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DECEMBER 1967

VIET CONG RECRUITMENT: WHY AND HOW MEN JOIN

John C. Donnell

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FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of Rand studies that examine the organization, operations, motivation, and morale of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that fought in South Vietnam.

Between August 1964 and December 1968 The Rand Corporation conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with the activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. Reports of those interviews, totaling some 62,000 pages, were reviewed and released to the public in June 1972. They can be obtained from the National Technical Information Service of the Department of Commerce.

The release of the interviews has made possible the declassification and release of some of the classified Rand reports derived from them. To remain consistent with the policy followed in reviewing the interviews, information that could lead to the identification of individual interviewees was deleted, along with a few specific references to sources that remain classified. In most cases, it was necessary to drop or to change only a word or two, and in some cases, a footnote. The meaning of a sentence or the intent of the author was not altered.

The reports contain information and interpretations relating to issues that are still being debated. It should be pointed out that there was substantive disagreement among the Rand researchers involved in Vietnam research at the time, and contrary points of view with totally different implications for U.S. operations can be found in the reports. This internal debate mirrored the debate that was then current throughout the nation.

A complete list of the Rand reports that have been released to the public is contained in the bibliography that follows.

(CRC, BJ: May 1975)

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For a description of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Project and interviewing process, the reader should first consult W. Phillips Davison, *User's Guide to the Rand Interviews in Vietnam*, R-1024-ARPA, March 1972.

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PREFACE

The following Memorandum is one of a series of inquiries into different aspects of Viet Cong motivation and morale which The RAND Corporation conducts under contract with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense. Like the other Memoranda published within this project, it is based on extensive interviews with prisoners of war and civilian and military ralliers by a field team of RAND analysts and interpreters.

The author is a professor of political science and consultant to RAND's Social Science Department who took part in the formulation and initial conduct of the interview project, in 1964, and has since contributed to several analytical studies based on the interview material. For the present analysis of the reasons why men join the insurgency, and of the variety of ways in which the Viet Cong induces them to join, he has relied heavily on 261 interviews with POWs and defectors who came into the GVN/U.S. orbit in 1964 and 1965. Their testimony covers a period when the Communists were still able to indulge their characteristic preference for voluntary enlistment, before the more recent intensification of the war, with its growing manpower requirements, caused them to resort more and more to outright conscription and such crude coercive devices as abduction. The earlier interviews reflect a great diversity of highly refined techniques of persuasion and subtle coercion, which are more likely to win loyal followers than are applications of the stick, and thus present the government's side with

a more complex task of counterpropaganda and political action.

In addition to the interviews studied in depth and quoted liberally throughout the Memorandum, the author has drawn on later interviews in the RAND files, which tend to corroborate findings derived from the earlier material. He has also made use of a number of captured Viet Cong documents, translated and made available to RAND through the courtesy of MACV, which shed added light on Communist recruiting methods. Further illustrative material from interviews and VC documents has been assembled in a series of appendixes.

SUMMARY

This Memorandum presents an analysis of extensive discussions with Viet Cong prisoners and defectors, supplemented by examination of relevant captured documents. The author studied closely 261 interviews completed between July 1964 and mid-1965 by the RAND field team, of which he himself was then a member. Some fifty more recent interviews, chosen at random from the roughly 380 that had been done by November 1966, received less intensive scrutiny, but yielded useful additional information and valuable comparisons with the findings derived from the earlier material.

The sample used includes every category of Viet Cong fighter: former Viet Minh, most of them cadres, who at the time of the 1954 partition were left behind in the South to continue what at first was only a low-key political activity aimed at preparing the elections that were to take place in 1956; those who had returned to a non-political civilian life and were reactivated only after the elections were called off and the resistance movement, now called the National Liberation Front (NLF), resumed guerrilla warfare against the legitimate government; the Viet Minh who had been "regrouped" to North Vietnam under the Geneva Agreements, there to be indoctrinated and trained and eventually reinfilitrated for warfare in the South; and, finally, many young Front fighters recruited after 1956, with no first-hand experience of the Viet Minh war. The numerous statements quoted throughout are drawn almost exclusively from interviews with men who decided, or were compelled, to join the movement before the GVN and United States began using air and artillery bombardments

on a major scale, that is to say, too early for the political and psychological effects of the bombings to have entered into that decision.

The pattern of VC recruitment has changed over time. It has varied, moreover, from one locality to another, the most striking difference being that between GVN- and VC-controlled areas. In recent years, strict criteria of proven political reliability, limits on the age and sex of recruits, the exclusion of youths supporting families, and attempts to station men near their homes have been subordinated to the demands of intensified warfare. Today, more and more youths in their early teens are performing nonmilitary, paramilitary, and at times even military functions; new recruits frequently are sent directly to the Regional and Main Forces instead of being allowed to gain experience in village guerrilla activity; and there is a general understanding that a man's service will last to the end of the war. Above all, the rising manpower requirements have caused the Viet Cong to resort increasingly to coercive recruitment techniques.

The bulk of the interviews on which this study is based reflect the conditions of 1961-1964, when, despite the stepped-up tempo of the war and the need for more and more men, the Front could still afford to be relatively selective as well as patient in its recruitment. VC leaders have demonstrated their strong preference for persuasion over threat or force; indeed, they frequently go to great lengths to bring about an act of voluntary (though often quite perfunctory) commitment by recruits who have been impressed against their will, and they strive to cultivate the myth of voluntary enlistment even in areas so firmly under VC control that conscription would be simple.

The earlier period, characterized as it is by a large variety of propagandistic appeals, is thus the more illustrative of the Viet Cong's doctrine and preferred practice, and of their success in winning adherents. It reveals more tellingly than do the most recent conditions the variety of reasons, and combinations of reasons, that men become insurgents. The earlier recruiters' preponderant use of persuasion casts light on the movement's ability to build up its initial mass support and to inspire a rank and file that has produced many of the cadres of today.

The Memorandum, as the title states, addresses itself to the many-sided question of motivation: What makes a man susceptible to the Viet Cong's appeal; what ideals, prejudices, resentments, fears, hopes, and self-interest combine to attract him; what makes many who are forced to join nonetheless fight well? And, going on to the manner of recruitment, how does the Viet Cong propagandist or recruiter, cognizant of the complexity and contradictoriness of the reasons behind human action, manipulate the targets of his efforts; by what methods and combinations of methods, from subtle persuasion to outright compulsion, does he succeed in winning followers; how does he exploit existing frustrations and traditional suspicions, awaken new resentments, and relate the self-seeking aspirations to the nobler ideals of patriotism and the common good?

As the interviews show, the Viet Cong has tried to capitalize on the honorable patriotic record of the Viet Minh. Wherever possible, recruiters draw the parallel between the movement that fought to win independence from French colonial rule, and the National Liberation Front, which is said to be continuing the same antiimperialist

war, where the United States and its puppet government in Saigon merely have supplanted France in the role of oppressors of the Vietnamese people. It would appear, however, that the Viet Cong has been somewhat less successful than the Viet Minh in its appeal to pure patriotism. Especially in the 1954-1959 period -- the "years of peace," as some Vietnamese call it -- people's war-weariness and the rather inconspicuous presence of the Americans combined to make the above argument less convincing than the case for the earlier Resistance. More than the Viet Minh, therefore, the Viet Cong has tended to combine the appeal to idealism with the appeal to self-interest.

Depending on the social status, the frustrated aspirations, the economic deprivations, the political past, or the personal grievances of the potential recruit, the Viet Cong propagandist is prepared to hold out a wide range of rewards in return for support of the revolution. The reasons cited by interviewees -- POWs as well as defectors -- for their initial decision to join the Front suggest both the variety and the relative success of these appeals to self-interest. For many of those young people, the desire to win glory, or perhaps just the respect of their community, was the governing motive. The normal adventurousness of the young (including the lure of being allowed to handle firearms) often played a part, though few of the interviewed were prepared to cite it as their sole reason for joining. Men who for any cause whatever had placed themselves outside the law found refuge and companionship with the Front, situations which the Viet Cong was quick to exploit. (Indeed, in many instances, it would deliberately create them by prevailing on ordinary citizens to perform a succession

of minor services for the guerrillas until they unwittingly had become deeply implicated, and as "illegal persons" had no choice but to leave their communities and join the rebellion.) Another common appeal was that of the "victory bandwagon"; many joined, opportunistically, what VC propaganda had convinced them was the winning side.

Naturally, it is in the exploitation of the existing shortcomings of Vietnamese society that Viet Cong recruiters find the most fertile soil. Given the chronic land hunger in many rural areas, for example, the young peasant responds readily to the promise of more equitable land distribution, and the fact that the Viet Minh is widely credited with instances of successful land reform tends to strengthen people's faith in the Viet Cong's promise. (When the promise goes unfulfilled, many Front members become deeply disillusioned.) Similarly, youths chafing under a system that makes it difficult for them to rise above their class and overcome the poverty that afflicts much of the Vietnamese peasantry are lured by the prospect of education and career opportunities; even defectors cited appreciatively the instruction in reading and writing that had accompanied their training for guerrilla warfare. Again, many Vietnamese villagers, with inadequate channels to the center of government, have witnessed instances of corruption on the part of local officials, or oppression and abuse from the disliked militia units, and Viet Cong agitators easily take advantage of these experiences by presenting them as evidence of the malevolent and corrupt nature of the central government. This theme found a strong echo especially in the days of the Diem regime, whose uneven performance in local administration, including its heavy-handed

management of agrovilles, strategic hamlets, and other "community development" programs, was felt at the hamlet level and caused much active discontent.

Viet Cong propaganda is adept at arousing those who previously were resigned to their way of life to a new awareness, and with it resentment, of its drabness and deprivation, and to give language and focus to the dissatisfaction so engendered; the articulateness with which prisoners and defectors describe their grievances bears witness to the effectiveness of the indoctrination.

Appeals to young men to dodge the GVN draft have been successful, particularly when recruiters use their intelligence network to ascertain who is about to be called up and then prevail on him and his family individually -- in the name of patriotism or to ensure him a better chance of survival -- to join the Viet Cong instead.

GVN/U.S. operations that do damage to peasant communities present Front propagandists with still another vulnerable target, especially in the case of villages that had not been the site of provocative action or of shelter for Viet Cong troops but were innocent victims of accident or misinformation. However, the extent to which people are ready to blame (or exonerate) the government seems to depend largely on whether the affected village is in VC- or government-controlled territory, and a considerable number of Vietnamese do not blame either side but accept such incidents philosophically as among the hazards of war.

Themes and tactics are, of course, tailored to the individual or group to be recruited, and the Viet Cong has concentrated much of its effort on particular target groups. Among these are former members of the

Resistance who, though they remained in South Vietnam after 1954, had returned to their peacetime pursuits and gradually lost touch with the small and harassed network of Viet Minh cadres in the South. One by one, however, they were found by Viet Cong recruiters, who, pointing to the discrimination that many former resistants were experiencing at the hands of local officials under Diem, tried to persuade these experienced fighters that their best chance, both for their safety and for the full attainment of the ideals for which they had fought the earlier war, lay in a return to the revolutionary movement.

Desirable also, though for different reasons, are recruits from among local government officials, whose shift in loyalty is used by VC propagandists to dramatize the "inevitability" of victory as well as the movement's much-vaunted policy of leniency toward its former enemies. Often, such officials are tempted to cooperate with the Viet Cong by the desire to maintain contact with relatives or protect property in VC zones, and this vulnerability is carefully exploited.

Government troops constitute another special target, and military proselyting involves such efforts and promises as leniency toward captured GVN soldiers (including the release of many after a period of indoctrination); pressure on peasant families to persuade their city-dwelling sons to visit home, where VC recruiters can then make contact with them; invitations to GVN units to enjoy the performance of VC entertainment troupes during the cease-fire that is observed over the Vietnamese New Year; and wherever facilities are adequate to it, intensive political indoctrination for captured GVN personnel and medical care for needy prisoners.

A favorite recruiting device, used more widely in the earlier period but still prominent today, is the large propaganda and recruitment meeting, most commonly held in VC areas and in contested villages. Even in villages where the government has fairly firm control, however, including some strategic hamlets, Viet Cong units are apt to break in at night and summon the inhabitants to a meeting, at which they harangue the audience, collect taxes, and solicit recruits, and then to depart before dawn, often deliberately ignored by the hamlet militia. Agents may be planted in the crowd to pick out anyone who responds enthusiastically, and a VC cadre is likely to follow up such a lead with a separate visit and a direct appeal to the individual so spotted, having first gathered any information about his person that might make him susceptible to particular appeals.

The personal approach, the special lure, the use of all manner of ruses by which to entrap the individual in a commitment he may not have foreseen or desired -- these are characteristic of some of the most effective techniques by which the Viet Cong wins followers without resorting to force. Also in this category is the subtle use of women, who are respected in Vietnamese society for character and intelligence as well as charm, and whose judgment and valor can be expected to have a powerful psychological effect and moral influence on the young men to whom they are exposed. (Numerous interviewees spoke of having been persuaded by women, influenced by their noble example, or moved to join the movement to impress the girls of their village.)

Though forcible recruitment, including abduction, and simple conscription are more common today than in

earlier years, they are frequently mitigated by a period of political indoctrination -- anywhere from days to months -- after which the individual is pressed to "volunteer" for military service or at least for agricultural production. This three-stage process has been very effective in deepening the revolutionary commitment of large numbers of men who previously were politically ignorant and indifferent. Perhaps even more important is its function of enmeshing the individual, who may or may not be politically "awakened" by this process, in an organizational network that binds him with psychological and social as well as political ties. Impressionable young recruits without a fixed political goal, without experience beyond the hamlet, and separated from their families are apt to be deeply impressed by the seasoned cadres, with their quiet endurance of hardships, their dogged pursuit of revolutionary ideals, and their willingness to forgo personal gratification and the pleasures of family life. Admiration and emulation of the older fighters, who take on the functions of fathers and community leaders for the uprooted youths, help to explain not only the continuing loyalty of recruits predisposed in favor of the Viet Cong but also the phenomenon of a developing commitment on the part of many who are forcibly inducted.

The post-abduction act of "volunteering" is significant in that it dramatizes the power of the organization over the will of the individual. As a man who has been so manipulated becomes part of the machine, subject to the system of political controls that includes the three-man cell and frequent criticism sessions, and as he undergoes the unifying experience of shared combat and the general

camaraderie of life in the Viet Cong, his initial resentment at having been forced into the movement often tends to fade. Yet it is likely to leave a psychological residue of hostility which, if brought to the surface by doubts and disillusionment, may ultimately contribute to a decision to desert or defect.

Not only the testimony of defectors -- men who presumably entertain serious grievances against the Viet Cong -- but also the statements of prisoners as to the frustrations, ideals, and material expectations that drew them to the movement can be valuable to the planners of GVN/U.S. policy and propaganda, for they illuminate both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of the Viet Cong. The movement has its greatest appeal where it can point to tangible shortcomings and inequities and raise the peasants' hopes for education, social advancement, a fair distribution of land, and other much-needed improvements in Vietnamese society. Recruiters clearly are most persuasive when they approach the individual patiently and respectfully. This same concern for the individual seems to express itself also in the attitudes of many cadres toward their men, who may respond with an emotional transference in which the cadres take the place of family and friends in the home community. The fact that some of these men will ultimately defect suggests that the transference may be reversible; whether loyalty to the Viet Cong changes merely to mute indifference or is turned into active support of the government, however, will depend to a considerable extent on how much thought and effort are spent on the defectors' political and social re-orientation.

Among the chief weaknesses in the fabric of Viet Cong propaganda is the anti-Americanism which the Front relentlessly and almost mechanically feeds to its fighters (especially the cadres) and to the civilian populace, and which runs the risk of being invalidated by the actual experience of people who have been so indoctrinated. And herein lies a major opportunity for constructive counterpropaganda, for anyone who has been taught to expect cruelty after his capture or defection and meets instead with humane and honorable treatment may well begin to doubt not only the anti-Americanism but other lessons of the Viet Cong as well.

In approaching the all-important task of winning the trust and the cooperation of these former opponents, who despite their disillusionment with the Viet Cong will rarely approach the other side without some prejudice and distrust, it is essential that the concern shown to them be genuine, and that their political reeducation have unmistakable depth and substance. The young people coming over from the Viet Cong, thoroughly politicized as they are, and trained to new perceptions and articulate social analysis, will be quick to distinguish mere slogans from thoughtful political enlightenment. In undertaking their reorientation the government will be wise to refute the Viet Cong's fundamental assertion that the present war is the continuation of the war against the French, and to convince them that it has many characteristics not of a war of independence but of a destructive class struggle. This will not be an easy task, as it runs counter to the many elements of Marxist-Leninist thought that have been spread throughout Vietnamese society for over a generation.

Being able to point to political achievements of the GVN, and especially to increasing stability in the countryside, will be a major part of matching deeds to words. The Vietnamese peasant is essentially conservative in the value he attaches to the protection of his land, his property, and his family, and any ideological notions that Viet Cong propaganda may have implanted in him are likely to be outweighed by evidence of a politically cohesive, dynamic GVN leadership capable of defending the countryside and satisfying his aspirations.

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In the beginning I was very hurt and angry with them for killing my father. . . . Then they told me that because my father had done wrong . . . he had to be punished. . . . They talked to me, and to people like me whose relatives had been killed, in order to eradicate all their hatred of the Viet Cong. They talked to a point where I felt that they were right. . . .

(From an interview with a defector, the young son of a former GVN hamlet chief)

Just as "all roads led to Rome" in the old Roman Empire, so all roads in VC or even contested territory lead into the Viet Cong, or at least did during the period under review here. Whether a man had been in the Viet Minh or not; whether he had been or done this, that, or the other thing, the Viet Cong seized on it and used it as the special reason for him to join, in so eloquent and crafty a fashion as to make him see the point. The endless and spectrum-like devices, from suggestion to persuasion to constraint and blackmail, emerge as a gigantic net from which there is hardly any escape. The VC efforts, in turn, meet and correspond with an infinite variety of physical or psychological predispositions on the part of future VC members which they skillfully exploit. . . . [Yet] no amount of skill, organization, indoctrination, coercion, or psychology would have enabled leaders to design and make work such a variety of devices, and have such a variety of well-fitting forces play upon the young and not-so-young to join, if the situation had not been so propitious. . . . The power of the VC to organize itself is, ultimately, inherent in the situation -- with all that that implies for the GVN and the United States.

(Comments of a RAND staff member on reading the text of this Memorandum)

I. INTRODUCTION

As its title suggests, this study addresses itself to the question of how and why men have joined the Viet Cong. For most of the answers it draws directly on the statements of former members of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and on attitudes that can be inferred from their testimony.

The "How" in this context encompasses the many varieties and combinations of methods, from subtle persuasion to outright coercion, by which the Viet Cong has won adherents. The "Why" is the more intangible question of motivation: What makes a potential recruit susceptible to the Viet Cong's appeal; what ideals, prejudices, resentments, fears, hopes, and self-interest combine to attract him; what makes many of those who are forced to join nevertheless stay with the movement and fight well?

Closely related to this second aspect of our inquiry, and highly relevant to the concerns of the counterinsurgent who must identify the weak and vulnerable spots in the enemy's psychological armor, are the unintended effects of some of the Viet Cong's methods and appeals -- resentment engendered by coercion and broken promises, or doctrinal doubts when observed reality contradicts Communist propaganda -- which shake the loyalty of many and make some of them change sides.

The writer has based his conclusions and generalizations on extensive interviews with POWs and defectors. He analyzed in depth 261 case histories, the transcript of interviews conducted between July 1964 and mid-1965 by a RAND field team which he himself had been instrumental in

organizing.¹ The author next examined some 50 interviews selected largely at random from the 380 more that had been completed by November 1966. Finally, he checked his findings against available captured documents and made use of these wherever they shed light on his subject.

As the above breakdown suggests, much of the material used and cited in this Memorandum stems from descriptions of the period 1961-1964. At that time, the Viet Cong was employing a great variety of recruiting techniques, with heavy emphasis on persuasion and every attempt to nurture the myth of voluntary enlistment and to obscure the use of subtle coercive devices. Since then, under the pressure of the growing manpower needs brought on by the escalation of the war, the Front has relied increasingly on outright conscription, a trend that is clearly reflected in the more recent interviews with VC prisoners and defectors. Despite the appreciable change in recruiting methods that has been taking place, however, a study of the practices that predominated a few years ago would seem highly relevant to our understanding of present and future problems of insurgency. The earlier methods and appeals are significant because of their variety and subtlety, because they constitute the preferred approach of the Communist proselytizer and insurgent, and because, in allowing

¹Of the 261 respondents, 166 were POWs and 95 were defectors. The total included 70 civilians; of the military captives and ralliers, 39 had been members of guerrilla units, and 152 came from the regular forces. The number of cadres (men of the rank of squad leader or above) in this interview sample was 128. Seventy-four of the total had been members of the Communist Party. It is worth noting also that the majority--184 of the 261--had become separated from the Viet Cong, voluntarily or otherwise, between July 1964 and June 1965.

the recruit greater freedom of decision than does the far more coercive approach of the recent past, they illuminate well the complexity of the soldier's motivation.

A study of the political themes and stratagems by which followers were attracted to the movement in the initial stages of its expansion and consolidation reveals much about its ability to build up mass support and to imbue with revolutionary zeal not only its cadres but also many rank-and-file fighters who became the cadres of today; it tells us a great deal about the political attitudes and expectations of those earlier recruits who form the heart of the organization at present; and it provides some insight into the phenomenon of the later period, when the Viet Cong resorted to more heavy-handed recruiting methods and yet managed to preserve some of illusion of voluntary commitment that characterized recruitment in former times.

A brief review of the changing trends in recruitment standards and customs will be followed by detailed discussion, under separate headings, of the sentiments and needs of the Vietnamese on which the Viet Cong recruiters have successfully played, and of the methods by which they have done so. Lest this schematic presentation create a false impression of unequivocal, readily identifiable single reasons for joining, it is important to bear in mind always that the Viet Cong recruit, like human beings the world over, normally acts not from one but from a variety of motives, often a combination of the most selfless with the self-interested. Moreover, he is likely to be only partly aware of his own motivation, thus leaving the analyst with the burdensome task of evaluating his testimony and discerning both deliberate

and inadvertent distortions of the truth that the witness has introduced.

The examination of motives will be followed by a description of the techniques that the Viet Cong has found most useful in the past. They reflect the propagandists' recognition of the motives, or combination of motives, to which their target groups are most susceptible; they are strongly governed, furthermore, by variations in local conditions, including, above all, the degree of control that the Viet Cong exercises in a given area; and, as will be shown throughout, they are intimately linked to the experience of French colonial rule and the Indochina War.

Coercion having become an ever-stronger element in the Viet Cong recruiting effort, its frequent boomerang effect deserves our special attention. POWs and defectors who describe their initial involvement tend to give prominent mention to the use of force, be it as a political alibi vis-à-vis their captors or as a cause of resentment of the Viet Cong.

To the extent desirable, the writer has illustrated his text with quotations from the interviews and from some captured documents; additional citations illuminating major conclusions will be found in the Appendices. The text includes such details as the informant's background, age, political history, reliability, and intelligence wherever they would add to our appreciation of a particular opinion or account.

It goes without saying that information derived from interviews with prisoners and defectors must be treated very cautiously, particularly on such politically sensitive

questions as relate to a man's attitude toward the Viet Cong at the time he entered the organization. The very length of many of the interviews -- some lasted twelve hours -- and the practice of repeating sessions with the most interesting of the ex-Viet Cong were means by which the planners of the interview project sought to test the informants' reliability and obtain the fullest possible picture of their background and attitudes.

Still, apart from deliberate deception (by some POWs who remain loyal Communists, by defectors who hope to gain personal advantages, or by men who fear the American and GVN authorities), the passage of time and specific experiences can distort an interviewee's vision in a number of ways that will complicate the task of analyzing his reasons for joining. For one thing, an interim of years, even of months, can make it difficult for a man to recall accurately his personal situation and the various pressures brought to bear on him at the time of recruitment. Often, the systematic political indoctrination that the recruit receives at the hands of the Viet Cong upon joining will have distorted his original views. Experience, especially upon contact with the government side, is a powerful factor. Ex-Viet Cong in the custody of the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) tend in their responses to reflect their new environment, including a certain amount of reindoctrination, especially for the defectors. Interrogations, even when they are conducted without duress, often lead to selective recall of aspects of the Viet Cong experience, the inevitable result of man's desire to idealize and sentimentalize his past actions, to find moral alibis, and to repress his most

painful memories. Moreover, not all interrogations are gentle; many POWs and even some defectors, by the time they were interviewed by members of the RAND team, had undergone protracted and harsh official interrogations, which influenced their subsequent responses. The advantage of the extensive interview in uncovering the deliberate or unconscious obfuscation of motives was vividly illustrated in cases where the informants, using the most obvious of alibis, reported having been abducted or otherwise forced into the Viet Cong, but revealed through subsequent, contradictory statements that their joining had been by no means entirely unwilling.

Another difficulty in probing for motivation is its complexity -- men, as we have said, tend to join a movement from a variety of motives -- and the fact that in an interview one reason, or several, may appear so conspicuous as to obscure others. Although it is not the purpose of this study to identify and weigh all individual reasons and their combinations,² "clusters" of motives will be emphasized and illustrated throughout.

²For such a quantitative approach see J. M. Carrier and C.A.H. Thomson, Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: The Special Case of Chieu Hoi, The RAND Corporation, RM-4830-ISA/ARPA, April 1966, especially pp. 35, 42-43.

II. PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

In the course of the last half-dozen years, both the methods and the standards of Viet Cong recruitment have changed considerably. Moreover, they have varied widely from one locality to another, most noticeably, of course, between VC-controlled and contested areas. The general tendency has been away from a relatively selective approach, in which every attempt was made to induce men to volunteer, to a far greater use of coercion, the inevitable result of the widening of the war and of the heavier recruitment quotas that follow from the rising casualty figures and the effort toward an ever-larger Main Force.

On the basis of captured VC documents and interrogations of captives and defectors, MACV sources indicate that as late as 1962, recruiting was still officially limited to volunteers, and standards of acceptability were relatively stringent. The preferred age range was 17 to 30. Only men were eligible, and those who were ill or the fathers of many children were specifically excluded. Political criteria for joining were similarly strict, ruling out people who were political suspects, or who had served the GVN as draftees or members of the

SDC (Self-Defense Corps), Civil Guard, Republican Youth, those who surrendered to or were arrested by the GVN and caused damage to the VC by furnishing the government with information, and those who had relatives working for the GVN or belonging to the GVN's National Revolutionary Movement or Can Lao (Labor) Party. Eligibility was expressly limited, furthermore, to individuals cleared by the Viet Cong security organs, those who had no hatred of the Viet Cong even though their relatives had been arrested by the Viet Cong, to deserters from the SDC, Civil Guard, and Republican Youth, and to religious people who were not fanatics.

In 1963, it appears, these criteria were eased considerably. The age bracket was still 17 to 30, but hereafter women also were to be recruited for logistic agencies. Health requirements were simplified. And VC recruiters were instructed not only to recruit volunteers but to force all youths in the draft age to enlist. In addition to SDC, Civil Guard, and Republican Youth deserters, former members who had not deserted had become acceptable, as had city dwellers. The only category still rigidly excluded was that of youths suspected of having worked as spies for the GVN. Even youths from disputed and sect-controlled areas, previously ruled out by the Viet Cong as "elements lacking a clean background," could now be taken in, if necessary by force.

According to the same sources, the Viet Cong in Central Vietnam were resorting to ambushes and attacks on strategic hamlets to abduct young men. And some time after 1963 the age ceiling for recruits was raised from 30 to 40.

The RAND interview material, on the whole, corroborates the official view that, since about 1963, Viet Cong recruiters have relied increasingly on conscription, abduction, and forcible indoctrination, and correspondingly less on voluntary enlistments. The fragmentary, sometimes conflicting, comments of the respondents reflect the considerable differences in geographic origin, personal bias, and past indoctrination among them; in many instances, moreover, a man's memory of recruiting practices or his willingness to describe them objectively and frankly will be affected by his status both in the Front and in relation to the GVN. Thus, generally speaking, POWs who had been hard-core cadres were likely to stress the voluntary element, whereas defectors, and rank-and-file members who had been in the movement a relatively short time and were less heavily indoctrinated, usually recalled more vividly the coercion they had suffered or witnessed.

Local variations, especially as between contested and "liberated" areas, are still noteworthy, though they have become less marked as the Viet Cong's manpower needs have swelled. The earlier, and from the Viet Cong's point of view desirable, distinction was described by a former assistant platoon leader from the Main Forces,

who had served in the Mekong Delta from 1961 to 1964. His no doubt oversimplified statement reflects the bias of a loyal cadre:

The Front never forces people to join its combat forces. In liberated areas, whoever does not volunteer is considered to be a pacifist and the Front will send him word to do his bit for three years. At the end of the required time, he will be demobilized.

In contested areas, young men are called together to attend [indoctrination] courses. Those who volunteer join the Front. Those who do not are dismissed because it will not be much good to force them.

It is worth comparing this with the statement of another hard-core cadre, who maintained that in Long My District of Phong Dinh Province, where he had operated from 1962 to early 1965, the youths from contested areas who did not volunteer after indoctrination were not simply dismissed but were required "to sign a statement committing themselves not to fight for the enemy and to move to and live in liberated areas." The assignment of youths in "liberated" areas, according to this cadre, depended on the enthusiasm for signing up that they displayed in the recruitment meetings: those who joined eagerly "were allowed to work in their home villages and those who did not do so were frequently sent far away from home for training."

A seventeen-year-old conscript, less "hardcore" than either of these two informants, gave this description of forcible recruitment in VC-controlled areas. When the Viet Cong took over his hamlet in Dinh Tuong in 1960, he had been twelve years old and had joined the Viet Cong children's organization. The Viet Cong,

he said, "tried to persuade people from the ages of 20 to 25 to enlist in their army." Many volunteered, and those who stayed home "had to guard the hamlets." But in 1964 conscription was introduced, and

. . . every young man in the village was forced to perform "youth duties" . . . the VC told us . . . that we had to fulfill our obligations toward the Revolution. . . . Adults had to serve for three years, younger people for one year. After that meeting, we went home to get ready and three days later we left, just like those who had enlisted in the government [GVN] army. . . .

He was assigned to a Main Force unit as an ammunition carrier.

A district recruiting chief who had operated in another part of Dinh Tuong Province, an area under VC control since 1962, cited August 1963 as marking the change to compulsory conscription there. Although the large propaganda meeting continued to be the chief recruiting device, he stated that, from mid-1963 on, the pressure on youth to "volunteer" became increasingly strong.

In the pattern that emerged from these and other statements on recruiting practices, the person who was told that he would be expected to serve three years usually was given political indoctrination and thereafter was asked to volunteer. Prior to 1964, apparently, those who did not volunteer for regular military duty often were assigned to farm production or hamlet guerrilla squads. (More recently, many have been sent to Main Force units if they are young and in good health.) Boys of fifteen or sixteen were eligible for "youth duties"

in the hamlet militia. Whereas conscripts from liberated (and sometimes even from contested) areas were told that their service would be for only three years, no such commitment was made to the volunteers. In the last few years recruiters seem to have been stressing the necessity for remaining in the service until victory. Typically, men who originally were told that they would need to serve only three years in the part-time functions of the hamlet militia now are subjected to steady indoctrination and eventually are pressed or persuaded to join a military unit, which may be anything from the village guerrillas to the Main Forces. Exceptions are still made, for example, for only sons (a status that exempts men on the GVN side also), who may be allowed to remain in their hamlet forces indefinitely. But the rising level of the conflict has caused more and more of these young men to become involved. There remain today only a few categories of people who can hope to avoid participation entirely: those who have broken the rules and been returned to their villages in disgrace (only a few such cases have been noted); those who have proved impervious to indoctrination and have failed to volunteer; and some seasoned troops and cadres whose morale has deteriorated to the point where they cannot be politically reclaimed, at least for a time, and are allowed to return to their villages. This last group has had to suffer the ridicule of the populace, especially at the beginning, yet more and more of them, according to the interviews, have left the ranks to return home. (Some were quoted as having told the local cadres defiantly that they would rather be shot at home than go back to

their units.) With the increasing attrition of the Viet Cong organization, however, we must assume that sooner or later many of them are recalled to active service, if only in hamlet guard duty.

As for local quotas and the Viet Cong's success in meeting them, the variations in recruiting methods from one area and one time period to another are such that one cannot hope for accurate appraisals. Commenting on these difficulties, MACV officials conclude that analysis of the number of recruits and training courses accomplished by the VC in 1962 and 1963 as well as the estimate of their future capabilities is a difficult task which can hardly be accomplished with accuracy.

A rare item among the RAND interviews was the detailed, albeit somewhat local, account of a POW who had been a member of a district military committee in Vinh Binh Province as well as a company commander. He had been captured in November 1964. Interviewed the following April, he cited statistics on recruitment according to which, between 1960 and 1963, the provincial Party committee was able to obtain through the village cadres its quota of forty to forty-five recruits per month. Thereafter, recruitment became more difficult, and the average monthly figure dropped to about twenty. Whenever it fell to ten or below, it was common practice to take men from the village guerrilla and the district Regional Forces and assign them to the Main Force. Since 1964, the informant estimated that only about 30 per cent

of the Party committee's recruitment quotas had been met; this reflected a dodging of the Viet Cong draft that he attributed to a combination of factors: the fear of wartime risks, such personal reasons as the poor families' need for male farm labor, and the fact that "many had been drafted by the GVN." With the greater difficulty in recruiting came a decline in selection and training:

Formerly, the selection of new recruits or fighters was very careful, based on the social class of each individual. They had to undergo a testing period, and elements with low morale were rejected. The men received military training before being assigned to a combat unit. Now, the screening of new recruits is careless, and their training is given in proportion as they are assigned to combat units as replacements. The new fighters joining my unit in the last six months before my capture had very little combat experience and therefore their fighting was weak.

Although some boys of fifteen and sixteen have been used for some time, especially for other than combat tasks -- entertainment and propaganda teams and assignments to munitions shops, quartermaster units, and the like -- the Viet Cong in recent times has been widening its dragnet to recruit younger men for military service. A former Viet Cong, commenting on the lowering of the average recruit's age, ascribed it to the Viet Cong's use of youths drafted and trained by the GVN who had either deserted or been discharged. His estimate of their numbers, however, was so high as to suggest that he was including in it recruits from some of the GVN's paramilitary hamlet defense groups, such as the Combat Youth. Also, he clearly ignored the fact that, of the

ex-GVN fighters now replenishing the Viet Cong's ranks, many had been heavily indoctrinated (some after capture) and then induced to "volunteer" under pressure.

Before going into the various techniques, and combinations of techniques, by which the Viet Cong wins followers, and the growing use of force in recruitment not only in VC-controlled but also in contested areas, let us look more closely at some of the prevailing sentiments and existing conditions -- social, political, and economic -- which cause men to respond to the Viet Cong's propaganda appeals and indeed are calculated to do so. No attempt will be made here to count, sort, and quantify these causes in the manner so effectively used in a RAND study of defectors, which tabulated sixteen major reasons for defecting from the Viet Cong and then showed how they tended to combine.³

As far as possible, we must try to distinguish between "motivation" -- that is to say, an emotional, ideological, and practical predisposition for an involvement that presupposes some genuine freedom of choice -- and such other reasons as coercion, fear of reprisal, and the need to choose between the Viet Cong and an unacceptable,

³Carrier and Thomson, in the aforementioned RM-4830-ISA/ARPA, having isolated the sixteen main reasons for defection, then go on to show that these tend to "cluster" in the following order: "personal hardships of active service," "concern over the economic situation of the subject's family, or concern over his own economic status and future," "criticism by peers or superiors, along with punishment," "fear of death in combat and loss of faith in a Viet Cong final victory," "disillusionment with Viet Cong aims of liberating South Vietnam." (Pp. 35 and 42-43.)

even more hazardous alternative. It is, of course, the former that interests us above all, as we inquire into the unique nature of revolutionary warfare and search for ways in which the GVN could anticipate, neutralize, and combat the appeals of the Viet Cong.

As already mentioned, these appeals usually involve an artful blending of persuasion and coercion, in proportions that differ according to the local situation. Major variables which affect the revolutionary readiness of inhabitants include the degree of control previously exercised by the French and later the GVN, and the economic level of a given area. But even within these categories there are differences. Thus, areas that have enjoyed a relatively good local administration under the French and the GVN may never have developed much revolutionary ardor, whereas those that have experienced neglect and maladministration are likely to cling to the tradition of social protest. Again, not all economically poor areas are hotbeds of insurgency, at the same time that relatively wealthy sections, such as the Mekong Delta province of Kien Hoa, with its swamps and myriad waterways, have caused the Viet Cong to concentrate much organizational effort there precisely because of their economic and logistic assets.

III. NATIONALISM AND ANTIIMPERIALISM AS
MOTIVATING FORCES: COMPARISONS WITH THE VIET MINH

Patriotism, nationalism, and the desire for independence from the rule and influence of the big powers were the preexisting sentiments on which the Viet Minh movement so successfully built much of its appeal in the fight against colonialism. Viet Cong leaders have sought to capitalize on these attitudes and on the experience of the Indochina War, pointing up parallels wherever possible and glossing over the differences between the war against the French and the war against the GVN and the United States. All their propaganda appeals, therefore, are tinged with the theme of patriotism. Also, the Vietnamese people's direct experience of French colonialism and the long Communist-led war for independence have combined to give currency and some meaning to certain Marxist-Leninist notions, including Lenin's contention that any Western power's interest in a country such as Vietnam invariably conceals imperialist motives that eventually will come to the surface.

Nevertheless, to judge by the interview material, joining the Resistance in the years 1945-1954 apparently was more often a spontaneous act than was joining the Viet Cong later on. For one thing, in many areas the anti-French nationalism of the Viet Minh accorded with existing resentment of the colonial rulers, which was easily exploited. By contrast, much of the antiimperialist propaganda of the Viet Cong had to be imposed on the rank and file by the Communist leadership. Only to the extent that it could feed on people's hostility toward

the Ngo Dinh Diem government and point to the visible presence of American advisors attached to ARVN units have popular responses been truly comparable to the efforts of the Viet Minh. But until the intensification of the war, in 1960, the American role in Vietnamese politics and business was inconspicuous compared to the presence of the French at the outbreak of hostilities in 1946. Moreover, five or six years of relative calm, since 1954, had led many Vietnamese to assume that they had truly thrown off colonial rule. Therefore, until the opening of the present phase of the war made the American presence increasingly obvious, it took much vigorous indoctrination by the Viet Cong to convince the Vietnamese peasants that certain economic and administrative shortcomings had been attributes of a bogus independence and that the United States had intended from the start to take the place of the French as the new imperialist power. A former Viet Cong company commander said that, at the time he joined the Front, in 1959, he had not heard that theme, but that "the anti-American movement [sic] had been developing since then," and that the slogans of "expel the American invaders" and "unify the national territory" now figured prominently in all post-induction political training. Others reported that, although the recruiting agents did state the anti-American theme, its full development was left to the indoctrination that took place after a man had joined.

It is hardly surprising, then, to find the most fervently and genuinely patriotic men among the group that had formed its political convictions during the war against the French and, between 1946 and 1954, had

been conditioned by a strongly nationalist environment in areas controlled by the Viet Minh, where participation in the Resistance was a matter of course and where, by its continuing presence, the political authority of the moment -- like the Viet Cong later on -- imperceptibly became the legitimate power. (This phenomenon shows up in the statements of those interviewed who quite naturally referred to the Viet Cong organs as "the army" and "the government.")

The issues in the earlier war presented themselves to the young Vietnamese in clear-cut terms, and most of the former Viet Minh in our interview sample (those who had stayed in the South after the partition as well as men who had been "regrouped" in North Vietnam and later re-infiltrated) had vivid memories of the thrill of being caught up in the nationalist upsurge:

I was 24 at the time. The Japanese had seized control of the country from the hands of the French; and in August 1945, the Vietnamese people rose up to take over from the Japanese. The revolution of August 1945 had the participation of all the Vietnamese people.

* * *

In 1949 I was 19 years old. Like other youths of my age, the call to the Resistance against the French excited my patriotism and I volunteered for the [VM] Army.

Patriotism is easily reinforced by a variety of social pressures on a young man that compel him to take sides and to involve himself in the political struggle. The revolutionary movement skillfully uses these levers as it seeks to dramatize the urgency of the issue as well as the ignobility and the loneliness of remaining on the sidelines. The following statements of former Viet Minh

testify to the force of social pressures, including the example of one's friends, the wishes of wives and relatives, and a family's revolutionary tradition:

Everybody in the country rose up against the French. I had to participate. I could not remain a bystander.

* * *

I joined the VM Front and the Communist Party because of the influence of my friends who advised me to work with the VM to protect my family's fortune.

* * *

I was young at that time; therefore, I had to join those [VM] organizations. Had I not, I would have found myself left behind, because all my friends joined them.

* * *

[By one who joined the Viet Minh in 1949, when the war spread to his region]. . . my friends asked me to come along. My wife also urged me, and the conditions of the times favored my joining.

* * *

I lived with my grandparents and my uncle. After my grandparents died, in 1948, my uncle left for the Resistance and took me with him.

And the son of a highly-regarded Vietnamese Communist, whose father had died in 1943 and who was trained and used by the Viet Minh from the age of thirteen on, commented with apparent pride on the fact that the Party elders in his province with whom he served when he was seventeen "recalled the name of my father when they talked to me."

In Section IX of this study we shall examine in detail the techniques of agitation and propaganda with which the Viet Cong has manipulated the vitally important target group of former Viet Minh in an effort to enlist their support and reap the benefits of their training, experience, and dedication to the revolutionary ideal.

Despite all efforts, however, the Viet Cong has not, it appears, been able to match the Viet Minh in either depth or breadth of the nationalist feeling it has managed to arouse; it has not succeeded, therefore, in creating local conditions quite so favorable to the automatic recruitment of men of all ages. Although it elicited considerable popular enthusiasm in some areas, especially in 1960 and 1961, when it was gaining ground most rapidly, this fervor lessened in many sections of the country as a result, first, of the temporary military setbacks of 1962 that followed the intensification of the American effort and, later, of the increasing authoritarianism in the control of the populace -- a by-product of the widening of the war -- which caused some disillusionment with the movement and a cooling off in the response to recruitment calls.

POWs and defectors interviewed by RAND described the appeal of the Viet Cong as a call to patriotism combined with the satisfaction of such individual ends as the desire to win glory or the respect of the community, the aim of personal advancement (through the acquisition of land, schooling, and career opportunities), and the wish to escape being drafted for the government's armed forces. Like the earlier Viet Minh recruits, these former Viet Cong -- especially, though not necessarily, from

VC-controlled areas -- also reported that the social pressures on young men to join the National Liberation Front, reinforced as they were by the activities of innumerable political associations (for youth, farmers, students, women, combatants' mothers, elders, cultural groups, and others) had been uncomfortable. Said one youth: ". . . people of my age had to do something. We were very much under the influence of VC propaganda. We either joined the VC Regional Force or the provincial Main Force. . . . I could not work with the government. I had to join [the VC]." Another stated simply: "Everyone had to join the Front because they lived in a liberated area." Reminiscent of the statements of those who had joined the Viet Minh are the reasons given by two younger interviewees: a peasant youth from the Mekong Delta who had joined in 1963 at the age of sixteen ("If I had not joined the Front, I would have had to leave my village to go to work elsewhere, because the young women of the village would have ridiculed me . . ."), and another, who revealed fear of being ostracized as well as an unquestioning acceptance of the anti-GVN propaganda he had been fed ("My friends would have despised me if I hadn't joined. I couldn't have stayed home . . . [and] certainly I would have been killed if I had been drafted into the ARVN"). Still another informant, who described his fear of the Viet Cong and his wish to move away from his VC-controlled village to "a place in town," said he had yielded to his mother's unwillingness to leave the family farm; thereafter, "I had to work for them or else I couldn't have stayed in the village with my mother."

The patriotic slogans of the VC propagandists during the tenure of Ngo Dinh Diem and for some time thereafter echoed those of the Viet Minh period as they called on the people to "safeguard the country" by fighting the American imperialists, the alleged manipulators of Diem (and his successors) and heirs to the role of the French. This is how a young peasant from Long An Province described his recruiter's message in 1962: "He told me that the Front brings liberty and social equality to the village people. The duty of the citizens is to participate in the Front to liberate South Vietnam from the foreign invasion." A similar sentiment was recalled by a former member of the Self Defense Corps who, having been wounded and captured by the Viet Cong, was then carefully indoctrinated and won over during his convalescence. He was able to analyze his and other men's main reasons for joining: "I wanted most to save my country and to be a hero. Secondly, I wanted to change the present society. Everybody longed for justice and liberty. Nobody wanted to be oppressed. That was the purpose of the revolution." (He stayed in the movement for two years, but defected early in 1964.)

IV. PATRIOTISM REINFORCED BY SELF-INTEREST

Condemnation of the present social order is a major theme of VC propaganda, which harps on the drabness and hardships of the peasant's life and his lack of opportunities for rising above them, and wherever possible points to such visible wrongs as an unjust or corrupt local administration, for they have more meaning for the peasant than complaints and objectives outside the realm of his personal experience.⁴

A dual function of the revolutionary movement's initial appeal, which is resumed and developed in subsequent indoctrination, is to exacerbate manifest antagonisms against the established authority and bring out latent ones, and to channel other resentments toward those same targets.

⁴Elliott and Thomson have suggested that the Viet Cong's focus on issues of equitable local administration by good persons has been "shaped by the Confucian insistence on good personal conduct of the official rather than institutional devices." They add: "Because of this personal orientation, ideology to the VC cadre means much more in terms of style and methods of work than in grandiose politico-economic perspectives." D. Elliott and C.A.H. Thomson, A Look at the VC Cadres: Dinh Tuong Province, 1965 The RAND Corporation, RM-5114-ISA/ARPA, March 1967 pp. 19, 20. In the opinion of the present author, the emphasis on good personal conduct and the cadres' style and work methods is certainly important, but there is significant stress in the ideology of the Viet Cong on the supportive roles of the world Communist movement and, locally, on the solidarity of the Vietnamese revolutionary brotherhood.

Thus the Viet Cong seeks to associate the most personal, nonpolitical complaints with the alleged corruption of society brought on by the American imperialists and their native lackeys. Even when the only sensible grievances are of the lower order connected mainly with the arduousness of peasant life, the currents of social change and heightened expectations have reached the rural backwaters, often through the transistor radio and through spokesmen of both the Viet Cong and the government. Their impact has paved the way for the message of the revolutionary agitator, whose task it now becomes to kindle new aspirations (or make old ones sound newly practicable) and present their fulfillment as the fruits of revolution.

In the mixture of motives that causes men to volunteer for the Viet Cong, personal circumstances inevitably play a large role, and the Communists shrewdly exploit the desire for a better life, especially among the poor and ignorant. Some of their slogans recall the Viet Minh's motto of "freedom, food and clothing, happiness"; thus, one informant called the war the "struggle for national freedom," which aimed to provide "food and clothing for the villager . . . (and if I died, my children would receive these benefits)."

The varieties of self-interest that make many men vulnerable to VC propaganda who would not be inspired by abstract goals were summed up most tellingly by a 33-year-old barber who said, when asked why some people in his native village had joined the Viet Cong:

I don't know. . . . Those who follow the VC out of faith in communism are extremely rare, I think. Special circumstances may

induce some people to join the VC. A man who commits an offense may become a VC to avoid being prosecuted by the GVN authorities. Or a victim of some injustice on the part of a GVN functionary may be resentful and join the VC to get revenge. Or a man who has VC brothers or parents may be influenced by them.

Poor, credulous and uneducated people are the main victims of VC propaganda: they enlist in the VC ranks in the hope of a better future.

A more cynical statement came from a company commander, who had fought with the Viet Cong for five years and become disillusioned with them, though he did not defect: "Because of their poor situation," he said, "the majority of these people have been seduced by the revolutionary movement, which they joined out of sheer opportunism." And he added: "Once they have joined it, they get entangled in the VC organization" -- a most perceptive remark, which touches on a crucial aspect of the complex picture of motivation and loyalty.

It was not always easy for interviewers to gather just how large a part a person's self-interest had played in his initial decisions and actions. The more thoroughly a man had been indoctrinated, the more likely was he to bristle at the very suggestion that he had been impelled by the desire for personal gain. There were some, however, especially among the disillusioned, who would ruefully admit to opportunism in joining. Others had been naive enough to accept the VC propaganda line just as it was presented: They believed that, though personal benefits would certainly be among the fruits of a victorious revolution, they were only ancillary to the greater, national good, which ipso facto would right many personal wrongs as well. Said one man:

I was dissatisfied with my lot, but I did not think of my personal interests. I thought that if the revolution succeeded, everyone would be happy, I along with the rest. That is what the agent told me and I believed him.

Hazardous though it may be to assess the weight that each motive had in the decision to join the Front, it is less difficult to ascertain from the interview material the variety of lures and rewards that the Viet Cong held out to recruits, especially in the early years, when they aimed mainly for volunteers.

The promise of honor and glory clearly had great appeal for the young, as in the case of a 23-year-old defector, formerly a squad leader in the Tay Ninh Regional Forces, who said:

I knew nothing about life with the VC when I was living with my family. After I was abducted by the VC [it appears that he actually may have joined voluntarily], they told me that I would have to bear many hardships like the poor food, but later I would have a great deal of glory. [Asked "What kind of glory," he said] I did not know. This was only a way to lure me into joining them. . . .

A propaganda and training cadre, who stayed with the VC for twelve years before he defected, gave as his reasons for joining: "I was still young [18] and very enthusiastic. I studied documents concerning youth's duty, the performance of which would cover them with glory when the country was unified." And a Main Force assistant platoon leader who spoke proudly of the "revolutionary virtue and behavior" of a Front fighter was one of several to cite with conviction the slogan that in the Front one "lives splendidly and dies gloriously" (song vi-dai, chet vinh-quang).

A subtle but significant variant of the patriotic theme is what one may call the "bandwagon appeal." Just like the Viet Minh before them, Viet Cong recruiters stress again and again the inevitability of victory, even in the face of great odds, so that it becomes the better part of wisdom (as they often point out) to join the future victors. The parallel with the Indochina War, to which the propagandists point whenever possible, adds credibility to their predictions. In drawing it, they put very heavy emphasis on the fact that the French, notwithstanding their control of the air and superiority in heavy weapons, succumbed to the moral strength and determination of the fighters for independence. A former VC propaganda cadre who himself had come out of the Viet Minh movement described as follows the propaganda value that the Viet Cong derived from the earlier victory:

At that time, since we did not have enough arms, we had to make propaganda to the effect that our force lay in the strength of our unity. As evidence, we pointed out that in 1945, we had overthrown the French imperialists' regime with nothing but bamboo spikes. Even though the French possessed heavy weapons, such as tanks and warships, they had to surrender in the face of our people's overwhelming strength and determination to struggle.

A farmer, who was predisposed to trust the Viet Cong because its predecessors, the Viet Minh, had given him land, told of having this trust exploited by VC cadres who tried to convince him of the Front's growing strength: They "gave me accounts of the various phases of the struggle since . . . the victory over the French and the creation of the Front. They told me that, although the Front was

very weak at the start, it had grown stronger and stronger" And a former VC prison guard, whose hamlet, though formally under GVN control, was penetrated by the enemy at night, recalled the arguments that the VC agent used with him:

He told me that Front forces were becoming more and more powerful, and that they would soon be able to drive the Americans out of the country and achieve national reunification. He added that it was time for me to set out on the right path, do something for the good cause, work for the people's happiness and at the same time to secure for myself a better future

A man who had joined the Front in late 1960 and had become a village tax collector for the Viet Cong said that the promise of "freedom of speech," and "complete equality" had greatly attracted him -- he commented on the fact that high- and low-ranking officials could eat together without discrimination -- and that he had also been impressed by the patient and, above all, respectful way in which the recruiting cadre had argued with him.

Whereas the very young might be open to talk about honor and glory, the poor peasant was most likely to be swayed by the material promises specifically aimed at the "have-nots," whether or not dissatisfaction with his lot was conscious at the time of his first contact with the Viet Cong. A defector or prisoner of war might talk volubly about his dissatisfaction with village life and his dislike of the American imperialists, but these sentiments, if they preexisted at all and were motivating factors in his choosing sides, were bound to have been sharpened and articulated, first, by the VC recruiting agents and, once he had joined the movement, through

indoctrination. The interviews are replete with evidence that the Viet Cong supplies the peasant with a language of discontent and trains him in the use of it: Ingeniously and patiently exploiting whatever circumstances lend themselves to it -- and these vary greatly with the locality and the changing fortunes of the war -- VC agents dramatize (and often exaggerate) the peasant's hardships, his difficulties with the local authorities, and the alleged futility of seeking to obtain justice and representative government, either local or national. And once discontent has been kindled, the Viet Cong itself becomes the organizational vehicle for aggravating and spreading it, tying it to the native blend of Communist theory and nationalist ideals, and then channeling the resultant hostility into insurgent activity, which it controls by artful applications of the carrot and the stick.

A few citations from our interviews will suffice to show how VC recruiters may play on the wants of the poor. Thus, a man who had joined the movement at the age of twenty, in 1959, and defected five years later after having risen to positions of political and military responsibility, described his situation before recruitment as "very poor," with "not enough to eat," a "life full of hardships" in which his family had to rent its land and borrow the rice seed for sowing:

I was a healthy young man at that time [he w's only 26 when interviewed]. I tilled the land. . . . It was very hard. Of course I would have liked to have many things -- more land to farm, more money to spend, more clothes and a comfortable house. I wanted most of all to have a bicycle. My family was too poor to

send me to school and I wanted to go to school. . . . I attended the [village] school for six months but then my family was too poor to let me continue. (I am better at reading and writing now because during my time in the Front my comrades taught me more about it.)

A classic example of the impact of VC propaganda in making a very young peasant for the first time resent his poverty is afforded by the history of a boy who had had to leave school at thirteen to look after the family's buffaloes. Viet Cong agents whom he had met at the edge of the forest had persuaded him to take a political indoctrination course, and he had thereupon volunteered for service in the Regional Forces, from which he defected two years later. When interviewed by the RAND team, he described his family as having been "poor and miserable," but, asked how he had felt about their state at the time, he said: "I was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied."

The many fruits of revolution that VC agents promise the abused, the malcontent, and the bored include not only glory, respect, and freedom from want, but adventure, education, jobs, land reform, and an end to corruption in government. (Some of these inducements will be discussed in detail in later sections.) They also include protection to those who have run afoul of local authority (for example, over the refusal to furnish the much-resented *corvée* labor for agrovilles and strategic hamlets) or had other difficulties in family or community. For the youth who fears being drafted by the ARVN and sent to a remote area there is the promise -- often broken later --

that in a VC military unit he will be allowed to serve close to home.⁵

Perhaps no single prospect looks more attractive to the poor Vietnamese peasant than that of owning more land and being the beneficiary of a more equitable land distribution system than the one he knows. So central a concern is the matter of land, and so important a part of revolutionary propaganda, that one Central Vietnamese, when asked how he understood the goals of the Viet Cong, said simply, "The Revolution is all about land." Another man from Central Vietnam -- a particularly land-poor area -- reported that the recruiting appeal he had heard most frequently before he himself was impressed into the movement was that "the purpose of the Front is to bring material welfare to the people, and to distribute land to the poor."

In short, the Viet Cong, emulating the example of the Viet Minh and exploiting its successes, takes every

⁵Appendix A gives quotations from seven of the many interviews in which recruiters were reported to have promised improvement in the individual's personal life. One young man went to a VC area because only there could he, with limited credentials, find a teaching position. Another, a farmer, wanted something better than just "polishing the earth" for life. Still another was an orphan who escaped from his hard work as a servant to a VC jungle munitions factory in hopes that it would afford him an easier life. One man wanted access to VC areas simply to sell fruit there. But it is noteworthy that in all cases, even of recruits who were clearly eager to escape from personal troubles and responsibilities, the Viet Cong's use of the patriotic and altruistic themes helped these volunteers to mask the overriding selfishness of their motives.

advantage of the people's land hunger. Its message and promise gain in credibility wherever people have reason to be grateful to the land program of the Viet Minh. This point was made by a former village tax collector from Tay Ninh, who had been told by recruiting cadres that those who had received land under the Viet Minh should now join the Viet Cong to safeguard and protect their gain. This was his comment on the role and importance of land:

During the Resistance period, we were all poor people. We had no land to farm, to live on, or to raise our cattle, but the French people had an immense tract of land which they used for a rubber plantation. If you ever dared to touch or violate their land, you were fined and arrested. When the Viet Minh rose up in 1948, we were given land to build our houses and to raise our cattle. When the Liberation Front was first organized in our area, the people of the Front recalled the past achievements of the Viet Minh. I believed in the Front because the above-mentioned story was a practical one in which I was the beneficiary.

This man's predisposition to credit the story and the goodwill of the Viet Cong was reinforced by his disappointment in the land program of the GVN:

I was given a hoe and a spade to farm the unoccupied land, but there was no unoccupied land in the area. The land was already fully used.

It follows that, once an area is firmly under VC control, the redistribution of land becomes a matter of the first importance if the expectations of the peasants are not to give way to disillusionment and distrust. In many parts, the Viet Cong simply puts pressure on

families with more land than they need for their livelihood to give up the excess to the poor. The aim there is to allot to every family member a minimum of one cong (one-tenth of a hectare, or the equivalent of what a person can normally cultivate in a single day), and to leave it to the very active farmers associations to see to mutual-aid arrangements for the benefit of the elderly and the dependents of men who have gone off to fight. Following is the description of land reform in Cai Lay, Dinh Tuong Province, by a defector:⁶

The land reform was carried out at the beginning of 1963. All the villagers, including the landowners, were convened in a meeting. The cadres openly asked those who owned many ricefields to give one part of their property to the poor countrymen. None of them dared refuse. Some bargained but at last all had to accept the share suggested by the cadres. [To obtain land] one had only to be landless or to own less than five cong. . . . The share varied from two to five cong, according to the economic status of each one. I obtained five cong for myself.

Some witnesses described more ruthless procedures, as in this account by a former Main Force member, who before his defection had operated in the Tra On District, Vinh Binh:

The VC took the land from the rich landowners and distributed it to those who worked for them, so that everyone would have some land to work on. The VC mobilized the poor

⁶A village guerrilla who became chief of the district recruiting office, this man, with a family of four children, owned only three cong before the land reform.

class and restricted the rich landowners. The land that belonged to the rich landowners was given to each family according to the size of each household. The VC left just enough for the landowners. Those landowners who protested this VC policy were beheaded [a statement which further questioning revealed to have been based on hearsay].

As might be expected, the implementation of the VC land programs, which also varied considerably from one area to another, left some followers disappointed, and a variety of complaints were expressed in the interviews. The more general criticism concerned the alleged discrimination against some families, and the failure of village cadres to carry out earlier promises of land allocation and to look after the dependents of men who were fighting for the Viet Cong.⁷

The most severe misgivings, however, seemed to be prompted, not by the idea of land reform, which remained attractive, but by the great burden of taxes that the Viet Cong imposed on the yield of redistributed land in addition to the already heavy assessments the VC tax collectors were able to enforce. An inquiry into the validity and typicality of particular allegations would exceed the scope of this discussion, but a few excerpts from the interviews suggest the disenchantment and some of the reasons for it.⁸ A former squad leader in the

⁷ For a more detailed treatment of this point see Carrier and Thomson, RM-4830-ISA/ARPA, pp. 34-37.

⁸ For additional statements, both negative and positive, about VC land programs, see Appendix F.

Regional Forces of Hieu Thien District (Tay Ninh) allowed that the poor people liked the program; he reported, however, that his own family, who previously had been fortunate enough to rent six cong but who may have been politically suspect because they happened to live near a GVN military post, had lost that land in the VC exchange scheme:

The VC didn't take the land from us, [but] they did the following things: they told villagers tilling land far from their homes that if they agreed, the Front would exchange their land in return for some land close to their houses so that they would not have to go far. The Front took the land of these villagers and gave it to others. In the case of my family, it was the same thing. The Front took away our land but never gave us any land in return. My family lived about 800 meters from the GVN post; therefore we didn't dare to say anything. If we did, we would be killed. Anyway, our land was away back in the village where the Front was strong. If we kept the land and went there to work, we would be in trouble. After the Front seized our land, my parents had to work as hired laborers and sell coconuts for a living.

A defector gave this generally favorable description of mutual aid and land redistribution in the Ben Cat District of Binh Duong Province, but he criticized the unfairness of the land-tax system and the intimidation tactics used to contain the protests of the rich:

The Front organized a farmer's association for the villagers to help one another. For example, when the harvest time came, if your family had already harvested the crop, the Front would come and mobilize your family to go and help other families. If a family had more land than they could work, the Front would come and ask that family to share their land with the poorer families.

This was their policy: "There are no rich people and no poor people -- everyone is on the same standing."

It was a good policy, and if the GVN would follow that policy it would be wonderful. However, there are some contradictions in that policy. To share what you have with the less privileged ones is good, but when you take land from the rich to give to the poor, and the poor don't have to pay anything to the rich -- and yet the rich still have to pay taxes to the Front (which the Front calls "contributions"), then I do not think that practice is fair.

The poor were happy, but the rich were frustrated. But they couldn't say so openly. If a family refused to share their land with others, the Front would come and talk to that family two or three times. If they still were stubborn, they were done for.

A Bac Lieu farmer who had joined the movement in 1957, having earlier received land from the Viet Minh, recalled the VC recruiting cadres' reminder that, thanks to the Resistance, he had 1.7 hectares of ricefield to work: "It was true, and it made me believe everything they subsequently told me." Later, however, he was bitterly disappointed:

The Front had deceived me up and down. The VC cadres had enticed me into this hard life of the Front by promising me that the Front would take care of my family. When I visited my family I found my wife and kids living in misery. Moreover, during my absence they [VC cadres] had confiscated one hectare of ricefield which belonged to us and left my wife only 0.7 hectares to work on. The taxes they forced my wife to pay for that much land were not even diminished commensurately. . . .

This kind of disenchantment is inevitable in a movement that has grown strong by being able to arouse

the hopes of the needy and to turn peaceful peasants into warriors by teaching the ignorant that life under the legitimate government holds no promise for them. Having been made aware of his own discontent and drilled in the use of a political idiom in which to express it, the person whose perceptions have been so sharpened, who has been given a certain view of the existing order, and has been led to expect specific, tangible changes in his situation will sooner or later note the contradictions, untruths, and broken or unfulfilled promises and turn his resentment or suspicion on those who have misled him.

Although the Viet Cong's political control system is geared to coping with this reaction through such institutions as the daily work and morale critiques and, particularly, the cadres' fatherly psychological influence in informal relationships with their men, the possibility of a boomerang effect remains, especially where the discrepancy between promise and reality persists.⁹ Thus, a young defector, touching on most of the familiar complaints, summed up his dejection and disappointment with the Front, which he had joined in 1959 at the age of twenty:

After I joined I found that I was no better off; life was dull, and there was nothing to be happy about; nights without sleep, the rain and the cold, the mosquito bites. Of course, I got more respect, nobody hurt me or insulted me. But my family still had not received any land. . . .

⁹This boomerang potential and its relevance to the political reorientation of the Viet Cong POWs and defectors are discussed in the last section of this study.

There was nothing to be happy about except the fact that the beating and the cursing had ceased, but in return I found out that there was no democracy in the Front . . . their orders had to be carried out without discussion; my advice was never sought.

V. DISSATISFACTION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY

The quality of local administration has always varied widely in South Vietnam. Not only during Diem's rule but also under succeeding regimes it has ranged from relatively good government in some areas to outright corruption in others. Where the citizens' interests were neglected and the government failed to make its presence visible, the political vacuum so created was readily exploited by the Viet Cong. This situation prevailed especially in and around former Viet Minh base areas; even in provinces whose over-all administration was adequate, it was often found in the districts farthest from the center of government.

In the accounts of VC defectors and POWs, the story of their dissatisfaction and open clashes with local civilian and military personnel plays a significant role. Strongest of all, in our sample, was the dislike expressed against the local militiamen of the Self Defense Corps (SDC), later named "Popular Forces." It would appear that in many instances members of this militia group became more ruthless as VC attacks and pressures made life more dangerous for them, and as the reluctance of the populace to inform on the Viet Cong for fear of reprisals added to their frustrations. By and large, villagers had fewer complaints about the better-trained and better-paid regular army (ARVN), and they made exceptions also for some militia units that had shown regard for their rights and property during military operations.

Tension between villagers and the representatives of law, order, and the tax authorities existed long before South Vietnam became independent. It was at the root of much of the discontent with French colonial administration that fed the Viet Minh movement, and the specific complaints about the earlier and the later period bear a striking resemblance. To illustrate, here is the account, by a former Viet Minh, of conditions as he saw them in his village of Central Vietnam in 1948:

There was injustice in the village. The village chief dominated the people by threats and blows. . . . The district authorities mistreated the village chief and the village chief mistreated the people.

The people had to work without pay on projects of so-called "public interest," go on patrols, etc. Generally, the village chief remained six or seven years in the position, which was handed down from father to son and between family members.

My uncle was a fighter in the Resistance. He explained to me things about the French and their colonialism. The duty of the youths was to chase out the invaders and bring independence to the country. When he was killed by the French Foreign Legion, I hated the French.

I saw Frenchmen in Hue . . . and I saw there were injustices; the French had a good time and a good life while the Vietnamese were afraid of them. . . .

Compare this to the story told by a former GVN hamlet ward chief (an ex-Viet Minh) about the conduct of local officials in his village in An Xuyen Province during the present war:

These [village] authorities acted like great personages. When they spoke, they threatened and warned that they were ready to arrest you. . . .

All these fellows, these "village fathers," got fat; they became rich and after some years built [good] houses. The populace hated them but didn't dare say anything. If anybody did, he would be arrested because the authorities would claim he was pro-VC. Any spirit of opposition could furnish the motive for one's arrest.

It was only one of many similar complaints about authoritarian village elders, corrupt and inefficient administrators, oppressive controls, an inequitable credit system that favored the rich, excessive taxes, and the compulsory labor program for "community development."

This last feature, in particular, has aroused great hostility, as forced labor, though a familiar phenomenon in Vietnam, is associated in the popular mind with stories of the peasant gangs that once built canals, palaces, and imperial tombs at Hue and, within living memory, with corvée labor under the French. In its adaptation of the principle, the Diem government tried, at least at first, to preserve a voluntary element and to limit the amount of time each person could be expected to invest in community work; it would provide free lunches and free transportation, and soften the hardships of an assignment to distant parts with the promise of future reciprocal services from the communities thus helped. But as time went on and the agrovillage and strategic hamlet programs did not succeed as planned, more and more of these promises went unfulfilled, the workers' morale suffered, and hamlet militiamen overseeing the labor sometimes felt impelled to deal severely, if not brutally, with the lazy.

One man among those interviewed told of joining the VC village guerrilla unit because he was "furious and

unhappy" after he had been "cursed and threatened" by village officials for complaining about having to work longer than others on distant projects. Another maintained that, if the husband was gone, the wife had to pay a substitute to perform the compulsory labor; and "if you didn't pay, you would be locked up in the communal house for one or two days." Still another man differentiated between the earlier years (1957 and 1958), when the village council would negotiate with the peasants over the construction of a military post, and the period after 1959, when they obtained such labor by force and, he maintained, beat anyone who refused to cooperate or sought excuses even on legitimate grounds.

As already noted, the SDC ranked high among causes for rejection of the legitimate government because of the alleged villiany of its members, especially in contested and increasingly insecure areas, where relations between troops and civilians were apt to be most antagonistic. The man who gave as his reasons for joining the Viet Cong his "hatred of the SDC, difficulties with the police, and VC propaganda" explained that he had found the last easy to accept, because "out of hatred for the SDC I hated everything on this [GVN] side":

The SDC were violent and arrogant [and] disliked by the villagers. When they called for free labor they had no regard for anyone, not even the elderly. They caught and beat youngsters who strolled around in the evening. If someone looked at an SDC intently in public places such as restaurants or theaters, he would be called out and beaten.

A "special forces" platoon (an institution whereby in some districts special training and prerequisites

were given certain local units) came in for similar condemnation by a villager from Long An Province:

[They] oppressed the people a great deal. I couldn't stand life in the village and had to leave. Whenever they went on an operation, these special forces soldiers entered the people's houses and stole everything they found. The people could not protest, because if they did, the soldiers would beat them up or bear a grudge against them and shoot them. When the soldiers wanted some chickens, for example, they asked for the people's permission. But while they asked for the permission, they shot the chickens. So how could we refuse? Sometimes when I returned from fishing, I met the soldiers and they took away my basket full of fish and ate them; but I couldn't say anything to them.

Men who, in one way or another, had placed themselves outside the law and fled to remote parts beyond its reach provided a natural reservoir for the VC recruiters. Some, of course, deliberately fled to VC-controlled areas with a view to joining the movement, where many of them attained rank; their political resentments, geographic isolation, and personal loneliness clearly combined to make the Viet Cong an attractive prospect and would serve to explain their more-than-ordinary initial commitment to the cause. But others, who merely fled from the law with the thought of leading peaceful, inconspicuous lives in those distant areas, nevertheless fell easy prey to the Viet Cong recruiting agent, for they had no "alternate sponsor," no protection against the Viet Cong, and nowhere else to go.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Appendix C for an account of several cases that fit into this category.

VI. ADVENTUROUSNESS

The thirst for adventure and the desire to find opportunities for personal heroism unquestionably entered into the motives of many who joined, whether or not they were aware of it or, being aware of it, were ready to admit to it. The well-indoctrinated among the defectors and POWs interviewed, who had been taught to look on such aspirations as bourgeois sentiments without political validity, recalled them (if they mentioned them at all) in conjunction with such honorable reasons as patriotism and the search for advancement. Thus, one 19-year-old youth had accepted the invitation of a school friend to see a "liberated zone" across a river several kilometers away "out of curiosity" and "the appeal of adventure," but he had also been moved by his desire to receive an educational allowance from the Viet Cong and to search for his father, who had disappeared earlier and was thought perhaps to have joined the Viet Cong. An older man, who had been orphaned and left to fend for himself as a small boy, cited as the foremost appeal of the Viet Minh the promise for him of food, clothing, and educational and economic opportunities; then he added: "I wanted to go and see other places."

Among the younger people, one youth admitted quite simply that he had found the stories that guerrillas told of their experiences as insurgents "appealing and enthralling." And several others mentioned being impressed by the authority associated with the possession of firearms, and thrilled at the prospect of handling them. One youth recalled that, after listening to the

tales of VC fighters, "I wanted to handle firearms; I saw friends carrying guns, and I wanted to do the same." And the friend who eventually recruited him for the Front -- apparently aware of his susceptibility -- had told him: "You can have a gun and kill the enemy."

A Main Force assistant platoon leader from the Delta, who had begun by sounding the Party line in disparaging individual heroics ("individualistic heroism is criticized because it can bring harm to others"), betrayed his own enjoyment of adventure, even bravado, when he spoke of his military experiences: He admitted having twice been criticized in his unit for daredevil stunts against enemy aircraft.

The mixture of appeals, in which adventure has so large a part as young Vietnamese men contemplate joining the Viet Cong, was well summed up in this frank statement by a youthful defector, who came from a Cao Dai family in Long An Province:

In 1962, the Front occupied our village. During a propaganda meeting, it appealed to the youth to join in the defense of the populace. Those who wished to went forward and signed the paper. Sometimes men of the Front went into the houses and in some cases they spent the night with the occupants.

I joined because I had the hot blood of youth. My family didn't know about it. Some others had already joined before me. About ten others signed up when I did. I didn't ask anybody for advice on this. A friend of mine from my hamlet joined up also, and he is still with the Front.

I joined not because I was afraid of doing my military service for the Nationalists [GVN], because I wasn't yet old enough for that. [I joined because] I had heard the propaganda: "liberate the South; struggle against Diem and

the Americans." Then, too, I thought the life would be more interesting and more fun. (I didn't know the hardships that awaited us -- they didn't talk about that.) I have to mention here also that my parents were scolding me because I liked to fool around and I wasn't doing my family work. I was having a good time: all kinds of things, liquor, cards, women. The young people were like that, they liked to have fun and find new things. . . .

VII. REACTIONS TO GVN/U.S. ATTACKS ON VILLAGES

Ground and air operations in which GVN and U.S. forces hit villages (either by accident or because Viet Cong units are thought to be there) naturally affect the attitudes of the local peasants toward both sides in the war. The extent to which this has been true since the intensification of aerial and ground bombardment has so greatly raised the incidence of attacks on villages is a subject for a more detailed study than the scope of this Memorandum permits. For our present purpose, which is not so much to establish the current mood and morale of the Viet Cong or ex-Viet Cong as to examine the reasons why many of them were originally attracted to the guerrilla movement, it is illuminating to analyze interviews from the earlier period to see what impact, if any, the experience of damage and casualties in the home villages had on the as yet uncommitted citizen.

In their very first sample, RAND interviewers did not, on the whole, probe deeply for the respondents' attitudes on the subject but tended to confine themselves to routine questions about observed damages resulting from military action between the insurgents and GVN/U.S. forces (or, earlier, the French). Yet in a significant number of cases, the former Front members readily described their reactions in more-than-routine fashion. Most of these men said attacks on villages had aroused resentment and hatred among the peasants and had thereby simplified the Communist recruiters' task of depicting

the war as a patriotic defense against callous and inhumane outsiders.¹¹

In the next phase of the RAND interviews, these particular reactions were explored more systematically and proved to be far more varied. Some respondents strongly condemned either the Viet Cong or the GVN (the latter with increasing castigation of the United States); some blamed both sides; and a few seemed resigned to accepting such incidents as inevitable in time of war and assigned no special blame to either side.

In both the earlier and the later sample, however, three factors had an important bearing on a person's judgment as to who, if anyone, was to blame for such attacks: (1) whether the respondent was a hard-core cadre -- especially from the Main Force -- or only a low-level guerrilla; (2) whether the hamlet populace whose views were being quoted was under VC, GVN, or divided control; and (3) whether the hamlet residents were convinced of provocative actions by the Viet Cong, or even the presence of VC units in the hamlet, which could have justified an attack.

Not only the moral judgment but the very description of such attacks varied considerably with the commentator's degree of commitment to the VC cause. Generally speaking,

¹¹Most of the attacks referred to here were directed not against the villages themselves but against VC units suspected of being in the vicinity. In some cases, artillery or aerial bombardments were reported to have hit such populated areas by mistake, a consequence of error either in the intelligence data on which they were based or in the procedures by which the bombardment was carried out.

the hard-core cadre described chiefly the kind of incident which, in the absence of subsequent civic action or other activity that might have explained the government's purpose in the attack, could easily be presented to the peasant as a senseless hit-and-run affair. A number of cadres pointed out that these attacks had been helpful in dramatizing the war as an immediate concern, rather than a remote conflict, which required the individual peasant to take a stand with the Viet Cong in defense of his family, his village, and his property. The recruiter found in them convenient confirmation of the VC propaganda stereotype as he pointed to damage and injuries inflicted on the "exploited peasants" by "them" -- that is, the American imperialist outsiders with their ultramodern engines of death, and their henchmen of the urban Vietnamese bourgeoisie who staff the GVN's officer corps and administration.

One statement by a VC cadre about the effects of attacks on villages came from a former Viet Minh regrouped in North Vietnam, who had returned from there as a senior captain in charge of proselytizing in and around War Zone D. He said that for every innocent villager killed "ten would rise in his place" to fight the GVN. Another interesting testimony was that of a man who had been a district-level cadre and propaganda expert, and who described at length how the Viet Cong exploited such attacks and "sowed hatred against the GVN among the peasants" by analyzing the evil effects of the GVN bombings. Even though he had eventually defected, he described VC propaganda as "always realistic, based on facts"; Viet Cong propagandists, he maintained,

"always give specific examples and figures of casualties or damages, and names of villages where the GVN has dropped bombs or conducted operations."

The sentiments of these cadres were echoed by some of the rank and file, as in this account by an 18-year-old former Main Force private:

The ARVN arrested the villagers, beat them up, and shelled the hamlet. Profiting from this situation, the VC propagandized the villagers. The latter tended to be sympathetic with them and to join them.

The fact that this speaker's hamlet, in Phuoc Thanh Province near War Zone D, evidently was in a contested area and thus periodically subject to intensified VC influence points up the second major factor we have mentioned as shaping a given hamlet's feeling about GVN/U.S. attacks on populated areas. Our interviews show clearly that villagers whose areas are quite firmly under the control of one side are apt to put the blame on the other side. But the reactions of those in contested areas (the largest category), where control may shift back and forth, are harder to predict and to determine, though we may expect such communities to harbor significant numbers of militant Viet Cong and their sympathizers, and hence at least a segment of the populace that is certain to blame the civilian casualties on the GVN and the United States.¹²

¹²See the concluding section of this study for additional comments on possible political and psychological effects of GVN/U.S. attacks on or near populous areas.

It is difficult to say just how helpful such incidents are likely to be to the Viet Cong recruiter. None of the persons interviewed claimed to have joined primarily because of them. A few, however, cited the attacks on villages as among the reasons for their joining.¹³ And still others said that they were acquainted with people whose decision to join had been prompted by attacks on villages, and that those men, although only a small minority within the movement, were among the most highly motivated, militant, and self-sacrificing fighters. In one interview, a 23-year-old defector, formerly an assistant platoon leader and political officer in Chuong Thien Province, reported that the few volunteers in his unit had come from families who had lost members in ARVN artillery bombardments, air raids, or ground operations: "These volunteers vowed they would fight for the Front to their last drop of blood, until the Front achieved final victory."

Quite a number of respondents, however, said that the peasants were increasingly coming to regard attacks on villages as caused by provocative actions, such as the Viet Cong's sniping at ARVN outposts or firing at overflying aircraft, and that the resultant antagonism of the populace was most likely to be directed against the village guerrillas, whose tactics, rather than those

¹³One young man, speaking of his enlistment in the earlier war, mentioned the death of his fiancée in a French air bombardment; another said that one of the reasons for his joining the Viet Cong was that "someone in my family was killed in an air raid."

of the Regional or Main Forces, were thought to be either deliberately provocative or the result of poor discipline. (Criticism of the guerrillas and their self-defeating tactics appears to have been shared even by some Main Force elements.) Inevitably, in the opinion of this group, the peasants' experience, especially in the contested areas, has led them increasingly to associate the presence of VC elements in the vicinity with the threat of imminent attack from the government's side; they are likely to dread the approach of VC units because of the possible military consequences, just as they are apt to be deeply resentful of the ARVN in cases where, through faulty intelligence, bombardments are directed at villages that turn out not to harbor any VC elements. The same informants noted that the majority of those who fled from villages in areas of frequent military activity took refuge in government-controlled territory rather than with the Viet Cong, a finding that would seem to be borne out by the statistical evidence.

As for the third group of Vietnamese civilians -- those who wish a plague on both their houses or, conversely, blame neither side but only the vicissitudes of war -- the psychological impact on them of GVN/U.S. attacks on villages, to judge by the testimony of the interviews, is to induce a sense of helplessness leading to political apathy. Characteristic of this was the attitude implied in an ex-guerrilla's description of reactions to an unsuccessful VC attack on a GVN outpost that had provoked retaliatory firing on his village:

I heard the people say, "If they [the VC guerrilla unit] were not capable of taking the [GVN] outpost, why did they attack it [futilely]? The fight between the ox and the bull kills the flies and mosquitoes."

VIII. EVASION OF THE GVN DRAFT

Since the beginning of the revolutionary effort in Vietnam, fear of being called up for military service, first by the French government and more recently by the GVN, has made many young men vulnerable to the lures and arguments of the rebel movement. In both periods, the insurgent propagandists have been able to play on the indigenous citizen's suspicion of the French and, later, the American role in his country and to raise the specter of foreign exploitation and of his being asked to die for the imperialists. One propaganda line has been that death, though it may attend either military service, is more glorious if suffered in the right cause, and that, moreover, it is more likely to come to the man who fights on the side of the blundering foreign exploiters against revolutionary cadres with successful experience in guerrilla warfare. Thus, a former Viet Minh described his own reluctant feelings when he was about to be drafted into the army, and recalled the advice of a Viet Minh friend:

I did not want to go because, if I did, I would be protecting the French who were occupying our country. My friend told me that to go into the French Army or the revolutionary (VM) army might lead to the same end -- death -- but to die for the revolution and to die for the French were two different things. To die for the revolution was a great thing because it was to die for independence and freedom. . . .

Before the large U.S. buildup in South Vietnam, some Viet Cong members, when pressed on that point, were ready to acknowledge that the American military was far less in evidence than the French had been. But they would

often argue that this only proved the cunning of the Americans, who were able to coax the Vietnamese units into combat without exposing themselves to direct involvement and the danger of death and attrition. Since 1965, with the intensification of the war and the growing presence of U.S. combat troops, the image of the foreign manipulators operating from afar may no longer be convincing, but the pressure on the young to align themselves with one side or the other remains as strong as ever. Since the beginning of the first war in Indochina, it has been impressed on them that they cannot remain outside the struggle in which their country is involved but must make a commitment. Typical of the early period is this explanation by a former Viet Minh: "If I hadn't joined the VM I would have been obliged to become a soldier for the French, who occupied my village in 1954. . . ." And, referring to the subsequent pressures on him to accept regroupment in North Vietnam: "I wanted to work to unite my country. But my friends told me that, if I stayed in the South, under the Bao Dai regime, I would be forced to join the army and I would surely die."

The arguments are much the same in the present war, and the appeals and promises are simple and direct, as is evident from these recollections:

I joined the Front in 1963. I got the draft order from the village authorities. One of my cousins advised me not to go into the ARVN. He said that to be a government soldier would be the end of my life but it would be good to be a combatant of the Front. Joining the Front might save my life.

* * *

by a youth who had been told by VC friends that if I didn't follow the Viet Cong, I would have to perform military service for the GVN and I would die merely for the Americans.

* * *

[By a 25-year-old defector who had been recruited by an old friend, a member of the village guerrillas] He told me about the government draft. He explained that to be conscripted was a death sentence, because the government would send you to the plateaus and mountains of Central Vietnam. . . . Once our country was reunified we would have plenty of opportunities for education. Now the people were suffering and miserable -- why should I continue my school studies?

The Viet Cong is particularly quick to direct its pressures toward youths who have received their GVN draft notices (just as it tries to head off peasants on their way to paying taxes to the government). Its recruiters thus exploit the youth's perplexity and play on his fears; if he is prepared to serve, they will attempt to divert his willingness from the GVN to the Viet Cong, often adding as an important inducement the promise that service in the Viet Cong will allow a man to stay in or near his village.

An 18-year-old from Phuoc Thanh Province described the simple and effective method he had observed in his hamlet:

Before the VC gained control most of the young men of the hamlet were drafted by the ARVN. A few feared the draft and joined the VC. Then the VC forced all young men of draft age to join their ranks. The mothers of the men who were to be drafted went to see their friends and complained, "My son will be drafted soon!" so everybody learned about it, and the VC came to take these men away.

Another youth remembered his own recruitment:

When the GVN draft notice came I had to make up my mind. I advised my friend, the bread peddler [a VC agent]. He sent for higher cadres to come down and have a talk with me. They told me that if I went into the ARVN, I would be shooting at my compatriots. They suggested that I help them by enlisting in the reconnaissance in Binh Duong and acting as an inside worker [fifth columnist]. With four others [all working for the VC] I applied . . . [and got the assignment].

A very comprehensive and analytical account of gradual, patient recruitment for the Front and of the various appeals that the Viet Cong uses came from a former squad leader who served in the Main Force in An Xuyen from 1960 to 1963:¹⁴

The Front cadres have political training, know how to talk to people, and show patience in "bewitching" the population.

First, they brief the villagers on their goal, which is to free them from GVN dictatorship, etc. . . . Then, on subsequent occasions, they keep up the same tune until the moment when they feel that their listeners are "ripe" for the following argument: "You can't sit on the fence forever. The GVN doesn't trust you anyway, nor do we. Either you're for the Front or for the GVN."

Later on, they will send other cadres to ask any waverer why he doesn't want to join the

¹⁴ Appendix C contains additional excerpts from interviews that illustrate the use and the impact of VC recruiting themes. Significantly, most informants stressed the contrast between conscription in the ARVN, which they said relied chiefly on coercion, and VC recruitment, with its attempt to persuade.

Front. If he says he doesn't want to leave his family and his ricefields and so on, they'll urge him not to worry about it and tell him that he will be given an on-the-spot job as a village-level informant or as a "producer." At that moment, he can't refuse and thus snaps at the bait. Once in the job, he can't get out of it because he's afraid of the GVN. And when his hamlet is attacked by the GVN, the Front will ask him to join its guerrillas or Regional Forces, and so gradually he will become a real Front fighter.

Another argument to attract youths consists of telling them that they will run much less risk of being killed by fighting for the Front than for the GVN because the Front leaders are capable of sparing them useless risks, the Front motto being, "The Front won't swap one of its fighters for 20 of the GVN's," and "GVN soldiers are mercenaries whereas the Front fighters struggle for their ideal." Such propaganda wins over the youth.

IX. REENGAGING THE FORMER VIET MINH

A unique category is the group of former members of the Resistance who, prior to what the Viet Cong call the "uprising" of 1960, had become politically inactive and whose interest and sense of involvement had to be re-kindled. To the VC recruiter these men, especially the ex-cadres, represent a special challenge not only because of the usefulness of their experience but because their revolutionary past and continuing ideological commitment has great potential propaganda value.¹⁵

After the partitioning of 1954, when many former Viet Minh were regrouped in North Vietnam, some of those who remained in the South were enlisted in the low-key activity of a movement that, at the time, concentrated mainly on propaganda anticipating the scheduled elections of 1956 and the country's reunification that was expected to follow them. A greater number, however, returned to the quiet, unpolitical life of farmers and heads of long-neglected families; they did so partly by choice and partly because the network of Viet Minh agents, which had shrunk as a result of the regroupment and of the government's severe antisubversion measures, was not easily able to reach and remobilize them. Whether or not a former Viet Minh succeeded in leading the life of a simple citizen depended largely on his geographic location and the degree

¹⁵ See Joseph J. Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960: The Role of the Southern Vietminh Cadres, The RAND Corporation, RM-5163-ISA/ARPA, March 1967, passim.

to which he could resist the pressures of the Viet Cong on the one hand and the recriminations of the GVN police units on the other. Where the government's policy against former members of the Resistance was enforced particularly harshly -- as it was in the old Viet Minh zones of Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh in Central Vietnam, but also, it seems, in parts of the Mekong Delta -- and in instances (reported in a number of our interviews) in which former resistants found themselves being blackmailed by GVN police agents, a return to political life and flight to the Viet Cong often seemed the only available means of survival.

As the Viet Cong's influence in the countryside spread, and as the harassment of the ex-resistants by the government's security organs grew, it became ever easier for the VC recruiters to appeal to the retired Viet Minh. The danger of losing contact with family members in VC-controlled areas and the prospect of being hounded by the GVN were heavily stressed in the period between 1956 and 1960, along with the old theme of the inevitability of revolutionary victory and the wisdom of joining, or rejoining, the winning side in time.

Several of the case histories in our interview sample are most revealing of the pressures from both sides that were brought to bear on the former Viet Minh, and they are worth quoting at some length.¹⁶

¹⁶For additional accounts of the alleged terrorism, corruption, and other factors that impelled inactive former Viet Minh to go over to the Viet Cong see Appendix D.

A man of 49 told a simple story of having served the Resistance between 1945 and 1954 and then tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to return to a quiet private life:

During the Resistance, I fought the invading colonialists. When peace came [in 1954], I felt I had already completed my duty and it was time for me to take care of my family again. I presented myself to local government officials to ask for permission to work on the land to feed my family. But the Diem government would not leave me alone.

Having been permitted at great expense to rebuild his house and gardens, he was disquieted to see former Resistance members arrested one by one and to observe their being "blackmailed" by the SDCs and others: "If you gave them money -- twenty or thirty thousand piastres -- you were left alone, but otherwise you were called a VC and arrested." Warned that he himself was about to be seized by the local authorities, and unwilling to become involved once more on the side of the revolution, he fled to the relative safety of Saigon, where "arrests were different . . . there had to be evidence, papers, charges . . . I did not want to participate in the second struggle, a class struggle. I am a bourgeois." But after two years, during which he worked for a friend in a distant town, financial straits forced him to return home:

My [holdings] were all in liberated zones. When I came back to my properties [in 1960], I was invited to join a Front Committee as a representative of the bourgeois intellectuals. . . . I considered that the happiness of my family came first. To save my interests that were located in an insecure zone, I had to participate more or less in Front activities. . . . [Thus]

it was because of conditions under the Diem government that I had to stand on the other side until the day I was captured.

Another man had lived in fear of arrest and rearrest for so long that he was relieved when, at a relatively late date, the Viet Cong asked him to rejoin. A Viet Minh village cadre before 1954, he was one of those who thereafter remained mildly active in propaganda work for the general elections. But by 1956 he had largely lost contact with the organization because the GVN had arrested "quite a few," and others were afraid to stay where they were known and hence in danger of being denounced. When the elections were canceled, this informant, like the man mentioned above, left wife and children to take refuge in Saigon. He worked there as a carpenter and apparently had no contact with the Viet Cong, but in 1956 he nevertheless was arrested by the GVN and kept in jail for eleven months. After the authorities had cleared and released him, he still would not return home: "I feared the village authorities would put me in jail again, or worse, even though I had just been released. Authorities in the village think differently and can imprison a man without abiding by even the legal processes used in Saigon."

Shortly after his release, he met a VC agent in the street, who asked him to join him in a trip to a "secret zone" of the Viet Cong. Once there, he decided to stay. "My 'brothers' invited me to remain with them and I accepted gladly" was his answer to whether he had had any misgivings about joining the movement. It clearly had been a relief to him to be reaffiliated after the anxious years without protection and proper identity.

Being caught in the political crossfire and living in constant fear of arrest caused still another former Viet Minh to return to the revolutionary movement. He had joined the Communist Party in 1950 at the instigation of a friend who, among other arguments, had pointed out to him the protection that membership would afford him ("You belong to the rich farmer class; you will have trouble if you don't join the Party").¹⁷ In 1961 he found the same cadre pleading with him once more, as the Viet Cong gained strength in his province of Long An:

You are a former Resistant and Communist cadre. You are sought even now by the police of Long An. You must rejoin our ranks to escape arrest. Moreover, our party has regained control of almost all of the South. If you renounce the struggle, your family will have trouble, and your lands will be confiscated.

Explaining his subsequent decision to resume revolutionary activity, and that of others like himself, he said:

¹⁷This is illustrative of the "soft" Party line toward some of the economically prosperous who, for tactical reasons, were wooed in the early stages of the revolution in Vietnam, and still are today in the South. In the North, it did not survive the harsh land-reform program of the mid-1950s. As Douglas Pike points out in his Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966), the "regularization," which is to say the communization, of the Viet Cong movement that began in 1962 and was well underway by 1963 resulted in the downgrading of many ex-Viet Minh who were suspected of not being dedicated to communism. Since then, those with bourgeois "taints" -- such as the man here quoted -- have tended to be excluded from positions of responsibility and relegated to lower-level functions, if they have not been removed altogether.

What [my friend] said was not a threat, but the truth. I really had been sought several times by the Civil Guard . . . and I couldn't leave the village to go to town without an identity card and authorization from the village officials. The [Civil Guard] had even interrogated my brother and his wife about my whereabouts to try to lay hands on me. I decided after further reflection that it would be better to go over to the Liberation Front than to lead a life full of anxiety in my village. Thus, I had to leave my wife and children, despite their opposition, to resume my political activities.

In that situation, I couldn't do anything else. I was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. . . . My only chance to avoid arrest was to accept the risks of the anti-Government struggle.

I believe that [many former VC cadres] submit to the Party's orders against their own wishes. Undoubtedly they do not want to plunge back into a life full of danger after [the earlier years] of political activity. But they don't dare show hostility for fear of being liquidated by the VC.

X. APPEALS TO FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Just as those who had once served the French came under pressure to join the Viet Minh, so the ex-GVN official is urged to make a commitment to the Viet Cong, thereby acknowledging his past errors and signifying contrition and readiness to atone through active revolutionary participation. To the VC recruiter, there is considerable propaganda value in the political conversion of GVN officials, particularly if they are well known and respected in their locality, for it not only dramatizes the movement's powerful influence over the individual but has also served as an occasion for the Front's much-vaunted (and widely publicized) generosity toward former enemies who have come over¹⁸ -- a policy which, to the extent that it has actually been followed in the past, is undoubtedly changing as the military and political conflict deepens.

Wherever government control deteriorates and GVN representatives are intimidated and persecuted, the men who are publicly associated with government officialdom inevitably feel threatened, and expediency leads those unwilling to part with family and property to accommodate themselves to the newly-dominant Viet Cong. Some former GVN officials try to straddle the issue of political loyalty, either by actually becoming double agents or by giving mere lip service to one side while secretly favoring the other.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the use and psychological impact of this approach, especially in the treatment of men forcibly recruited, see Sections XVII and XVIII.

The varieties in the approach of the Viet Cong to this politically vulnerable group are illustrated in the accounts of several interviewees. One young man was afraid of what the Viet Cong might do to his family; "they told me that I had worked for the GVN, and if I didn't follow them now it was because I wanted to spy on them and turn them over to the GVN." The case of another revealed the curious mixture of coercion and voluntary commitment that is the aim of one of the Viet Cong's favorite recruiting techniques. After his previously peaceful strategic hamlet was attacked by Viet Cong in 1962 and the village chief killed, few inhabitants wanted to serve on the village committee. He himself had the status of an acting committeeman when, in 1963, a VC unit entered the village and arrested him and another acting committeeman for being authoritarian and "not behaving properly toward the people." After three months of being assigned to farm production, he became bored with the work and voluntarily joined a military unit.

The most complicated sequence of changing fortunes and loyalties emerged from the story of a one-time Viet Minh, who after 1954 had been allowed to rise to the position of a GVN ward chief (or subhamlet chief) in Bac Lieu Province. In 1959, when that area was beginning to fall under VC control, he was arrested by the Viet Cong, who took him blindfold to an isolated spot and there, according to his account, told him:

"Now we warn you. We fight for peace and we have returned to dissolve the dictatorial power of Diem here. You are working for this power. We forbid you to do it. If you continue in it, you will be committing a crime." There were three or four of them, one of them

off to the side with a gun and another talking to me for two hours. I made promises to them and they released me.

On my return, I reported the incident to the hamlet chief, who answered, "They say that, but they will not kill you. I will not authorize you to quit your functions; if you don't continue in the post, you will go to prison." I did continue, but I dared not return to my home to sleep. Instead I hid in [another] section of the hamlet.

Later, they returned and surrounded my house. I wasn't there, so they told my wife that I had better stop working for the GVN, for if I didn't and they caught me, they would cut off my head. They gave my wife a handwritten letter for me along with some tracts.

I took these to the hamlet chief and told him what had happened. I was paralyzed with fear. I pleaded with him to authorize me to go to Nam Can (two days' trip by road) to work as a woodcutter and to remain there for a month to let the situation simmer down. In the neighboring hamlet, the men of the Front had written several letters to the hamlet chief [condemning him for having insulted them and calling them VC], and he was beheaded.

Leaving behind two of his children, he fled with the rest of his family. Two years later, when he learned that the Viet Cong had consolidated its control over the area, his wife went back to explore whether it was safe for him to go home; she was told that it was, provided he had ceased to work for the GVN, and he thereupon returned. Eight months later, he was pressed to prove his political good faith by becoming a supply cadre for the Viet Cong.

XI. PROSELYTING AMONG THE GVN MILITARY FORCES

Proselyting figures prominently among the methods by which the Viet Cong wins adherents. In its doctrine, "military proselyting" (binh van) is distinguished from civilian proselyting, though in some respects the missions and techniques of the two are very similar.¹⁹

Viet Cong training emphasizes military proselyting because it can "strike into the enemy ranks with less cost in blood"²⁴ than regular military operations, and because this special approach to GVN military personnel can be used by VC partisans of all ages and in government-controlled zones as well as in combat areas. The proselytizer can pursue his aim of winning over members of the GVN's armed forces either by approaching and talking to these men directly or by indirect means, such as inducing their families in the villages to send them written or oral messages. He may try to persuade his subject to defect to the Viet Cong; he may ask him to serve the Communists while remaining in the government ranks; or he may do no more than attempt to inject pessimism and doubt into the subject's attitude toward the GVN effort.

In villages harboring VC military units, military and civilian proselyting activities converge and mutually

¹⁹The term dich van (enemy proselyting) is a collective that includes both military and civilian targets.

support each other. Among other rules of conduct, the Viet Cong insists on a strict code of behavior for its soldiers in their relations with civilians, a principle which, as our most recent interviews show, may not always be scrupulously upheld under conditions of great stress. Where it is observed -- most conspicuously so in the Main Force -- it is a most persuasive asset and helps win sympathizers and recruits. As one defector, an assistant squad leader in the Regional Forces from 1960 to 1964, described people's attitude toward the VC unit in a village in Binh Duong Province,

The villagers were happy to have them. The soldiers considered the families they visited as their own. It was a mass proselyting mission. The soldiers were told to do everything to please the villagers and never to antagonize them.

A typical example of the kind of proselyting tactics that the Viet Cong have successfully used on ARVN soldiers is the experience of a former SDC private from Binh Long Province, who described in great detail the series of events that followed his being wounded in action and captured by the Viet Cong in early 1962, only two months after he had joined the SDC. He began by commenting on the solicitousness of the VC soldiers who carried him and the medics who attended him during the first days after his capture, and on the care he received at the hospital later on, when his wounds had become infected:

I could not find anything to complain about in the attitude and behavior of the VC during that period. No one could be nicer to me than the Front cadres. Their only purpose in capturing me was to find

out if I was a spy or had done harm to the population. If not, I would be released after a period of reeducation. I told them the only reason I had joined the militia was that I had wanted to avoid the ARVN draft. I also told them that I was a new recruit with no training at all; therefore I could not do them any harm.

. . . At the hospital they were even nicer. I was the only prisoner in a room of twenty patients. At first, when my condition was very bad, I was given chicken soup with beef sauce. Later, when my condition improved, I was given rice soup with beef sauce.

He then went on to describe the proselyting process:

Every day the propaganda and indoctrination cadres would come to lecture to me in particular and to my roommates in general about the meaning of the present war of liberation. They said the North Vietnamese people were trying to help their South Vietnamese brothers chase away the American imperialists and win back their independence. They showed me how rotten the Diem regime was; Diem and Le Xuan [Mme. Nhu] were dictatorial and were selling the South Vietnamese people to the Americans for their own family's profit. The Americans were false friends; they did not come to Vietnam to help the people but rather to take over the country. Then they talked about the aims of the People's Liberation Front, which were to liberate South Vietnam from the domination of American imperialists and from the Ngo family, and to lead the South Vietnamese to socialism as in North Vietnam, where no one was exploited and where everybody was free and everybody was master of his tools and his land.

Then the cadres asked me to choose between the two paths before me. They asked me to fulfill my duty toward the people and they let me know that the Front was in critical need of young men like me. After I had agreed to join

the Liberation Front they lectured me on the hardships endured by their comrades and asked me if my decision still stood. I said yes, and was sent back to the district the next day.

Besides the lectures of the propaganda and indoctrination cadres, I was visited by the Province Committee Chief. I talked with my roommates and with the female nurses. I read their information bulletin, and I listened to Radio Hanoi on a Phillips battery-operated radio.

The lectures lasted about twenty minutes each day and I remained at the hospital for about one month and eight or nine days. At the end of this period . . . the cadre asked me whether I wanted to return to my family or stay with my comrades and join the Revolution. He wanted me not to work for the GVN again in case I chose to leave, and he told me how grateful my country would be to me when the day of liberation came. I did not want to return home because I would certainly be imprisoned for having lost my weapon to the enemy, and besides, I was won over by the aims of the Revolution. Therefore I decided to join the Front. . . .

[In answer to a question as to which reason was more important] The aims of the Front were more important in my decision than fear of prison. The cadres had succeeded in arousing my noblest feelings. I thought that my family would be proud of having a son who had contributed to the liberation and would benefit from my accomplishments.

He was to remain with the Viet Cong for three years, during which he joined the Party and rose to the rank of squad leader, before he defected back to the government side.

Another informant served with the Viet Cong for only four months, in 1964, before returning to the GVN, in which short time he became chief of the proselyting team in his village (the assignment he had chosen over the proffered alternative of going to the main VC base in the Viet Minh

jungle). A ten-day intensive training course taught him that as a village proselyter he had three principal tasks:

(1) I had to make a list of people who wanted to join the Popular Forces or the ARVN. Then I was supposed to talk to them and inform them of the hardships involved.

(2) I had to talk to those already in the Popular Forces or Regional Forces and try to persuade them not to go on local operations.

(3) I had to talk to relatives of government troops and try to persuade them to send letters asking their sons and brothers to return home, lest they themselves become victims of VC terrorism.

To further this work and train new cadres, he was supposed to apply what he himself was being taught: "(1) how to pick out potential underground cadres from among the village population; (2) how to train them; and (3) how to get these underground cadres into the GVN units, especially those in the outposts."

In the first phase [of his own ten-day training course], there were three lesson plans. . . . The first was concerned with how to proselyte people in the GVN areas; the second, how to force people to quit working for the GVN; and the third consisted of how to sense the reaction to this propaganda. I was to wait for a week and then decide which people had been most impressed by the propaganda and select these people as potential underground cadres.

The second phase was supposed to be flexible. The program was to be determined by local conditions. There would be different training programs for different kinds of cadres. For example, if a person showed that he was particularly anti-American, we would train him in spreading propaganda against the Americans.

In the third phase, we were told to try all means such as helping the GVN soldier or his family with labor or money if we could spare it. Whenever we gained the confidence of these soldiers, we were to begin telling them of Communist victories in nearby areas and of the death of particular GVN soldiers such as Mr. X, Mr. Y, or Mr. Z. We were to keep this up until we convinced the soldier of ultimate VC victory. Then we would go further and try to get him to provide information which I was supposed to collect and report.

The informant said that another Viet Cong had been responsible for civilian recruiting in the village but that he had had little contact with him and his work.

A detailed statement on the effects of proselyting on the populace and the villagers' reactions to VC methods, as well as some insight into the young people's reluctance to let themselves be drafted by the ARVN, came from a former squad leader who had defected in March 1965:

[Youths] are afraid of the draft, because if they joined the ARVN, the people would take their parents and families to a far away place to attend an education session. The Front was afraid lest their sons or husbands would contact them and ask them to go to the GVN-controlled areas. Because of this, the young villagers don't dare leave the village. Besides, if they joined the ARVN, the ARVN would never allow them to go home for visits, since their families live in a liberated area.

[These villagers] were indoctrinated on the policy and line of the Front. . . . In addition, they had to pay higher taxes or do forced labor twice as often as other families. If they let the Front oppress them, nothing drastic would happen to them, but if they opposed the Front, they would be accused of violating the political discipline. In this

case, they would be forced to do dangerous and difficult work, such as building road-blocks, destroying roads and bridges, etc. . . .

Was their property seized by the Front?

No. The best thing for these families to do was to "cheat" the Front by saying: "My son (or husband) has been stupid enough to join the ARVN. Please allow us some time, and we will call him back home." The Front just wanted to "torture" these families, so to speak, as much as possible to relieve their anger. When they had taken their revenge, they would stop pestering them.

Did families succeed in calling their sons home?

The families that were oppressed by the Front called their sons home. But how could they deliver their sons to the tigers? They called their sons home as a matter of form. If they recalled their sons to the village, they could not go to GVN-controlled areas later on.

If one man in a family joined the Front while his younger brother joined the ARVN, he would write the latter to ask him to come home. He would use emotional appeals or political arguments, according to his own talent. If his brother liked arguments or admired his talent for political discussion, he would return home. Or if his parents or grandparents got sick, the younger brother would also come home.

What happened to those who had joined the ARVN when they came back?

When they returned, the Front took them away for an indoctrination session. Then they were allowed to stay at home for a while. After that the Front would force them to join its forces. If they refused, they would be accused of being GVN spies.

The villagers particularly dreaded those indoctrination sessions, as they were given in a remote spot more liable to GVN air attack than their own area, which, though VC-controlled, was close enough to a GVN outpost and the Cambodian border to be relatively safe from the air.

An unregenerate cadre, who had been an administrative official in Binh Dinh and a district propaganda chief in Pleiku, described in clinical detail both the methods and the rationale of the Viet Cong in approaching Vietnamese and montagnard units:

During an attack, we call on the ARVN to surrender, using loudspeakers. We tell them if they lay down their arms, they will be forgiven by the VC; if not, they will be exterminated. We also tell them that they should not sacrifice themselves for the feudalists and the imperialists, and that they should return to the people's side.

We distribute leaflets saying, for example, "Officers and soldiers, return to the Front, you should not make useless sacrifices." Or, "Soldiers, stand up against the orders of your cruel leaders and American advisors! Refuse to go on sweep operations! Demand to return home, to live with your families!" Or we make up verses like these: "You are a soldier of the nation. How could you have the heart to steal the people's property and burn down their houses!" Or, "The same blood flows in our veins. If you still think of your country [and join the Front], your country will not forget you!"

We ask the families with members in the ARVN to write to them, asking them to come home.

We aim at demoralizing and confusing the ARVN. Our purpose is to make them discouraged, and to make them lose all confidence in the GVN. We want to disrupt the ARVN ranks and cause the units to fight

between themselves. We call on the ARVN soldiers to defect. We tell them they are forced to march at the head of the column in mopping-up operations or . . . in battles because the officers want to use them as cannon fodder. . . . [and] they should turn around and kill their leaders and advisors. . . .

In the case of the montagnard units, we use their own dialects to communicate with them. I worked among the Bahnar tribe. To be successful with them, I had to learn their dialect and their customs, because the VC consider the ethnic minorities in the South as an extremely important factor in the struggle. The montagnards contribute a great deal to the Front. All the corridors going from North Vietnam to South Vietnam pass through regions inhabited by the montagnards, and even our camps are all within their regions. For this reason, any maltreatment of the montagnard, any discriminatory acts, would be severely punished.

To win their support, we use the bait of "autonomy". . . . In addition, we promise to achieve equality of all ethnic groups in the South, and to respect their customs and traditions. To prove this point to them, we set up autonomous administrative councils, and select from the notables in the tribe the Chairman of the Council and Council members. This gives the Council set up by the Front a lot of prestige among the montagnards. The VC cadres simply act as advisors.

The VC cadres who work among the montagnards must . . . win these people's support. We should show our respect for their customs. The cadres must dress, live, and eat like the montagnards. . . .

A persuasive, politically very effective aspect of military proselyting is the avoidance of brutality toward the GVN POWs. Several of the former Viet Cong interviewed

cited the slogan "Add friends, subtract enemies" (them ban, dot dich) that they had been taught, and were in agreement as to the highly disciplined manner in which the Front treated its prisoners, in keeping with a policy that purports to aim at "training and liberating" them.²⁰

A succinct summary of practice and principle appeared in a captured document under the heading "Policy Regarding POWs and Surrender." Because of its authenticity, it is worth quoting here:

. . . To determine the management of reeducation principles, prisoners captured on the battlefield by regional units are first interrogated [for tactical information] and disarmed. . . . It is forbidden to confiscate their personal belongings (clothes, money, etc. . . .). Upon arrival at POW camps, the responsible "comrade" is to make a list of their personal belongings (mentioning whether they are all present or lacking). These items are kept temporarily and fully returned when the POW is released. The exchange, buying, or selling of POWs' belongings is forbidden.

²⁰This attitude toward POWs, which resembles the policy of the Chinese Communists in the Korean War, does not necessarily spare the prisoners severe physical and psychological duress. But the physical hardships generally are those, inevitable in jungle warfare, that are shared with the VC unit holding the POWs, while the psychological burden lies in the uncertainty and anxiety normally experienced by prisoners of war. Captured GVN enlisted men seem to suffer less, for they frequently are told early in their detainment that they will be released soon after they have listened to lectures on VC policies and goals, and they also are encouraged to remain with the movement. These findings from the RAND interviews are borne out by the author's perusal of captured VC documents and by interrogation reports on ARVN personnel released from VC detainment.

Food for POWs en route to POW camps is assured by the regional forces and factories which will settle with rear bases all matters concerning reimbursement. Their rations at the camps are supplied in accordance with POW policy.

It is necessary to have a policy regarding enemy soldiers who willingly join our side. We need to try to overcome difficulties, give them a warm welcome, and teach them the main points of our policies.²¹

Appendix E reproduces translations of several captured documents that bear on military proselyting techniques. The propaganda devices described range from the familiar letters and leaflets to "peace boats" that will carry messages by water to GVN ports and communities. Different techniques and approaches are specified for different target groups, from the part-time, hamlet-based Combat Youth up to the regular troops of the ARVN. Some themes and methods are local and transitory, while others are basic and permanent.

One of the documents presented in Appendix E is designed to dramatize the regularity with which the VC policy of clemency toward POWs functions. It is a sample of the kind of certificate that the Front may give to a prisoner about to be released. It states that, having been forced to join the ARVN, like the "majority of enlisted men and officers," the bearer, "after a period of indoctrination, . . . has realized that the Americans and Diem are the enemy and that joining their army is a crime.

²¹The document also stipulated the setting up of POW camps at the province level for the indoctrination of enemy troops, both officers and men, "who need long-term reeducation."

He has displayed repentance and promised he will never do anything that betrays the people and the country."

Several former Viet Cong in the RAND sample reported that, in their experience, most POW enlisted men were released after a few days' indoctrination (even hours after capture when access to facilities for detention was inconvenient), whereas officers were kept at least a few months. Long detention, forced labor, and even the death penalty were reserved for prisoners accused of having been cruel to the people or of having spied for the GVN.

A particularly successful proselyting tactic has been the cease-fire that the Viet Cong has for some years ordered its forces to observe on the Vietnamese New Year (Tet) -- three days at first, but extended to seven days in 1964 -- an order accompanied by an invitation to ARVN forces to visit and be entertained by VC units during that time. When, initially, the GVN/U.S. side failed to accede to the cease-fire and made it difficult for its enlisted men to visit their homes during the lull, the antagonism of some ARVN soldiers unable to profit by the holiday turned out to be an additional political bonus for the Viet Cong.

XII. THE LARGE PROPAGANDA AND RECRUITMENT MEETING

The widening of the war and the growing need for VC manpower have resulted in greater reliance on the rough and quick recruiting methods, to the neglect of some of the subtler, more time-consuming, but politically and psychologically more effective specialized tactics, such as the seemingly spontaneous public meeting, followed by personal approaches to individual participants, which will be discussed in the next section. But, even though the artfully contrived spontaneity of earlier times may have fallen by the wayside, the institution of the public meeting, which permits the manipulation of mass emotions and facilitates indoctrination and political control, remains an important political tool of the Viet Cong.

In the late 1950s, the large hamlet or village meeting was an elaborate recruiting device. In contested areas, there might be a series of such meetings, at intervals of days or weeks. In GVN-controlled parts, it was not uncommon for VC guerrilla bands to penetrate for the sole purpose of holding a single hit-and-run propaganda, recruitment, and tax-collecting meeting. In the days before hamlet defense was organized, it took fewer than a half-dozen guerrillas -- not necessarily all armed -- to capture a hamlet audience, using the guerrillas' familiar signaling devices and pressure tactics to ensure attendance. Later on, these propaganda sessions often were combined with demonstrations of military power. From 1962 on, when the Viet Cong was bent on destroying the strategic hamlets, a dramatic night attack that blasted the perimeter defenses typically would not only frighten the peasants into attending the lecture and recruitment session that followed but

crush at least temporarily whatever inner resistance to cooperation they may have felt beforehand.

To incite young people to join the Front, VC agents or sympathizers were planted in the crowd to whip up enthusiasm and even to prime the pump by "volunteering," and also to observe the reactions of spectators with a view to personal follow-up visits to the more enthusiastic. Even though the individual villager might not really be free to decide whether to attend the meeting or stay away, the VC cadres took great pains to preserve the illusion of spontaneity and voluntary action, just as they have done in the more complex "forced volunteering" of recent years, to be discussed in Sections XVII and XVIII.

The following are excerpts from the RAND interviews that illustrate the importance of the propaganda and recruitment meeting in the VC scheme, and the care and organization devoted to it.

A district recruiting chief, who had defected in 1965 after serving four years, described the use of the "victory bandwagon" theme in his area before it came under VC control in late 1962 and military service became compulsory in 1963:

Before this date, recruiting was performed by propaganda. [This village had been controlled by the VC since the end of 1962.] Some youths convened a meeting where the cadres lectured about the Front. They told the youths the Front forces were a negligible quantity at first but were increasing little by little. Meanwhile, GVN forces were withdrawing everywhere, abandoning hamlets, villages, and posts. Liberated areas grew larger and larger; the countrymen who could free themselves from Diem's yoke were more and more numerous. It was inadmissible that a youth

fold his arms and profit from the sacrifices and endeavors of others. They should join the Front to make their contribution to the liberation and the reunification of the country. After this lecture, a register was presented to the youths, and those who volunteered had only to sign. Ordinarily 80 per cent of the youths signed.

Since compulsory military service has been in effect, the same process is still being used, but the difference is that all the youths attending the lecture must sign.

A typical enlistment campaign in Long An Province in the words of a very young former guerrilla:

Few young people remain outside the Front because the VC periodically organize very attractive recruitment [drives]. The volunteers must fill out "enlistment forms" and submit them to VC leaders in the village. When the number of volunteers is big enough, i.e., about 30 or 40, the VC organize a solemn departure ceremony attended by almost everyone in the village. The volunteers, one by one, mount the platform to express their feelings, to promise to fight "to the last drop of blood," and to encourage others who have not yet signed up. The villagers applaud and cheer and the young women offer flowers and handkerchiefs to the young combatants. . . .

A member of a civilian proselyting team described the routine and the objectives of that group:

Most of the work was done by the local agents. My duty was to assist them in the persuasion. This was called armed propaganda. About twice a month, my team, which numbered one squad, would gather the plantation workers in the middle of the rubber plantation for a meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to create a good image of the Front, to make propaganda and to let the population know that the Front forces were everywhere.

We would introduce ourselves as the forces of the People's Liberation Front, telling the

people about the aims of the Front, the defeats inflicted by Front forces on the ARVN, and calling for the participation of the people in the popular struggle. We would let the people know in detail all the defects of the GVN: Diem was a dictator, he worked only for the interests of his family, he oppressed the Buddhists, and he set up all kinds of organizations with forced membership so as to control the population more closely. Le Xuan (Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu) forced our women to wear the blue, military-style (Republican Youth) uniforms that made them the laughingstock of the village. Diem was helped by the American troops. The people were informed about every arrival of new American troops. In brief, every shortcoming of the GVN was analyzed and explained to the population.

We also incited the people to struggle for more pay and more rice from the plantation owner. This was called the "Mass Struggle."

During the talk, it was very easy to notice those who listened intently. The village secret agents, who mixed with the population, would follow these persons and would make contact with them. They would visit the civilians in their homes and would tell them the Revolution was very hard to achieve without their help. They would say that the Revolution was at its beginning and needed everything, material as well as moral support, from every class in society. Those who left to join the Front contributed moral support and those who stayed at home should contribute material support to sustain the Front fighters. Once the civilians were contacted by our secret agents, whom we called "foundation agents," it was impossible for them to refuse the contribution of fifty piasters [then about US \$.50], because they were afraid of reprisals.

This systematic sequence of meetings was staged in a VC-controlled village for the local residents as well as for inhabitants of nearby contested areas and even one GVN strategic hamlet:

First, the VC [cadres] invited the men in the village and the strategic hamlet to attend their study sessions. Each session lasted for seven or eight days, during which each person took part in the discussion.

At the end of the session, the Front cadres asked the following question: "Who is your friend, and who is your enemy?" Since we were living in a VC-controlled area, everybody would say that the GVN was our enemy and that the persons around us were our friends. Then the cadres would say that when we met our enemy, we would either have to fight or run away.

The cadres asked the people attending the session: "Would you run away and let others fight the enemy for you?" This made many men mad, so they ran up and signed their names to volunteer for the Front forces. But when they got home, their wives and parents scolded them or complained about their actions, so they decided not to join the Front. But if they signed for voluntary service and then refused to join, the VC would come to their houses and take them away by force.

Many of those who were moved to join spoke of having been politically "enlightened" or "awakened" to their responsibility for supporting the revolution. One man commented on the meaning of these terms: "You reached enlightenment when you had deep hatred in your heart, when you were able to distinguish your enemy from your friend."

Though the Viet Cong would use the propaganda meeting to ask for volunteers, it had other ways of persuading those who failed to heed that call. Thus, a youth who had stayed away from a mass meeting after the Viet Cong took control of his village promptly received three consecutive visits from the VC cadres:

At first they used honeyed words to try to convince me, but I turned down their request

right away. Next day, they came again and this time they used coarse talk to pique my pride, such as: "You are a youth living in a country in danger, and you must defend it. You should not stay inactive at home, hiding your face in a woman's skirt! A youth like you does not deserve to live! You lie there waiting for a piece of dung to go down your throat, and you will never succeed!"

At that moment, I was so excited that I lost my temper and my good sense as well, and I agreed to go. They said, "We will take you along with us for 15 days only. Rest assured we won't keep you any longer." They asked me to pack my clothes and to request my parents to give me money. I didn't comply with their last proposal, but I brought 600 piasters which I had saved for a long time.

Entertainment by troupes of young dancers and singers added to the attraction of many propaganda meetings. Indeed, one ex-guerrilla reported that their lure had been his undoing, for, at the invitation of a VC cadre, he had gone to different places near his strategic hamlet to attend dance programs on several evenings in a row; then, afraid that having stayed away overnight would compromise him on his return home, he became highly susceptible to the suggestions of the cadre:

The VC did not promise me anything. [The cadre] only said that I would have a happy and glorious life (after the war). I would not have to work on the land. I could go visit places by car. All these sounded exciting and I asked to join the VC.

Another youth's account illustrated both the effectiveness of the lure and the shallowness of a commitment exacted by false promises. The eight-man GVN unit in his hamlet had chosen to ignore a superior number of VC intruders, who had

put on a dance show that so enthralled the 17-year-old that he had readily accepted the offer of a place in the entertainment troupe. But he found himself assigned instead to the village guerrilla unit, and defected after only three months.

XIII. THE INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Before the onset of intensive warfare began placing a higher premium on the more mechanized recruiting methods (including conscription) that are certain to enlist soldiers though they do not necessarily win political adherents, VC cadres sought to follow up the results of the large propaganda meetings by approaching the susceptible individual; they would shrewdly exploit any local circumstances and personal grievances that might lend credibility and weight to the recruiters' arguments, or try to win personal loyalty and trust through simple kindnesses. Thus, one informant related the visits of a cadre, a fellow-villager, who harped on the inadequacies of the Diem government: "He called at my house frequently and talked very convincingly²² about how the Viet Cong dealt with the GVN's oppression of the people." Another witness was a young woman who had told a VC cadre about the "suffering and injustice" in her life as a servant and was "sweet-talked" into acting as a courier:

He consoled me, spoke to me of resignation. . . . Finally, he asked if I wanted to help the Revolution. I asked him "What is the Revolution?" and he explained: "It is to chase out the imperialists. If we are victorious, we will expel them and will no longer be the slaves of anyone." I was full of bitterness against my employer and I agreed with this man. He told me that it is due to the Americans that the war is raging, there is unemployment, and people have to leave their families and villages. I thought that what he said was right, that life was truly hard. He told me that to work for the Revolution is to work for society and at the same time to work for myself because I am in society. . . .

²²Literally, "sweet-talked" -- an expression that turned up frequently in the interviews.

From time to time he gave me a letter to deliver to someone else.

Just as they did in their collective propogandizing, recruiters fanned existing dissatisfaction and stirred up active resentments:

A member of the village Party chapter worked on the people's dissatisfaction until you felt resentful. Then you were ready to join or do anything, including leaving your family. That is the first step. . . .

The most careful preparation went into the individual approach, and the effect of the cadre's seeming omniscience could be hypnotic:

When they [the VC] told you to do something for them, they had studied it well ahead. They knew you well, knew your family, knew all of your relations. When you saw that they knew you so well, you trusted them and would do whatever they told you to. . . . I can't remember everything about their policies, but many of the things they said were true. They talked to a point where you became so well penetrated that you began to feel like them. If you did not believe the things they believe, it would be very difficult to work for them. If you did not believe, you would have no energy . . . you would feel very tired.

The pains to which the Viet Cong would go to woo even a single youth whom a serious grievance might well have prejudiced against the movement was illustrated by the case of one young man, the son of a GVN hamlet chief who had been killed by the Viet Cong. Then still only a boy, he was visited by the village Party secretary, who explained to him the reasons and necessity for the killing so as to "dissipate any personal hatred" he might be nursing.

In the beginning I was very hurt and angry with them for killing my father. I quarreled with them. Then they told me that because my father had done wrong (in serving as hamlet chief and thereby "working against his own class interests, against the poor classes"), he had to be punished. But he also said that the faults of the father should not be visited upon the son. They talked to me and to people like me whose relatives were killed in order to eradicate all their hatred of the VC. They talked to a point where I felt that they were right. I no longer felt hurt. . . . I came to hate my father even though I didn't know [exactly] what he had done.

The tactic of personal representation extended to the Viet Cong's seeking out families of youths who had moved to distant towns and cities and persuading them to induce their sons to return to VC territory. In the words of a recruiter who had operated near the city of Can Tho in Phong Dinh Province,

I was with a youth proselyting group [working] . . . among the young and their families. As for the young people, we would arouse their hatred for the enemy and urge them to join the Revolution. With regard to their families, we would make propaganda and then urge them to call their sons in the cities back to the village to join the Revolution. We investigated very efficiently; we knew exactly which family had a son in the cities. When we succeeded in making the young man join the Front, we would turn him over to the local men, i.e., the guerrillas.

XIV. GRADUAL INVOLVEMENT

In a period when the Viet Cong could still afford the more patient and thorough approaches to recruitment, it apparently placed great value on the kind of involvement that began with the performance of minor tasks for the movement and then grew imperceptibly until it had become an almost irreversible commitment. Many former members reported that, when they volunteered to help the Front in small ways, they did not foresee how deeply they would ultimately become engaged. "We started at a very low level, but we 'worked up,'" said one. A characteristic story was that of a man who at first agreed only to help two covert agents in his village by giving a warning whenever GVN troops were near. ("Thus, although not yet a member of the Front, I was already participating in a way in Front activities in my village.")

As such an individual becomes more active and is identified in his community as pro-Viet Cong, he becomes an "illegal person" in the eyes of the GVN. It is then that he generally takes the big step of leaving home for the life of the full-time, wholly committed guerrilla. Many of those interviewed used the term thoat ly to describe this momentous step -- a word that means not simply leave-taking but emancipating and liberating oneself.

Our sample yielded numerous case histories of young men who initially did no more than stand guard for the guerrillas, carry rice, aid in the sabotage of roads and bridges, and assemble peasants to help with VC projects. ("Later," said one, "they had me using a [megaphone] to appeal to the people to close the market and go on strike.")

A boy of poor peasant background said of his early contact with the Viet Cong: "They did not threaten me, but they moved step by step, gradually, through stages." Though his Cao Dai village had never been controlled by the Viet Cong, he had first met VC agents there, and later made further contacts with the Front as he helped drive a truck on the highway to Saigon. For two years his assignments were limited to distributing tracts, putting up VC flags and slogans, and telling his acquaintances to resist the draft and not to furnish labor for GVN public works programs. When he himself was drafted, he was sufficiently pro-Front to become a fifth-column agent in an ARVN unit; when exposure threatened, he ran off and joined the VC Main Force.

Several young men recalled their passage from "legal" to "illegal" status, including the aforementioned youth whose father had been killed by the Viet Cong:

I went to work for them just a few months after my father's death. They talked a great deal to me. When I was "well penetrated" I worked for them. It didn't take much time. Everybody of my age worked for them. In no time, because of my illegal actions, I became an illegal man. Though I had begun to work for them . . . in the winter of 1959, I really became an illegal man [only] when I had to leave home. . . . On July 20, 1960, they celebrated something big [the anniversary of the 1954 Geneva Agreements]. [The Viet Cong] organized everyone to destroy the roads. I had to organize people to dig trenches across the roads. . . .

Another spoke almost sentimentally of the heroic moment of full commitment:

You started to serve and have missions and study sessions, according to your ability. You tried to do your missions underground, but you were still a legal person. So you worked until people found out about your activities, and then you became illegal and had to leave home to become a full-time guerrilla.

When you left your home, there was a celebration, and the village was invited to send you off for your national duty. That was glorious! Having a fighting son brought glory to the family!

As some of our case histories show, however, the very subtlety of this gradual approach, so effective in many cases, also has made it possible for the cautious or unwilling to resist involvement; and if they cannot avoid a minor involvement, it enables them to stop short of, or at least to delay, the point of no return.

XV. THE USE OF RUSES

Trickery is an integral part of the recruiters' arsenal, and the respondents' accounts were replete with recollections of a great variety of ruses by which the Viet Cong trapped, misled, and compromised those it sought to recruit. Once a man had been so enlisted and was accessible to systematic political indoctrination, other procedures went into effect to turn his conditional commitment to the movement into one of deeper loyalty, and neutralize whatever resentment he might feel at having been deceived.

In Vietnamese peasant culture, the ruse as such is not necessarily unacceptable; the person who is "shrewd and artful" (khôn, khôn-khéo -- often rendered by the French malin) and thereby succeeds over the less devious commands a certain admiration. Therefore, the VC recruit who has been so entrapped, once subsequent indoctrination makes him accept the political system that has deceived him, is more apt than most Westerners would be in a comparable situation to overlook and forgive the unethical methods that lured him into the movement.

One of the most common of ruses reported in the interview sample was what we might call the "limited service pitch." It had many variants and applications. Those who were regrouped to North Vietnam after 1954 did so on the understanding that their service was to last, at the most, two years, after which the elections of July 1956 stipulated by the Geneva Agreements would ensure their return to a peaceful South. To judge by the large number of regroupees who spoke about that initial promise and their later disappointment, many might not have gone north

had they been able to foresee actual developments. But the political indoctrination system they encountered in North Vietnam was effective in making them accept the postponement of elections, which indefinitely delayed their return to homes and families and meant, ultimately, the hazards and hardships of renewed warfare.

The few ethnic northerners we encountered in our interview sample had been prevailed on to "volunteer" for combat in the South after they had entered the compulsory three-year military service of the North Vietnamese Army (PAVN). Unlike many of the southern youth, however, they had been allowed to understand that their service might be extended for the duration of the struggle.

In the South, and particularly in GVN-controlled and contested areas, where it was not yet desirable to enforce outright conscription, VC recruiters frequently were quite specific about the limits of the service period. A young Main Force ammunition bearer reported having been told at his recruitment in 1960 that "adults had to serve for three years, younger people for one." A 19-year-old defector, who had joined the Viet Cong in 1962, described himself as the victim of deliberate deception:

The VC propaganda said that we wouldn't stay longer than one or two years in the Front before the struggle was ended. [Meanwhile] we would be able to go visit our families. It was enticing and I believed it. If I had known that I would have to stay for a long time far from my family, I wouldn't have joined.

Several of those interviewed had been the targets of cruder tricks. A young man from Central Vietnam had been working in a strategic hamlet when the Viet Cong came one

night in 1963, destroyed the hamlet defense system, and called a propaganda meeting, at which they asked the young men of the hamlet to follow them, though "it would not be for long." Then, the youth recalled,

They took all the youth toward the mountains, making us march for a month to a training school. They gave us four months of instruction and then sent us to different places to transport rice.

Another informant had been one of a dozen VC militiamen who in 1960 were told that they were going away temporarily for additional military training, not for regular military service. He found this quite plausible, because a year earlier, when the Viet Cong arrested him for having served in the GVN's Rural Defense Youth, he had been taken to the jungle and a month later had indeed been allowed to return home. This time, however, he was one of a group of 240 trainees who were first given military training and then sent on a four-month march to Tay Ninh to join a Main Force battalion.

The naive country boy was readily hoodwinked. One such youth, dissatisfied by village life in Central Vietnam, allowed an older friend to accompany him, or so he thought, to the Mecca of Saigon in quest of watches, bicycles, and other lures. But the man, who himself was on his way to joining the Viet Cong, led the boy straight into the hands of VC recruiters, who succeeded in turning a disappointed and at first reluctant youth into a fighting man.

One of the cadres cited earlier was candid about the deliberateness with which the VC propagandists and recruiters entrapped the trusting. He told of meeting by

chance a Civil Guard soldier, a friend of his uncle, who had just lost all his money gambling:

Taking advantage of this situation I told him to come along with me and we would arrange for him to borrow some money. Actually, it was a lie. I led him into the VC zone. After we got there, I told him the truth and asked him to join us. He accepted because it was too dangerous for him to go back.

One more illustration of the innumerable instances in which a young person's trust in the good intentions of a friend placed him within the reach of the Viet Cong was the experience of a defector, a young peasant in an insecure area, who had gone fruit-picking at the invitation of a 17-year-old friend, a secret agent for the Front:

I agreed to go. While I was climbing a tamarind tree [my friend] disappeared, and six VC appeared at the foot of the tree. They lived in the same village as mine but in different hamlets. Le Van Manh, a squad leader, was armed with a MAT-49 submachine gun and the other boys were armed with a carbine and four MAT-36 rifles. They persuaded me to go along with them to Ho-Ruong Hill to see a photograph of one of my uncles who had been in the North since 1954. I arrived at 6:00 p.m. at the foot of the hill. I had to sleep with them and only the next day at 2:00 p.m. did I receive any food. They told me, "The youth of today must go to fight for the Party, for the people, in order to defend the country." I was not shown my uncle's photograph. I knew that I had been fooled by them. I cried a lot, but they did not release me and they took me to the mountains. . . .

A standard abduction tactic of the Viet Cong is to promise a man that he will be allowed to return as soon as he has performed a particular chore or satisfied his

curiosity about life in a "liberated" area. Oddly enough, this was used to persuade a young man (one of several similar cases in our sample) who lived in a VC-controlled area and could simply have been drafted. The fact that he nevertheless was tricked into joining voluntarily (possibly because of an overly anxious mother) suggests once again how intent the Viet Cong is on preserving appearances where possible.

A defector's statement that the Viet Cong accepted all who wished to join, including the handicapped, the weak, and the very young, was strengthened by the example of several respondents, one of them an epileptic, another with the apparent symptoms of elephantiasis who had been used as a courier so as to be spared undue exertion. A third reported having seen a hunchback among new recruits. Anyone who wished to believe the recruiters' assurances that his participation in Front affairs would not be militant and hazardous might well have been heartened by this seeming lack of physical standards of selection.

XVI. WOMEN AS A FACTOR IN RECRUITMENT

Although the Viet Cong generally adheres to a strict code of conduct in matters of sex, it does, to the extent compatible with its puritanical precepts, use women as lures, examples, and challengers to potential followers. In Vietnamese society, with its strongly matriarchal features, women customarily take on not only housekeeping and the rearing of children but also quite often the financial responsibility for their families. Their stock therefore is uncommonly high; it is strengthened by the historic precedent, going back to the first century A.D., of the two Trung sisters who died heroically while leading Vietnamese forces in battle against the Chinese.

The Viet Cong is skillful in exploiting the appeal of girls and the prestige of woman revolutionaries, using them chiefly in recruiting and indoctrination, but also in hamlet and village guerrilla units, and occasionally even, it is said, in combat operations involving local VC forces. Women are expected to inspire a man, to challenge his pride by their own valor and the strength of their revolutionary commitment, and to charm them with their femininity. The Viet Cong's moral code precludes the promise or actual use of sexual intimacy as a means of attracting recruits, and, with rare exceptions, it is observed. Taught as he is to hold women in the highest esteem, the young Vietnamese is as likely to be impressed by the arguments of articulate women as he is eager to win their approval. And the importance of the example or the intercession of women in helping the individual youth make his political

commitment is borne out by the testimony of numerous interviewees.

One young defector, who had joined the VC regional forces at the age of thirteen, attributed that unusual step entirely to the persuasive powers of an experienced woman, his family's neighbor. Another gave a detailed account of being abducted, indoctrinated, and after a week of such indoctrination, asked to volunteer. Reluctant at first, he was won over by the village girls:

At first, I refused to join. I was almost ready to go home after being educated; but finally, I had to give up this idea since many girls came to me and persuaded me to stay and to join the village force in order to assist the villagers. One of the girls held my hand and promised me that she would send me a hammock and parachute risers [cord] to hang the hammock on once I was in the forest.

It may be worth quoting at some length from the interview with a Main Force squad leader from Tay Ninh, who described a typical recruitment situation in which the initial coercion was subsequently mitigated by persuasion in which girls played an important part:

Seven of us joined the Front. We were forced to go. Besides, they talked very sweetly and fluently. They came to my house on the 7th day of Tet, my 9th day of leave. There were four men, armed with guns. If I had resisted them, I would have been blindfolded, tied up, and taken away. That was why I had to go with them. When they came to pick us up, there were some girls who volunteered to join at the same time; that was another reason why I could not refuse to go, although I did not want to. . . . The girls probably attracted me some; they were the first lot to join. . . .

* * *

[About the week of indoctrination that followed their joining] One man and one woman came to talk to us for three hours, twice a day, for three or four days. The man said that we were young people and the Front needed us to fight the enemy who was being defeated. Once the Front won this war we would enjoy many benefits. He said he himself had to leave his family to serve the Front. How could we live at peace with ourselves if we did not follow his example?

The woman cadre was even better at propaganda than the man. She said that as a woman she had joined the Front to fight against the enemy; thus, we as young men should do something instead of staying home with our families. The Front had more guns than it could use and we should use those guns against the enemy, otherwise our country could never win its independence and peace.

I am a man and I could not be less than a woman. The pride of every man in our group was hurt. Consequently all of us agreed to remain with the Front. The next day we were taken to Bao Cho by the same guerrilla unit which had abducted us.

XVII. FORCIBLE RECRUITMENT AND CONSCRIPTION

The recurrent self-justification of POWs and defectors, as we have seen, is that they were "forced to join." In the accounts of those interviewed, the coercion took many forms, from the simple request to the use of brute force. In some instances, small groups of armed Viet Cong visited the prospective recruit and his family and merely told him it was his turn to perform the military service demanded of all youths. Some young men (especially those who had been approached in that manner but had not yielded to the demand that they come voluntarily) were abducted from their homes; some were taken from trains or buses held up by bands of Viet Cong. Frequently, they were tied and blindfolded until they reached the center at which they would then be subjected to days or weeks of political indoctrination.

Because of the natural self-interest that makes men try to absolve themselves from guilt and responsibility, it is not always easy to discern from their testimony the extent to which they may have been predisposed to be "forced" into the movement. Certainly, apart from those who seek to hide the fact that they actually volunteered, there are undoubtedly many who, consciously or not, were sympathetic to the Viet Cong and needed little prodding from the recruiter.

The statements of those who described themselves as victims of a well-organized system of conscription by abduction were corroborated by our interview with a former VC private from Binh Duong, who reported having been part of a platoon (evidently a village guerrilla unit) that

once every month or two accompanied district cadres on recruiting missions carried out "on a forced basis"; and, "if the person concerned objected stubbornly . . . , he would be tied up and taken away anyway." Each mission brought in anywhere "from ten to seventy" young men; that last figure was reached "in October 1964, when the VC launched a recruitment [drive] in the whole village."

A former squad leader maintained that in his area of Tay Ninh Province forcible recruitment, at least in the period prior to his defection (in March 1965), was reserved only for those who, after attending propaganda meetings and study sessions, had signed up for the Viet Cong and later had reneged on their commitment.

Typical of the experience of men who were simply abducted and forcibly recruited was the story of a defector who, by moving from hamlet to hamlet, had tried in vain to stay out of the Viet Cong's reach:

I was on my way to [Rural Defense Youth] guard post and I stopped at an inn in my hamlet. It was between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. About ten armed VC soldiers rounded me up along with five others. Two of the others later escaped. I was assigned alone to a unit of the district [regional] force.

He was sent to a farm production unit and given military training once a week for three weeks. Outside the brief daily "work evaluation" sessions he received no political training. After six months he defected.²³

²³ A strikingly large number of those interviewed who reported having been abducted either defected or were captured after relatively short service with the Viet Cong. The sample is not large enough, however, to permit our establishing a more precise correlation between these facts.

A one-time strategic hamlet cadre in Song Cau (Phu Yen) told a similar tale of abduction followed by assignments to production units and clerical tasks, with only the most superficial attempt at political indoctrination. He, too, had surrendered to the GVN at the first opportunity, seven months later.

Another defector, however, reported that most of the twenty-three youths from Vinh Binh Province who were rounded up with him by the Viet Cong in December 1963 and marched off to the forest for two weeks of military training, followed by a two-month march to a forest in Tay Ninh Province, had been assigned to combat units. He himself, because of an epileptic condition, was kept in farm production, where he was exposed to political indoctrination only within the routine work-criticism sessions. On the other hand, illiterate until then, he was given, and enjoyed, an hour's instruction a day in reading, writing, and arithmetic. But he apparently remained impervious to VC propaganda, and was ready to defect at the time of his capture, in mid-1964.

Many of those who allegedly joined against their will were enlisted by the Viet Cong in a manner closely resembling conventional conscription: They were told in advance, or given some signal, of their imminent call-up, and they were in due course summoned by recruiters who appeared in person, frequently with appeals to the young man's family to encourage his joining up.²⁴ Those who

²⁴Thus, a 17-year-old guerrilla spoke of having been "invited to join the army" by three VC soldiers; another had been simply told by a VC cadre of his acquaintance that he had to "go into the army," and he had thereupon

resisted the summons thereby exposed themselves to irresistible strong-arm and other pressure methods. A particularly effective terror tactic was the blindfolding of abducted youths. It occasionally impaired the victim's vision, at least temporarily, and, apart from any physical disability, was apt to produce severe trauma, intensified no doubt by people's awareness that the Viet Cong habitually blindfolded persons marked for very harsh treatment or execution.²⁵

A unique feature of the VC recruiting pattern is the involvement of unwilling and politically uncommitted men,

done so. And one interviewee, whose account was precise and detailed, told of the Viet Cong's kidnapping his wife and his mother and taking them to an abandoned house:

They asked my mother and my wife to persuade me to go and serve my military duty. My mother begged them to spare me, because I had a wife and five little children and I had to stay home and work to feed them. They replied that people of my age could not stay in the hamlet, because sooner or later the GVN would come to take me away. They said they could not afford to have me enlist in the ARVN and fight their comrades. A few days later, I received a paper warning me to be ready to do my military duty. Six days after that Mr. Sen and Mr. Khai came to my house with three or four guerrillas and took me away together with seven other hamlet inhabitants. They came at about 5 p.m. My mother would not let me go, but they loaded their guns in front of me and I was forced to agree to go with them.

²⁵ See Appendix F for summaries of case histories and excerpts from interviews that illustrate recruitment by abduction.

and their manipulation to the point at which they voluntarily become fighters for the revolution. Innumerable case histories in the RAND sample testified to the practice as well as the success of a three-stage process of conscription, indoctrination, and conversion, after which the subject was ready to volunteer. Despite the inevitable resentment caused by the use of threats and force, it is indisputable that many men whose induction had been effected in this manner nevertheless performed satisfactorily in combat; their antagonism apparently had been attenuated by indoctrination and political controls, as well as by the gratifications of camaraderie they had experienced, and by the sense of participating in a cause. Even though a number of them later maintained that they had never done more than make the best of a bad situation and had been far from enthusiastic in the performance of their duty, and although, as pointed out, there were appreciable numbers of defectors and willing POWs among them, it is clear that forcible recruitment did not necessarily result in low morale or poor fighting ability.

In the normal course of events, men who had been drafted or coerced into the movement would be exposed to intensive propaganda in a politically closed environment. Thereafter, many of them signed the lists of volunteers either because they had indeed been swayed, or because, though unconvinced, they felt trapped and were eager to salvage the respect of their cadres and their own chances for advancement.²⁶ If, however, after that first

²⁶ So perfunctory and unimportant was the act of "volunteering" in such cases that interviewees often mentioned it only when expressly asked about it.

indoctrination they were not sufficiently "awakened" to heed the invitation to volunteer for combat, they frequently in the past were assigned to food production and other service units. From there on, the political training of such men often tended to be haphazard. A few reported that they remained on probation, some said under surveillance, even after they had been given a rifle. Some found the isolation and tedium of production work reason enough to accept the opportunity for a change of heart that was periodically proffered them; others were "volunteered" by their cadres, more frequently so, it appears, as the widening war called for more men. Certainly, it would appear from the RAND sample of interviews that even a man who has had to be forced to join the Viet Cong is apt eventually to carry a rifle in one type of military unit or another. If he demonstrates enthusiasm and leadership quality, he has as good an opportunity as the spontaneous volunteer to receive promotion and admission to the Communist youth organization and the Party. In general, however, draftees are likely to be assigned to the lower-level forces, whereas the volunteers tend more often to go directly into the Main Force or to transfer into it from the lesser units.²⁷

²⁷For further light on this point and some comparisons of morale at the various levels of VC forces, as tested by exposure to combat of different degrees of intensity, see Frank H. Denton, Some Effects of Military Operations on the Viet Cong Attitudes (U), The RAND Corporation, RM-4966-1-ISA/ARPA, September 1966.

Excerpts from a number of case histories illustrating the varieties of methods used in the three-stage process just described, as well as the diverse reactions of men subjected to it, are included in Appendix I. They also reveal, among other things, the great importance that the Viet Cong evidently attaches to having on record the fact that a man has "volunteered," even when such a commitment has to be elicited by pressure or has become an almost mechanical gesture.

Appendix H contains several illuminating accounts of interviews with men who asserted that they had been forced to join the Front but who, unwittingly, betrayed a strong predisposition in favor of the Viet Cong. Although most of these cases tell us little about people's motives in joining that has not already been discussed, they do cast additional light on the VC recruiters' range of techniques, from the most tried and trite to the patient, sometimes ingenious, exploitation of individual foibles.

XVIII. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the Viet Cong greatly favors (and indeed practiced for as long as the tempo of the war permitted) the softer approaches of persuasion and gradual involvement rather than forcible recruitment. This preference is in harmony with other doctrinal precepts of a movement that aims at the social and psychological remodeling of the entire man, his acceptance of a new system of values, and the development in him of a genuine "revolutionary consciousness." Although rising manpower needs and the pressure of time have made resort to conscription, abduction, and the threat of force more and more common, the Viet Cong attempts to mitigate the resentments engendered by such methods, and to nurture the impression of a wide popular base of voluntary supporters, through intensive indoctrination of these victims of coercion, the subtle use of political controls, and the creation of new incentives. Its expectation (which has proved justified in the majority of cases where such post-conscription training was feasible) is that, after being so conditioned, many men, if invited to do so at the right psychological moment, will join the Front voluntarily. With those who do not, or in circumstances that make systematic indoctrination impossible, the Viet Cong will go to considerable lengths to manipulate men and situations in such a way as to elicit an act of voluntary commitment rather than use outright compulsion.

Once a man has in one way or another been prompted to volunteer and become part of the movement, he is subjected to a system of continuous political instruction,

both formal and informal. Indoctrination in small groups, the father-like image of the cadres who set examples and give encouragement to the discouraged, the close camaraderie in the ranks, and the gradual toughening that takes place in the course of guerrilla life all contribute to maintaining morale and satisfactory performance.²⁸

As we look for chinks in the armor of the Viet Cong, for the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of which GVN/U.S. propagandists and policymakers should be cognizant in their attempts to win over many of yesterday's Front fighters, it is well to realize how much we have yet to learn about the long-term effectiveness of the political control system and the implications of some of the Viet Cong's apparent successes. Bearing in mind the extent of this unexplored area and the promises it may hold, one can hazard some speculations and generalization, and pose a number of questions that may open up worthwhile avenues of inquiry.

* * *

When we speak of the complex of characteristics that make for an effective Front soldier, we assume political

²⁸For a discussion of various political control mechanisms see J. C. Donnell, G. J. Pauker, and J. J. Zasloff, Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: A Preliminary Report, The RAND Corporation, RM-4507-ISA, March 1965. These mechanisms include the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam, the political cadres in the military units, the three-man cells (designated by various terms, including to tam-tam) into which the ten-man squad is divided, and the various types of kiem-thao (criticism and self-criticism sessions) at which the performance of a unit and its individual members is evaluated.

loyalty to the Viet Cong to be an important part of his equipment. Yet there are many reasons why men will fight, and it is by no means clear how much political loyalty to a cause the individual needs to fight well. Thus, political controls and the political and military momentum of the organization of which he is a part may well take the place of political conviction in carrying along, at least for a time, a man who was forcibly recruited or who "volunteered" against his will. It is difficult to generalize: In some cases, the longer a man stays with the movement, the more likely is he to forget his initial hostility and become a zealous follower; yet many of the defectors who complained about having been forced into the movement had made their escape within the first year.

If, as we know, significant numbers of genuine volunteers and original enthusiasts -- perhaps all the more shocked by the disillusioning realities for having once been enthusiastic -- become so disenchanting as to rally to the government's side (not to mention the doubtless far more common phenomenon of "desertion home"), it is safe to assume, in the absence of more comprehensive and precise data, that the lingering memory of forcible induction will in some measure add to a man's predisposition to defect when his personal situation deteriorates and he accumulates further reasons for doubt and hostility. The fact that in his indoctrination he has not been "brainwashed" in the ordinary sense of the word (which involves political reeducation under conditions of isolation, physical deprivation, and mental stress)²⁹

²⁹The closest thing to true brainwashing appears to be practiced in special training camps in remote areas,

makes it the more likely that the process can be reversed under the proper conditions and influence.

The variability of several factors that tend to strengthen a soldier's attachment to the Viet Cong is important in this connection. One of these is the subtle substitution of cadres and brothers-in-arms for the authority figures and love objects in the man's private life, which, if successful, places him more securely under the control of the new authority at the same time as it enables him to bear the separation from family and friends. Another morale-building factor is the esteem and affection of the rural populace for the revolutionary fighter. As regards the first, the interviews suggest at best only a partial success. Hence perhaps the Viet Cong's need for the patriotic fanfare that accompanies the final break with family and community, when a man is said to "liberate himself" (thoat ly) and become a full-time fighter, and for the frequent inclusion of the "internal unity" item in the daily ritual of criticism and self-criticism, where any unseemly nostalgia for the old

such as the highlands, where new recruits, suddenly cut off from family, community, and accustomed routine, are subjected to arduous military training, painfully personal indoctrination, and a monotonous, often inadequate, diet. In this period of acute stress and loneliness, the political instructors, who may include women, attempt to displace the former figures of authority and emotional support in the recruit's life, until such time as he is assigned to a military unit, when another transference -- to cadres and comrades -- can be effected. As the interviews show, the attempt does not always succeed, and continued homesickness is prominent among reasons for desertion.

life is exposed and condemned. Certainly, there are strong indications that distress over the separation from wife, children, and parents and concern for their welfare continue to be major reasons for defection. As for the peasants' moral support, it is clearly diminishing as the hazards of warfare are involving the countryside more and more, and under the impact of the resource and population controls that military and economic necessity have compelled the Viet Cong to impose.

* * *

A crucial task in the political reeducation of former Viet Cong will be the neutralization, or more properly the destruction, of the hatred of the enemy -- the GVN and the United States -- with which the Viet Cong has so painstakingly tried to imbue its supporters. In the process of exacerbating peasant discontent and then channeling those sentiments and their political rationalization into revolutionary activity, the Viet Cong, as shown earlier, uses many methods and appeals to create fertile emotional soil for its propaganda; among other things, it exploits the casualties and property damage that peasants have suffered in military attacks. With such fuel to feed to the flames of existing dissatisfaction and anxiety, it becomes possible to create and keep alive the "love-hate" dichotomy that has been an effective element in the dynamic of militant movements under stress. This phenomenon, which we associate with the political style of Communist societies, though others (e.g., Sukarno's Indonesia) have borrowed it, is the twofold demand of "love for the people," including its political

representatives and the fighters for its cause, and "hatred for the enemy" and his collaborators. From there it is a simple step to exhort the people to "turn hatred into deeds," a favorite slogan of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese.

We can only guess at the extent and the political significance, both short- and long-range, of the hatred that the present conflict has generated among the peasants, especially those that have suffered personal injury. The Vietnamese, it must be remembered, often are able to accept a degree of deprivation and shock that astonishes the Westerner; moreover, although their propaganda tells them of the continuous antiimperialist struggle that began after World War II, many peasants, their areas untouched by the low-key activity of the years 1954 to 1959/60, experienced a time of relative calm which made them believe that independence had really been attained and gave them little tangible cause for resenting the ruling powers, let alone the United States.³⁰ Nevertheless, given the present escalation and prolongation of the war, an increasing number of noncombatants are bound to be affected by

³⁰ Many of the men interviewed, though they readily expressed anti-American slogans and said that they had joined the movement to "save the country from the American imperialists," also admitted that they had never seen an American before joining. Most of those recruited before the U.S. troop commitment was stepped up apparently had acquired those stereotyped explanations only in the course of their doctrination, after they had joined.

damage from artillery and air bombardment, even assuming the constant improvement of fire control, target intelligence, and deliberate caution on the GVN/U.S. side. There is no predicting the degree of hostility that the cumulative injury to life and property will produce, or the form in which such hostility (or its repression) will reveal itself. Conversely, if active warfare were to cease and the Viet Cong were thus deprived of its chief means for the political incitement of the peasants, the question that would arise is whether the residue of resentment was great enough to hamper the participation of civilians in GVN/U.S. programs for reconstruction and political education. And if it were, what, if anything, could be done to remove so major an obstacle to a lasting political settlement?

As a step toward at least a partial answer we might look for a possible similarity of the Vietnamese situation to the observations of Lucian Pye on Communist China. In his monograph The Dynamics of Hostility and Hate in Chinese Political Culture,³¹ Pye notes the satisfaction of deep psychological needs that the Chinese Communist tends to derive from his hatred of the enemy, and points out that Chinese propagandists incite it to achieve precisely that end, at the same time that they keep it carefully controlled, to make certain that, once it has served to kindle passions that make men respond readily and uncritically to certain stimuli, it will not interfere with rational policy. There is some evidence, both in VC propaganda and in our interviews, that in Vietnam,

³¹The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1964.

too, the emotions, useful as they are in stirring people to action, are being manipulated so as not to get in the way of pragmatic decisionmaking. The extent to which this is true will be of obvious significance for the eventual reorientation of former Viet Cong. For, if they can be turned on and off almost mechanically -- which is another way of saying that these resentments are not deepseated enough to have a momentum of their own -- then their malleability, uncertainty, and indeed shallowness open up the most promising possibilities to the GVN and the United States for reeducating the former opponents and winning their support. An immediate test of what may be feasible will be the case of over a million-and-a-half refugees who have come from VC into GVN zones, and particularly of the several hundred thousand of them who have been resettled or have returned to their villages in relative safety. (Incidentally, many of them have already been absorbed into the large labor forces on U.S. military construction projects.) Whether the GVN, with U.S. assistance, is able to satisfy the peasants' basic needs will have a direct bearing on their residual hostility; whether their former anger is merely neutralized or can be transformed into positive support for the GVN will depend on many factors, including, as mentioned earlier, the future course of the war (and specifically the damage to the villages), the extent to which the American effort is seen as adding to Vietnam's political strength, and the emergence of a dynamic indigenous leadership capable of projecting a strong nationalist image, of bringing reconstruction, and of extending the efficacy of good government to the local level.

* * *

From all indications, including some of the statements quoted in Section III, VC propagandists are less successful than were their predecessors, the Viet Minh, when they try to rely exclusively on the appeals of nationalism and antiimperialism to inspire men to join them. In this respect, to be sure, the RAND sample must be used with great caution. Former Viet Minh among the respondents very likely have repressed whatever selfish interests may have accompanied their idealism, as man tends to glorify the past; moreover, men who joined the Viet Minh largely for reasons of narrow self-interest were the least likely to join the Viet Cong in the 1950's or, if they did, to stay with it for long. But there can be no doubt that Viet Minh followers, having lived under French colonial rule, could find more grounds for feelings of anti-imperialism in their own experience than can the younger generation of Viet Cong adherents. And the fact that the Viet Cong apparently has not been entirely successful in getting across the parallelism between the two wars reveals itself in numerous ways. For example, though the term "liberation struggle" is commonly applied to both wars and the "all-class" nature of the present war is officially stressed, a significant number of prisoners and defectors who describe the earlier conflict also as a "war of independence" see in the second prominent elements of a "class struggle" and thereby, consciously or unconsciously, impute to it more of a Communist character than they do to the earlier, more purely nationalist conflict. Exposing the historical inaccuracy of the alleged parallel and thereby invalidating an important doctrinal tenet of the opponent would be a useful objective in any

thoughtful program for the political reorientation of prisoners, ralliers, and civilians.

The success of such a program will hinge to a large extent on the combined impact of all aspects of U.S. policy and conduct. If the Americans try to limit the damage to peasant communities that is caused by their military operations, if they could make a major effort at civic action and pacification to ensure the permanent administration and protection of rural areas against the dreaded possibility of periodic military conflict and VC reprisals, if American troops are at all times correct in their relationship with the Vietnamese, both on and off duty, and if the United States supports the emergence of a capable indigenous leadership that can make itself felt even at the lower levels, American representatives and propagandists will gain greatly in credibility. The very stereotype of the invariably malevolent American that Viet Cong propagandists try to convey makes them vulnerable, for U.S. personnel can derive considerable political benefit from disproving the allegation that American and GVN forces mistreat, torture, and kill VC captives and defectors.

Of obvious importance also is the substantive content of the political-educational program itself. As of now, defectors are the chief beneficiaries of efforts at political education, and these programs have tended to be superficial. To achieve the desired reorientation of POWs, defectors, and civilian refugees and their satisfactory adjustment to life in a non-Communist environment, including an ability to deal with the Communist indoctrination of the past, political

reeducation has to be much more than a string of anti-Communist slogans. It must be based on the realization that many members of the Viet Cong, particularly among the cadres, have been strongly politicized and schooled in an articulate analysis of their surroundings that enables them to put political constructions even on personal experience and observation. Competent teachers and depth of content, therefore, are requisite to the success of any program.

No approach could more effectively cast doubt on the one-sided propaganda of the Front than an honest historical evaluation that would not omit scrutiny and criticism of the mistakes of the French, the Diem government, its successors, and the United States. Nor should such a presentation deny tribute to the aims and successes of those who fought, and won, a war to end colonialism, whose tragic aftermath it was that much of the non-Communist leadership of the movement for independence was crushed between the agents of French security and Vietnamese communism, a major cause of the present war. The lost leadership, it should be pointed out, will have to be replaced gradually by a new generation of political leaders, and the former Viet Cong themselves, among others, can contribute significantly to this development.

Another point worth stressing is that the war today, as some of the more articulate former Viet Cong have stated, is not another fight for independence but is indeed a class struggle aimed at securing Communist rule over both North and South Vietnamese society. In this context, GVN/U.S. propaganda will be on firmer ground once the demands for political, social, and economic

reform that large segments of the populace are pressing have been at least partially satisfied.

The interviews with POWs and defectors -- older recruits and very young men, zealots as well as critics of the Viet Cong -- show the great majority of them to be susceptible to political reorientation. But however excellent the educational program may be, its lasting impact will depend on the action that accompanies it, for a people so long exposed to propaganda as the Vietnamese is wary of empty words and gestures and quick to distrust the mere propagandist. Appeals to their self-interest in a new, non-Communist society must be followed by concrete service of that interest. Moreover, having seen the fulfillment of their hopes repeatedly postponed by a long war, the Vietnamese are not likely to be impressed quickly by piecemeal improvements; they will expect thoroughgoing reforms. Promises of political, social, and economic advances have been made to them not only by the Viet Cong but also by representatives of the GVN. Indeed, some propaganda and cadre teams reportedly have gone so far as to promise a genuine, albeit non-Communist, social revolution and in so doing have at least implied some criticism of the present government and its institutions. The impediments to change are likely to be strongest in urban communities, which have found it most difficult to achieve stability, consensus on nation-building aims, and cooperation for local mutual-aid programs. Another serious obstacle in the path of progress will be the weak linkage between the rural community and the elitist, urban-based GVN and ARVN leadership. As regards the South Vietnamese peasants,

their present mood and expectations for the future are harder to assess. Some no doubt would be satisfied for the moment to see an end to hostilities and a modicum of order and social justice. In the long run, however, the propaganda messages they have absorbed over the years will lead to more substantial demands, which are apt to vary from one area to another. In places that have already undergone a de facto land reform under the Viet Cong part of which the GVN has at least formally accepted, the class struggle has become a somewhat academic notion, and practical demands are likely to aim at the legalization of the present system of land distribution rather than call for sweeping changes of a revolutionary kind that might shake the basic institutions of family and private ownership. Here the task of an enlightened postwar government will be to convince the peasant that non-Communist forces are best able to serve his particular interest, and to prove to him that they have the unity, political dynamism, and willingness to do so.

* * *

As for the larger long-range prospect, the evidence of the past suggests that among the possible impediments to a desirable postwar course would be a sense of national humiliation if any serious economic setbacks were to force intellectuals and professional people into menial occupations or large numbers of women into prostitution, and if children were allowed to become beggars and panderers. Another development to be avoided if the destructive psychological effects of cultivated hatred and anger are

to be overcome is the large-scale uprooting of communities through forced resettlement. In contemplating ways of making local organs of government more responsive to their citizens' needs, and thereby gradually removing what has been described as an important factor in the peasants' pent-up resentments and hence their susceptibility to the appeal of revolutionary movements,³² it will be advisable to consider rural sensitivities wherever possible. Especially to be avoided would be the practice, common in the past, of assigning civil and military officials from the cities, with an urban orientation and frequently unconcealed contempt for the "backward peasant," to local levels of administration.³³

Next, it will be important to counteract any impression the Vietnamese may entertain (and the interviews show it to be a prevalent feeling) that they have been used as helpless pawns in the self-interested game of such a powerful force as the United States or even a central national government of Vietnam with which they are not

³²Professor Everett Hagan of The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has been doing a systematic analysis of this particular problem. He discussed his findings very briefly at a conference of the Southeast Asia Development Advisory Group held in Washington in January 1966 under the joint auspices of the Agency for International Development and the Asia Society of New York.

³³For a discussion of some of the implications of this urban-rural gap see John C. Donnell, "The War, the Gap, and the Cadre," Asia, No. 4, Winter 1966.

fully identified.³⁴ This belief is readily compatible with the peasants' traditional conviction of their own political inefficacy. Accustomed to being buffeted in power struggles that they cannot comprehend, the peasants tend to cover up frustration and indignation with apathy. It is in the interest of the Viet Cong, and an important part of its political strategy, to reconvert this resignation into resentment, to convince the apathetic that they have a chance to improve their lot, and, by offering credible political vehicles and establishing workable communication, to channel their anger and their hopes into political activism. Thus, to the extent that any vestige of apathy is allowed to persist in a future society, it may become a source of renewed revolutionary stirrings.

The experience of refugees from VC zones suggests that people suddenly released from the Viet Cong's political domination and agitation and given security and possibilities of earning a livelihood are apt to feel gratitude, but it remains to be seen how much of their reaction is due to relief at having escaped from the hazards of war and what part of it endures beyond the end of the war.

³⁴An ex-GVN marine who became a VC youth proselyter, though he later defected to the GVN, betrayed the depth of this feeling: Asked whether he thought his rally had helped the Americans, he said, "I knew when I rallied that I would be guilty toward the people . . . however, I thought to myself that Vietnam is a small country and the United States is a big country. I am like a tiny particle living in this immensity . . ." (emphasis added).

Whether it is a lasting change of heart will depend on the economic, political, and social life that awaits these people in peacetime; the positive challenges of new opportunities will go far toward erasing the memory of past losses and suffering.

* * *

We have already mentioned the possible boomerang effect of excessive hate propaganda that is belied by personal observation, and of promises that remain unfulfilled for too long. Once a man's experience causes him to doubt some of the words of the cadres, he may well begin to question the general reliability of those leaders. The interviews indicate that many VC fighters approach the statements of their cadres with some skepticism and might thus not be unduly shaken by a single discrepancy between expectations and observed reality. For example, a defector or POW who encountered humane treatment instead of the abuse for which he had been prepared probably would not lose his faith in the VC movement instantly, but the experience would weigh in the scales as his disenchantment grew, until ultimately he became susceptible to political reorientation.

Although it would be difficult to say how much disillusionment it takes before a fighter's combat morale or a prisoner's loyalty to his own side is seriously impaired,³⁵

³⁵ See D.W.P. Elliott and C.A.H. Thomson, A Look at the VC Cadres: Dinh Tuong Province, 1965-1966, The RAND Corporation, RM-5114-ISA/ARPA, March 1967 p. 70, for their discussion of the reasons why cadres and rank-and-file members are likely to defect, and the implications as well as the extent of such a break.

it is most important for the GVN and the United States to be alert to the possibilities opened up by such bewilderment, and prepared to supply new political ideas as well as economic prospects at the moment that these men are psychologically ready to break with the Viet Cong. This goes particularly for personnel receiving prisoners and those working in Chieu Hoi centers. Sympathetic concern for the situation of the former Viet Cong and concrete steps toward helping them reshape their lives would give the lie to much of their previous indoctrination. However, though it might prompt surprise, gratitude, and a readiness to question the reliability of the cadres, humane treatment would not by itself necessarily dispose of all suspicions, such as those concerning the ultimate designs of the Americans and the political trustworthiness of the GVN. So thoroughly accustomed are Viet Cong followers to the notion of the United States' imperialist objectives in Vietnam that they must be truly disabused of it and politically reeducated if their break with the movement is to be meaningful and lasting. This is especially true of the more thoroughly indoctrinated cadre, for whom anti-Americanism has the essential function of solidifying his convictions and motives and obliterating political differences among the various elements with whom he is allied in the struggle. The anti-American message -- including the promise of inevitable victory over the overbearing, powerfully equipped opponent -- is a basic theme for revolutionaries in both North and South Vietnam, entering strongly into the motivation of the cadres, though perhaps less that of the rank and file, and no doubt strengthened in the most recent past by the omnipresence of American

troops and the growing, visible fact of U.S. air power over Vietnam. For this reason, anti-Americanism must be a major target of any GVN/U.S. effort to pierce the Viet Cong's web of ideas and arguments and, by word, deed, and example eventually to destroy the ideological structure of the insurgency.

Appendix A

THE LURE OF PERSONAL INTEREST: FROM THE
TESTIMONY OF PRISONERS AND DEFECTORS

(1) A hard-working waiter, with hopes for further education, said that he joined the Front when a friend told him that "they would give me money to pay for my studies." After becoming an armed youth propaganda cadre, he allegedly won over some forty youths (possibly an exaggerated figure) by such methods as paying them monthly allowances for tuition or subsistence.

(2) "I wanted to be a male nurse, but there was no hope for me. Then a VC officer came and promised me that the Front could send me to a medical school."

(3) "[I was told that] joining the [VC] troops would bring me glory and fortune later when the country was unified. At that future date I would . . . have a high post in the government."

(4) From the testimony of a former peasant, captured after four years' service with the VC, who, on finishing elementary school, had seen little prospect of satisfying his ambitions or even going on to secondary school in his village in GVN territory:

In my village, I could not do anything to make myself happy. My family did not have enough for me to go to school. All my friends were going on to secondary school. I did not want to go to work yet. In my village, I worked in the daytime and I ate in the evening. I didn't want to live like that. I wanted to go to secondary school.

[Explaining his decision to join the Viet Cong] I didn't want to be a soldier. On the other hand, I didn't want to stay home and polish the earth all my life. . . . If I had had the opportunity to go to school, without having to pay for anything, I would not have

joined the other side. They promised me to let me go to school. You cannot just forget about people's aspirations. . . . There are all kinds of people in the Front. Some like the Army, some are draft dodgers. . . . Some, like myself, want to go to school. . . . If the Government satisfied the aspirations of people like me, there would be no more Front; nobody would fight anymore.

(5) The statement of a youth who, as an orphan, had at an early age been placed as a servant in the home of a family where he did heavy work and suffered harsh treatment: "When I heard from friends that I might get a little more rest while working for the Front, I wanted to go."

(6) A 23-year-old said that he had run off to the Viet Cong to evade payment of damages under a judgment against him arising out of a motor-scooter accident. (He quickly became disillusioned and defected after only a few months.)

(7) A girl recalled that she had been deeply depressed over failing her high-school examinations ("I thought of nothing except leaving home as soon as possible") and thereupon had been approached by a female VC cadre whom she had never seen before but who knew her situation: The woman "knew how to talk very well and I didn't care how life with the VC would be. All I wanted was to get away. . . ."

Appendix B

FROM THE STATEMENTS OF ONE-TIME OUTLAWS
WHO JOINED THE VIET CONG

(1) The account of a POW, the son of a poor family in Vinh Binh, who had taken to gambling at an early age and had thereby alienated his own family and ultimately run afoul of the local authorities as well. In 1958, having paid off a gambling debt of 4,000 piastres by laboring for two years, he had returned to his hamlet with his wife, but his troubles were not over:

My father hated me very much, because of my passion for gambling. So, he distributed land to my brothers and sisters without giving me any. I had to request him to redistribute six cong of ricefields to me, so that I could support my family. [In addition to that] my father gave me only a sampan when I took my family to live separately. . . .

[Later] during the Diem regime, my family was in dire poverty. I was a member of the Republican Youth and so had to work as a coolie for the construction of the Long Vinh Agroville in Loan Toan District and the building of outposts in my village. I did not receive any wages for all these services, which lasted from one to two weeks [at a time]. I had to furnish my own rice. I escaped this hard labor twice by fleeing to the fields of Lang Rang, where I caught fish and crabs, and from time to time my wife came there to take my catch home for sale. Mr. Tep, the chief of police of my village, threatened not to protect my life any longer if I did not work as a coolie on the agroville. My wife kept me posted on this and I dared not go back home. Thus, I met some VC cadres who passed through my hideout in the fields. . . .

These cadres came to arouse my hate for the GVN. I felt that I was extremely poor; I had lost my standing among my acquaintances because of the debts I had recently incurred and also the thought of revenge for my grandmother's and uncle's deaths was kindled in my mind. [These

relatives had been killed earlier by Cambodian-Vietnamese "working for the French."] I confess that at that time my spirit was very low, so that when the VC cadres persuaded me to join the Front I believed they were right. I was reeducated by them. In about May 1962 I sold all my belongings, my sampan and fishing nets, and, as I was short of money, I let my wife live with her own parents in order to join the VC indefinitely.

The propaganda themes that appealed most to this man were "suppression of the landlords" and "struggle against Diem." He rose in the movement to become a company commander and assistant to the district military committee.

(2) Another captured Viet Cong owed his initial involvement to a landholding problem that indirectly had led to his becoming an outlaw. When the rental contract for his land came up for renewal, his landlord had offered the property to a higher bidder, and the informant thereupon had reclaimed some abandoned land. But as the property was twelve kilometers from the village, he refused to comply with the authorities' demand that he return to the village every night and periodically stand guard with the local defense unit, and so became persona non grata with the village council. In October 1960, while working on his reclaimed land at the edge of a forest, he was approached by a small band of Viet Cong and persuaded to join. He was promoted steadily, and, at the time of his capture, in 1964, had risen to deputy chief of a district committee military section.

(3) A 37-year-old former Viet Minh from Quang Nam, ordered to go to North Vietnam in 1954, had disobeyed the order and returned to his village. As he described it, Quang Nam provincial authorities started "a terrorist campaign against old Resistance members" in 1956 and arrested "about 10,000," causing him and three others from his village to flee to the mountains. They had lived there for several years, with support from tribal people, when local VC cadres found and recruited them. The informant became an acting company commander in the Regional Forces.

Appendix C

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEWS COMPARING
ARVN AND VC RECRUITMENT

(1) A 32-year-old defector, a VC prison guard until early 1965, spoke at length about the Viet Cong's "serve-near-home" pitch:

Everybody knows that, no matter which side one joins, one is but a soldier. However, there is a difference in the recruiting methods. The GVN is satisfied with ordering all youths to complete their military service. The authorities in the village, in order to execute this order, force the young men to join the Army. Sometimes this is done with brutality, and never with explanation or propaganda. The VC also use force to recruit their soldiers, but force is always accompanied by explanation and propaganda.

For example, in the case of the young men in my village, the VC know that the majority of the people in the countryside do not like to be definitely separated from their hamlets and families. So they said that once the villagers became GVN soldiers, they would not be allowed to return home and see their families, that they would be sent far away, and that in the end they would die in a foreign land without the hope of seeing their parents, wives, and children again. The VC added that to be GVN soldiers is to be mercenaries in the pay of the Americans, to be working against the people and against their own families. It would be better then for the young men to become guerrillas. As such, they could stay near their families and go to see them whenever they wanted to. Besides, they would take pride in working for the people and for a good cause. The people in the countryside, being for the most part uneducated, tend to listen to this sweet talk.

(2) A squad leader in the Main Force recalled his recruitment, at which he was told that he could serve near home:

Towards the end of 1959, the Front abolished the village administration and put an end to the GVN control of my village. . . . In April 1960, the Front contacted me for the first time. I did not want to join because I knew the Front would lead me far from my mother. But the next month they came back and forced me to join the village [guerrillas]. They assured me that I would not have to leave my hamlet, and they gave me some hand grenades.

Upon joining, he was sent away for four months of military training, and thereafter was assigned to a unit in another province, where for the next three years he saw a great deal of combat.

(3) A defector recalled having been dissatisfied with the GVN's strategic hamlet program, with its demands that he participate in the Combat Youth by standing night guard duty, and with the prospect of conscription and the impossibility of postponing his enlistment "in order to support my old parents." In consequence,

I ran away from my military service for the GVN and, in the company of three of my friends, I went to Hao Duoc village. There I met a VC cadre who was a complete stranger to me. He told me that I could not hide in the village because the GVN certainly was going to search there. He advised me to go with him and took me away with him. I joined the Front enthusiastically after having listened to the VC propagandist.

He became a squad leader in the Regional Forces and served for more than five years, until his defection in April 1965.

(4) Another man, who defected at about the same time after four years with the Viet Cong, revealed great naiveté about the likely nature of VC service. He remembered being afraid of the draft and bewildered by the political turmoil surrounding him. A friend who already had received his ARVN draft summons

. . . tried to persuade me . . . to join the Front with him. . . . I was not enthusiastic; however, I thought this was war and I could sit it out in the Front. When peace was restored, I would go home. I did not think much about what I was going to do.

. . . I joined the Front because of my friend. He lectured me day and night. He appealed to my emotions, saying that we were best friends, that he was going to be a VC, and if I did not join the VC with him I would eventually be drafted by the ARVN. One of us would surely be on the wrong track, and when it came to fighting we would shoot at each other, for you do not spare your friends on the battlefield. Then there were the VC who came to the village beating on gongs and lecturing to the villagers over megaphones. These VC caused much commotion in the village. They beheaded people and left the heads on the main road. . . . [However] every now and then the VC staged a show in the nearby village and I was invited to attend. I felt very happy and eager to work for the Front.

Discouraged though he had become with the Viet Cong, he nevertheless paid tribute to the persuasiveness of its recruiters and its painstaking propaganda techniques:

If I look at the material side only, I should say that life in the ARVN is much better, but the Front knows how to appeal to youth; the Front's arguments are more convincing. As for the draft, in the GVN when a person has reached draft age he has to go. There is an element of force in the GVN. The Front does not force people; it uses politics and persuasion to get people to work for it. Front members went to the families who had someone regrouped in the North and persuaded other members in these families to join the Front. People were told that the Front's influence was spreading wider and wider every day and they would not be killed as readily as if they joined the GVN. . . .

. . . I knew that I had three uncles working for the GVN, but my friend had begged me day and night to join the VC and I could not refuse him. . . . The VC told me to appeal to my uncles

to come back either to join the Front or to work
at home. If they did not, they might have to
shoot me or I would have to shoot them. . . .

Appendix D

ACCOUNTS OF FORMER VIET MINH
PRESSURED TO JOIN THE VIET CONG

Rejoining the Viet Minh (later it would be the Viet Cong) could be a very complex process that might cause a man to switch sides several times. Several of the respondents quoted below emphasized that their decision to rejoin was strongly affected by the harsh GVN policy toward former Viet Minh members, citing, in particular, indiscriminate arrests, torture, and even the killing of former Resistants by GVN local authorities as playing into the hands of VC propaganda and recruiting agents.

(1) A defector, who had come out of the Viet Minh, said that already in pre-Diem days security officials of the Bao Dai government were inconsistent and corrupt in the treatment of ex-Resistants. In late 1950 the Viet Minh had released him from his cadre duties among the peasants, and he had gone home to Danang to work on the docks:

Then security agents who had been VM cadres denounced me to the police and I was arrested and imprisoned for three months. They had no proof against me, and no charges were filed against me. Friends collected a sum of one thousand piastres to bribe them for my release.

A dock contractor vouched for him and gave him a job when he was released, "but the district administration was suspicious and would not give me any identification papers." After the 1954 ceasefire, the Viet Minh resumed activity in his area. Involved in the movement once again, he was regrouped to North Vietnam. Allegedly, he became increasingly resentful of the political control of his environment and the pressures that governed his life, and defected shortly after having been infiltrated into the GVN in 1963.

(2) Another defector gave a detailed account of his checkered career, strongly condemning local GVN authorities,

whose conduct, he thought, had caused much political disaffection among villagers. Having joined the Viet Minh in 1949, at the age of 18, he was allowed in 1954 to return to his native village in Binh Dinh and marry. In 1956, when former VM cadres resurfaced in the area, they flattered his ego and "I was awakened and joined them." Assigned as a VC agent to the GVN Information Ministry's provincial branch, he supplied information and did recruiting for the Viet Cong. At the same time, he kept an eye on the families of men who had been regrouped to the North. He finally was denounced to the GVN, imprisoned for one year, and then allowed to return to his home village, where he remained under house arrest for a time. When the village, although officially under GVN control, was penetrated by VC agents, he rejoined the movement once more, and eventually rose to the post of Party district committee member for propaganda in Pleiku.

The performance of local GVN authorities had been an important factor in this man's history of repeated affiliation with the revolutionary movement. When he eventually rallied to the GVN, he was able to evaluate critically both the impact of that behavior and the Viet Cong's technique of magnifying local difficulties for its own inflammatory purposes:

[GVN officials in my village] accepted bribes, threatened the villagers, and exploited them. [Their] bad behavior is the reason why the GVN is losing the people's support. The villagers are simple people who cannot have an over-all view of the GVN. They judge and evaluate the GVN through the actions of the GVN local officials. I'm not saying that the GVN policy is wrong; on the contrary, I think that the GVN policy is right, but unfortunately the officials of the lowest echelons apply it wrongly. In order to obtain the people's support, the GVN must reorganize its local government in hamlets and villages, it must make the local officials, who work close to the people and through whom the villagers will judge the entire GVN, work for the good of the people and of the country. The GVN must eliminate all the bad elements from the village and hamlet [administrations].

Asked whether many villagers had joined the Viet Cong and, if so, why, he answered: "Yes, many joined the VC. There are two reasons why they did so: (a) They believed in VC propaganda; (b) they hated the GVN officials' oppressive actions." Commenting further on VC propaganda,

The VC distorted the truth. They told the people that the Americans, through their aid, were transforming South Vietnam into a new type of colony and a fortress which will enable them to provoke war in Southeast Asia. They said the people should rise up to overthrow the Americans and their henchmen, to reunify the country in peace, neutrality, independence, and harmony between all racial groups, with no distinction of class, region, or political affiliation, and to obtain their own economic rights.

The GVN, for a long time, has committed numerous errors which have had catastrophic consequences, such as indiscriminate arrests of the people, torturing those arrested, acceptance of bribes . . . , which the VC exploit very aptly. The VC exaggerate the gravity of the errors committed, and inflame the hatred of the population against the GVN.

(3) The complicated and perhaps somewhat distorted account of a peasant from Tuy Hoa District in Phu Yen Province contained allegations of extraordinarily harsh treatment from the GVN, which had driven him inexorably back into the revolutionary movement despite his relatively advanced age of 53. At the age of 25, under the French, he had been a village chief, and a year later an assistant to the district chief. When the Viet Minh took control of Tuy Hoa he lost his official functions, but in 1949 he was elected village chief under the revolutionary regime. He joined the Communist Party, but was expelled for being a "middle" rather than a "poor" farmer. He was even slated to be tried as a "feudal tyrant," when the Party changed its policy on such purges.

Immediately after the Geneva cease-fire of 1954, he was elected hamlet chief, only to be removed from that post by the GVN village chief after three weeks. He was allowed to work his land undisturbed until 1956, when the

provincial administration ordered certain former Communist Party members arrested so as to keep them inactive during the period set for the projected elections in North and South Vietnam. Released at the end of that year, he was kept under loose surveillance, which required that he sleep in the village communal house and obtain permission from local authorities for travel outside the village. Occasionally, he was detained in the communal house for periods of up to a month. In addition to this harassment, the man learned that the GVN village chief, an anti-Communist zealot who hounded ex-Viet Minh and their families, might be trying to kill him:

The village chief said he was elected by the people . . . but it was not the truth. He was a stranger to the village. He was very cruel. He hunted down all the former members of the CP during the Resistance to arrest and kill them. All told, he slaughtered fourteen Party members in my village. I saw him with my own eyes order the killing of two Party members in Mau Lam hamlet. They had their hands tied behind their backs and they were buried alive by the militia. I was scared to death. . . .

Allegedly, the respondent had no contact with the Viet Cong until, by 1962, the VC controlled seven of the eleven hamlets in his village and had destroyed the one additional strategic hamlet. Then, during a raid on his own (GVN-controlled) hamlet, a cousin who was a VC cadre warned him that he was once more in danger from the GVN and should flee to the VC unit in the hills. He put in another rice crop, waited nine months, and then, upon receipt of a second message from the cousin, took to the hills without even telling his wife that he was leaving. He first worked in farm production and, after a few months, became treasurer of the Economy and Finance Section of the district organization. When his unit advanced from the hills to the plains, he was assigned to a dike repair job and, shortly thereafter, was captured by the GVN.

Appendix E

THREE VIET CONG DOCUMENTS RELATING TO
MILITARY PROSELYTING

I

The following list of "propaganda and indoctrination activities," which appeared in a document captured in 1964, is typical of the Viet Cong's standard prescriptions for proselytizers. For clarification of some of the items in the translation see the author's bracketed remarks.

- Conduct verbal propaganda among the populace who live around the [GVN] posts and fortifications:
- Public letters [to GVN officials and officers, etc.]
- Private letters [to GVN officials and soldiers, etc.]
- Appeals
- Leaflets
- Hanging slogans [on posters and banderoles] opposite the posts
- Peace boats [propaganda messages affixed to small boats or objects which can be floated down a water course to GVN posts or communities]
- Handkerchiefs [these bear VC slogans and are given away]
- New Year cards
- Appeals through megaphones [to GVN forces in a post under attack from the Viet Cong asking them to surrender, or, on other occasions, urging them to cooperate with or defect to the VC]
- Entertainment [songs and recitations, usually transmitted by a megaphone]
- Face-to-face struggle [political persuasion or asking GVN officials and soldiers to desist from mopping-up operations, attacks on villages, etc.]

- Countering GVN sweep operations by political means [including those listed in the preceding item]
- Training and liberating POWs [to be described further in the third document, below]

II

Following are excerpts from a captured document that describes in detail the themes and specific approaches to be employed in the proselyting of various GVN military formations. (Some of these may be changed with time and local conditions, but some are standard and invariable.)

PRACTICAL PLANS TO BE CARRIED OUT

(a) PROPAGANDA TASKS

The present main propaganda themes must be: [Do not] die for the American imperialists and their lackeys. Stand by the people's side to save country and families and request the enemy to halt the war.

Some Slogans for the Present

Down with the U.S. invaders.

Stop the war and reestablish peace in South Vietnam.

Support the people in destroying combat hamlets and increase the pressures necessary to free our country.

Don't be trapped and abused by American imperialists and their new lackeys.

No mop-ups; no massacres; no destruction of the houses and villages of your relatives and neighbors.

Join your people and your families and vigorously serve the Revolution.

Request your discharge just when your term expires. Never reenlist.

Don't take part in military operations. Don't participate in mopping-up operations. Don't terrorize the population.

Resolutely protest against the draft, the scheme of the American imperialists and their lackeys.

(b) DIRECTIVES

Aims of Propaganda

To explain clearly to men and officers the present embarrassments and collapses of the American imperialists and their lackeys as well as their inevitable total defeat. Should they continue to serve the enemy, they would sin against our people and bring about shameful deaths and hatred of our compatriots.

To mobilize true patriotism and love of peace indicating that the present unique way is to stand by the people's side against the U.S. invaders, and to request the neutralization of South Vietnam.

The above propaganda themes must be carried out in accordance with present local requirements such as: opposition to mopping-up operations against the settled populace, conscription, and economic sieges. [This evidently refers to GVN regulations prohibiting the transport or sale of certain supplies, such as medicines and flashlight batteries, into contested and VC-controlled areas.]

These themes have the general purpose of arousing the consciousness of the nation and social classes. Besides, we must pay attention to other concrete favorable targets.

Toward the Combat Youth and Popular Forces

The majority of them, being deceived or afraid that they will be taken away from home as draftees, have

mistaken as Combat Youth [hamlet part-time sentry and guard units] or PF elements.

They are attached to their rice fields, neighbors, parents, wives and children, and relatives . . . they share with our people all the pain and hardship caused by the enemy. We must awaken class feeling in them and also the spirit of national vigilance. We must point out particularly local traitors and enemy draft schemes which step by step will take all youths for soldiers. Then we can persuade them into strong resistance.

Toward the Regional Force (Formerly Known as Civil Guard)

Except for draftees, most of these are veterans, aged and married. For them the military life is a trade. Their brains are "poisoned" by enemy political conceptions. Their tactics are very cunning. But they and their dependents are usually faced with financial problems and hence dissatisfied. However, they understand us very little, so that we must direct our attention to explaining to them our policies and indicating to them a way [out of their predicament].

Toward the Regular Forces

Most of them are forced into the enemy army. They are usually sent to suppress revolutionary movements in many areas and so are more sensitive than the other forces to the present situation. Daily they are ordered by Americans and their lackeys to kill our compatriots [including some of] their relatives. However, they still believe in U.S. strength and money and do not yet believe in the mighty force of our true course, and so they "wait and see," not daring to take revolutionary action. This state of mind is general. With them, our propaganda [seeks] to awaken their patriotism, making them believe that the combination of their own force and of our people can upset all the schemes of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, and [thus also] save the country and their own lives.

PROPAGANDA METHODS

It is necessary to revise the methods which have usually been applied so that they may become, day by day,

more numerous and effective. Following are some relatively good methods which have been collected by superior authorities and not yet applied broadly:

Use verses, satirical songs, [and] pictures of peculiar characteristics of the Delta areas to disseminate our propaganda themes among enemy troops.

Use special leaflets slanted toward enemy officers. Do not send "form letters" to many of them but write persuasive letters to each of them in accordance with their character, etc. . . .

Use elements for propaganda activities who are capable and credible (professors, notables, learned men, priests, Buddhist monks, qualified oriental druggists, soothsayers, etc.). It is necessary to train and educate them thoroughly in propaganda tactics.

Teenagers, school children, and youths are very capable in propaganda missions; POWs whom we have reeducated and freed are also effective.

The use of enemy deserters to broadcast appeals to enemy units is also effective.

III

Reproduced below, in translation, is an official form used by the Viet Cong in the release of military prisoners.

* Document captured in Hiep Thanh sector, Vinh Binh Province, on April 1, 1964.

NFLSVN
Tra Vinh [Vinh Binh] Province

PEACE - INDEPENDENCE - NEUTRALITY

--o0o--

D E C I S I O N

--oo0oo--

The NFLSVN Committee of Tra Vinh Province decides to free brother _____, prisoner of war captured on _____ by the Liberation Troops, SVN.

This decision is made for the following reasons:

1. The policy of the NFLSVN is to grant clemency to those who have gone astray and to share in the situation of those who are forced to join the American-Diem army. This policy is generated from the long-standing humanity of the Vietnamese people, the love of the people from the same country, and the just cause of the NFLSVN.

2. The majority of enlisted men and officers are not for the Americans [and] Diem, but they are not yet aware of the revolution and are forced to join them. Therefore, once they realize the just cause of the revolution, the tricks and crimes conspired by the Americans [and] Diem, they will certainly be able to distinguish between the just and the unjust cause, and will see who are the men who love the people and the country, which way will lead them to life, and which way will lead them to death and slavery.

3. After a period of indoctrination, brother _____ has realized that the Americans and Diem are the enemy and that joining their army is a crime. He has displayed repentance and promised he will never do anything that betrays the people and the country.

Day Month 1963.

Appendix F

VIET CONG RECRUITMENT BY ABDUCTION
AS REPORTED IN TEN INTERVIEWS*

(1) This statement by a 20-year-old defector from Thua Thien Province in Central Vietnam described his abduction in 1964:

I had been working in the fields and I was sleeping in my house when Phung [a friend] came by to invite me to a chess game at his house. I came back from the game at midnight, and on the road some VC stopped me: "Come with us to the Green Mountain." "I don't want to," I said. "Why not?" "I am coming back from a game. . . . There will be nobody in my house to feed my parents if I go away." "That's not a good reason. . . . Do you have a rifle?" "No," I answered. I had a rifle because I was in the Combat Youth, but I [was not allowed to] keep it in my house. . . .

The VC pushed me around for a while and then took me to the Green Mountain. There, two other prisoners of the VC told the latter that I did in fact have a rifle. Upon hearing that, the VC called me a liar and beat me up. Then I was shown a place to stay, and for the next four months, along with two other prisoners, I worked at producing manioc, potatoes, and beans for the VC. There was a guard who always kept an eye on us.

The defector said that he was given neither political nor military training, and that he was able to escape while moving from one work site to another.

* Some of those who described their forcible recruitment left the interviewer uncertain as to their motives and the reliability of their report. The following excerpts are given without evaluation of their accuracy.

(2) Another defector, in his late teens, said he had been abducted by three Viet Cong in Hoa Vang District, Quang Nam, in December 1963 while cutting wood in the forest. (His real desire, he maintained, had been to follow the example of his two brothers who served in the ARVN "and thus were able to support our family with their salaries," but his efforts to join the GVN military had been rejected because he lacked a birth certificate.) For the next two weeks or so, he was put to work gathering manioc. Then he was given a two-week political training course and thereafter two weeks of military training. Next, he was returned to upland farm production for about six months, and, finally, he was assigned as a liaison agent and sabotage guerrilla. He had participated in the destruction of three strategic hamlet defense systems before he found an opportunity to surrender to a GVN militia.

(3) A man of twenty-five from Dien Ban District, Quang Nam, gave this account of how he had fallen into the hands of the VC:

The crop of that year was very poor, and my family lived miserably. I made an application for enlistment in the ARVN's 2nd Division. I was on a bus enroute to the 2nd Division headquarters in Danang. The bus was approaching the Ky Lan railway station when [four or five] VC suddenly stopped the bus to search the passengers. A Viet Cong, finding that I held an enlistment application form, arrested me immediately.

After a year in an upland production unit, he was transferred to the Regional Forces. He was sick during much of the time, mainly with malaria, and his morale evidently was low. After eight months, during which he participated in two brief skirmishes, he was captured.

(4) A POW in his late teens said that he had been abducted by the Viet Cong after a Main Force attack on his GVN-controlled hamlet in Phong Dien District, Thua Thien, in August 1964. Already married and seemingly satisfied with his life on the land, he had served in the GVN hamlet defense unit and also as a kind of town crier who read out official orders to the hamlet residents as they were received.

After his alleged abduction, followed by a month's political indoctrination (four hours per day) along with two weeks of military training (two hours a day), he was assigned to a two-man liaison team who carried mail along a five-kilometer stretch of a relay system and were kept under constant surveillance:

They always had someone on my tail; if I had tried to run, he would have shot me down. I was given a rifle, but I had to walk in front of him all the time. . . . I did not want to carry out the assignments, but I had to. I wanted only to go back home.

Captured after two months in the Viet Cong, he said he had considered defecting, or at least deserting to return to his village, but had feared that he would then be arrested by the GVN. (The interviewer was left with some doubts as to the sincerity of his anti-VC statements.)

(5) An illiterate peasant youth from Quang Tin said he had first noticed the Viet Cong when they came into his village in 1963 to hold meetings but had not been interested in them. Then: "I was working in the fields when the VC came to kidnap me. I remember that it was in July and we were getting wood in the forest. The VC came to forbid us to cut down trees for fuel." He was given two months of political instruction followed by two months of military training, and thereafter spent three months in a farm production unit. Then, one day, he was given a submachine gun and told to prepare for his first combat mission, the nature of which was never clear to him. He was captured by the ARVN shortly afterward before his unit could carry out the assigned operation.

(6) From an interview with a 23-year-old from Gia Dinh:

In 1961, as an act of reprisal, the VC executed my eldest brother in front of our house because he was a GVN soldier. On the same occasion, they threatened to chop off my head if ever I cooperated with the enemy as my brother had done. At this time, I had already received my military

census card, but I had not been called up for military service under the GVN banner as yet.

Later, in 1964, they came back and told me that if I carried out my military service with the GVN, I would certainly get killed and my family would not escape the Front's reprisals.

-- Did the Viet Cong explain to you the Front's objectives?

No. They simply threatened me, as I have told you. If I was compelled to follow them, it was for my own safety.

In the eight months he spent in the Viet Cong, the respondent received most of a two-month medical-aid course and underwent some political training. He was captured by the ARVN, and may actually have been a case of passive surrender.

(7) From the account of a youth who was taken away by the Viet Cong in October 1964, at the age of sixteen, and immediately was sent to the Main Force:

One night in mid-October last year, while we were sleeping, two Viet Cong broke into my house. My mother, in tears, pleaded with them to spare my elder brother, saying that he was going to be married very soon, and so they arrested only me [along with six other men from the same hamlet]. It was about 10 p.m., and I had to walk all night to arrive at a hill at about 6 a.m. the next morning. I had to walk again until noon before reaching a straw hut, in which I saw two other men. The two VC who had arrested me disappeared, leaving me alone with these men. I stayed for three days in this hut, and on the third day a man came to take me to Company K105.

Stationed in the jungle, he received rudimentary military instruction, but he had not seen action when he was captured two months later.

(8) The traumatic blindfolding technique was associated in the public mind with being led off by VC cadres for

any number of terrifying reasons, ranging from forcible induction to summary political execution. A 26-year-old, who had been chief of a village military affairs committee (the equivalent of a platoon leader) in Kien Hoa before defecting in January 1965 after six years' service in the Viet Cong, supplied specific information on blindfolding and executions when he was asked about VC terrorism:

Yes, it usually happened when the villagers could not pay taxes to the Front. In May 1964 we had to kill two villagers because they refused to pay taxes to the Front. In all we killed about forty of them.

-- What kind of people were they?

Some were old; some young. They belonged to the group of landowners and they refused to pay.

-- Who gave orders to kill them?

I received instructions from the District to kill anybody who would stand against the Front by refusing to pay Front taxes. . . .

-- How did you feel about these killings?

I thought that the cruelest thing to do was to kill a man who had a wife and children. Now I feel very sorry.

-- If they refused to pay taxes to the Front, did you kill them right away?

I received orders from the Front to kill them. I did not kill them the first time they refused to pay but first I warned them three times before my men killed them. In these warnings, we made threats or we blindfolded them.

-- What were the results of these warnings?

In spite of the warnings and threats to their life, these people often refused to pay and moved their houses nearer to the [GVN] outpost.

(9) This description came from a 36-year-old refugee from Long Dinh District, Kinh Tuong:

The VC compelled the people to do collective labor three nights each month. The labor consisted of digging up the roads or driving piles across the canals. These night trips were very dangerous and nobody wanted to go. But those who

evaded them two or three times were shot. No one had been shot yet, but many were tormented. They had their eyes blindfolded for two or three days, and they were accused of being reactionaries. After such a torment they usually lost the use of their eyes for some time. That is why people were so afraid of the VC.

(10) A peasant boy from Ba Xuyen Province told of two armed Viet Cong who came to his house in September 1964 and told him to follow them, although he was only fifteen years old. ("There were no older boys in all my village. They had moved with their families into the strategic hamlet near the district town.") They blindfolded him for the first stage of a 20-kilometer walk. The next morning they lectured him for two hours:

They said that I was grown up, that I should serve the "government" in killing the enemy.

-- What government were they talking about?

The Communist government in the South.

-- Who is the enemy?

I don't know.

-- Didn't they tell you?

No, they didn't.

Later that day, he was given a rifle and ten rounds of ammunition. But, though he was instructed in how to use the rifle, he was not allowed to fire it. The next morning, he claimed, the VC unit was surrounded by a heliborne ARVN unit and he was captured.

Appendix G

AN UNWILLING VC RECRUIT AND SUBSEQUENT DEFECTOR
REVEALS THE POWER OF COMMUNIST INDOCTRINATION

A former auto mechanic and member of the GVN Marines, who had been caught and abducted by the Viet Cong while he was absent without leave from his GVN unit, thereupon underwent extensive indoctrination and ultimately became a youth proselyter for the Viet Cong. Although he eventually defected, the interview uncovered a strong residue of the political conversion he had undergone in the Viet Cong. When asked to recall his own experiences as a recruiter, he lowered his voice and reverted to his old role as if he were trying to convince the interviewer of the justice of the VC position. Describing the VC appeal to youth, he began:

They [the U.S./GVN] used the "poisonous method" (Chinh sach dau doc). I was told why the young people of my age said that the city youth were led into debauchery by corrupt movies showing nudes, criminals, and cowboys. The young people got into the habit of swearing, gambling, and drinking. They would turn to delinquency rather than work. They thought they were happy but they were superficial in their thinking. They could not see the poisonous scheme of the U.S.-Diem clique, which was to impoverish them in the absence of work. Therefore they would run out of money and the only solution left for them was to enlist in the ARVN to serve as bullet shields for the U.S.-Diem clique.

I was trained to raise the people's hatred for the enemy. For instance, toward the young people I was supposed to uncover for their benefit the poisonous methods of the U.S. and Diem. The young people were led into debauchery by lewd pictures. They like drinking, gambling, and sex better than work.

. . . the GVN also organized a female army to hurt the pride of the young men and spur them into joining the ARVN. The poisonous methods used by the GVN depraved the youth and annihilated their patriotism.

On the contrary, the revolutionary youth had moral virtue. Women were not permitted to marry before the age of twenty and men before the age of twenty-four. The marriage ceremony cost only 300 piasters, while in the GVN area people competed for waste.

I was supposed to arouse the villagers' hatred for the GVN. I would ask them who paid the militia and the police to come to their villages and insult them, steal their poultry and their precious belongings. It was easy to make them hate the militia and the village council because the latter were ruffians. I saw them twist the necks of poultry reserved for ancestor worship, take rings and necklaces right from their owners, shoot at random at the farmers working in the fields, insult elderly people, etc.

I also urged the people to go and destroy the strategic hamlets, which were nothing but camouflaged prisons . . . because the villagers were surrounded by barbed wire with only small entrances . . . [and] under strict control by the GVN. I aroused the people's hatred toward the Americans by asking realistic questions such as: Who provided the bombs and the ammunition to kill the people? Who flew the aircraft that bombed your school?

[Addressing the interviewer:] You should know that the Americans are devils. They kill only innocent people. One school in my area was hit by bombs which killed sixty to seventy children.

As for the GVN troops, I would come near the outpost and ask them how they felt at night on guard duty; whether they carried American-made or Vietnamese-made weapons to turn against their people; whether they or the Americans did most of the fighting.

The interviewer asked: "Have you ever thought that by rallying you are indirectly helping the Americans to take over South Vietnam?" The answer was:

The Government acts as henchmen for the Americans, but the Government and the Americans

do not declare their positions vis-à-vis each other because they are afraid of the reactions of the Vietnamese people. I knew when I rallied I would be guilty toward the people because the people are fighting the Americans, and now I am here I have become a tool of the Americans. However, I thought to myself that Vietnam is a small country and the United States is a big country. I am like a tiny particle living in this immensity.

Appendix H

FORCIBLE ENLISTMENT OF MEN PREDISPOSED TO BE RECRUITED:
FROM THE TESTIMONY OF SIX WHO BECAME CADRES

(1) A farmer from Can Giuoc District, Long An Province, who stayed with the Viet Cong for over four years, becoming a Main Force squad leader and a Party member, but who eventually defected, described his recruitment:

I was farming the land when I was taken by the VC. . . . I was happy. I liked farming and wanted to stay with my family. The VC took me and six other young men of my village away to a training center. They told me it would only be one week of military schooling. I didn't want to go but I was afraid not to.

He was taken to a jungle base, trained for six months, and assigned to a Main Force company. However, at the time of his recruitment he was much more sympathetic to the Viet Cong than to the GVN:

I thought a Viet Cong was a good man. The Viet Cong are good because they defend and love the poor people. The Viet Cong cannot give material advantages to the poor people, such as money, but they struggle and sacrifice their lives, not for personal gain but to give back the rights to the poor people. The majority of the people in the South are poor. Any government which loves and cares for them and gives them their rights will have their support. . . .

The GVN leaders talk about improving the life of the poor people. But the leaders only talk about it, and the lower officials do nothing, only talk. I've never seen any evidence of their efforts to improve the life of the poor.

(2) An assistant company leader from Tra On (Vinh Binh), who had joined the Front in April 1961, made similarly conflicting statements:

My father loved me very much. While I was living with my family I had most of the things I wanted. I never went hungry, but it was the young blood in me which wanted to go here and there and to see this and that. I was full of excitement. In addition to being young, if I did not join the VC I would be classified as the "hard-headed type," would be considered a spy, and who knows if they would not behead me like the others.* Other than that I had nothing to complain about in my family life.

-- Were you forced to join the Front or did you join it of your own free will?

First I was afraid the VC would do me some harm so I agreed to stand guard for them while they carried out their mission. Later, when things got hotter, I was afraid the GVN might get wind of my working for the VC and arrest me, so I decided to join the VC all the way.

Asked about his attitudes toward the Viet Cong before and at the time of joining, he recalled some tempting visions and subsequent disappointments:

The VC said those who work for them would lead a glorious life and die a grandiose death and their names would be remembered by many, but after I had been with them for a while I found out that life with them was extremely hard. We ate poor food and we slept in the bush. Many times after a battle, I realized I had committed many inhuman acts, but I had not foreseen such things before I joined the VC. I believed the VC were fighting for the just cause. They put the happiness of the people above all. I also believed that they would take care of my family when the country was unified and that those who worked for them now would be given priority in everything. These were their promises. They also promised to take good care of us once we worked for them; and when the country was peaceful again, they would take us to the North and we would be driven around in American cars.

*"The others" were some GVN village officials he had seen executed there in 1960.

(3) A 23-year-old defector from Kien Thien District, Chuong Thien, who in his five years of service rose to assistant platoon leader and served also as platoon political officer, may have been misrepresenting the coercive aspect of VC recruitment in his area in a not uncommon effort to make a favorable impression on his interviewers by exaggerating the evils of the Viet Cong. As he described conditions in his village,

I was forced to join the Front in February 1959. The VC forced all young men in the 16-35 age group to leave their families and join the army for three years. If these men refused, they would be accused of being pro-GVN, and their families would be arrested, tortured, and killed by the VC.

-- Did anybody ever refuse to join the Front?

Yes, many refused to join, many fled the village, many resisted the VC orders and were arrested by the VC.

-- Why did they refuse to join?

Because they did not want to kill other Vietnamese.

-- What happened to them and to their families?

The VC forbade their families to go outside the village perimeter. If they wanted to go somewhere, they had to ask for permission from the VC. Otherwise, they would not dare go anywhere at all. Those who were arrested were educated and subjected to propaganda for a while. If after a certain time they still refused to join, their families would be tortured and killed.

-- Did it ever happen that the families of those who refused to join the Front were killed by the VC?

Never. Those who were arrested and imprisoned knew they had better join the Front, otherwise their families would be killed.

Rationalizing both his recruitment and his subsequent defection, he said:

When I was forced to join the Front, I had to go. I thought I would be left alone afterwards, when I had completed my military duties. However, at times I gave excellent performances; for example, when I was attending the training for new recruits and was regarded as the best student of my class. Or during battles, sometimes I had no choice but to fight the ARVN with ardor when too many of my comrades were getting killed. I had to fight hard to save my friends from getting killed. I left the Front because I did not believe in VC propaganda. I knew the Viet Minh had killed all the men who had contributed a great deal to the Resistance. If I had stayed in the Front, I would have made the rank of battalion commander some day, but I knew sooner or later the VC would kill me. If the Front won and the country was reunified, I would be killed by the VC, just as they had killed the Resistance fighters.*

(4) From the interview with an 18-year-old from Phuoc Thanh Province, who evidently had been recruited in 1964 and had served briefly as a farm production worker for a Main Force company before he deserted to the rear and was captured by the ARVN:

I was forced to join. . . . Because of my acquaintance with the village council representative and my frequent trips to the district, the VC guerrillas in the hamlet suspected that I was a spy for the GVN.

I was also taken away by the guerrillas. They came to my house during the day. My mother was at home when they came. They said they wanted to talk to me for a while, and asked me to accompany them outside. They arrested me and took me to the forest to investigate my case. After two weeks, I asked them to let me go home. But they refused, saying they would release me at Tet [the Vietnamese

*The last part of this statement could not be clarified further by the interviewers. Apparently it referred to Viet Minh terrorism and assassination by the Viet Minh against non-Communist nationalists in the movement over a period of years.

New Year]. However, they took me into the forest and kept me there for good.

However, further questioning revealed that he had been furious with an ARVN ranger, who had beaten him for returning to the strategic hamlet after the gate-closing hour, and that VC agents, exploiting the incident, had visited him and tried to talk him into joining them. He described the VC propagandists as extremely persuasive, and particularly the cultural troupes that came to the hamlet half a dozen times a year:

They came from the district or the province. They staged operas (cai luong). Each time the group and the cadres came, the villagers welcomed them. It was great fun. Before the show began the cadres talked to the villagers. The cadres talked very well. They were very persuasive. Anybody who listened to them wanted to join the VC. If they talked to you [subject pointed at the interviewer], you would feel like joining the VC too.

-- Did you want to join them when you heard them talk?

Yes, but who would take care of my family if I joined them. . . ?

(5) A prime example of ambivalence about recruitment was the response of a 15-year-old who said in one breath that he had been coerced and persuaded to commit himself to the Viet Cong:

While I was tending the family's water buffaloes I met the cadres at the edge of the forest. They coaxed me into joining the Front. They talked over and over again about joining the Front and they forced me to abandon the water buffaloes to attend the political training courses. I joined in December 1963. [Emphasis added.]

(6) One man allegedly was "captured" at the age of twenty-four during a visit to his home village in Hau Nghia Province, and subsequently became an instructor in the

Regional Forces of Tay Ninh before he defected after thirty-one months of service. Actually, however, he may have volunteered, or may have done so upon post-recruitment indoctrination, for he apparently was already predisposed in favor of the Viet Cong:

Before I was in the Front, I thought a country should not have two kings. People should unite to liberate the country.

-- Liberate them from what?

The Diem government oppressed and mistreated the people. Everything was in the hands of a privileged few. Now it is much better.

-- Did you sympathize with the Front before your capture?

The Diem government oppressed and mistreated people. The Front says its aim is to liberate the people.

His explanation of how he had earned his rapid promotion again suggested his early identification with the movement; he owed it, he said, to his "combat ability, good behavior, and level of self-awakening."

Appendix I

ABDUCTION-INDOCTRINATION-CONVERSION:
A THREE-STAGE PROCESS

Many respondents had been affected by the effort of the Viet Cong to induce those forcibly recruited to "volunteer" for service after a period of political indoctrination. Whether this formal commitment represented a genuine political conversion or an expedient yielding to pressure tactics, much importance was attached by the Viet Cong to the formal act of volunteering.

(1) An acting GVN village committeeman, who had been led off, in March 1964, with another official, described as follows his reaction to the ensuing two weeks of political training by the Viet Cong:

I realized that they were on the right path and that I had been wrong. After one week of study, self-criticism, and [work in] food production, I felt better. I felt calmer, though sad because of my family [back in the village]. My errors were corrected and I accepted the discipline. I was on the right track morally and politically.

After three months in food production work (an assignment which apparently bored him greatly), he asked to be transferred to a military unit:

[Production work] was all right but when I realized [after the indoctrination period or possibly additional study sessions] that the country had been invaded by the U.S., I volunteered for a fighting unit, along with the ten other young men in the camp of 30 men.

Captured three months later after having participated in two brief skirmishes, he told the interviewer that he had never considered trying to defect.

(2) A 15-year-old boy from Vinh Binh Province was inducted by VC cadres, in November 1963, while visiting his sister in Ba Xuyen Province to help the family during the impending harvest, and was accused of being a GVN spy. (Local VC organizations are alert to the presence of outside visitors, whose freedom to travel from GVN-controlled areas renders them politically suspect.) He was blindfolded and led into the forest, where the Viet Cong questioned and threatened him for two days. Thereafter, they allowed him to move about freely in a nearby "liberated zone":

They showed me rifles and weapons and presented me to the guerrillas. They allowed me to watch training exercises in simulating combat. Finally, they asked if I would like to join and to go and fight. I accepted, believing that the life would be fun and interesting. I didn't think at all about the future nor about the consequences of my accepting.

He was sent to a Main Force battalion, but, though he enjoyed the military side, he did not take to the political training. After his defection, which he attributed to physical hardships and the separation from home, he helped the GVN propaganda and intelligence effort.

(3) A 20-year-old illiterate farmer from Binh Dinh Province said that, despite his resentment at being forcibly recruited, he had been impressed by the cadres' talk of glory during a week's indoctrination:

I do not remember all that they said, but the general theme of their lecture was that "to follow the revolution means to obtain glory in the future." They spoke so well that I believed them.

Although he apparently volunteered for service, this man never lost his original resentment over his abduction, and was one of the relatively few men interviewed who had used violence to effect their escape from the Viet Cong.

(4) One dramatic case of abduction and subsequent political conversion is that of the auto mechanic and former member of the GVN Marines who has already been described in Appendix G. One weekend, while he was AWOL from his post in Saigon, he was en route to visit his family when his bus was stopped on the highway by a VC band and he was one of four passengers to be detained for carrying GVN military identification papers. He was taken blindfold to a VC area, and from there had to march to a remote zone for two weeks' systematic indoctrination. When he refused to fight for the Viet Cong, he was classified as a "stubborn element" and sent to a VC-controlled area to work in the fields by day and assist in the "collective struggle" by night, an activity he described as the sabotaging of roads and strategic hamlets. All the while, he was being subjected to months of further indoctrination through visits from cadres and other people, "down to the ordinary villager" ("The VC mobilized the entire population to propagandize us"). Every two or three days, he would have to attend a meeting for systematic instruction and a discussion of "the ideological changes they found in me during my stay there with them."

When I came to understand the line and policy of the Front, I was asked whether I would like to participate in the Front. I thought to myself that, if I returned to the GVN, I would surely be thrown into prison. Therefore, I asked to be accepted into the Front.

After a three-month training course in youth proselyting, he worked for the Viet Cong as a youth recruiter in An Binh Village and probably also in an armed propaganda and sabotage unit. Although he defected in 1965, he said of himself that he had remained "imbued with VC policy," a statement which was borne out by his conduct and testimony during the interview.*

* See Appendix G.