INTERVIEWS WITH SENIOR CAPTAIN

PHAN VAN XUONG, NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

PART II

(Nota: This interview was conducted on July 3, 1968)
C. What is the name of your former regiment, Captain?
A. The unit under my command was the Cuyet Thang Regiment. This unit designation has been given recently, as the regiment is made up of former local units. It has two battalions, Battalion 1 and Battalion 2. Battalion 1 was the former Cu Chi local unit operating in Cu Chi District. Battalion 2 was the Battalion of Go-Mon district, which included Go Vap and Hoc Mon areas.

C. Did your regiment have two battalions only?
A. Yes.

C. Was your regiment an element of the Forward Division under the command of Colonel Tran Van Lac?
A. This regiment is under the direct command of the Local Headquarters. As a matter of fact, besides its two key battalions, it may be reinforced up to three, four, five or sometimes six battalions, depending on operational needs.

C. Can you tell us the numerical strength of each of the two battalions in the Cuyet Thang Regiment, Captain?
A. Regarding the numerical strength of each of these two key battalions, Battalion 1 and Battalion 2, if they are at full strength, each has about 3,000 men.

C. Are these two battalions manned by North Vietnamese soldiers or local troops?
A. During the Phase 1 offensive, 95% of the soldiers in these two battalions were South Vietnamese. But, beginning with Phase 2, due to high casualties in the Phase 2 offensive, 50% of the soldiers in
these two battalions have been replaced. Therefore, at present, 50% of the soldiers are North Vietnamese and the other 50% are South Vietnamese soldiers.

C. Did this take place after the middle of June?
A. No, the middle of May.

C. Was the regiment commander killed in action or did he defect to the government?
A. On the 31st, when we moved into the outskirts of the city, the regiment commander was killed in action.

C. The 31st of what month?
A. The 31st of May.

C. And you took over the command of the regiment, right?
A. Yes, I replaced him.

C. Under what circumstances was the regiment commander killed?
A. In the night of the 31st, when we moved across the railroad at Binh Loi bridge near a FCL depot, he was hit and killed by a mortar shell during a contact in that area.

C. What was the grade of the regiment commander?
A. He was a major.

C. Was he a regrouped or a South Vietnamese?
A. He was a South Vietnamese, not a regrouped.

If he did not regroup to North Vietnam, how could he get the grade of major?
A. He was made major in the South here. He remained in South Vietnam. And during that initial period, they did commission
officers in here. Only recently did they suspend the commission of people in the South.

C. Can you tell us when was that initial period?
A. That initial period was from 1961 to 1963. During this period, they commissioned officers here in the South.

C. Was his name on the officer personnel roster of North Vietnam?
Since the Liberation Front has never commissioned anybody, how could he get the rank of major then?
A. I don't know when he was commissioned. But when I came in here, he was introduced to me as a major.

C. Didn't they tell you whether he had been in North Vietnam or not?
A. No. He was a man in the South here.

C. Is this an infantry regiment? What are its basic weapons?
A. This regiment is primarily armed with light weapons, such as AK rifle, F-41, F-41, 60mm mortar and automatic rifle.

C. Is it armed with automatic weapons too?
A. Yes, it is armed with automatic rifle. All automatic weapons, including the AK, fire with the same type of ammunition.

C. Can you tell us the operation areas covered by this regiment?
A. As I said just now, Battalion 1 operates in Cu Chi while Battalion 2 operates in Go Mon District, which covered the Go Vap and Hoc Mon areas.

C. Can you tell us the approximate area covered by this regiment?
A. It covered almost three districts.

C. What were the objectives of your regiment during the recent
attacks into the city, Captain?

A. During the Phase 2 offensive my regiment was assigned to attack the Go Vap Sub-Sector Command and the second objective was the bang koo Police Station. After occupying these two objectives, the regiment would proceed to take over the Minh Hoa and Ha-Dh tong villages and set up a government there. To accomplish this process, we would motivate the masses with propaganda to topple the puppet regime and set up a new government. After taking over these two villages, two units of the regiment would stay to defend the areas, waiting for reinforcements from the left echelon or the echelon of the Long Nai Regiment and units from the rear. After that, a coordinated attack would be launched against the Gia Linh Sector Command, and all the units would wait there for further orders.

C. But did you succeed in capturing the Go Vap Sub-Sector Command that day?

A. Well, none of these planned assignments and objectives could be accomplished, because on the 31st we were intercepted when we moved across the railroad. The fighting in this area continued until the 17th, when I turned myself in and the battle was still raging. Therefore, I don't know the outcome of this action and whether the planned objectives were eventually captured or not.

C. So they pre-planned all this?

A. Yes. They assigned my regiment with these missions which
must be carried out at any cost. But, as we crossed the railroad
we were intercepted right there, and the fighting continued for
17 days and nights. Suffering considerable casualties and running
short of ammunition, without receiving timely reinforcements
from the rear, my regiment was crippled and could not do anything.

Q. During the May offensive and the ensuing attacks, did your
regiment receive the people's support or help at areas where
your unit moved in?
A. As my unit moved into the fighting areas, all the inhabitants
there usually had evacuated. There were but empty houses and
deserted fields. Thus, we did not receive any help from the
people, so far as supply and transportation services were concerned.

Q. Did the people flee when they saw the arrival of the your
troops or did they evacuate before the coming of these troops?
A. Well, if the people got wind of imminent fighting in their
areas, they would evacuate well before the arrival of the soldiers.
If they didn't know they would flee when seeing the coming of troops.

Q. When your regiment moved into action, did members of your
unit anticipate an uprising of the people? If you anticipated such
an uprising, but one didn't come off when you got in there, were
you and your men surprised Captain?
A. Since we had experience in this, we knew that during the
fighting the people would evacuate and flee when they saw us, as
they don't want to get killed while both sides are exchanging fire.
But when the fighting is over, they would come back. And at that
time, we must try our best to motivate them. That was what we anticipated. We didn't expect to meet the civilian populace when we moved into an area.

C. Was there a section in your regiment directly in charge of propaganda and motivation? Did they distribute leaflets and instigate the civilian populace to rise up?

A. We didn't have a specific section in charge of this action. That is the duty of every soldier.

C. So, that say your troops did distribute leaflets?

A. We distributed some leaflets at the Zom Thom area, but we could not distribute all the leaflets we brought along. A large quantity of them were left over. I found that out later when I came over here, as I was told that large number of leaflets were seized.

C. Were there political cadre in the regiment under your command, Captain? From what Colonel Tran Van Dac told us, we know that normally there is a political cadre and a military cadre in a North Vietnamese regular unit. The political cadre always plays a key role in the actions of the unit, that is, he decides how a battle should be conducted. Was there such a political cadre in your regiment, Captain?

A. In the organizational system of the Viet Cong Army, from company level and above, there are political officers in the duo-chain of command, i.e. a unit has a military commander and a political commander. Political responsibilities are clearly outlined in the regulations for political officers, who are responsible for policies and political problems
to higher headquarters. The military commander of a unit is responsible for combat and operation plans, and all military activities. However, the decision for an action is normally reached by the Party Committee. Take our regiment for example; all actions were decided by the Party Committee and not the Chief Political Officer individually. When an offensive or attack is planned or decided unanimously by the Party Committee, the political officer of the unit concerned will strictly comply with the course charted out by the Party Committee in the implementation of his political actions, while the military commander carries out the military activities as decided in the Party Committee's resolution. This means that the political and military commanders are held responsible for actions in their respective spheres of responsibilities.

C. Are there Chinese soldiers in North Vietnam? And in the South here?

A. I don't know what is the situation in North Vietnam after 1965; but before 1965 when I was still out there, I saw many Chinese come to North Vietnam in the capacity of technicians or advisors. In my armor (tank) unit, there were Chinese advisors who came to help the development of the North Vietnam Army. Regarding Chinese soldiers, I didn't see any of them.

Q. Have you seen them in the South here?

A. I have heard that there are Chinese advisors in the South here too; but personally I have never met any of them.

Q. Captain, in your opinion do you think the communists in South
Vietnam will eventually win this war?

A. In my opinion, the present war which is being fought between the Viet Cong and North Vietnam on one side and the GVN and Allied Forces on the other side cannot settle anything. A settlement by force will be impossible. However, both sides will continue fighting until they have created suitable conditions for a negotiated settlement at the conference table. At present this side is being helped by the Free World bloc, while the other side is aided by the socialist countries. Eventually, this war may become a confrontation between the two blocs, touching off the Third World War. For this reason, I think both the United States and the Soviet Union, the two leaders of the two world blocs, don't want to see this war turn into a world war, which will be extremely dangerous and destructive, as it will be an atomic war with nuclear weapons. With the tremendous progress achieved in science for military applications by the two world powers, the destruction inflicted on the belligerents in a future world war will be much more terrible. Therefore, I don't think this armed conflict could be solved by force, and neither side could expect to win a total victory.

Q. Captain, what were your impressions when you met Nguyen Van Do?

A. As a matter of fact, I never thought that he is still alive. While I was still out there, I was convinced by the communist propaganda and the Hanoi radio that Nguyen Van Do has died, and that he was a hero. They even held memorial ceremonies to eulogize the heroism of Do, which they wanted all the people in the country to emulate.

Besides the Hanoi radio, I also heard about Nguyen Van Do on the Saigon,
British and American radios. But I can tell you that through the propaganda of the Hanoi communists, all the people and cadres out there believed that he has died. Now that I suddenly met a living Nguyen Van Be, whose survival was also confirmed by many other returnees, I feel that the communist propaganda had not told us the truth about Be. They systematically fabricated the story of Be's heroic sacrifice, and lied to us.

C. But personally do you believe that this is the real Nguyen Van Be, Captain?

A. As I told you just now, I never met Nguyen Van Be until recently. Nor did I see him in picture. So when he was introduced to me, I believed him as the real Nguyen Van Be. I believed that because Be has been introduced to the press and appeared on radio and television. Since his case has been known internationally, he cannot be a bogus Be. How can you fool the world with an impostor?

C. Cut there did they institute extensive studies to emulate the heroism of Nguyen Van Be? Besides Be, what other martyr heroes' examples were brought up for emulation?

A. They disseminated extensively the examples of their heroes for emulation, especially the example of new heroes such as Nguyen Van Be. They eulogized the heroic death of Be and conferred on him the title of 'Martyr-Hero. The study period on the heroism of Nguyen Van Be was relatively longer than the indoctrination studies on other heros. Even I myself was required to study his example during that period.
Captain, out there did they distribute printed matter and publications for their soldiers to study?

A. Do you mean publications on a particular subject or publications in general?

Q. All publications in general.

A. When I was in Hanoi, I noticed that publications, study documents, newspapers, pictures etc... were distributed in abundant quantities. But in the South here publications were rather scarce due to lack of printing and distributing facilities. I operated in Cambodia until the end of 1953, when there was the armistice. The troops went back to the country and assembled there waiting for the time to regroup to go North. I was then company commander. We went North in 1956 and I was named Junior Political Officer of the 1st Battalion. In 1958 I was transferred to staff of the Military Region Headquarters of the "Huu Ngan" (right bank of the Red River). I was staff assistant of the training and research service. We specialized in the training of tactics and the training of recruits in the handling of guns. At the end of 1958 I attended the regular school in Lang Son, North Viet Nam. Right after that I took up foreign language, that was Chinese. I had finished school by the end of 1960. In 1961 I went to China and was sent to Kwang Si to get some training in the armored school of the People's Liberation Army Armored Institute. I stayed there for three years, from 1961 to 1964. When I went back to Viet Nam I was there for some time without any assignment. They had told me to prepare to go back to the South. In the meantime I was on the staff of the COSVN Bureau.
I did some research on the tactics strategy and the fighting methods of the National Liberation Front's Army. I did a lot of research during that period of waiting. I studied the after-action reports sent from the South. Those were the reports made after the various battles were over. The lessons learned from those reports were very important. I stayed there until May and I was sent to the 22nd Regiment. There I was given the job of Executive Officer of the regiment, which was supposed to go to the South. In the headquarters of the regiment there were three men. The others were Mr. Hung, the commander, and Mr. Tam, the political officer. The three of us continued to train the two battalions to prepare them for the trip to the South. The troops we had consisted of drivers and gunners. The training stressed tank movements, field deployment and field installations and hiking with loaded packs. We had to hike without footwear to train them and to prepare them for the difficult time ahead. I typical training was also stressed so that they could endure the hardship in the near future. The training lasted some two months, from May to July. In July we started the trek with the troops. Starting at Vinh Fluc we were moved to the South by train to Kanoi, then to Lo Len. At Lo Len we had to move by ourselves, using National Highway No. 1. We hiked all the way to the border separating North from South and stopped at a way station called "Ho Station." This was the end of the trip in the North Vietnam territory. From Ho Len to the way station, the
trip lasted exactly one month. We rested there for two days to recover from the difficult trip. Then we continued the trek down Anamitic Chain. Off and on we crossed back and forth over the Laos border. We did not see any population there. We were guided by the commo-
liason people from one station to another. We only knew that we had to move and we did not care much about the road taken. When we asked the guides they would keep mum and did not answer us. They might throw back at us with such stuff as 'Say, comrades, haven't you learned about the security protection?' This meant that they did not want to answer the questions we had raised. They did not want us to know the location the emplacement of the stations and the road taken. We, then realized this was something really secret and we did not ask them anymore. From there we went to Tay Ninh, to the district of Huong Minh Chau. At Huong Minh Chau they had installed a station called T-14 to help the newcomers, especially the people from the North. We arrived at T-14 station in November 1965. Thus, the whole trip from the starting point to the T-14 station lasted some 3 months and 15 days.

C. When you were there, Captain, I believe that you know something about the techniques used by the authorities there to motivate the young ones to urge them to go to the South to fight. Could you tell us about those techniques and principles they used? I believe that you, yourself, are a man of experience and you must know a lot about this.

A. First, I want to tell you this. Ever since I joined the army, I only know about my field which is to command a military unit. The
education of the troops was assigned to the political officer. But, whether I wanted or not, I was also motivated by the political officer myself. Through the experiences I had and through my knowledge, I will try to tell you about that the best way I can. When we arrived in the North, they paid a lot of attention to us and they had educated us a lot. They had a good system of education and we were educated by the cadres. The cadres especially were given a lot of attention. We were indoctrinated to reassert our position and viewpoint. We were taught that this war is a war for the class struggle. There are only two distinct classes. The proletariat and the capitalist. We were supposed to reaffirm our position in the class struggle. As to the question of motivation which would urge the young combatants to fight they used the exploits set forth by the military heroes. They also used the feat the country had gone through, the twenty and some years of struggle and war to bring peace to the country (in the North) and still the North was able to build an armed force. They urged everybody to strive to help the nation. They were urged to learn about military science, the military techniques, the modern techniques developed recently. The army was being modernized, joint operations and the combined operations might be used in the near future, the equipment was to be changed to fit the new needs. The old tactics used in the previous war might not fit the new demand, so we had to go all out to keep up with the new techniques and tactics. In the past the motivation for the cadres' education was assured by a political body. It was supposed to follow the movement, the training
of the cadres and the combatants. Should any comrades show marked progress, then the story about that man would be played up in the newspapers and broadcast over the radio. The methods the man used would be explained to others, so they could reap the benefits. That was the way they proceeded. In each unit when the time for political indoctrination came there was an evaluation session. They had to select the best member of the unit, the one who had shown the most proficiency, the highest spirit as an example for the others to guide themselves. They used the slogan, "The more sweat poured on the exercise field, the less blood will be spilled on the battlefield." That was the kind of slogans they used there, and every combatant was supposed to get to know that by heart. The combatants were organized in the triangular cell. Each combatant had the duty to watch the other men in the cell. If the comrades were good, that member of the cell who watched them kept them in mind and reported back every evening. The committee would ask him to comment about his comrades and then there was a selection of the best combatant to be compared with the men selected from other cells, other groups. Then a squad of the best combatants would be selected to be proposed in the emulation campaign with other units. The radio, the public address system was used to help the emulation program. The master of ceremonies, usually the political officer, announced every evening through the public address system, the best battalion, the best company, the best platoon, the best squad, and the best soldier of the program. The results depended on the comportment of the unit or
the combatant, the spirit, etc. Then the commander of the units which were not selected had to find ways to help his combatants to assimilate better and faster the things and ideas taught by the cadres. That was the way things occurred during peace time in the North. During the time of war when I came to the South, the forms of the indoctrination were the same, but the subjects stressed were military subjects. The combatants from the North urged their comrades from the South to continue to study intensively. But, we may ask, what did they want to study? They recognized the fact that the combatants in the South had much experience in the fighting, especially in the fighting against U.S. forces. The fighting experience of the Southerners was an asset and the combatants from the North should be able to learn from their comrades in the South. To learn those fine points in the fighting, the combatants from the North should be very self-restricted in their manners when they dealt with the Southern combatants. They should not be too proud because they came from the North, a socialist country, because their army was much older and stronger, because they were to learn from a younger army. Thus, it was a necessity to assert the desire to learn from the younger brothers, who had plenty of experience. On the other hand, the indoctrination urged the Southern combatants not to be too difficult; they were not supposed to be haughty combatants who did not deign to help others in their common fight. After the two sides had recognized their respective positions, the Northerners were to try to show the kind of theories they learned up there, the kind of organization they were capable of, etc.
The Southerners had their experience from the fighting, but they lacked the kind of conclusion needed in those reports. Thus, one side is well-versed in one aspect, the other well-groomed in other aspects. Experiences should be exchanged, so that both sides can benefit in their future encounters with the enemy. Our current objectives were to get the combatants to give all of their efforts in the common struggle. We should fight to lick the United States. That was the kind of motivation they used in their past activities in the South. After battles, they selected the best fighter in each unit and sent them to other units for propaganda purposes. If need be the best combatants might be transferred to other units to initiate the unit's combatants in the way to fight the war. The best way and method of fighting would then be absorbed by the new unit.

Q. Captain, how did they manage to indoctrinate the combatants ideologically?

A. Dealing with this matter, I think I have told you some minutes back that they have often said: "To inspect any matter, we should have our feet well-planted on some bases, some positions. Our views should be bounded by some limits. The kind of reasoning they have put forward consists of two bases.

1. They may use the materialistic dialectic, i.e. with a proletariat viewpoint.

2. The second reasoning, often used by people here, is not realistic, for it is based upon military might, upon sophisticated armaments. Any subject under consideration should be analyzed to shift the results positively toward the proletariat, toward the army which is now part of the
proletariat. That was the way they instituted the backbone of the army. When they wanted to start to teach the combatants anything, they started by by repeating, by reaffirming that viewpoint. The same stuff could used to to teach again and again, year after year. Again and again, they repeated the viewpoints and the positions of the combatants. They could not forget them.

Q. About those indoctrination sessions during the time of peace, how many hours per day were the men subjected to indoctrination, excluding military training.

A. The training program was sent down from the Central Government. For a regular training program of three months, the education and indoctrination covered some 60% and the military training 20%. Motivation and political training covered some 70% and this included the leadership training. Should there be some special resolutions and some special training, then the training session was called the political indoctrination session. For example, when the program of land reform was initiated the percentage of training would be much higher. It may reach 90%. The time left was reserved for the revision of basic military training.

Q. Could you tell us about the errulation program up there, Captain?

A. As I told you some minutes back, everyday there was an evening evaluation session for the soldiers as well for the cadres (I had forgotten to tell you that the cadres were also subjected to the evaluation). The cadres were evaluated for their ability in teaching methods. How did they judge teaching and training? How did they manage to say the
method was good or bad? That was the gist of the evaluation of the teaching by the cadres. That selection was done at low level. Off and on there was the selection of the best soldier in the unit. Often there was someone who emerged from the group. The ones selected were put through more training and went through the evaluation again at a higher level, say at the regiment level. The best soldier selected at that level, was proclaimed to be the best soldier of the regiment. That was one form of the emulation. The judging was done for their past activities and their capabilities and a note was kept for performance of the potential candidates. At the evaluation session, they revealed the facts and findings with much accuracy. That was one aspect of the emulation program. The evaluation was one of the forms of recognition and reward with an award for an honor flag, pictures taken for exposition, and attribution of flower collars by the beautiful women etc. The men may be interviewed by the radio and the interview broadcast for others to hear. If need be, they may use the movie media for better motivation and this was done often in the North.

Q. Did the youth like that kind of emulation?

A. Generally speaking, when I was there, the emulation program was carried out on a big scale and the comrades out there did really participate actively in the emulation program... Each of the youngsters tried to outdo the one who was in front of him. The atmosphere was very intense. Every activity was centered upon this program of emulation. They were cut to select the best man in the field. Higher authority did help some to start the emulation program and to keep it sustained.

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by having the big brass come down to talk to the winner and to invite
the winner to talk to other people, to other organizations and to give
them gifts, recognition and so on. The motivation program was very
active and intense.

C. The winners of the emulation campaign, were they young men or
were they older ones?

A. Out there there were two kinds of people: the young ones who were
volunteers, and they were mostly the noncoms; the other group consisted
of older people and they were just about average. The younger ones
were very eager and they were often selected. But the draftees were by
far the best soldiers. Right then, they wanted to build up the army by
basing upon the younger generation and they worked to motivate them.
The objective was the build-up of the infrastructure for the development
of the army and to incite the young ones to look up to the army and to
be proud to be one of its elements and to show to those who were about
the be drafted that they are better than the volunteers. The second point
was to aim at the formation of the company cadres, who were supposed
to be active. The battalion cadres were older and they kind of lacked
drive. The older men were not too active. They wanted an unpublicized
life. They didn't want to see their picture in the newspaper, and so on.
When I was out there I knew that most of the cadres at the battalion level
were older. They were around 35 or older and they did what they were
supposed to do, but they did not put their heart into it. They considered
it as a mission to be accomplished and they had to carry it out, to
courage the emulation program. "We could incite the younger
generation to go for that. As for us, we are too old for that kind of
stuff," was the way they might have reasoned.
C. There were indoctrination sessions about the living and dead heroes, weren't there?

A. That kind of session was stressed in the South, for in the North, there were no such things as "Heroic American Killer" and "Heroic Airplane Fighter." When I was in the North, there was not much destruction by planes. Once in the South, there were many fights, many battles. Thus, recently the Politburo had put up the criteria for earning that kind of recognition. A regular soldier should have killed a certain number of Americans before they awarded the soldier with a title of Heroic American Killer." The criteria was a little different for the guerrillas. For example, in the infantry division of the regular army, the soldier was supposed to have killed at least five Americans before he was awarded with a medal of 'F.A.K.' The number was three for the guerrillas. The same thing for the destruction of tanks. A tank destroyed will earn the soldier a medal for tank destruction, but there was some distinction in the grades. There were first, second and third grades. If the man destroyed three tanks, then he was awarded the first class medal of "Heroic Tank Killer" and if he only succeeded once, then he was awarded the third class medal. The same may be applied to the destruction of planes.

Q. Personally, had you known a particular hero?

A. In the South, I did not know any hero. When I was in the North, in Lang Son, I knew many heroes. Most of the heroes were the people who hailed from the farmer-worker class and they did not have much education and the authorities up there wanted to give them some educa-
Q. Did you ever doubt that the heroes did not attain the tremendous feats?

A. When I was there, I did not have any doubt. I believed in the mass evaluation and selection by the organization from the bottom up. The heroes were there with their political officer as mentor. I believed that they were capable of those feats. But, after I had heard some of those stories, I felt that the feats the heroes had accomplished were too difficult for me to carry on.

Q. Among the heroes whose stories you read recently, who was the greatest hero?

A. Since my infiltration from North Vietnam into the South, I have known two heroes who were believed to be the greatest, with extensive propaganda for a longer period of time. They were martyr-heroes Nguyen Van Troi and Nguyen Van Be. The period of propaganda for these two heroes was the longest, comparing with that of other heroes. I wondered why they received such special treatment. Finally, I found out that it was all because of the social backgrounds of the heroes. I learned that Nguyen Van Troi was a worker, an electrician. At that time the workers in Saigon had not played a important role, yet. Therefore, they needed an outstanding example among the working class to arouse the workers. They aimed at motivating the working masses to emulate the daring deeds of Nguyen Van Troi. Nguyen Van Be received even more extensive propaganda than Nguyen Van Troi because he came from the so-called basic class, which as defined by the VC is a man who comes
from poor peasant family. With the heroism of Be, they hoped to motivate the peasantry. In other words, they wanted to create two heroes representing the two major classes, which are the workers and peasants in South Vietnam. To enhance contribution of various classes such as peasants, workers, intellectuals, bourgeoisie to their struggle effort, they are eager to create heroes representing these social classes so as to rally broader support from the people to their cause. Particularly for the propaganda on Nguyen Van Be and Nguyen Van Troi, I noted that they initiated extensive and boisterous campaigns among the ranks of their cadres and soldiers here. The propaganda period for Nguyen Van Be was comparatively longer and more stirring.

Q. Did they particularly eulogize Martyr-Hero Nguyen Van Be because Be was a youth coming from the peasant class, while in the South Vietnam Liberation ranks a great number of youths come from peasant families?

A. Well, the adulation of Nguyen Van was primarily a counter-propaganda measure, for at that time I often heard the Saigon radio talk about the survival of Be. While the VC claimed that Be had sacrificed, the Saigon radio disclosed Be's survival. Therefore, they must counter the South Vietnamese Government's propaganda; and this counter-propaganda at the same time could serve to motivate the peasant soldiers who made up the majority of their ranks in the South here. In their indoctrination, the peasants were told that they and the workers are the two major classes which contributed the largest part to the Revolu-
tion. For this reason, the communists always try to create heroes representing these two classes. That was why they were particularly interested in the case of Nguyen Van Be, a soldier who came from a poor peasant family. They tried to convince others that they could emulate the example of Be. I can tell you that the Communists always regard the peasant and worker classes as the leading and key elements in their ranks. In the selection of heroes, they invariably paid particular attention on these two classes for propaganda purposes, as workers and peasants constituted the backbone of their forces. Though representatives of other classes were also recommended, more often peasants and workers were selected as their outstanding heroes.

When the example of Martyr-Hero Nguyen Van Be was disseminated by the Liberation and Hanoi radios, were the cadres and soldiers of all levels required to study and emulate Be's example? How was this emulation indoctrination drive conducted at that time?

A. I was with the armored unit while the indoctrination drive for emulation of Be's example was in full swing. However, I was not very well informed of the general situation of this emulation drive, which was initiated by the Political Department in the South. The units here probably were required to undergo the same indoctrination phase as my unit. Regarding the forms and methods of indoctrination, they varied depending on local conditions. As a matter of fact, I don't know much about this indoctrination drive, as I was busy with many other things in my unit at that time.

Q. Personally what did you learn from the Martyr-Hero Nguyen Van
The indoctrination in my unit was the responsibility of the Chief Political Officer who attended indoctrination classes at higher levels. For the middle level cadres, documents were furnished for their study. From these indoctrination documents, I learned that Nguyen Van Be was a young man coming from a poor peasant family, as I told you just now. He was captured a few months after he joined the Liberation Army, during transportation mission delivering weapons and ammunition for the Rear Supply Service. The indomitable spirit of Nguyen Van Be who struggled to the last minutes of his life to destroy the enemy, instead of giving himself up as a surrenderer, was the point of their indoctrination. They told the story of Be like this: When he was captured, Be knew that his life was at the mercy of his enemy, but he didn't want to surrender. Instead he was thinking of how to destroy his captors. He told the enemy that he was a soldier of the Rear Supply Service and was assigned to deliver ammunition and mines. When asked if he knew how to use a special type of mine, Be said yes and volunteered to demonstrate the use of that mine. Taking advantage of the moment, he took the mine and charged into a nearby tank. The explosion of the mine destroyed several armored vehicles and killed over 60 enemy troops. I remember the figure was 67 or 68 enemy soldiers killed by the blast. And Be sacrificed himself, of course. Be's heroic act highlighted the indomitable spirit of the Revolutionary soldiers. Even though he had joined the Liberation ranks for only a few months, young Be who was a soldier coming from a poor peasant
family proved quickly responsive to revolutionary education. From this fact they tried to prove that the poor peasant class always responds quickly to their cause, comparing with other classes. Their indoctrination documents stressed the unsubmitive spirit of Be for their soldier to emulate. That was the main purpose of their indoctrination drive with the example of Nguyen Van Be.

Q. While studying documents on Martyr- Hero Nguyen Van Be, did you or your friends ever show any doubts in the unusual story of this martyr-hero, Captain?

A. The indoctrination sessions for middle level cadres and lower level cadres were conducted separately. Among our middle level cadres, we doubted the following points in this story of Nguyen Van Be. First, the Allies of the GVN forces, especially the United States, were not so poor as not to know the use of a simple mine and need someone to show them its use. The United States is the most advanced country in the production of weapons. It even has atomic bombs. So we doubted the fact that American experts didn't know the use of a special mine and needed Be to demonstrate its use. Second, for security measures which are the same on both sides, a prisoner would never be allowed to handle any weapon. Third, according to the sapper cadres, mines and detonators are never put together during transportation. A mine is fixed with a detonator only when it is ready to be used. During handling, the mines and detonators should be transported in separate boats. When Be was capture together with his mines, where could he get a detonator to fix in the mine he used? Moreover, it was an electrically-operated mine. So there were the doubts we brought up; but the cadre in charge of the
 indoctrination gave ambiguous explanations that that was what Be did and nobody could verify it. There were the doubts in the story of Nguyen Van Be, but the Chief Political Officer in my unit could not give us convincing explanations or conclusions. He promised to contact higher levels for such explanations. However, nobody ever bothered to ask for the explanations after that, being busy with their combat duties.

Q. After reading the Tien Phong newspaper published in Hanoi showing Nguyen Van Be’s picture, which the Liberation Front took from his family to put on a worshipping altar, what were your impressions when seeing that picture?

A. Before coming over here, I believed from the indoctrination I received that Be was dead. After coming over here, I met friends who told me that they have met Be. I was surprised when they told me that Be was still alive. But now I personally have met Be too. I am convinced that this is not a bogus Be as the communists denounced in their propaganda. I believe that he is the real Be, because now he is not only South known in this country, both in the and the North, but his story has been spread to the world over. The Saigon and Hanoi radios broadcast for months the story of Nguyen Van Be, in a different way, of course. The communist side said that Be was dead and posthumously awarded the title of hero with impressive memorial ceremonies, while on this side the press and radio said that Be is alive. The propaganda, of course, has been made in different foreign languages, and the story of Be is now known to many parts of the world. If this Nguyen Van Be were a fake and he were discovered, nobody will ever believe in what the Republic
of Vietnam says again. This is a risky thing. So, I positively believe
that the Be whom I met is the real one, and what the Hanoi and National
Liberation Front propaganda said about him was but a bunch of lies
aiming at achieving some political ends.

Q. Captain, how might the death or survival of Nguyen Van Be affect
the political lines of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front
in South Vietnam?

A. Well, the death of Nguyen Van Be, even though he was elevated to
the rank of hero, does not produce any significant impact. He died in
the same way as many other soldiers died or sacrificed. But his death
or survival now has become an important issue. If he is really dead,
than the people would believe that Hanoi radio has spoken the truth and
Saigon radio has lied. On the contrary, if Be is still alive, the people
would think differently. That is the crux of the issue now. I think what
the Government side should do now is to carefully protect Be, so that
one day he may be presented to the people and unmask the brazen lies
of the communists. Be's survival is widely known to the people here,
but people in the communist ranks or under their control believe that
Be is dead. Due to lack of communications and under the influence of
the communists, the people out there believe that Be is really dead
and now has become a martyr-hero, as they have been told by the
communist propaganda. Now that Be is in fact still alive, as I have
met him personally, the Government should protect and take good care
of him so as to unmask the Communist liars when conditions permit.
A. At first, the lower levels reported the capture of Be but later they filed reports of Be's heroic sacrifice. They sent in false reports due to lack of accurate investigation. But the sacrifice of Be had been reported to higher levels and was quickly spread by the radio. It was then too late to correct the mistake and it was impossible to do so. Consequently, they had to fabricate a story of heroism with an imaginary Nguyen Van Be to play the role of their hero. They brazenly stuck to the false propaganda with the hope to convince their people. To me, I think the whole thing has stemmed from false reports from lower levels due to lack of proper investigation. They were too eager to exploit the new story, which was not only newsworthy, but was a shot in the arm for the morale of the soldiers. They did just that, without knowing that the reports the lower echelons had submitted were wrong in many ways. Now that the story is out of the bag, they have to keep a poker face and play the cards that way. That is the way I believe things happened.

Q. Captain, in the various units you commanded, did you have any opportunity to get to know about false reports sent up to you by your subordinated. Did you see any wrong and or false reports?

A. This has occurred. I want to give you a very simple example in the battlefield report. For example, in an engagement, they had reported that they had annihilated many platoons of enemy soldiers, or many enemy companies. How do we verify the correctness of the reports, how do we know that our forces had wiped out platoons and companies
enemy soldiers? You have to know the organization of the enemy, the strength of their various units. You have to know how many men there were in an ARVN squad, in a U.S. squad, the number of soldiers in the platoon etc. Then you have to know the extent of the current operation, the distance between the contiguous soldiers. They may be separated by two to three meters. Their movement in the jungle is different from the formation on the asphalt road. The topology also plays an important role. With 30 bullets in the burst of a submachine gun, how many men can you kill? If you just think of the ammunition you could carry and the time involved in a battle, you can tell whether the claimed death toll is correct or not. Moreover, the counting of dead bodies in a battle is usually not accurate. Many a time I brought up this tendency of claiming high enemy casualties. If you killed hundreds of enemy troops in every contact, how could the enemy replace their strength in time to continue fighting like this? As a commander, I doubted such enemy casualty rates and suggested more accurate reporting. However, being a commander who stayed in the CF and did not actually get involved in the fighting, I found it difficult to say that my lower levels submitted false reports. If I did, the lower levels would think that I distrusted them. So, even if I knew the report was false I could not tell it openly, because the report was submitted from my lower levels. And if the higher levels asked me about the report, I would tell them that it came from the lower levels and I didn't know anything about it. For example, if my subordinate unit reported that it killed a hundred enemy troops, as
other friendly units did, I could not cut the claimed enemy death toll to 50. If I did, the unit concerned would lose its rating points and might ask why its reported enemy killed rate was 100 and now it was cut down to 50. So, you see, I had to report to higher levels what my lower levels reported to me. If the lower levels submitted a false report, I had to take it for granted, because the lower levels were always supposed to submit true reports. From this fact, you can see that their reports are not always accurate, specially reports on enemy casualties.

Q. Had any of the units under your command achieved an outstanding feat and had it mentioned in the newspapers of Hanoi or publications of the Liberation Front in South Vietnam for other units to emulate? Were its merits cited on the radio, too?

A. As a matter of fact, my armored unit had never been cited on the radio. Personally, I didn't like that either. Moreover, my unit usually played a secondary role in battles. So it was not widely known or commended on the radio. However, my unit did play the principal role once in the battle at Go Dau. My unit was assigned to attack the objective. But for propaganda purpose, the successful attack was attributed to the help of a fifth columnist named Huynh Van Muoi, who was the Tank Detachment Commander there. He was credited for taking the tanks out, and nobody ever said anything about us. Their radio praised the role of the fifth columnist, because it was the first time they ever had a fifth columnist operating in the Government ranks. Their purpose was to motivate other fifth columnists in other armored units, and to sow suspicion in the Government ranks. They intended to make people
believe that the Government ranks had been infiltrated by communist agents. That was the only occasion when my unit acted independently. Besides that, in other times, it always operated with the worksite, supplying three or four tank crews, each had three to four men, as requested by the operational worksite. These crews were supposed to operate tanks captured from the enemy. As I told you just now, two battalions of our armored unit came in here without any tanks or armored vehicles. We were tank operators who were sent to operate tanks captured from the enemy by the worksite. That was why my unit was not widely known.

Q. When receiving armored training, were you trained to operate all types of American tanks too?

A. No. We only knew the American tanks from films and documents. We didn't have a real one for practice. After we came here we captured M14 tank in the Go Dau battle. Until that time did we had no American tank to train our tank operators. The operation systems of the America and communist tanks are quite similar, except for a few gadgets installed at different positions.

Q. After familiarization training, was the tank captured at Go Dau destroyed or taken into the War Zone?

A. It was taken into the War Zone, and it was buried.

Q. Was it buried for future use?

A. Before I was reassigned to the Quyet Thang Regiment, I did a check on that captured tank. It is now unserviceable, being badly
damaged due to the moisture of the ground, its engine and generator are inoperative. It can only be repaired in Hanoi. Now it lies there awaiting to be hauled into a museum, for it cannot be used any more.

Q. Now that you have come over here, can you tell us what you think of life in South Vietnam, comparing it with that in the North and in Red China during the period you received training there. How do the people live under these three different regimes?

A. Oh, in my introduction I forgot to tell you whether I come from the North or the South. I was born and grew up in South Vietnam. After the armistice I regrouped to North Vietnam. Upon arriving there I did make a comparison between the lives in the North and the South. As a Southerner, I was surprised why the people who lived close to the central level fared so poorly in comparing with the people in the South, which, as the propaganda out there denounced, was under corrupt colonial rule of the French. Of course, North Vietnam must speak good of itself; but I could not find anything out there better than that in the South. I compared the lives of the workers and intellectuals out there with their counterparts in the South. I found that the people in the South enjoyed better living conditions. Take the life of a peasant out there for example. He must work hard all year round in order to have enough food to feed him and his family. If a peasant in the South worked that hard, he may become a millionaire. The peasant in the South needs to do very little field work. After transplanting rice seedlings, he just leaves the paddy to grow without any care. The peasant
in the North must till his fields repeatedly to insure better growth of the plants. After transplanting the young rice, he must work on the field every day to spread fertilizers, kill harmful insects, cut weeds etc. From the time he transplants the young rice until crop harvest, he must spend a lot of labor and time. If the peasants in the South ever worked that hard, they would get rich easily. When I returned (from China) in July 1964, the lack of water buffalo and oxen on the farms was prevalent. Men had to pull the plows in place of oxen.

White collar workers and cadres in the army, especially the regroupees who did not have any dependents with them, could live off their salary quite easily. They still had plenty to spare. What I mean is this, if we were to spend money indiscriminately to satisfy our plain desires, then we would not have enough money to fulfill needs. We still had money, and this was due to the fact that goods were scarcely available and besides they were rationed and can be bought by showing ration cards. There were no outlets to spend the money, so we still had much money to spare. That was the case of an unmarried officer like myself, a captain. Another man, say a captain, married and with three children or more, could not make ends meet with the meager salary. For a man with five people to feed, for a man with a small income, life was miserable. The captain in question had to keep his expenses to a minimum. I used to live together with that captain in the area on the right bank of the river, and I knew that he limited his monthly expenses to 110 piasters. Only 110 piasters, for all kind of expenses such as haircuts, movies and soap. Once he told me, "I
can spend only that much money, and no more. Otherwise my family would starve. I raise this point to make a comparison for comparisons sake and to stress the fact that the salary offered was not enough for a family with many children.

Another thing I want to talk about is the cost of living in the North. A captain received something around 100 piasters for his salary. Depending on his seniority he might get 120 or 130 piasters. A bicycle manufactured and sold by the government cost something like 320 piasters. He will have to save three months' pay to buy that bicycle, and in the meantime he is supposed to stay hungry. And a farmer might buy many bicycles, not simply a couple of them, if his crop return was good. Thus, I can say that the living standard in the North is very low. The trader, business and industrial classes could not be developed and they kind of withered slowly. There is not much freedom there and activities are well-curbed and restricted. Regoupees who came to the North from South Viet Nam all felt bad about the tight control imposed upon the people by the government from the North. After my trip to Red China I had a chance to compare living conditions between North Viet Nam, Red China and South Viet Nam. I concluded that there is much more freedom in South Viet Nam; life there is much easier and the population can make an easy living. Freedom can be found in many activities. Comparing the two regimes I could and dared say that the regime in the South is by far much better. There is much more freedom and liberty. Human rights are recognized. One can move from one place to another without restriction. The country is prosperous, the
economy is well-developed. In any aspect the South is much better than the North. Then we can start making a comparison between the North and Red China. Red China is a large country. It is also an industrialized country. But when compared to North Viet Nam, the Red Chinese income per capita is well below that of North Viet Nam. For example, their textile production is enormous and still the production is inadequate to fulfill the needs of some 600 to 700 million Chinese. If Red China had the kind of textile plant like the one in Hai Duong, North Viet Nam, then all the Red Chinese will go about stark naked. With our ration card, we were allowed to buy 4 yards of materials per year. In Red China, they were allowed to buy only 3.5 yards per year. This can be considered as an indicator of their lower living condition in Red China.

I did not have many chances to visit the back country, but I had visited a couple of farms. During those visits I got to know that life in the countryside is much more unbearable than life in the countryside of North Viet Nam. It was difficult to live in those parts. Where I used to live it was very cold and to get the minimum requirements to live there was quite difficult. One had to find ways to get shoes, cotton padded coats and trousers. Coal was hard to find to keep warm in the winter. Lacking those requirements may mean certain death, for the weather was awfully hard and cold. The people in Northern China did not have much to live on. They had only wheat. Life was miserable there. Compared to North Viet Nam, Red China is in a worse shape. When I was there, I witnessed the bad situation which followed the bad crop period. Even if they had a good crop year, this would not help.

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them much. A good crop would fill their need, but not much, in view of the fact they are so numerous. At mealtime they ate some kind of dark cakes made out of wheat. I have seen each of them eating three or four of the cakes and washing them down with a bowl of water. They called that their lunch or dinner during those periods of bad crops. Had they had better crop production their lot would not be much better.

Q. When you were in Red China had the Cultural Revolution begun yet?
A. Not yet.

Q. When did the army hold self criticism sessions? How many times did they hold those sessions per month? What were the topics most often brought out for discussions? What were the aims, the objectives of those criticism sessions?
A. Dealing with those sessions, there are two aspects to be considered.

First, there are the critiques on our every day activities. Second, there are the critiques in the political indoctrination sessions. In the political indoctrination sessions, the aims were to reassert and to reaffirm the positions of our own class in the struggle movement. The renewal and the confirmation of our position had a lot to do with our everyday activities. There are activities which are very special to the farmer-worker class and there are other activities which are considered to be those of the bourgeoisie. They often call the bourgeoisie way of living a wasteful way, while I feel that was a necessity. Suppose that after dinner you take a piece of cake with a cup of coffee. Then the communists would say that you intentionally had wasted foods and you have been enjoying life in the manner of a bourgeoisie. They will
lecture you and ask you to try to remember the poor farmer's conditions. That is what I called critiques. And their reasoning keeps on and on:

"Look, the farmers and the peasants sweated a lot and they had to content themselves with a little rice. You, yourself, had not toiled at all. You had your meals and now you enjoy life with coffee and cake. You should not waste on those fancy. You should have saved money for better things instead." This is the kind of concept that we have lacked; that concept does not allow the farmer-worker class to think that way; it applies to the bourgeoisie and other classes in the upper strata. I took a simple case for an example to show the consciousness of the class. That is what we called political indoctrination critiques.

The critics on our everyday activities are another form of critiques. For example, they deal with the questions of falling in love with the villagers or the questions of raising troubles back in the villages near the camp where the unit was based. Suppose one of the men in the outfit troubled the villagers. He was reprimanded the first and second time. If he disregarded the reprimands, then we might organize a critique session with the whole outfit present. There the mischievous comrade will be exposed. I believe this practice is a good one, for often it brought good results. The man might correct his faults and behave correctly. But, he may also disregard the critics and commit the same troubles and we know this is unavoidable. Two of the problems we had to face often were bribery and women. I don't mean to praise or to undermine them at all. I just want to bare the facts and to bring out the truth. Suppose we have a married man and he had some affairs.
with some miss in the village. If the man did not report the affair and
if the girl did not report the affair to the proper authority, then both
will get stuck. If some of the comrades in the outfit learned about
it and reported to the higher echelons, then the culprit will have to go
before the outfit to face their critiques. If a cadre got involved in such
an affair, he was criticized harshly and the reprimands were marked
in his personal records. We considered that a rather harsh punishment.
Bribery and kickbacks did not involve many of the military cadres.
Any expenses incurred were reported back. Corruption and kickback
could be found in the rear service, for this service deals often with
money and materials. This was the cause of many critiques sessions.
The way to eliminate corruption and bribery was through those critique
sessions and the success was only fractional. If the guys want to get
fat on the people's funds, I don't think there are ways to stop them. All
we could do was to slow them down and try to talk them out. They may
have doctored the accounts, changed the files and used the enemy raids
as the real reason for the loss of materials and documents. Only God
may know about their dealings.

C. How did they manage those critique sessions, Captain?
A. First they introduced the man. They had the files on the man and
his dealings and they knew if the man was double dealing or not. If
they knew the man is responsible for his acts and is guilty, they told
him about the fund shortage and the proofs brought forth by the witnesses.
And there are a lot of witnesses. They allow the man some time for
they want him to think and to ponder. If the man recognized his guilt, then the punishment meted out was not as harsh. If the man was hard-headed and refused to recognize his faults, then he was punished rather harshly. If the man had the courage to come up to them and tell them what he had done, then the punishment probably would be lighter. Punishments there are not very bad. Often they are designed to give the involved party some warning not to repeat again. They may put the punishment in the personal records, and this is what they are really afraid of, a charged personal record. Often the men who were called in front of the board and later recognized their faults could get away with a light reprimand. If the man kept refusing the charges and this forced the board to produce witnesses and the proof, the subsequent investigations would be very thorough and the punishment meted out to the culprit would be stiff, very stiff.

Q. Were there any other topics for critiques, besides the questions of love and embezzlement of public funds? How about ideological matters?

A. I have already told you that involvement in a love affair, embezzlement, etc. are related to the critiques on everyday affairs and activities. They are not serious. The critiques involving ideology are much more important for this involved future political activities. They do not set up the critique sessions regularly, but they set them up when needed. Often they were organized in the form of a series of sessions. For example, there was a series of political indoctrinations wherein they wanted to reaffirm the position of the bourgeoisie
class, to assign certain objectives for them to attain. They may ask them to drop the little bourgeoisie way of life and to line up with the other classes in the current struggle. They might want to ask them to take sides clearly. For those who were already on their side they have been fighting a right struggle. For those who have been fighting at their side and who still have some inclinations for the other side, they conclude that those men had the tendency for the little bourgeoisie class and were suspected to have lost their position and were easily subject to go out to surrender. This is very important to the men. Their life may have been threatened. They may not dare to consider those men for a responsible position, for an important mission. Everybody got jumpy and scared after a political indoctrination session. They were afraid about their political future.

Q. How did they know about what you were thinking?

A. In the indoctrination sessions they introduced the documents related to the way of living and the activities of the two classes. They showed the two pictures. They encouraged discussions by means of reasoning. Then came the period of preparation for the critiques done by the whole assembly. Then they would call on you and introduce you to the assembly. They would recall various remarks you had made in the past while living with some of them. They would invite you to defend your remarks. After the introduction, you would be asked to keep thinking and you would be invited to write them out. You would struggle with your own ideas and prepare your answers. When you had the answers well-prepared during the next day or two,
then you would be asked to present your ideas to the assembly. They would judge if you were truthful or not. Basing upon other facts, they would judge your positions and they would be the judges by deciding if you had corrected yourself or not. If your reasoning was not solid, then they would decide that you are not really truthful. Then they would keep asking questions. Should they device that you were not truthful, or that you were kind of floating, undecided, then they would decide if your position were revised or not. All of this falls into the realm of politics.

Q. In those political indoctrination sessions, do you think the man involved spilled out to the assembly what he really thought, deep in his mind. Do you think that he lied or that he argued back and forth to hide his real thoughts?

A. I think it is difficult to say about this matter. Each man has his inner thoughts, how could we manage to know about them. But the interesting point is this. Through many questions, many requests, the man had to repeat himself many times and somewhere along the way he may make some mistakes and through those mistakes, they would try to insert the wedge and ask some probing questions in the subsequent interrogations. Often the man stumbled and could not answer the questions thrown at him and they would allow the man to bring in the answer the day after. If some days later, they were still unsatisfied with the answers, they may defer the probing and the interrogations to some other sessions in a later date. They may have made some conclusion on the generality. If the man was right or
if his reasonings were supported by some comrades and cadres and friends, then they recognized the fact the assembly was agreeable.

Q. Do you think that those political indoctrination sessions were useful in the ideological build-up of the communist doctrine? Were they very important?

A. The way I see it, I think it is very important. A fluent man who talks well and who presents ideas which are acceptable to the assembly will be recognized as a man of potential who has proved himself to be in progress. They use him as an example for the others and, better yet, they may invent the story that the man in question came from the little bourgeoisie class and that now he had changed position and sides with the proletariat rank and file to continue to fight in the struggle. All he thinks now is the struggle in which he will be able to participate. Then his exploits will be polished up before they are shown to the others.

Q. How do the NVA or the Front combatants feel about the religious issue? What is the policy of the authorities when they deal with the various religions?

A. I don't think I could tell you much about this issue for I don't know much about that. I lived most of the time in the army and I did not pay much attention to the outside world, especially religious matters. Generally speaking, in the army there are Buddhist soldiers as well as Catholic or other denomination soldiers such as Hoa Hao and Cao Dai. In the army, we do not get involved in religious matters. There were no religious holidays except for the internationally-accepted holiday such as Christmas. As a matter of fact, we just watched the celebra-
tion of Christmas. In the army there were no religious activities. They did not even touch on religious holidays. There were no displays of belief. In the North there are still some pagodas, but we can say that the government up North does not encourage the development of religion. Often in Hanoi I saw the celebration of Christmas. The army did not pay attention to such events and nobody joined in, except for some of the men who wanted to see the festivities out of curiosity. In the army there are no activities dealing with religions and political parties. In the current ideological education of socialism they recognize liberty in religious practice. They feel that the socialist citizen will drop religion after awhile when they get to know the reasons, which will surface naturally later. Thus, I can say that they do not encourage the soldiers. They had explained to us that the Christianity is currently well-developed the world over, and it does not pay off for us to attack or to destroy the Catholics. They will destroy them through education and one of these days they will revise and repent. Had they bothered the churches and the pagodas, they would have been subjected to much criticism. They will strive to destroy the religions slowly through education of the cadres and of the people. The destruction will be slow and will follow that path.

Q. Did you see any Red Chinese and Russian technicians working in the North?

A. There were many of them there. The technicians came from all the countries in the socialist world. The biggest party came from the Soviet Union and next came the Red Chinese party. The technicians covered
all technical fields. There were Russians and Chinese in every field and especially in the army.

Q. In the unit under your command, a mechanized unit, did you have any Russian or Chinese technicians?

A. They were called experts. There were Russian and Chinese experts.

Q. Did you see the Russian and Red Chinese experts get together and talk about things?

A. I seldom saw them together. It seemed to me that the Russians and the Chinese never got together to converse the way you are doing with me right now. There were some kind of troubles, contradictions between them, and it was difficult for us to fathom. It was very seldom they got together. They conducted themselves differently. The Chinese were much closer to the Vietnamese than the Russians. The Chinese were very correct in their relation with the Vietnamese. Often the Russians were very subjective and there were many hard discussions, often hot, between the Russian experts and the Vietnamese cadres. I did not see the Chinese experts arguing with the Vietnamese cadres.

Q. Could you pick out a concrete example wherein the Russian experts and the Vietnamese cadres did not see things eye-to-eye?

A. As I have told you before, the Russians are the conservative type. They may have thought that all the tricks and techniques were originated from the Soviet Union. Thus, in everything, they often forced the others to accept their procedures, their way of doing things. If the others did not want to follow suit they would argue and argue. For example, dealing
with missiles furnished by the Soviet Union, the Vietnamese used them differently from the Russian way. Another example, in the deployment of anti-aircraft artillery the Soviet Experts were all for the idea of concentration of fire power; they wanted to concentrate a fire position consisting of at least three missiles with other field pieces of ackack to support and defend. Thus the fire position might cover a whole square kilometer. In North Viet Nam the Vietnamese wanted to use it sparingly and they wanted to adapt to the country's economy. The reason given was that the enemy might detect the defense easily and the concentration of fire power like that was not economic. The site was much more vulnerable to enemy attacks. Thus, the North Viet Nam people wanted to spread the defense thinner, battery by battery, piece by piece. The Russian experts argued that the idea was contrary to principle. The dispersion of firepower was contrary to the principle of air defense and they did not want to go along with that idea. The result was that there was a hot discussion for a long period of time, for many long months. After many months of evaluation, the North Vietnamese decided to go ahead and use their idea. They rejected the Soviet scheme, for they said the latter scheme was not economically viable. Finally they had decided their scheme was by far better than the Russian scheme, and much more effective. Only then did the Russians recognize the fact the North Vietnamese were right, for the thin defense fit better with the local economy and the Viet Nam situation. In the air war, the air force was underequipped, and it was not often engaged in the air war. There were not many planes and
the main bulk of the planes consisted of MIG-17A. Compared to the U.S. F-105, the MIG-17 was much slower and underequipped in armament. Those are my ideas even though I am not a specialist in the matter. The air defense by the air force was in bad shape, and the ground air defense also caused some drawbacks for their own air force. The type of air defense in the North, using their planes for sneak attacks and the thin defense was recognized to be economic and effective. Later the Russian experts recognized that fact. The discussion dragged on for months first at the 'technicians' level, then at the experts' level for they did not see things eye-to-eye. The matter was sent up to the Ministry of Defense and it was at that level that the policy was made.

Q. Relations between the Red Chinese cadres and the North Vietnamese was smooth, for they know how to accommodate each other, you said. I would like for you to tell us about the kind of treatment the Red Chinese used so that they could get along with each other?

A. Often the Red Chinese behaved themselves correctly. They were sent to North Viet Nam as experts to help the Vietnamese. They were willing to go South to help and as I understood, they were not forced to go. They did their job correctly. Let's take an example dealing with tactics. Suppose they were to make a joint study of the sand table to select the site and the point to drive the spearhead. They based the selection upon the topography, the enemy situation, the friendly situation and the population to find out the point to drive the attack through.
Suppose the North Vietnamese had selected a point of attack and the Red Chinese expert did not agree at all. He did not simply disagree. He would analyze the problems in detail by basing upon the available data such as the topography, the enemy situation, etc, and then the subsequent development and deployment of the forces. He would list the pros and cons of the scheme. Then he might conclude by saying that he invited the others to think about it and the decision was up to the others to decide. The Chinese expert was very courteous and often he succeeded in driving in his point. The North Vietnamese cadres then had the chance to ponder and to think about the pros and cons by basing upon the analysis of the Chinese and often they found that the Chinese was right and then they might change their scheme voluntarily after some deep reflection. They were not forced to follow any advice; the decision made was theirs. Thus, the way I saw it, and this had been reckoned by other people, it was easy to work along with the Red Chinese, for there was no indication that they tended to dominate us for an adverse decision. The Russians did not use the analytical scheme to judge things. They just said that this should be done this way or that way, that was all. That was the way we did it, and you should follow accordingly. The Russians were too straightforward. I can say that the behavior of the European and the Asian are completely different. The Russians would say in a straightforward manner what they thought, and this did not help them to make their point seen and accepted by others. The North Viet Nam cadres had better respect for the Red Chinese.

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Q. What did the population in the North think about the cadres from the friendly countries?
A. The North Vietnam people had a good education. After the war against the French was over, the country was in ruin, and then the North did receive a lot of help from the Soviet Union and the Red Chinese. For that the North Vietnam people were in deep gratitude. The people were told and educated that Red China and the Soviet Union had pitched in to help to build the industrial installations, to redress the economy, to raise the standard of living. Compared to the situation of the previous decade they were much better off. The people from the North felt that they owed to the Soviet Union and Red China and the other countries in the socialist world a lot. The political question behind the aid offered was not discussed. The way the cadres think is different. They see in the help provided by the Soviet Union and Red China to fight against the United States, a movement to bolster the outpost which guards Red China. I don't know if the population felt that way. There was no expressed opinion, public or otherwise, on that issue. The population only was in deep gratitude toward the other countries for their aid.

Q. Was the Revolutionary Heroism indoctrination out there designed to facilitate motivation of the young people when they join the army in the future?
A. Yes, they not only aimed at motivating the young people outside, but also members in the Armed Forces. In other words, they tried to impress the young people with the examples of heroes to motivate their aggressiveness in combat.

Q. In fact this Revolutionary Heroism indoctrination is designed to:
stimulate the pride of the young people so that they would fight with
greater enthusiasm and join the army more eagerly. Is this correct?
A. Yes.

Q. When your regiment launched the recent attacks, did you anticipate
that the US and VN Air Forces would interdict you by bombings? And
did you make any preparations to counter such bombardments?
A. Out there in any battle, every unit anticipates and is prepared to
counter the bombardments of the US and VN Air Forces. Their only
means to counter the air actions is the shovel to dig shelter trenches.
Therefore, in a night movement the commander, must always calculate
the time so that his soldiers arrive at the destination at around 3 o'clock
in the morning. This will provide them sufficient time to dig shelter
fortifications otherwise it would be too late to do that.

Q. In case of attack on a city or raid into a city quarter, do the
soldiers also think of digging shelter trenches to avoid aircraft?
A. Yes, they still have to dig shelter trenches. In cities, where
they cannot dig trenches, they stack up furniture to provide shelters.

Q. When moving into a city to attack an objective, such as during
the recent offensive, do units of the other side anticipate that the
civilian populace will all flee the area when they arrive?
A. Definitely. They know that the civilian populace would have fled
when they arrive. The people flee to safety because they anticipate
clashes between the two opposing forces in their area. But after a few
days, the people would come back. When they come back, that is the time
to carry out propaganda actions.

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