower the rates to suit their own needs and use the funds for roads, schools, wells, public health, or other projects in accordance with their own priorities. In some instances the village councils might seize the opportunity to do away with taxes entirely, but if they chose this course, they would have to pay the price in terms of fewer public services. Most importantly, if the authority to raise taxes and to spend public monies were more in local hands, local government would be strengthened and the control of local government would become a more important and more desirable prize. In addition, the authority of local governments could also be increased by giving local officials control over land tenure and land reform programs.

(c) Providing greater support for local self-defense forces.

Local governments will obviously be strengthened if the Popular Forces and other local-defense units receive greater support. The PF are, in many respects, at the lowest rung in the Vietnamese military hierarchy yet they are also clearly the key to long-run rural security. They are also, on many measures, the most effective military force against the VC. In Region III, for instance, the RF-PF kill ratio in 1967 was reportedly 2-1 while the ARVN kill ratio was .9-1. Improved pay, better medical care support for families of PF troops killed or wounded in action, improved training, and most importantly, improved leadership would all contribute to strengthening these military forces which are best able to deal with the VC.

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Assimilating Local VC Organizations into the Political System

Continuing security in rural areas depends upon the development of effective, indigenous political organizations based upon the social characteristics of the population as it actually is, rather than as the US or GVN would like it to be. The more people who can be brought into non-communist rural organizations of any type, the better the prospects for rural security. Political stability, in short, is the precondition of rural security. The Catholics, Hoa Hao, VNQDD, and a few other groups have at times developed effective rural organizations; the Buddhists, Cao Dai, and others may be able to expand their rural structures. Clearly, however, the strongest rural organization is that responsible for rural insecurity. In this case, a high level of political organization is the antithesis of rural security. As a result, a prime goal of US and GVN policy has been the destruction of the VC infrastructure. Following this line of analysis, the sequence in establishing rural security is assumed to be the following:

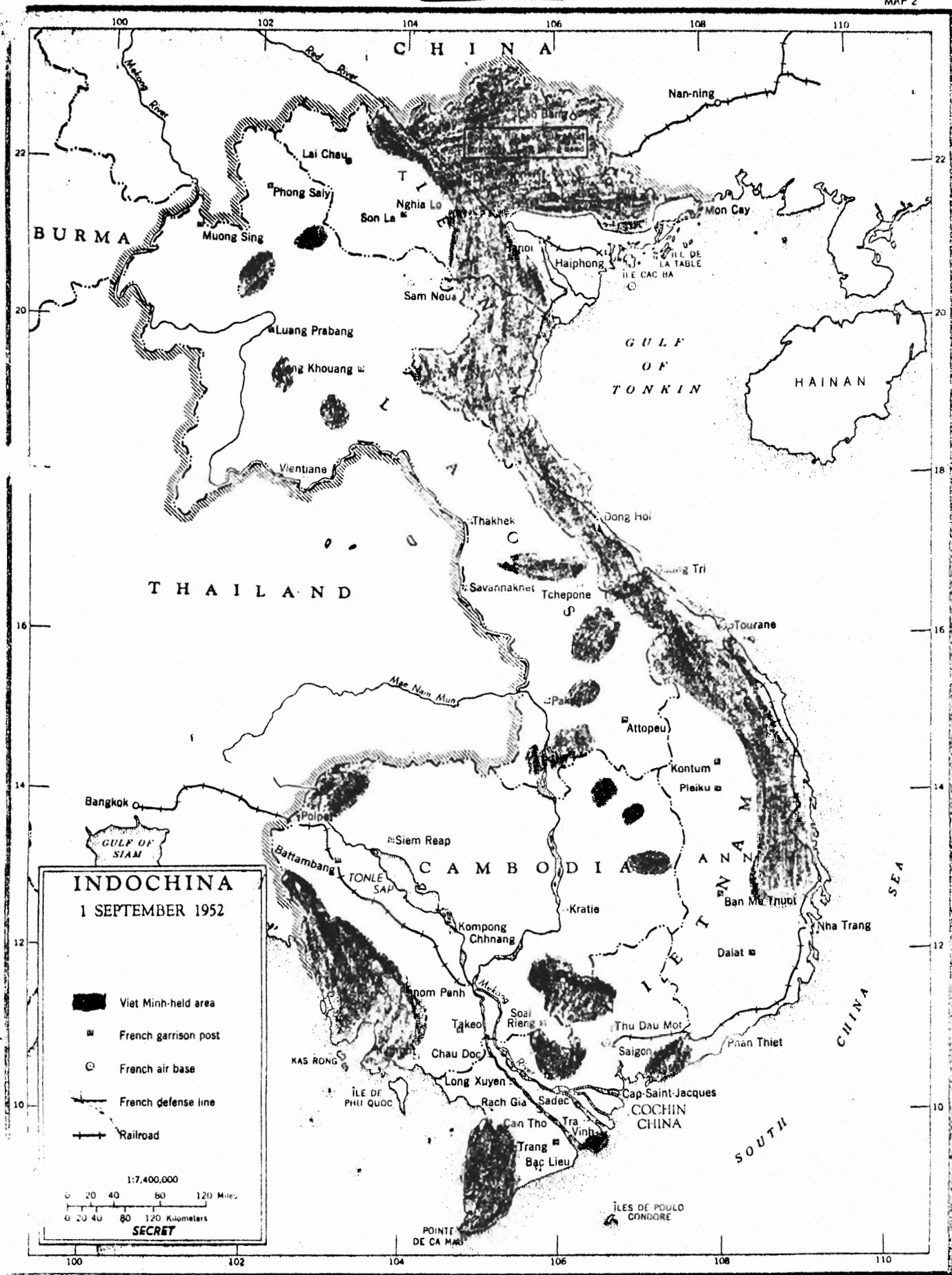
- a. Establish US and GVN military superiority in the area, defeating or driving away Main Force units;
- b. Extend governmental RD and administrative apparatus into the area;
- c. Identify and destroy VC infrastructure;
- d. Bring into existence new governmental organs and political groupings.

This policy sequence may well be the most effective approach to security in those populated areas which the VC has controlled for only a few years. Most of the areas in which governmental control was extended in 1966 and 1967 fell into this category: they were, by and large, areas which had come under VC control in 1963-1965, during the chaos and disintegration following

the fall of Diem. As the allied pacification effort is extended into other areas which have been under VC and even Viet Minh control for many years, it may well be that a different approach is called for. These areas would include substantial portions of An Xuyen, Chong Thien, Kien Giang, Kien Hoa, Kien Phong, Kien Tuong, Vinh Long, Hau Nghia, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and other provinces. Even a rough comparison of the areas under Viet Minh control in 1952 and those under VC control fifteen years later shows a striking correspondence between the two.* To root out the infrastructure in such areas will be a much more difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating task than it was in those areas where the pre-VC local leaders were still available. In "hard core" VC areas the path of wisdom may well be to attempt to use the VC structure rather than to destroy it.

This alternative is particularly attractive since the destruction of any organized social or political grouping tends to create anomie and disorder which, in turn, makes difficult the development of new forms of organization. The difficulties of reviving or introducing non-communist political organizations in such areas are clear enough. If communist political organizations are the only ones existing in some areas, their complete destruction would mean losing the only effective local leaders and the only recognized local authority structures. In 1965 and 1966 the VC held elections for "Liberation Committees" in several villages in Quang Ngai and also in villages in Binh Phuoc, Darlac, Bac Lieu, Binh Dinh, and Bien Hoa Provinces. (See FVS-13, 228, 28 July 1966, CONF/NOFORN, and FVG-00,071, 22 October 1966, SEC/NOFORN.) Insofar as the VC is able to develop a structure of government at the village or even district level in areas which it firmly controls, it would seem highly desirable that the prospect be held out of, at some point, incorporating these local structures into the GVN governmental system.

*Compare the attached map of Viet Minh strength as of September 1952 with the most recent HES Population and Area Control map. The only significant decline in communist controlled territory generally is in Cambodia!



NIE 35/2. Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1953

Organizational capacity in a social unit appears to exist independently of the purposes which it is called upon to serve. In Ba Tri in Kien Hoa, for instance, the villages immediately around the district town had not been well-organized by either the VC or the GVN. Those villages further removed from the district town had been under firm VC control and had been well-organized by the VC. In the pacification of the district, it was found that these latter villages, where the VC organization had been strong, could be much more easily organized on the side of the government than those villages adjoining the district town where the VC had been weak. Hamlets which were well organized by the VC were also well-organized by the government. Those hamlets which could not be organized by the one side present equal difficulties to organization by the other.

The key question consequently concerns the "convertability" of local organizations. Is this at all possible? If so, under what circumstances can organizational structures which served the communist cause be induced to flip-flop and then serve the GVN cause? One partial instance of such flip-flop occurred in Long Huu. In this case, pre-VC authority structures and leadership were reintroduced into the village, but this was accompanied by significant "defection in place" by VC political and military cadres. One hundred and three people were classified as Hoi Chanh, of which 71 had been captured and 32 were true ralliers. These received a reindoctrination and training course at Long Huu with a view to eventually organizing them into a PF company. One of the major problems concerned the relationship between this group and the village government officials who had fled when the VC took over but who then returned with the allied forces. The villagers, on the one hand, were not enthusiastic about these officials, but on the other hand they feared the Hoi Chanh on the grounds that they would revert to their Communist allegiance if the GVN and Allied presence on the island was reduced.

The indigenous VC clearly differs in important respects from the religious sects and the nationalist parties. Yet it also shares many characteristics with them. Up to a point, the evolution of the relations between the VC and the political system parallels the evolution of the relations between the sects and other parties and the political system. Like them, the Viet Minh developed organizational and political consciousness in the 1930s; it then came into conflict with the French and French puppet authorities; after 1954 it in effect withdrew and, like the other sects and parties, went underground during the period when Diem was attempting to centralize authority and eliminate local power centers. Unlike the other parties and sects, however, the Viet Cong began to receive significant reinforcements in the form of returnees and supplies from North Vietnam in the late 1950s. Consequently, at this point the VC broke from the pattern of evolution which it had shared with the other groups -- consciousness, confrontation, withdrawal -- and instead instituted a renewed period of confrontation. After 1963 the other groups arrived at accommodations with the government while the confrontation between the VC and the government intensified. Yet it is not unreasonable to assume that when it becomes clear that this confrontation cannot succeed, the indigenous VC will again move into a phase of withdrawal, which could then be followed by accommodation and incorporation into the political system.

Some forms of accommodation between GVN and VC have, of course, existed for some while in some parts of the country. Experience in the Delta, indeed, suggests that accommodation between different and theoretically hostile authority structures is not only possible but at times has been quite widespread. Data on the precise extent of accommodation between GVN and VC officials are, of course, almost impossible to come by. Accommodation is, in general, illegitimate in terms of the stated policies and objectives of both sides, and hence the success of the accommodation depends upon its not receiving explicit recognition.

It seems clear, nonetheless, that accommodation has taken place on a reasonably extensive scale. In the summer of 1967, for instance, two knowledgeable American observers reported that: "There appears to be a certain degree of accommodation between the GVN and the VC. The war in the Delta is not total in the sense that neither side is fully exerting itself...Both sides have to some degree adopted to the war in certain areas by not aggressively pursuing or even avoiding each other until one side is motivated to upset the balance of power. It is also likely that in the course of profit-making the GVN and VC make some mutual accommodation in the enforcement of each other's regulations on commercial and agricultural activities." (Kirkpatrick and Richardson, Memo: The Delta, 27 June 1967, SEC.) In Kien Giang province it was reported in March 1967 that:

"Minor changes of territorial control have taken place, but the general feeling on both sides has been to not 'rock the boat'.

The VC recently gave up control of the rich and productive Hon Chong peninsula, however, after many weeks of vascillating /sic/ on the part of ARVN forces before moving into the area and after there had been rumors of a GVN/VC 'accommodation' regarding this area of Kien Luong district." (FVS-14,778, 28 March 1967, CONF/NOFORN.)

Similarly, in Bac Lieu Province there seems to be good grounds for thinking that various accommodations have existed between the ARVN 21st Division and the local VC forces. In early 1966, for instance, it was reported that:

"The VC tax on a bus ride from Bac Lieu to Cantho is 60 Ps. the ticket only 50 Ps. This is an example of a myriad of accommodation situations in being that have more effect on

general psychology than all the psywar we can muster. The fact is that the actual situation -- the accommodations -- encourages fence-sitting and apathy and cynicism. We have outpost garrisons that won't bother the VC when they come into a hamlet if the VC won't bother them. The people are in the middle and have learned long ago to accommodate to the VC as GVN itself does." (Nager, 21st Division, Bac Lieu, Monthly Report, 24 February 1966.)

Significantly, however, the accommodation in Bac Lieu, as in Kien Giang, eventually broke down. A year after the above report, another observer reported that:

"When the VC shelled Bac Lieu city recently, they made one of their most serious mistakes in the area. Until that time, there appeared to have been a tacit agreement between the ARVN 21st Division and the VC to maintain a status quo. The military is now quite active." (FSV-14,778, 28 March 1967, CONF/NOFORN.)

Undoubtedly similar arrangements exist on the local level in many areas. The Catholic hamlet of Ninh Phat, for instance, has existed for many years in a generally insecure area of Tan Tau Village, Binh Chanh District, in Gia Dinh. Americans in the area noted that whenever operations were ordered by the RF company in the hamlet, the priest sounded the bells for mass at 0530 instead of 0630. None of these operations made contacts with the VC. A short distance away on Route 4 in Long An province on the night of July 26, 1967 all of an RF platoon guarding the bridges on Route 4 took up ambush positions on the west side of the river; that night the bridges were blown up from the east side.

The following propositions generally describe the patterns of accommodation which have developed so far in the war.

(1) Accommodations most often involve restraints on military activity; secondarily they involve tolerance of revenue raising activity. Never do they involve political matters.

(2) Accommodations may take the form of reasonably symmetrical arrangements to live and let live between local GVN and VC forces (we won't attack you if you don't attack us) or somewhat less symmetrical arrangements, more favorable to the VC, in which the VC do not attack GVN military units if those units do not prevent the VC from achieving other objectives (blowing a bridge, kidnapping local officials, collecting taxes, etc.).

(3) On both sides the propensity to accommodate is stronger at lower levels than at higher ones.

(4) The lower the level of accommodation, the more asymmetrical the arrangement is likely to be in favor of the VC.

(5) The extent of accommodation varies inversely with the presence of NVN and US forces.

(6) The extent of accommodation varies directly with the political stability (i.e., level of political organization) of both sides (and hence is highest in the Delta where both VC and GVN-oriented groups have been well-organized for many years).

(7) Accommodation, like migration, is a way of minimizing the unpleasant effects of war on the population, and the extent of accommodation varies inversely with the number of refugees.

The accommodations to date have thus been primarily military accommodations and should be carefully distinguished from the political accommodations which might be possible in the future. Military accommodations, in effect, tend to favor the VC since they involve

acceptance of a military status quo in which the VC dominate the countryside and the GVN abandons its efforts to assert its control over the countryside. Political accommodations, on the other hand, would favor the GVN since they would involve acceptance of a political status quo in the form of a GVN-dominated political system and VC participation within that system. Under such accommodations the VC would have to accept the legitimacy of the national political system while the GVN recognized the legitimacy of the VC local authorities in the areas clearly controlled by the VC and incorporated into its system of local government the hamlet, village, and, possibly, district structures of the VC. This pattern of accommodation would not be too dissimilar from that worked out between the GVN and the Hoa Hao, and it would mean that the VC political organization would as effectively dominate the scene in many areas in the Delta and elsewhere as the Hoa Hao and the Catholics do in other sections of IV Corps and III Corps. Presumably the representatives elected from these areas to the national legislature would be predominantly VC-NLF, and presumably the presidential and senatorial candidates endorsed by the NLF-VC political organization would carry these districts by impressive margins. On the military side, such an accommodation would involve, on the one hand, the conversion of the local VC guerrilla forces into Regional Force and Popular Force units and, on the other, VC acceptance of the freedom of movement for regular ARVN forces throughout the district.

Political accommodations such as these require accompanying actions along three lines.

First, non-VC rural political groups would have to be strengthened so that they would be in a better position to compete with the VC for support in the countryside and to limit the expansion of VC political influence.

Second, the authority of local governmental units would have to be increased so that such governments had

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a fair degree of autonomy within the political system.

Third, the local VC in the South would have to be cut off from military and economic assistance from the North. The substantial defeat and withdrawal of the North Vietnamese military forces in the South would clearly facilitate this sort of reconciliation between the VC and GVN local authority systems in the South. The military accommodations which have been arrived at to date are, in large part, testimony to the weakness of the GVN in rural areas. Future political accommodations will be testimony to the weakness of the North Vietnamese government in the South. In the late 1950s the policies of Diem discouraged accommodation with the VC and the policies of Hanoi encouraged a return to confrontation. If accommodation is to have any chance, both policies must be changed. The local VC must be convinced that they can no longer count on unswerving support from Hanoi nor on unswerving opposition from Saigon.

Efforts to arrive at such political accommodations with the VC are preferable to intensification of the war in the Delta. To date the Delta has been spared much of the heavy fighting which has characterized III Corps north and west of Saigon, the Central Lowlands, and I Corps. The intensification of the war in the Delta would disrupt what has been a fairly stable balance of power between the VC and pro-government groups. It would destroy the effective local authority structures (VC, Hoa Hao, Cambodian) which exist in many parts of the Delta and would thus encourage anomie and instability. Due to the heavy population densities in many parts of the Delta, it would produce much loss of life and great social dislocation, including the possibility of refugees on a scale which would dwarf that of I Corps. It would further disrupt rice production. It would involve the commitment of large numbers of US and GVN troops to rooting out VC infrastructures in areas where they have been entrenched for decades and where "many people have been born and raised into adulthood under VC control." (Advisory Team 52, Report on Vinh Long, 1 October 1966, CONF.)

The existing pattern of military accommodations in the Delta indicates some desire on both sides to limit the effects of the war. For some years on the VC side there has been evidence of war-weariness and disaffection from a conflict which has increasingly become Hanoi's war. At a VC Provincial conference in Kien Giang in January 1966, for instance, "Several cadres raised the subject of pessimism and war-weariness of both cadres and the local population and asked why a Geneva-type conference which could bring peace to Vietnam could not be held, thus enabling the VC to conduct a struggle for a solely political nature after peace had been achieved." (FVS 12,644, February 14, 1966, CONF/NOFORN.) In the spring of 1967 a VC district level cadre from Ba Xuyen reported that VC cadres and people had been discussing peace overtures by the GVN. "People were receptive to news that the GVN had invited the Hanoi regime to meet at the Ben-Hoi River Bridge for peace negotiations, and there were mixed feelings when Hanoi declined the offer. Throughout VC-controlled areas civilians and VC cadres have been gathering in groups to discuss Hanoi's rejection of the peace offer and there has been considerable disappointment in all circles over the rejection." (FVS 15,396, July 11, 1967, CONF/NOFORN.) This receptiveness to negotiations and a political settlement among VC groups in the Delta contrasts sharply with the North Vietnamese belligerently negative attitude. It indicates that an effort to arrive at political accommodations in the Delta might well meet with favorable responses and lead to a break between Hanoi and the Delta cadres. The intensification of the war in the Delta, on the other hand, would leave those cadres little alternative but complete identification with and dependence upon the North Vietnamese regime.

V. CONCLUSION: REVOLUTION OR ACCOMMODATION (BICH VS. BE)

The policies of a great power do not have to be consistent to be successful. But beyond a certain point the gains achieved through the pursuit of one policy may be outweighed by the losses suffered in the obstruction of another policy. To date the demands of pacification and the military defeat of the VC have quite properly had the top priority. But the costs are beginning to mount. In the summer of 1967, for instance, if Thieu and Ky had run against each other for president, the battle between the two would have forced the military to compete actively for the support of civilian groups and would have stimulated both sides to organize the unorganized CRABVN "hollow majority" of Vietnamese politics. Such a competition would have had clearly beneficial results for the political system. Many U.S. officials, however, believed the military should unite behind a single presidential candidate. To have two generals running against each other, it was felt, would divide the army, embroil the officers deeply in politics, and hence reduce still further the effectiveness of ARVN as a fighting force. Military needs and pacification thus took priority over the claims of politics and future political stability.

Pacification is revolutionary in intent; urbanization is revolutionary in effect. Together they threaten to disrupt and to destroy those remaining structures of political and social authority which exist in the countryside. Political stability in rural Vietnam is provided by the traditional organizations of the ethnic and religious groups and by the revolutionary organizations of the Viet Cong. U.S. policy is aimed at undermining both. It is based on the belief that a "third" liberal middle way exists as an alternative to traditional and revolutionary authority. Neither US nor GVN policy, however, is directed toward organizing that middle way. The implicit assumption behind US policy is that if an electoral framework is created, the proper type of political organizations will come into being. But this does not necessarily follow. There is no

significant evidence of any new groups coming into existence with appeals to match those of the traditional and revolutionary organizations. Through pacification and urbanization, the United States is trying to create a second revolution in South Vietnam to rival that of the Viet Cong. Instead of trying to destroy the Viet Cong by destroying traditional authority structures, the United States would do far better to promote accommodations with both.

Movement toward accommodation is made difficult by the dynamism and continued growth of the American presence in Vietnam. To the extent that the military defeat of the VC requires this presence to be maintained and expanded, it also contributes to future political instability. The military effort wears down the VC, but it does not build a political and social structure to replace the VC. If anything, its effect is just the reverse, and it tends to restrict and undermine the groups which are necessary to create an institutional and organizational counterweight to the VC. If the United States is to succeed in its efforts to promote a viable Vietnamese policy, the emphasis in its policy should shift from revolution to accommodation. This shift, in turn, will require changes in the scope and nature of the American presence in Vietnam.*

The difference between revolution and accommodation is neatly reflected in the contrasting approaches of two otherwise very similar and talented Vietnamese leaders: Dinh Thach Bich and Nguyen Be. The two have much in common. They are both able, honest, energetic, and patriotic. They are both young: Be is 37, Bich 35. They are both representative of the new breed of rising younger Vietnamese political leaders who entered politics fighting against the French instead of for the French. They both joined the Viet Minh at the age of 17 in the late 1940s, and they both came out in the early 1950s

*See the Appendix for comments on the political dynamics and political consequences of the American presence in Vietnam.

when the Viet Minh came clearly under communist control. Both joined ARVN in the mid-1950s and suffered painfully slow promotion as the places above them were pre-empted by the higher ranking officers who had served the French. Both, however, impressed their superiors with their ability and energy and were assigned to positions of increasing responsibility. After the fall of Diem, Bich emerged as special assistant in charge of Chieu Hoi. Be as commandant of the RD Training Center at Vung Tau.

With all these similarities, the differences in their approaches to their country's problems are striking. Be is the zealous revolutionary par excellence. He is deeply committed to the radical reconstruction of the Vietnamese countryside. At Vung Tau he preaches to the RD cadres on why revolution is needed in the hamlets; he attempts to influse them with revolutionary dedication; and he indoctrinates them in the ways and means of eliminating corruption, privilege, and traditional authority and of creating a new, unified, egalitarian, national society. He argues that not only must the old social structure in the villages go, but that the existing administrative structure of the GVN must also be replaced.

Bich, on the other hand, has an entirely different approach. Be is the administrator, Bich the politician. Be can easily spell out a Grand Plan for the reconstruction of the nation. Bich, in attempting to organize the Palm Tree coalition for the elections, eschewed commitment to any legislative program. His effort was simply to hammer out compromises and agreements among the politically relevant groups. He describes himself not as a revolutionary but as a pragmatist, which, as he says, is another way of saying "opportunist." His aim is not to overthrow the existing groups in society but to work with them and attempt to create from them a more broad-based national political movement. He wants to strengthen, not to destroy, the existing social structure. While Be is against village and hamlet elections until the local power structures have been drastically reconstituted, Bich approves of elections now as a way of broadening but also legitimizing the existing power structure.

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By and large the Be approach has been the American approach in Vietnam. The time has now come, however, for a shift in emphasis. To date, the revolutionary approach has not produced the results which it was supposed to produce. It leads to increasing pressures for greater American involvement in Vietnam, with no sign that this involvement will generate the conditions which will make it possible to withdraw. The vacuum of political authority in the country can be filled by the VC, or by the US, or by indigenous Vietnamese political forces. By insisting on elections and representative government the United States has created a framework within which such indigenous forces can operate. But if it continues its commitment to revolution, to pacification, and to the expansion of the American presence, the US will make it difficult if not impossible for such forces to emerge and to organize themselves. History shows that American instincts are usually revolutionary, but that our talents are mostly accommodative. What is needed in Vietnam is not change but conciliation. The policies and talents of Nguyen Be are less relevant than those of Dinh Thach Bich. The future political stability of South Vietnam will, in large measure, depend on whether the US can shift its emphasis from the revolutionary to the politician and from the promotion of change to the acceptance of accommodation.

APPENDIX: ACCOMMODATION AND THE AMERICAN PRESENCE

The Dynamics of the American Presence

For the past two years the most dynamic and rapidly expanding political force in South Vietnam has been the United States Government. By comparison, all other political groups--the Viet Cong, the nationalist parties, the Buddhists, the sects--have been stagnant. Their strengths have changed only marginally, while the American apparatus has exploded across the landscape. The U.S. military is the largest single organization in the country. The U.S. Government and its contractors are the second largest employer of civilians. The American administrative network reaches down to the direct level and at times below that. In August 1967, 1200 U.S. civilians and 10,000 military were involved in civil operations, and efforts were underway to increase these 50% to 1800 civilians and 15,000 military. American engineering and logistic know-how has radically changed the commercial, transportation, and communications infrastructure. New towns have been created; new economic activities and opportunities stimulated; and new money poured into what had been a fairly simple and small economy. Clearly this expansion of the American presence will have profound effects, positive and negative, upon the future political stability and security of South Vietnam. Insofar as political stability and security depend upon the accommodation of indigenous social forces, the effects of this expansion are likely to be more negative than positive.

The personnel policies of the American Government insure the continued dynamism of the American effort. The leaders of other groups in South Vietnam grow tired, indifferent, cynical, and wise. Through twenty years of continuous struggle they have seen everything done and nothing changed. The American apparatus, however, is perpetually renewed and perpetually young. The

Americans--civilians and soldiers--arrive enthusiastic and full of energy. They plunge into their work at the national, sector, or subsector level with the gung-ho determination to get on with the job and to accomplish their mission. Twelve or eighteen months later, just at the point when their energies begin to falter and their doubts begin to multiply about the meaning and purpose of their actions--when in the jargon of their trade they begin to develop "end of mission blues"--their mission ends, and they abruptly depart to be replaced by another newly arrived enthusiast.

The reasons for this continuous rotation of people are clear enough. Its novelty and its consequences also need to be spelled out. The agents of other great empires have been experienced professionals. The Englishmen who as young men went out to India only returned to Sussex to be buried. In the course of their labors in the ICS they acquired a knowledge and understanding of the cultures with which they dealt; they adapted themselves to their environment, learned its languages, its customs, its ways of thought and action. In the process they often became as much Indian as English and more knowledgeable of India than the Indians. In Vietnam, in contrast, rotation makes it very difficult for the American bureaucratic machine to adapt to its environment. Rotation encourages an everpresent dynamism and the absence of an institutional memory which could prevent the retreading of paths previously trod. It means constant energy, constant innovation, and constant innocence. Unless counterbalanced by other factors, rotation tends to insure that the American apparatus in Vietnam will never grow tired--and never grow wise.

For many perfectly legitimate and understandable reasons the American mission in Vietnam is under tremendous compulsion to achieve results quickly. In part this is simply American impatience; in part, it stems from a distaste for the whole operation and a desire to finish it up and get out; in part, it comes from a progressive and reform-minded abhorrence of the injustices and inefficiencies of Vietnamese government and society. In part, also, however, this

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impatience stems from the policy of rotation. The very fact that his time in Vietnam is so limited makes each American attempt to accomplish in a year what the Vietnamese have not been able to accomplish in a generation. Since the American effort is supposedly an advisory one, the American operatives, civil and military, at first attempt to achieve their goals by working through their Vietnamese counterparts. They attempt to stimulate, to jolly, to persuade, to cajole Vietnamese officials into doing what, to American eyes, obviously has to be done. American eagerness turns into impatience and impatience into frustration. In the end, the Americans are driven to abandon their advisory role and to do the job themselves.

This dilemma of American reform and results versus Vietnamese responsibility is the central one of American-Vietnamese relations. Americans are geared to the achievement of immediate, concrete objectives: pacify eight hamlets; open twenty-three kilometers of road; build four schools. The need to achieve these results produces the continuous impetus to expand the American presence and the American roles. At every echelon, one hears again and again the refrain, "if only I had five (or ten or fifteen) more Americans here, then I could really get things done." And so more experts, more managers, more staff are recruited, all of which simply tends to overwhelm and to suffocate the Vietnamese who in theory have the responsibility for getting things done.

The drive to get results which produces the continuing pressure for the expansion of the American role manifests itself both in the take-over of specific tasks and in the general expansion of the American parallel or shadow government in the provinces. In terms of specific tasks, the choice is often between accomplishing some important specific goal quickly through American effort or accomplishing it much later or even not at all through Vietnamese efforts.

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Results or responsibility is the recurring dilemma. The natural impetus here, as in all bureaucratic situations, is for concrete and immediate goals to take precedence over more diffuse and long-range ones. Even so, American consciousness of the problem has meant that at least in some cases the temptation to take over has been resisted. The forms and the ways in which the dilemma presents itself can perhaps best be suggested by a few illustrative cases.

(1) In Vung Tau, a secure area relatively free from military imperatives, the outbreak of a few cases of plague created, in the minds of American medical and public health officers, the need to take drastic action to insure against an epidemic. The local Vietnamese officials were reluctant to impose quarantines and take the other public health measures recommended by the Americans. The immediate danger was a plague epidemic; the long-run danger was reducing still further South Vietnamese responsibility for their country. In this case, the Americans apparently decided that the immediate threat was great enough to warrant drastic action and in effect went ahead on their own, by-passed the local Vietnamese officials, and decreed what was described as "medical martial law" to halt the spread of the disease.

(2) Somewhat similar issues were posed over a longer period of time by the garbage problem in Saigon. Garbage was piled up about the streets and empty lots, creating an obvious public health danger, and the Saigon garbage collection system seemed quite incapable of effectively dealing with the problem. Again U.S. doctors warned of the dangers which this posed for epidemics. In the spring of 1967, one Vietnamese newspaper publisher, discussing the problem of Vietnamese relying on Americans to get things done, lamented that: "Today, the Americans are paving the streets of Saigon and everybody is happy about it. If tomorrow the U.S. decided to take over garbage removal in Saigon, most people would find this perfectly natural, too."

A few months later, this was on the verge of happening, as plans were developed for the collection of Saigon garbage by an American contractor.

(3) The port of Saigon, on the other hand, is one notable case where the dilemma was resolved in the opposite fashion. In 1965 and 1966 the delays and difficulties in unloading cargoes generated great pressure, particularly from the U.S. military, for the U.S. to take over the operation of the port. The issue was debated back and forth for several months, but in the end take-over was avoided: Prime Minister Ky appointed an effective port director and U.S. innovations and action to improve the port situation were taken under his aegis, so that while much of the push came from Americans, Vietnamese responsibility for the operation of the port was preserved.

(4) Of a somewhat different order was the debate within the American mission during the summer of 1967 about how to take more effective action against corruption in the GVN. One proposal was that the U.S. systematically collect data on the corrupt activities of GVN officials and from this data establish a blacklist of those officials who were unduly corrupt, letting it be known that if such officials were appointed to any positions of authority (e.g., province chiefs), they would be boycotted by the U.S. and denied U.S. advice and assistance. Such a policy would in effect assert an American vote over appointments of officials throughout the GVN. Which is worse: Vietnamese corruption or American colonialism? In this case, the initial decision was not to interfere too drastically with Vietnamese sovereignty, but to engage in less coercive forms of lobbying and persuasion with the GVN leadership in an effort to get them to clean their own house.

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More generally, the drive to accomplish results produces a continuing expansion of the American administrative apparatus at the provincial and district level. In Region IV, for instance, in the summer of 1967 the American civil operations and revolutionary development staff consisted of somewhat under 2,000 people, distributed as follows:

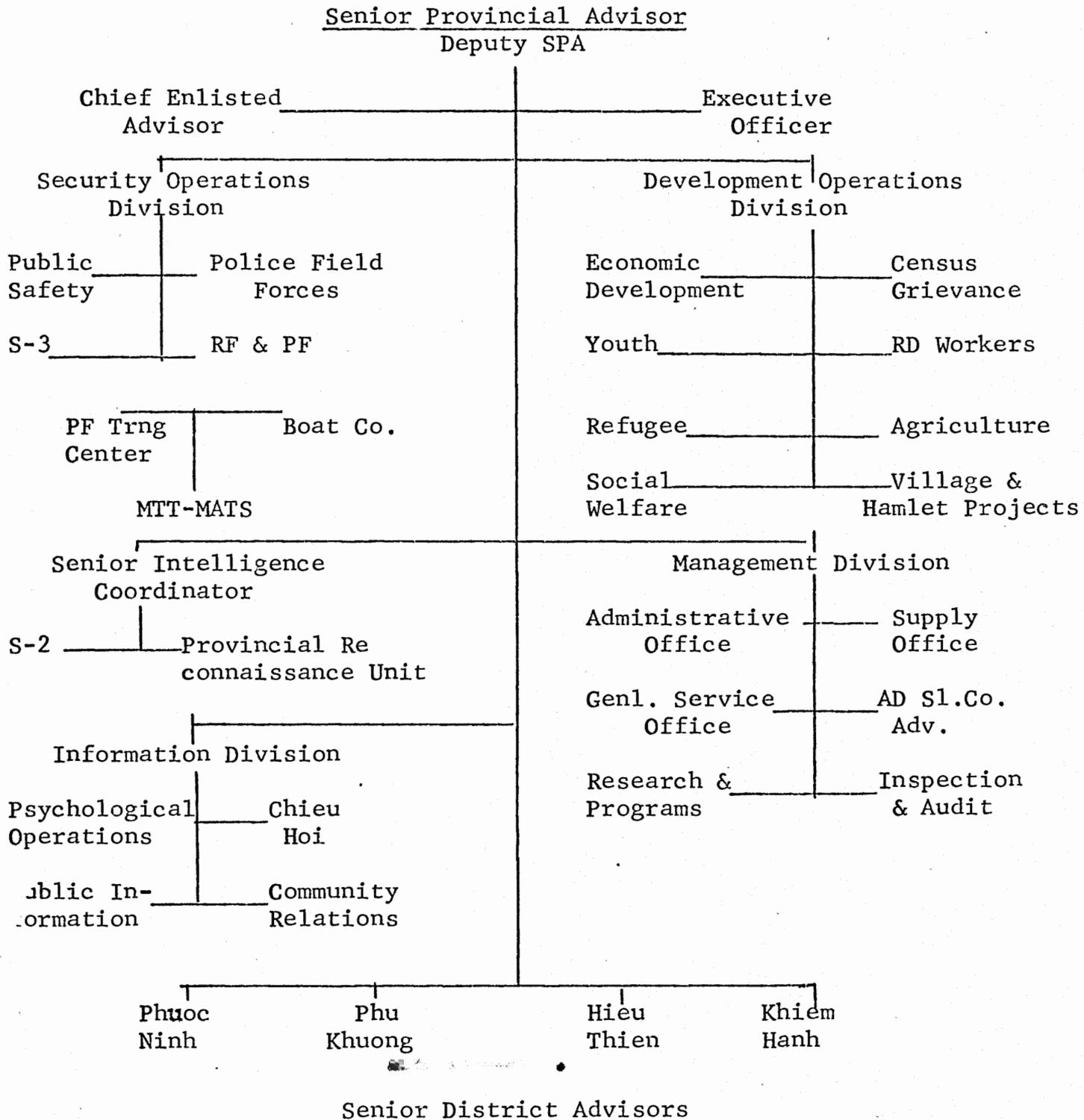
U.S. civilians	. 437
U.S. military	321
Third country nationals	178
Vietnamese	<u>978</u>
Total	1,914

The American operation in each province typically includes from 20 to 50 U.S. personnel plus additional third country nationals and Vietnamese. At the district level there are normally five or six Americans who, until recently, have been entirely military. In the past few months, however, U.S. civilian personnel have begun to be assigned at the district level, and the drive is on to multiply the civilians in the districts. The activities of the American structure encompasses virtually all those which any government would engage in at this level. CORDS Region IV headquarters, for instance, includes divisions or branches for Administration, Plans and Programs, New Life Development, Refugees, PsyOps, Public Safety, Chieu Hoi, Revolutionary Development Workers, Public Health, Education, Agriculture, Public Works, Public Administration, Logistics, Cultural Affairs, and Political Reporting. Some indication of the provincial operations may also be gained from the following (reasonably typical) organization chart for CORDS in Tay Ninh Province, III Corps.

The need to produce results develops in the "operators" in CORDS a philosophy and attitudes which differ from those dominant among the "observers" based in the Embassy. The former are under pressure to produce, the latter only to report. CORDS has to believe that it is accomplishing results, and it wants to do what is necessary in order to accomplish results. The operators are thus usually far more optimistic than the observers.

Figure 1

Table Organization, CORDS Tay Ninh August 1, 1967



In addition, and quite naturally, they are far more activist and expansionist. In Vietnam "can do" usually leads to "take over." Many CORDS officials are quite willing to accept and to defend this logic. "Nation-building" is the job to be done in South Vietnam, and, if necessary, the U.S. should do it.

Posted on the walls of many CORDS and AID offices in Vietnam are Kipling's words of warning to occidental reformers:

Now it is not good for the Christian's health
to hustle the Aryan brown,
For the Christian riles, and the Aryan smiles
and he weareth the Christian down;
And the end of the fight is the tombstone white
with the name of the late deceased,
And the epitaph drear: "A Fool lies here
who tried to hustle the East."

The lesson which Americans seem to draw from this verse, however, is quite the opposite of Kipling's. It is that if the East cannot be hustled, then it must be replaced. If the Vietnamese will not move their own society, we will move it for them.

The Political Impact of the American Presence

The full scope and nature of the American impact on Vietnamese political development can hardly be foreseen at the present time. Two of the more "positive" results of the American presence are, however, clearly visible now. First, the relative stability of governmental personnel for two-and-a-half years is very largely the result of the American presence, American support for the Thieu-Ky government, and American opposition to military coups. Secondly, the progress which South Vietnam has made in writing a constitution and in making office contingent upon election is also largely a result of American influence. Only a people obsessed with the idea of elections as the source of legitimacy would have imposed six elections on a battered and divided country like South Vietnam in less than thirty months.

Other political consequences of the U.S. presence may not be quite so encouraging. Among these at least five are visible in embryonic form at the present time.

(1) Abdication of responsibility.

American intervention in Vietnamese affairs and assumption of what would normally be thought to be Vietnamese responsibilities is often justified on the grounds that through the example of the Americans and the experience of working with Americans the Vietnamese will learn to and be inspired to undertake similar actions on their own. Presumably the willingness of Americans to give priority to short-term results is based on the assumption that at some point this process will come to a natural end and will generate counterbalancing capabilities on the part of the Vietnamese. Few, if any, Americans think of the U.S. taking over additional functions and responsibilities in Vietnam as an irreversible process. The underlying assumption is that these are temporary measures which can be subsequently easily turned back to the GVN.

Yet little evidence exists to support this assumption. What activities or roles which the United States has assumed in Vietnam has it subsequently been able to abandon and return to the Vietnamese? The fact that to date this has virtually never happened does not preclude its happening in the future. But it should be a warning against the easy assumption that it must happen. Indeed, the trend is, if anything, in the other direction. The American assumption of additional responsibilities, civil and military, has encouraged the further abdication of responsibility by Vietnamese and the feeling that they have lost control of their future. The war is obviously the most crucial issue confronting South Vietnam, but many if not most South Vietnamese believe that the important decisions about the war are made in Washington and Hanoi and perhaps elsewhere, but not in Saigon. The

Vietnamese, as Vu Van Thai has said, feel increasingly alienated from their own destiny. Hence they are able, in some respects, to stand aside, to look at the war and the war effort and, indeed, the government as something apart from themselves. To some extent, the tendencies in this direction have undoubtedly been counter-balanced by the elections and the broadening of political participation which also result from the American presence. But it would be folly not to recognize also the extent to which the expanding dynamism of the American presence gives rise to attentisme, and the feeling that if something has to be done, the Americans will do it. "The main problem with the American presence in South Vietnam," as one Vietnamese has said, "is that the man in the street, along without government, has developed the habit of leaning on Americans for everything.... Many Vietnamese behave as if the Americans will remain in Vietnam forever. American presence here has become a kind of opiate."

Americans want the American presence to assist the Vietnamese to help themselves. But it may indeed have just the opposite effect and be an opiate rather than a stimulant. If this is the case, the dynamics of the American presence there could eventually lead toward a completely dependent relationship.

(2) Resentment of American Dominance. Beyond the simple abdication of responsibility for their own future is the development of more intense resentment and hatred for Americans taking over so much of the direction of their country. This resentment is widespread among many of the Vietnamese elite. "The atmosphere here now," it was reported from Saigon in February 1967, "is one of increasing resentment over so-called U.S. 'domination.'" (Saigon 17155, 2 Feb. 1967, SECRET) Again, the elections undoubtedly helped to defuse some of this resentment and direct it into more

constructive outlets. But it still exists, nonetheless, and if the American role continues to expand in South Vietnam it is certain to become more intense and widespread. Among intellectuals and students the resentment at the incursions into Vietnamese sovereignty is particularly strong. Among government officials this resentment can give rise to conscious efforts to frustrate American desires just out of Vietnamese desires to assert their own independence. These may take the form of seeming to comply with American insistence on some reform while actually undermining and defeating it. Or they may simply involve standing still and refusing to act; U.S. efforts to get the Montagnard statute approved, for instance, are reported to have led the top officials of the GVN to dig in their heels and refuse to sign it, until the pressure of the elections made it politically necessary to do so. At the extreme, Vietnamese resentment of the Americans can lead to identification with the Viet Cong. "I recently read in a newspaper of a VC victory over an American unit," one young intellectual was quoted as saying, "and I was happy. Yet I remember all that the VC had done to my family, and I like the Americans. But I was proud to read of Vietnamese defeating the foreigners." (Saigon 15738, 15 Jan. 1967, CONF.) If the American presence expanded to its logical conclusion, the Vietnamese would have little left to be proud of except the Viet Cong.

(3) Denationalizing the Government. Closely linked to this resentment is the feeling, often expressed by the Vietnamese politicians, that the GVN is in some sense no longer Vietnamese. One of the most common themes in Vietnamese political discourse is the need for a "truly nationalist" regime. In its most extreme form this feeling expresses itself in the denunciation of Thieu and Ky as the puppets of the Americans. Quite apart from the close ties of individual leaders with the United States, there is the much broader and

more troubling fact that the GVN itself is being Americanized. American ideas, American policies, American techniques, American ways of doing business, are permeating the governmental bureaucracy. To the extent that they replace French ideas and practices, this is undoubtedly a welcome change. But to the extent that they enhance still further the gap between the Vietnamese government and Vietnamese society, they increase the likelihood of future political instability. The Americanization of the Vietnamese political system has a differential impact on different segments. In general, it would appear that the Vietnamese military are the most Americanized branch of the government, followed by segments of the civil service. The civilian politicians, in contrast, tend to be much less Americanized, and either much more French or more Vietnamese than the soldiers. A strong tendency exists among civil servants and civilian politicians to identify the military with the Americans. The current leadership of the armed forces who fifteen years ago fought with the French and now associate with the Americans thus have the poorest credentials to lead a nationalist government.

The more the United States attempts to promote reform and change in Vietnam the more closely it will become involved with the GVN. More important than the actual ties between the U.S. and the GVN, however, are the images which people have of the relationship between the two. The election undoubtedly helped to soften somewhat the image of the GVN as an American instrument, but as the election fades into the past and the American pressure on the GVN continues or intensifies, inevitably this identification of the two in the public mind may reappear.

Already some tendencies exist to compare the recent government unfavorably with the Diem regime. These trends are much stronger among Catholics than among others, but they are couched in terms which would have a general nationalist appeal to all Vietnamese.

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Diem, it is argued, was a true nationalist, the servant of no foreign power, and under his rule the Vietnamese government maintained its dignity, integrity, and independence. Recent governments, in contrast, have been dominated by the United States in a way which could never have happened under Diem. The relatively good showing of the "Diemist" slates in the senatorial election was undoubtedly in part a result of this re-emergence of Diem as a nationalist symbol.

(4) Withdrawal of Politicians. One of the more encouraging developments in South Vietnam was the mass outpouring of candidates for the national office in the 1967 elections. This indicated that the great bulk of Vietnamese politicians had sufficient confidence in the future of the emerging political system to feel that if they were going to play a role in that future, they had better get a foot in the door quickly. In addition to this dominant trend, however, there is also an as yet still small counter trend among Vietnamese political figures. One of the worst things that can be said about a Vietnamese politician today is that at some point in the past he was closely associated with the French. Some Vietnamese politicians, looking to the future, wonder if a close association with the Americans now may not be a similar liability five or ten years from now. Consequently, they go out of their way either to disassociate themselves from Americans now or to oppose Americans in the expectation that this will be political capital in the future.

Two notable examples of talented Vietnamese leaders who have acted along these lines are Tran Ngoc Chau and Ma Sanh Nhon. Chau, a former colonel in ARVN, was a highly effective province chief in Kien Hoa, then inspector in the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and a successful candidate for the House of Representatives in October 1967. He is, however, very careful to pursue a conscious policy of never being publicly associated with Americans. Nhon, also an ARVN colonel, is the efficient and energetic province chief of Hau Nghia.

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He is young, dynamic, extremely popular with his troops, and prides himself on his rapport with the common man. He reportedly aspires to be President of the Republic. His American advisors think he is great. But they have to put up with the fact that he seizes every opportunity he can to tell the Americans off, rejecting their advice and spurning their supplies, and making it publicly known that he is so doing.

(5) The Danger of Polarization. The political appeal of anti-Americanism will increase in South Vietnam. The important thing, however, is for Americans to recognize the positive functions which non-communist anti-Americanism can play in the political system. Almost the worst thing which could happen in Vietnamese politics would be for the Viet Cong to establish a monopoly on anti-Americanism. This would polarize politics around a nationalist-foreigner duality and would, in due course, put the Americans in the same place as the French. It would, indeed, be in the interest of the U.S. to encourage effective nationalistic, anti-communist, anti-Americanism. In this sense, the Chaus and the Nhons are our best allies. If the Viet Cong did monopolize anti-Americanism, no chance would exist for emergence of a viable, non-communist, Vietnamese political system.

The expansion of American influence in South Vietnam naturally tends to narrow the scope of action for non-communist anti-Americanism. The basic question is whether a political system in which the U.S. plays a major role can also accommodate political forces whose major appeal is their opposition to the U.S. In the one clear test of whether this was possible, the 1966 struggle movement in I Corps, the outcome was not encouraging. The GVN's suppression of the Buddhists effectively eliminated what might have been a third force in I Corps politics. The Buddhist leaders were either jailed, driven underground, or impelled to flee to the mountains and join the VC. Even conservative and pro-government politicians in I Corps feel that

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this was a significant error. By lumping all Buddhists together, the GVN antagonized many groups which it could have won over and thus created unnecessary enemies. The result was to polarize I Corps politics and to arouse among groups which were anti-American and anti-GVN new sympathies for the VC.

I Corps is supposedly the most politically advanced and sophisticated section of the country. If the polarization there foreshadows the future of the rest of the country, the U.S. could find itself in an increasingly untenable political position. Vietnamese nationalism with anti-U.S. overtones will manifest itself either within and through the political system or against the political system. If the latter occurs, the struggle will eventually be redefined in terms of nationalism versus colonialism, and the outcome will be a foregone conclusion.

Outside of I Corps the possibility still exists for the emergence of a broad-gauged autonomous nationalist movement. In particular, many groups in the Delta -- Buddhist, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and others -- could form the core of such a "country-boy nationalist" coalition. Only a movement which is strong enough to stand up against the U.S., however, will be strong enough to stand up against the VC. The accommodation which the U.S. should now encourage between the GVN and local indigeneous political groupings must, in time, take the form of accommodation with a nationalist political coalition which, to establish its credentials, will be anti-American as well as anti-communist.