church management committees at various levels also was provided by Thanh Nam. Fe said the church regarded bare majorities in elections for the lower and middle level management committees as potentially harmful because a man winning, say, only a 51% majority would lack sufficient authority to be able to do his job. Therefore, the upper levels of the church kept careful tabs on these contests and weighed carefully the support for each candidate before the elections took place. Then, if it appeared that a vote would be too close to give anyone a convincingly large majority, church officials would persuade some unit leaders controlling blocs of supporters to change positions in such a way as to produce the desired majority.

The church's concern over the abrasive, potentially wounding aspects of political debate and confrontation was further spelled out in another church document called "Application of the Regulation that the 'Minority Yields to the Majority.'" After urging that discussions be "conducted in a collective fashion, avoiding the arbitrary and dictatorial," it drew the following contrasts between a disputatious kind of political hurly-burly and the reasoned approach which it advocated.

2. Discuss matters calmly. Do not imitate the noisy activity of political meetings, with their ponderous questions and replies, harshly critical tone, coarse language and impetuous gestures. Discuss things seriously and incisively but in a calm and orderly fashion so there will be no hard feelings afterward.

It went on to urge that "contrasting ideas be reconciled before the vote is taken and that "The minority group, if possible, should review its stand to see if it can yield or withdraw its points in the interests of an amicable decision."

After the vote, both sides were to be bound stringently by it: "In discussing the decision thus taken with higher echelons or with persons outside the church or in explaining it to lower echelons, both sides must not present views contrary to the spirit of that decision..."
In conclusion, the document reiterated the need for a majoritarianism infused with a basically religious spirit, pointing out that in this sense, "Religious democracy differs from political democracy."*

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*Chi-Thi, Trich-yeu: Ap-dung quy-luat 'Thieu-so phuc-tung da-so,"

(Instruction, Application of the regulation 'The Minority Yields to the Majority,') from the Hoa Hao liaison offices in Long Xuyen and Saigon to administrative management committees throughout the country, No. 002/TU/CT, November 11, 1971, 3pp., mimeo. Other passages of the document read as follows:

1. Conduct the discussions in a collective fashion, avoiding the arbitrary and dictatorial:...
2. Reconcile/contrasting/ideas before the vote is taken: Try to create an atmosphere of harmony and avoid contention....
3. Avoid dispute if it is necessary to arrive at a decision by voting: Voting should be done in an amicable, not disputatious spirit to obviate the minority's challenging the election results...
4. Attitude of the majority after the vote: The majority must not be arrogant nor /abuse/ the minority or it will produce in it a "Defeated in battle! Bitter blow!" complex which gradually will lead to divisiveness. The majority must be generous, use friendly explanation /and persuasion/ and request that the minority group put aside its previously opposing points for the sake of unity...
5. Attitude of the minority group. It must not /take its defeat too hard/ nor become uncooperative and continue to excuse and defend its position...If it is responsible and reasonable, it will show cheerful respect for the decision made...
G. Socio-Political Training at Grass Root Levels

The church's training programs featured an overlapping of religious and secular content. These programs had become much more systematic after 1963 with the post-Diem "restoration" (phuc hoat) which was considered to be still underway. It viewed the church's most urgent task not as expanding the body of believers but reassembling existing believers dispersed during the Diem repression and getting them back into church activity. Also of high priority were the tasks of increasing the number of instructors and management committee members among the young and raising their levels of effectiveness.

Specifically, the restoration revived and expanded training programs in religious doctrine* and church administration.

*Religious doctrine was taught in classes of three levels: elementary training for boys and girls of about 15 years of age, for about two months duration in the summer vacation, at the village level; a catechism (giao ly so cap) type of class, also at the village level, for adults of 18 and over, also for two months and during the less busy farm season between harvests; and a third level, called "intermediate religious study" (giao ly trung cap), which was projected but in 1972 was not yet offered due to a lack of instructors.

For example, the elementary program was offered in Phu Hiep Village, Dong Tien District, Kien Phong Province (in the Plain of Reeds), whose population of over 5,700 were all Hoa Hao except for 19 families which were Cao Dai and eight, Catholic. This village began to offer the introductory training in 1971 to 150 children of about 15 years of age.

Similarly, in Long Dien Village, Cho Moi District, An Giang Province, with a population of 22,500 which included 15,000 Hoa Hao, the village management committee organized also in 1971 three introductory level classes for about 1,000 young people. This village also sent 150 adults to the second level classes at the district and provincial levels.
The latter included organization and management (along with the teaching of religion)* for persons who ordinarily had had one or two years of experience on management committees. A long-range training program elaborated in 1965 devoted attention to the problems of "reviving the local /management/committees" and consolidating the church committee network (giao he). It also dealt with broader socio-political concepts and although these were listed under "religion," they included "revolutionary virtue, revolutionary society and revolutionary politics." A training program of three or four years duration, being prepared in 1972, was scheduled to offer subjects such as education, sociology, health, administration and law, in addition to religion, its principal subject. In early 1972 Hoa Hao officials calculated that since 1964 they had trained some 10,000 instructors and management committee members in about 30 classes of various levels** In addition, the central church organization published two monthly journals for the believers.***

*The teaching of religion was the second track offered under the heading of "church administration" and students in it also were normally expected to have two years of experience in the field. The class for these teachers ending in early 1972, for example, had run for three months with an enrollment of 30. It covered five subjects: teaching techniques, Sam Giang Thi Van (the Hoa Hao bible), Vietnamese language, religion and art.

**All training was free and persons sent from the villages to the district and provincial levels for it were given subsistence allowances.

***A newspaper, Tu Bi (Compassion) was published in 3,000 copies and Tin Tuc Giao Su (News of Religious Affairs), in 5,000 copies. In addition, books, reports, information bulletins and other documentation issued by the provincial management committees were displayed in the district and village offices.
H. The Notable Responsiveness of Local Government in Hoa Hao Areas

In his field research on village politics in 1969, Samuel Popkin found that "There was no organization, save in villages dominated by the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai or Catholics, to provide a moral counterweight to the established government or to recruit capable men to run for office."* A major consequence of this, especially visible in the Hoa Hao areas because of the consistency of its occurrence there and the extensive regions affected, was the contrast between Hoa Hao peasant attitudes and behavior and those generally found elsewhere with regard to the vital issues of village life. In most parts of the country, peasants, exposed to "corruption, nepotism and inequalities in work assignments and selective service requirements" and also to "years of rebuff, scorn and intimidation" on the part of government officials, would "not risk protest or complaint." But

...the Hoa Hao do not hesitate to denounce bad cadres because, as one peasant said: 'We are not afraid because we are Hoa Hao.'

Hoa Hao villagers have become accustomed to a responsive government; those under GVN control not supported by such an organization will only approach an official once he has shown his willingness to cooperate and his understanding for peasant problems.**

The Hoa Hao thus stood as the major exception to the widely remarked tendency for the war to strengthen the socio-political bonds of local communities.

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**Ibid., p. 670.
for the NLF side and to weaken those on the government side.* Popkin presented examples of this local government responsiveness and its impact on socio-political cohesion and then put all this into a national perspective:

That the failure of the GVN /Government of the Republic of Vietnam/ to develop a meaningful political structure in the villages is not a result of some debilitating characteristic of peasant life or of Vietnamese culture is made clear by the great strength and flexibility of communities under the direction of the Hoa Hao. The Hoa Hao examples make it clear that where there is organized and dedicated leadership, the strains of war can strengthen village institutions and the commitment of villagers to their leaders. With such a commitment, it is possible to extract a level of sacrifice and labor from villagers that is unheard of in other villages administered by the GVN.**

*For an insightful comparison of the reactions of government and NLF communities to the pressures of war including their contrasting strategies of rural mobilization, see Jeffrey Race, "How They Won," *ibid.*, pp. 628-650.

I. Hoa Hao Relations with the Government and with Other Political Groups

The Hoa Hao appeared to strive effectively to maintain good relations with other religious and political groups, a situation not so prevalent in earlier years of the movement. It was cool only toward parties headed by leaders of the Diem regime. That the Hoa Hao usually lived in sizeable populations and concentrations, had a collective religious/socio-political spirit and resulted in cohesion and discipline were all important. Believers in other faiths resided as minorities in the same communities usually showed some extent of Hoa Hao influence on their modes of life.

In the southern delta, the Hoa Hao claimed that the other religious group with which it lived most harmoniously was the Cao Dai, a situation compared with that of an earlier day. On a religious anniversary of either one or the other, its religious flag often would be flown by both and not only on pagodas and church offices but private houses as well.

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*A newspaper, Tu Bi (Compassion) was published in 3,000 copies and Giao Su (News of Religious Affairs, in 5,000 copies. In addition, books, information bulletins and other documentation issued by the provincial menh minh committees are displayed in the district and village offices.

*Devillers (op. cit., p. 94) has described the earlier conflict between Hoa Hao and Cao Dai such as existed in late 1944, for example, when both were stepping up preparations for nationalist military activity, in anticipation of a Japanese defeat. He claims that the Hoa Hao preparations "were directed against the French administration than non-believers—Cao Daiists or simply elements of the Annamese bourgeoisie."

Apparently the first alliance between the two sects was concluded by Hoa Hao military commander Tran Van Soai in January 1948 but it had the effect of alienating many Hoa Hao believers from Soai, so great was the Hoa Hao distrust...
The social and political cohesion of the Hao Hao community, when it constituted a sizeable majority of a local population, made it well nigh impermeable to the recruiting efforts of non-Hoa Hao political parties (and the NLF, as will be discussed later). It was said that even school teachers, who ordinarily were very influential in such farm villages and therefore effective political recruiters for various political groups (particularly the NLF and the VNQDD as noted earlier), had to give up such efforts as far as Hoa Hao pupils and parents were concerned.

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of the Cao Dai (Savani, op. cit., p. 91).

In 1972 there were definite signs of an amicable coexistence between and believers of these two faiths/others (at least in areas populated principally by the Hoa Hao). An example of this was Long Ho Village, Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long Province (the native place, incidentally, of Vice President Tran Van Huong. Of a total population of 9,843, 2,673 were Hoa Hao, about 1,700 were Cao Dai (two-thirds of which followed the Tay Ninh church and the other one-third that of Ben Tre), about 500 were of Khmer origin and the remainder practiced the ancestral cult. The chairman of the village council was a Hoa Hao and the village chief was a Cao Dai and from what we could learn of the situation, these two officials and the villagers adhering to these different faiths lived and worked harmoniously with each other.
In recent years and particularly since the 1968 Tet offensive, the Hoa Hao had been under stronger pressure from the government, on one hand, and the Cap Tien or Nationalist Progressive Movement on the other. This tended to be heavier, of course, in provinces in which the Hoa Hao did not comprise a very large majority.

The prime example of this was Vinh Long, where the province chief, Col. Duong Hieu Nghia, a strong Tan Dai Viet leader, had established a firm foothold for the Cap Tien, a Tan Dai/offshoot, and assigned Cap Tien members to a number of important provincial and district posts. In a district like Binh Minh (formerly Cai Von), where the Hoa Hao comprised over sixty percent of the population, the Cap Tien had not been able to make much of an inroad, so it was concentrating its effort on other areas, particularly the villages around the city (Chau Thanh) district which were more urbanized and in which the Hoa Hao amounted only to perhaps fifteen to twenty percent of the population. Hoa Hao leaders in these areas claimed they had been pushed by the Cap Tien to support government positions and government electoral candidates.* Moreover, almost all the Hoa Hao had been eliminated by one means or another from the village chief and village council posts in Vinh Long local elections, with the exception of those in Binh Minh District itself.

Gradually, Hoa Hao leaders complained, provincial and district officials, under Col. Nghia's direction, had given the Hoa Hao increasing trouble in even routine administrative matters but particularly concerning their draft status and especially during the election campaigns of the preceding two years. Here it should be noted that the question of draft status posed an unresolved issue between the Hoa Hao and the government, for the religious leaders of

*This is discussed also in the Cap Tien section of this paper.
the movement maintained that members of all the church's management committees down to the hamlet level should receive religious deferments. And the government dismissed this as unreasonable, contending that although these persons did assist in the church's business, they were not regular, full-time religious practitioners of the category entitled to the deferment.

During the Lower House election campaign beginning in July 1971, according to the Hoa Hao, members of their management committees of various levels up to that of province had been hounded by government authorities and especially its security agents who insisted repeatedly on examining the draft cards of committees. Some 60 members of such Hoa Hao men. Some 60 members of such Hoa Hao had been so detained for irregularities of draft status including a district level leader. The Hoa Hao believed the government was deliberately harassing the believers with the intention of disrupting their election campaign; and in any case, Cap Tien candidates captured all four Vinh Long seats in the Lower House. The province chief's own interpretation, provided in a personal interview later, was simply that he was rounding up draft evaders—and he gave the impression that most of those detained had been turned over to the Army for induction.

During the subsequent presidential election campaign of 1971, the provincial authorities had continued their stepped-up examination of Hoa Hao draft cards and had detained another 70 to 100 men. The objective at this time, according to the Hoa Hao, was to shut off criticism of President Thieu's running unopposed. To cope with this, the Hoa Hao province management committee continued to distribute communiqués throughout the province for several months after the election, publicizing the plight of those who had been arrested, and it also organized study sessions in many places to discuss ways
Eventually, church committee representatives of all levels up to the province had formed a delegation to request the province chief to desist from such treatment and release the detainees. Then, they claimed, they had been kept waiting for a week to see him. (The province chief in the personal interview said he never had met with the delegation and simply had sent off of this batch/detainees also to the Army for induction.)

The Hoa Hao, with their legendary aggressiveness in defending their home territory, demand for the hamlet and village People's Self Defense Force or PSDF (Nhan Dan Tu Ve), and even for regular ARVN units that there appeared to be a certain amount of shifting of the local units as well as personnel from within them from one area to another at the province chief's discretion. (This practice originally was illegal but later was authorized by government decree and occurred on a widespread basis, as described earlier in the section of this report dealing with the VNQDD). The Hoa Hao complained that PSDF units composed of or at least stiffened by a certain percentage of Hoa Hao had been assigned to district and province headquarters, away from their home villages; and they also alleged that Hoa Hao PSDF units usually did not get weapons in the sufficiency found in other areas.

*One of these communiques, Thong Bao No. 1284/TB, December 20, 1971, from the province executive committee, was examined in Dong Thanh Village, Minh District. The term "struggle" typically was used to describe the Hoa Hao responses, though the latter tended to be quite mild.

**Interview with the village chief and council members of Long Ho Village, Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long.

***Interview of the Hoa Hao management committee of Loc Hoa Village, Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long.
Although the Hoa Hao members of Popular and Regional forces showed when these units performed well, especially in areas pacified since the Tet Offensive, it was noteworthy that the Hoa Hao upper level management committees took a cautious view of their men joining these government forces. The large size of the Hoa Hao community had made government authorities since 1964 uneasy and among the church leadership there was a long-standing concern that if the Hoa Hao should have a large number of men under arms would somehow find itself involved in a situation leading to the kind of suppression inflicted on it by the Diem regime in 1955.*

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*This view was expressed not only by individuals interviewed but in "Nhung Bai Kinh-Nghiem: Khuynh-Huong Chinh-Tri-Hoa Tan," some of the training materials such as a mimeographed instruction, "Lessons of Experience: The Tendency to Politicize Religion," used in the training program for lecturers and management committee members describe the preceding section of this paper.
In Phong Dinh Province, the one other province in which the Hoa Hao had had serious friction with government authorities and religious or political groups, the Hoa Hao had experienced a confrontation with Catholics and the government. A dispute had centered on a plot of ground containing the tombs of three original Central Management Committee members killed by the Viet Minh in October 1945, including the younger brother of Master Huynh. Originally public land, the site later had been deeded by the Diem government to the local Catholic church. In 1970, the church applied for official permission to remove the three tombs and construct a monastery, possibly because the Catholics were unaware of the site's significance to the Hoa Hao. The government approved the project and excavation was begun before the Hoa Hao realized what was transpiring. Their provincial management committee approached the Catholic church with a request that a fence be erected around the three tombs and that the latter be undisturbed. The local government officials, trying to avoid trouble, said simply that the Diem government had given the land to the Catholics and the Hoa Hao and Catholics should settle the matter between themselves. This evasiveness angered the Hoa Hao and a crowd of them formed at the site, ready to take direct action. However, the provincial and even the Central Management Committees of the Hoa Hao persuaded their people to remain calm and an agreement was reached whereby the monastery would be built but in such a way as not to disturb the tombs.*

*In recounting this incident, Hoa Hao leaders cited Master Huynh's conciliatory philosophy regarding repressive elements and expressed pride that it had prevailed on this and other occasions. Huynh Phu So is quoted in the Tieu-Su va Giao-Ly... (Biography and Teachings of Prophet Huynh Phu So)

as follows: "Should they act wickedly towards us, we must not permit ourselves to strive for vengeance but must
In the 26 years which had elapsed from the time that Master Huynh was kidnapped by the Viet Minh and the present writer's field research, much blood had been spilled in fighting between the two sides and the old antagonism on the part of the Hoa Hao still appeared strong. Hoa Hao former fighters who had been wounded in the campaigns displayed their scars with pride.*

However, a number of better educated, younger Hoa Hao were encountered who believed that the struggle against the Communists should be limited to less violent, more political means whenever feasible. And there were indications that this view was shared by at least some members of the church's Central Management Committee. The Hoa Hao still were unlikely to accept publicly the notion of concord with the Communists, though, and if the January 1973 peace settlement had actually attempted to compel the Hoa Hao to accept a policy of accommodation with the Communist-led forces, the Hoa Hao doubtless would have striven as always to maintain somehow as much of their local and regional autonomy as possible.

"... make peace with them. We must always behave well towards them even if they wrong us."

*An example was a farmer, Tran Ngoc Dang, encountered by / in Phu Thanh Hamlet, Phu Quoi Village, Vinh Long. He had been shot three times by the Viet Minh during the Hoa Hao demonstration in Can Tho in 1945 described above and later fought in the Hoa Hao forces in Sa dec. He was regarded as a hero in his farm community when interviewed there.
But the more immediate reality was that the great majority of the Hoa Hao faithful, including their Central Management Committee, believed unshakeably that their territory was and would remain impenetrable by the Communists in the face of military struggle or political competition. They insisted, moreover, in the long run, as Master Huynh had predicted, they would not only survive but overcome their adversaries.

It was in this spirit that Chairman Nguyen Duy Hinh began in 1969 to send thousands of Hoa Hao colonists to land reclamation sites in Plain of Reeds areas formerly controlled by the NLF. This was continued by Hinh's successor, Le Truong Sanh, and these settlers successfully established new villages there, existing at spartan levels of livelihood, as visits during this field research indicated. The church planned to invest considerable amounts of money in new earthmoving and other equipment to continue this resettlement campaign. The major question of the security of the new settlements seemed to have been answered positively, on at least a provisional basis. For at that time, wherever the Hoa Hao settlers were located in any considerable strength, it was found that the NLF withdrew a distance of at least five kilometers. This was no proof that the Communists would and could not mass their forces and harass or destroy some or all of these settlements at a later date, of course, but it was evidence of the Hoa Hao's confidence in its own capability of holding exposed areas under hazardous conditions.