One of the major problems facing Vietnam in its move toward modernization and industrialization is that of increasing the production and consumption potential of its rural residents who comprise about 80 percent of the population. Until this agricultural sector of the population attains a cash income sufficient to allow it to consume large quantities of locally made products, demand for these products, investment incentives, and nonagricultural employment remain low, thus retarding economic development. Unlike such Asian countries as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, or mainland China, Vietnam has a wealth of natural resources, land, and no undue population pressure. Yet agricultural innovation and economic progress in the rural areas have not occurred in Vietnam as rapidly, or to the extent, they have occurred in some of these other nations. In the pages that follow, some attempt will be made to describe the economic activities in My Thuan and to analyze some of the major obstacles to innovation and change. While My Thuan may not be a "typical" community with regard to its economic practices, it is probable that many of the problems found in this village are common to the Vietnamese countryside, especially the Delta area.
My Thuan is primarily a rice producing village, although a number of garden crops are raised for home consumption. Of the total land area 91 percent, or 4,741 hectares, are under wet rice cultivation. Another 455 hectares are utilized for garden crops and 900 hectares, located far from streams and rivers, are not yet under cultivation. The most important fruits and vegetables grown in the gardens surrounding the house plots are potatoes, lettuce, corn, cabbage, coconuts, oranges, and mangoes. According to village records, there are 938 landowners including owners of agricultural plots of various sizes, operators of larger commercial establishments, and still larger private operating agencies such as the Catholic church. From these statistics and from interviews with village officials, it is estimated that about 30 percent of the families in the village own some land. The majority of the farmers are tenants. From the available statistics, it is difficult to determine the size of farm holdings or the size and amount of land rented.

AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

The farmers of My Thuan produce only one crop of rice a year. The reason advanced for not double cropping is the serious shortage of water. That this should be so in the river-webbed Mekong Delta is because there is little or no irrigation, rain water being the primary source of water for the flooding of the paddy fields. Various informants stated that water from the rivers and streams is not utilized because of the high alum content in the water. There is little evidence, however, to support this charge. In the first place, several farmers in the village have borrowed pumps from the provincial extension office in order to pump water from the stream onto their plots for irrigation purposes. Secondly, water from the streams is used to supplement the rain water during the height of the rainy season; i.e., the water overflows its banks and inundates the fields. When the water reaches a level of 20 centimeters below the top of the rice plants, farmers dike the fields so as to halt the influx of water. Without this river supplement, irrigation from rain water alone would be difficult. Thus, land located some distance from a river or stream is not highly valued, and the uncultivated 900 hectares in My Thuan are all in "dry" areas.1

There are probably two major reasons why irrigation, and thus double-cropping, are not practiced in this area:

(1) Irrigation systems are tremendously complicated affairs in terms of human relationships. Cooperation, control, and planning are

1The rivers are also an important source of drinking water since there are few wells in the village for this purpose.
necessary for the successful implementation of an irrigation project. These, as well as the technical aspects of the irrigation system are not well developed, and since agricultural extension is practically nonexistent in My Thuan, it should not be expected that any large-scale projects will develop in the foreseeable future.

(2) Possibly a more important factor bearing on this subject is the lack of incentives for higher production. Subsistence farmers the world over are conservative. Obviously, survival, not production, is their major preoccupation, and the incentives for altering existing practices which have thus far proved adequate are practically nonexistent. In My Thuan the farmers are not starving. On the contrary, a number of tenants and small land owners stated that they were relatively prosperous because of the high yields in good years:

I have heard that the use of fertilizers in other villages has increased the yields. The people in this area would be willing to use fertilizers if we could learn how to use them and where to get them. But really, we don't have to have fertilizer here, because the soil is very good. The average yield is probably about 100 g/ha per hectare, but in good years we get from 115 to 130 g/ha. The rice plants in this village are larger (this probably means more shoots) so we get a higher yield.

Land is abundant in the Delta region, a farmer being able to rent as much land as he can cultivate, and production from a single crop appears adequate for the survival of most of the peasants. Therefore, there is little experimentation with new methods of cultivation, such as the use of fertilizers, new seeds, irrigation, or double cropping.

Farming activities are spread over a 6- or 7-month period, from the fifth to the first lunar months (see Figure 3). With the first rains that break the three-month dry season, the farmers begin to prepare their seedbeds, which takes from 2 to 5 days, depending upon the number of hectares to be cultivated. After the seeds have been broadcast in the seedbeds, the plowing and harrowing of the fields begins. Preparation of the fields takes about thirty man-days per hectare. Owners or tenants operating more than two hectares ordinarily hire additional laborers and water buffaloes for these chores. (The cost of labor in My Thuan is 40/kg per day plus meals.) During the sixth and seventh month, for a period of 30-40 days, the seedlings mature. The plants are then removed from the seed beds, tied in bundles and allowed to soak in water until the beginning of the middle of the eighth month, at which time they are transplanted into the paddy fields. A small amount of weeding is done by sickles in the ninth and tenth months. Harvesting begins at the end of the first lunar month (see Figure 3) and lasts for about 30 days. Labor is hired during this time by the larger operators, and there were

---

*In South Vietnam, 1 g/ha equals 30 kilograms.*
some reports of labor exchange among families operating small plots.

Although many of the farmers talked about the "average" yield, crop damage in the My Thuan area is high, due to a disease called *tim* or "rust" and the usual insects. Generally, both "rust" and the insects appear to occur together, and their effect upon the yield is devastating. A rice field which normally produces 100 *gía* per hectare, for example, may yield only 5 or 10 *gía*. One farmer who was only slightly affected by insects and "rust" complained that his yield on 9 hectares last year was
only 600 gla, whereas normally he expects about 800 gla. The disease problem works a hardship upon the operator, because usually labor and rental agreement are reached prior to the harvest season, and if the yield is low, the farmer is unable to fulfill his contract (see below).

Insecticides are unknown in My Thuan. We broached the question in all of our interviews, but the farmers stated that they did not know that crop devastation could be avoided through the use of medicines. Interestingly, farmers indicated they would not be willing to invest large sums of money on insecticides even if they were available, and they explained that they believed yields varied depending upon luck more than on pest control.

Weeds are another problem that harass the My Thuan farmer. Most of our informants said that weeding was "no problem at all except in the areas where there was a scarcity of water." Weeding, a necessity for high yields, was reportedly carried out only during the pre-transplanting period and occasionally in locations where inundation was incomplete. With the effective introduction of such weedkillers as 2,4-D, production in My Thuan could no doubt be increased significantly.

In interviews with farmers who could understand the utility of irrigation pumps, fertilizers, and insecticides, we asked why they had not resorted to loans from the National Agricultural Credit Organization (NACO). A typical response was:

I have heard of how farmers in the next village have increased their income by using scientific methods of farming. But I am only a poor peasant. Why would anybody give me money to increase my own personal happiness? Nobody in my hamlet has asked for a government loan, because they think that no one would give them any money.

Agricultural practices in My Thuan are not highly developed, the standard of living is low, as is the level of aspirations. If the situation we observed in this village is in any way characteristic of the Vietnamese countryside, then drastic measures must be taken by the various governmental agencies to extend knowledge relative to more efficient means of production and agricultural credit, and to heighten the expectations and aspirations of the average Vietnamese peasant.

Another factor which perhaps inhibits more rapid agricultural development is the high degree of tenancy in My Thuan. It is estimated that about 70 percent of the farmers rent the land they cultivate. Generally, tenants cannot be expected to be in the vanguard of innovators, since they are, in effect, working the land for the owner rather than for themselves. Thus, long-range planning for the use of the land, which is necessary for the modernization of agriculture, is absent. One of the
reasons advanced by the landowners for the present ratio of tenants is the high costs of hired labor:

It is easier and cheaper for us to rent the land out than to hire laborers and worry about it ourselves. Farm labor costs 40$ per day plus food. Food costs alone are very high, if you figure that 5 people are needed for our 10 hectares for over 30 days at transplanting and harvesting times. If the land is rented, you don't have to think about these things, they are the tenants' problems.

The maximum rent set by the government is 25 percent of the yield on the rented land. However, in My Thuan we were informed that such high rents were never charged, the average being 10-15 percent. Thus, if a farmer produces 100 gia per hectare on 2 hectares of rented land, he might pay only 20-25 gia in rent to his landlord. One landowner stated that usually his tenants bring their rent by boat up the stream and leave it at a previously designated place on a given day after the harvest. A tenant stated that he pays his rent to a man whom the landlord sends to his house. It was surprising that many people did not even know their landlords; the original agreements were apparently reached through a middleman.

According to the village chief, only 3 village landowners were affected by the recent land reform, i.e., they owned more than 100 hectares of paddy fields, and there are 20 absentee landlords. It appeared that although individual landholdings were not great, even small owners rented land to tenants rather than work it themselves because of the high costs of hired labor. However, a determining factor in the size of farm unit operated was the number of farm laborers in the family. Five or six adults, for example, may be able to operate as many as 10 hectares, whereas a family with only 2 workers, a man and his wife, can work only 1 or 2 hectares.

As in all other facets of My Thuan life, the security problem affects the nature of landlord-tenant relations. Landlords are one of the chief targets of Viet Cong intimidation and terrorism. Landowners are threatened not to collect their rents, and tenants are warned not to pay rents. To some extent, no doubt, the tenants have invented this device as an excuse not to pay rents, but there is abundant evidence to support the claim that rents go uncollected or unpaid as a direct result of coercion from the Viet Cong. One landlord, for example, stated that he owns almost 100 hectares, but does not go there to collect rents nor to farm any of it himself because it is in a remote area held by the Viet Cong. The threat of terrorism may also be a reason why the rents paid in My Thuan are so far below the price set as equitable by the government. Although none of the owners interviewed are considered "large" land-

---

*One of these was an Indian.*

50
holders, it is possible that in areas of the south where such landlords exist, the withholding of rents may account for the decrease in rice shipments to the Saigon markets and the shortage of rice in Central Vietnam.

MARKETING

The marketing practices followed in My Thuan, and in Vietnam generally, are such as to allow a considerable amount of price manipulation by the middlemen and the rice-mill operators. In the absence of marketing cooperatives and farmers’ unions, information on the fluctuating prices of rice and garden crops is unavailable. Thus farmers often sell their rice to the middlemen far below the official prices set by the government or the unofficial seasonal prices. This system of marketing operates to the disadvantage of the farmer. One farmer complained:

Last year I harvested more rice than the year before but I received less money. I was disappointed this year because I only got 30$ per gIa from the middleman. Later I found out that others were getting as high as 37$ to 40$ per gIa. Most people do not know the price of rice, so they go to the rice-mill owner and ask the price they should use in bargaining with the middlemen.

There are 20 or 30 middlemen who work in My Thuan. They visit each farmer individually and bargain for the rice which they purchase with funds loaned to them by 1 of the 4 rice-mill owners in the village (all Vietnamese). The middlemen then sell the rice to the rice-mill owner, their profit being the difference between the price they paid the farmer and the price paid to them by the mill owner. The mill owner then polishes the rice and transports it to Saigon. Polishing and transportation costs must be considered when the mill owner bargains with the middlemen and with the wholesale dealers in Saigon.

Nearly 20 hectares are under fruit and vegetable cultivation for the Saigon markets. Middlemen passing through the village at the appropriate times buy and transport these products to the city. Fishing is an important part of the economic activity of My Thuan, but the fish caught in the numerous streams and rivers are mostly for home consumption. However, there are some commercial fishermen who sell their produce individually in the markets of the neighboring city of Can Tho.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

As stated earlier, one of the main objectives of this research was to acquire an understanding of the way of life or the standard of living of the Mekong Delta peasant. This is a difficult task for a number of
### TABLE 1
**Farm Income and Expenditures—Tenants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenant</th>
<th>Amount of Land Rented (Hectares)</th>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Net Income Per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Production (t@)</td>
<td>Home Consumption of Rice (t@)</td>
<td>Amount of Rice Sold (t@)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>110-170</td>
<td>90-150</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100-110</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>40-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2
**Farm Income and Expenditures—Owners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Amount of Land Owned-Rented</th>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Net Income Per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Production (t@)</td>
<td>Home Consumption of Rice (t@)</td>
<td>Amount of Rice Sold (t@)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>210-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reasons. In the first place, farmers are reluctant to discuss income with strangers because, for example, production is related to both taxation and rent. Secondly, peasants are not accustomed to dividing the world of reality into such units as piasters per month and expenditures per year. In other words, questions have to be structured so as to fit the way of thinking of the peasant, which complicates the processes of comparison and communication. Finally, there is the problem of reliability and validity. In the short period in the field, one could not expect to acquire a random sample of the income and expenditures of the total population. Furthermore, no way of measuring the accuracy of the reports on these matters which were accumulated during the course of interviews had been evolved. However, because of the consistency of the responses received, there is some reason to believe that they reflect to some extent the real situation. Seven operators of farms of various sizes, ranging from small rented plots to large landholdings, were interviewed. Tables 1 and 2 contain a summary of the data collected from the farm operators.

It is noteworthy that among both tenants and landlords, production, rent, cost of labor, home consumption of rice, and per capita income are relatively consistent. Although the per capita income may appear to be low, the average being about 2,000$, it must be remembered that the majority of the peasants in My Thuan are living at the subsistence level. Unlike Khanh Hau, where Hendry found the per capita income to be from 4,000-5,000$, the farmers of My Thuan do not double crop, use fertilizers, or irrigate, except with rainwater. In various interviews, it was observed that the size of farm unit operated depended upon the number of farm workers in the family. The data on income and expenditures support these observations. This is another indication of the subsistence orientation of the My Thuan peasant.

SECONDARY AND NONFARM EMPLOYMENT

Perhaps the major source of cash income in the village is from off-seasonal employment as agricultural laborers or as day laborers in other villages, towns, and provinces. In some of the surrounding areas, such as in Long An Province, there is a considerable amount of double cropping, which affords a source of employment for the My Thuan villagers. According to the political agent of the village council, 50 to 70 applications per day are made by villagers for travel to other villages and provinces for work. In My Thoc Hamlet alone, 30 people went to An

*Hendry, op. cit., p. 248.
*Surprisingly, few people ever request to travel to Saigon for either work or recreation.
Giang Province during the month of the research to work in private and public rice fields.

Men in the village also accept employment as carpenters, roof repairmen, and other daily labor in return for cash. Others remain in the village to repair houses, make wooden sandals, or engage in such commercial activities as foresting, fishing, and fruit peddling. From a series of interviews with the commercial, nonfarm inhabitants of My Thuah, it was estimated that their yearly income does not differ significantly from that of the agricultural population. Cash income varies from day to day depending upon such factors as the availability of odd jobs and the amount of fish, fruit, or candies sold in the market.

INHERITANCE

It is difficult to determine the dominant pattern of inheritance in Vietnam, especially among small landowners and tenants. In the case of large landowners, say 50-100 hectares, however, it was generally agreed in My Thuah that the ideal pattern is for the eldest son to inherit about 10 hectares devoted to the cult of the ancestors, the remainder being divided equally among the other offspring, regardless of sex or birth order. However, in many cases the land for the cult of the ancestors is inherited by the “most competent” son, or the individual “most devoted” to his parents, or merely by a favored son. In some cases the eldest son claims all of the land in the absence of a will. In such instances, if a dispute arises, the hamlet chief refers the case to the village chief. If the village chief is unable to arrive at an equitable solution, the case is referred to a provincial court. In most such cases, the court decides to divide the land equally among offspring, the land for the cult of the ancestors being awarded to the eldest son. Therefore, it appears that the ideal patterns coincide somewhat with the legal norms.

In the case of small landowners or tenants, if no will is left, the sons and daughters decide among themselves the disposition of the property, and all try to contribute to the cult of the ancestor. For example: On the anniversary of the death of the father, the children gather, each contributing food, money, or lodgings for the event.

Although the system of primogeniture is apparently ideally followed in the inheritance of land for the cult of the ancestor, in many instances ultimogeniture is practiced in the inheritance of the house and household effects. Thus, it appears that children who have not yet left the household in marriage have the responsibility for the care of the aged and the maintenance of the house and garden. The wide range of inheritance practices followed in My Thuah is a factor contributing
to the large number of civil disputes handled by the village chief. In the absence of cooperatives and farmer's associations, and because of the flexible nature of the land and rent contracts, civil disputes arising over inheritance, land, rent, and tenure present persistent detriments to the realization of efficient village administration.

SUMMARY
One of the most pressing problems in Vietnam is that of increasing the living standards of the peasants in the countryside. For this to occur, it is necessary to increase agricultural production through the modernization of the traditional farming methods and to decrease the percentage of the population dependent upon farming as a way of life. From our observations in My Thuan, however, it appears that innovation in farming methods is likely to occur very slowly due to the following factors: (1) the nature of the security problem; (2) the relatively low level of economic aspiration; (3) the structure of rural economic relationships; (4) the lack of large-scale agricultural organizations; (5) the severe shortage of trained agricultural specialists capable of initiating new techniques at the local level; (6) the scarcity of research on soil and water conditions, as well as on the organization and condition of the rural labor force, and (7) the lack of crop diversification and markets for garden products.
My Thuan must be placed in the larger context of a developing nation-state. The problems existing in this village are probably representative of those found generally in rural Vietnam and, indeed, in most of the newly developing countries of the world. Simply stated, these problems ultimately revolve about the solution of two related questions: how to increase the standards of living of the peasants, the majority of the population, and how to develop in rural areas an image of and identification with a nation-state. In most instances, the obligation and responsibility of answering these questions has fallen on the central governments. Planning, organizing and initiating change programs have emanated from the center. In Vietnam, the youth rallies, nationally oriented religious ceremonies, the discouraging of splinter sects, the agroville programs, the organization of farmers’ unions and cooperatives, are all governmental attempts to either stimulate economic development or solidify the image of President Ngo Dinh Diem and his government. That there are obstacles and failures in the finalization of these attempts at planned change comes as no surprise to those familiar with the change process in developing countries.
The problem, as we understand it from the case of My Thuan, comes into relief if it is placed within a communications context. Numerous programs are initiated by the various development agencies in Saigon. These are relayed to provincial headquarters which is seriously understaffed with personnel trained in administration of health, construction, welfare, education, propaganda, and military programs. Nevertheless, every attempt is made to forward the instructions, orders, and plans to the district office where, at most, the district chief, usually an army officer, and a couple of clerks are charged with implementation. At any one time these officials may be involved in 10 or 12 major developmental programs.

At this point the communication process breaks down as a result of channel overload. Messages transmitted to the village chief and his assistants are incomplete, contradictory, and, above all, physically impossible given the communication channel or administrative and social structure below the village level. Thus, messages from the source (Saigon) are interpreted and reinterpreted thru the various receiver levels where the communication facilities, or human resources, are limited. The breakdown in the communication network because of overload and poor receiver facilities has been detrimental to the development process. “Forced labor,” “forced attendance at meetings,” and “forced organizations” are alienating the peasants from the government and setting the stage for even greater political unrest.

There are no easy or rapid solutions to the problems which face Vietnam or other developing countries. The training of personnel capable of operating within complicated bureaucracies and who possess some empathy with the masses of people and the organizing of the communication networks to handle the complexities of national development are not goals achieved easily or rapidly.
APPENDIX A

Abstracts from Letter from the Secretary of State at the Presidency to Prefects and Chiefs of Province
Dated March 13, 1957
Concerning the Reorganization of the Five-Family Group

A. ADVANTAGES
1. To promote the spirit of unity and mutual aid among people.
2. To expedite easily reconstruction and social works.
3. To help the village council avoid the waste of time spent directly on settling petty disputes.
4. To propagate quickly the government policies.
5. To help the government become efficient in the following work:
   a. Controlling people
   b. Protecting order, security, and stopping all destruction plots
   c. Taking census of national resources
   d. Collecting taxes.

B. DISADVANTAGES
1. Present inconsistency of the organization.
2. Lack of coordination between family group and hamlet chiefs and village council members.
3. Lack of means to form and train chiefs of family groups, resulting in a number of them who do not have a sound point of view, ability, and working spirit.
4. Lack of means of control and expedition because of large areas, remote roads, scattered houses.
5. Incompletely organized areas because of the danger or insecurity of the location.
6. Many difficulties encountered by the organization in big cities, due to the heterogeneous composition of society and the great number of foreigners.
7. Restraining influence in some areas of the opposition group, where people are not wholeheartedly devoted to the government cause.
8. Understanding in a very narrow sense the meaning of family group and regard of this organization only as a means for people to control and denounce one another, putting too much emphasis on politics while neglecting social works.

The Secretary of State then requested the officials concerned to make careful studies of characteristics of each region in order to reorganize the family groups, based on the following basic criteria:

1. Terminology. It should not be called “five-family” (Ngü-gia) or “ten-family” (Thap-gia), but be called “mutual-aid family group” (Lien-gia tuong-trò). The number of families depends on each area and population of each place. A mutual-aid family group does not need to have a specific number of houses; it may consist of 5, 6, 7, or 10 houses.

2. Leadership. It may be difficult to find people who have the ability and good will, therefore, it should not create many functions, many officers for each section, such as finance, social, police, etc. . .

   Each group may appoint a mutual-aid family group chief and a deputy to take care of all works. Later, when there is a larger personnel, and depending on the development of each group, the number of officers may be increased to take charge of each section.

3. Aim of the organization. The organization of mutual-aid family groups has not only a political aim to prevent Communism or guerrilla forces but a primary aim of creating the spirit of unity, mutual assistance, mutual security, mutual aid, mutual achievement of reconstruction and social works which are useful to everyone, mutual effort to understand the policies of the government and to carry out government orders concerning tax collection, as well as other public matters.

4. Interest of leadership group. From the psychological point of view, to have duties means to have rights. For that reason the official who carries out these duties will devote himself to the job. Thus, family group chiefs and their deputies should
have a deserving position and should be given a certificate so stating. In the official ceremonies or meetings, they should be invited to participate in these activities and should be seated right after the village council officials. To stimulate family group chiefs and their deputies, they should be awarded certificates praising their deeds or congratulating those who have successfully done their duties or recognizing family groups which have achieved outstanding work. However, the problem of reward depends on the situation in each place. Explanations should be given to village councils so that each place could estimate the amount of allowance to cover office materials for family group chiefs and deputies according to the village budget, but money should not be collected monthly from each house for fear of abuses, complaints, etc.

5. The relationships between different family groups and the authority. Each family group chief should send to the hamlet chief (in villages) and to the district chief a short weekly report on activities already carried out, or events which have taken place in the group. In urgent or important circumstances, reports should be submitted right away.

The hamlet chief should send reports to the village council which, in turn, would forward them to the district. Every 15 days, the district chief would collect all materials and prepare a general report which would be sent to the chief of province or prefect.

In the monthly report to be submitted to the President, province chiefs and prefects should discuss clearly the activities of the family groups in their regions, and at the same time they should give their opinions and suggest solutions in order to correct the shortcomings, if any.

6. The control and encouragement of family groups. The work of the family groups must be continuously controlled and encouraged in order to obtain good results.

In the inspection tour, visits should be made to the family groups. In addition, each district should appoint an official to be in charge of controlling family groups in order to show to the family group chiefs and deputies the necessary things to be done and to correct the drawbacks, in case there are any.

The controlling work can be assigned to the deputy district chief, deputy canton chief, to a representative of the village council, or to the chief of the Civic Action Team or the Civil Guard.

1. AIMS OF THE MUTUAL- AID FAMILY GROUPS ORGANIZATION

The organization of the mutual-aid family groups has three aims:

a. To group people into one strongly organized block in order to orientate them toward the cause of government.

b. To educate people so they can be conscious of their rights and duties as citizens.

c. To eliminate the Viet Cong and rebels who are still sabotaging the government.

Because of nearly a century under the yoke of Colonialism and Communism, the Vietnamese peasantry has led a very obscure life. Peasants have lacked everything from every point of view; their knowledge is very low, therefore, they are receptive to all kinds of clever propaganda. They cannot distinguish between the right and the wrong government.

The ruling group, being afraid of the coalition of people into one block and of their becoming too educated, applied the policy of “divide and rule” and “obscuration.”

The Communists are very clever, exploiting the patriotism of people in order to introduce to them the ideas of “resistance to attain independence,” using people as sacrificial objects before guns. They cleverly group people behind “save-the-country” forces such as organizing fronts, “Vietnamese-Coalition Association,” various men’s, women’s, and youth groups in order to control and transform them into machines to serve the party, exploiting the psychology of people to make propaganda, to dupe them and to poison their minds. Because the former puppet national government was a corrupt government which depended entirely on the forces of the Colonialists to oppress and exploit the people, it created hatred among them and exposed them to the Communist influence.

In order to remedy the situation of chaos which still exists in remote areas, and to educate people so they can understand the Republican Government regime, and at the same time to create a strong force which will support the life improvement program of the government, it is necessary to organize mutual-aid family groups in every place.
In practice, the mutual-aid family group is not a new organization. The Viet Cong has already organized what they called “five-family groups” (Ngū-gia Lien-bao) or “neighborhood family groups” (Lan-gia Lien-ket), but in comparing these two organizations, they are found to be similar only in form, not in function.

In terms of form, the Viet Cong has grouped 5 or 3 families into a number family of groups called “five families groups” (Ngū-gia Lien-bao) or “3 families groups” (Tam-gia Lien-bao).

In terms of function, the Viet Cong has taken advantage of the organization to transform it into a brainwashing operation and has changed people into machines to serve the party.

Thanks to this organization, the Viet Cong can control properties of people in order to facilitate appropriation of their property and to further impoverish people by means of taxes: agricultural taxes, commercial taxes, etc. . .

Furthermore, they use this organization to spy on individuals, to create suspicion among them, to inculcate hatred among social classes in order to advocate class struggle, and to kill small capitalists, tenants, landowners, and intellectuals, that they classify as “Tri, Phu, Dia, Hao” (Intellectuals, wealthy people, landlords and notables) who are enemies of the proletarian class.

On the contrary, the organization of mutual-aid family group aims at reconstructing and gathering scattered families, to eliminate all cleavages which divide the rich and the poor and to create an atmosphere of understanding, favorable to mutual aid among people in case of distress, illness, or other misfortunes.

Thanks to the organization of family group, people can have more contact with hamlet chiefs and village councils, and through these organizations can indicate to the government their wishes and problems. The government, on the other hand, can diffuse to the families which are scattered the instruction and information in order to guide and shape the people in conformance with government policies. The government can also rely on the family group organizations to control and eliminate Viet Cong agents on the spot or rebels infiltrating in villages to perform subversive activities.

The mutual-aid family group is not a compulsory, or a “spy” organization like the one under the Communist regime.

The government is trying to create a spirit of unity so people can defend their own interests; i.e.:

—interest in education in order to become good citizens.
   —elimination of rebels to protect themselves from false propaganda of the Viet Cong in order to avoid dupery.
   —contribution of their efforts, with means already available, to social or community development works so that village people can benefit from common roads, schools, churches or dinh, etc. . . .

Therefore, in order to fulfill the ideal aim of the mutual-aid family group, the organization should be planned carefully, arranging propaganda meetings to explain thoroughly its purpose to the people and to distinguish the practical usefulness of the mutual-aid family group from the false five-family group organization of the Viet Cong.

Battalion
Thuong Kiet
Company 256
No. 35/CTQS
APPENDIX B

Coalition of the Armed Forces of the
Religious Sects Against American and Diem

To Mr. Y, Secretary of
M Hamlet
My Thuan Village
Binh Minh District
— Vinh Long —

While the situation is critical, the fighting movement of the people becomes stronger and stronger every day. The Americans and Diem without any pity oppress the people and use dictatorship, one-religion and one-family system to govern the country. While they are entirely isolated from the people, their regime comes to a declining stage right at its very root. At present, the Americans and Diem can only use the barbarian policy, there is no other barbarian policy that they have not yet had recourse to. Hence, this regime is essentially a barbarian and bloody one.

Based on the above situation, the Revolution and people at present do not fully recognize this regime and the various reactionary organizations of the Americans and Diem. For that reason, the Revolution and people have recently taken some opposition measures at various places and right at My Thuan that you, undoubtedly, have heard and seen.

In the past, that is, since the day the hamlet chief paid for his crime, you have committed many indecent deeds, sometimes secretly, at other times in the open, hiding from the people and bypassing the Revolution. You have stubbornly continued working for the rebels, to be exact, such as recently tying two draft dodgers, then handing them over to the Americans and Diem, selling family declaration forms, collecting money from people and, at present, you have given the hamlets an order to take names and ages of persons in each family to compel people to work at the agrovilles. You collaborate closely with the hamlet, carrying out plots against peace by the Americans and Diem, siding with landowners in the fixing of rice rentals, forcing farmers to pay high rentals, and looking after rented lands for landowners.

All these above actions, which are very detrimental to the Revolution and people, prove that you may be the future hamlet chief, and it would be very dangerous if you did not repent soon.

We, the commanding staff of Company 256 of Battalion Ly Thuong Kiet wholeheartedly warn you so you can correct yourself and resign immediately from your function as secretary and stop collaborating with rebels. If you stubbornly refuse to do so, you will be entirely responsible in front of the Revolution and people.

War Zone, March 26, 1960
— sealed —

Battalion
Ly Thuong Kiet
Company 256
No. 35/CTQS
Coalition of the Armed Forces of
Religious Sects against Americans and Diem

To Mr. X, Commander
Company B, Youth of the Republic
Resident of L Hamlet
My Thuan Village
Binh Minh District
— Vinh Long —

Faced with the Revolutionary movement of the South which breaks out like a storm, the people and the Revolution of the South are trying to give the country-sellers and usurpers, Americans and Diem, a deathly kick which will soon decide their fates. The Americans and Diem become more and more isolated from the people everyday, and their regime declines and becomes disorganized from day to day. The Americans and Diem no longer have any means to use demagogy. For, at present, the people of the South have already been trained by many sacred years of the Revolution of Vietnam, and they have already witnessed the wily and dishonest face of the Americans and Diem.

On their dead-end road to agony, the only means is to use dictatorship and fascism, such as killing, beating up, imprisoning and stabbing villagers, etc. . . . They hope that such actions will suppress the movement and spirit of the Revolution of people. But they are completely wrong, for the Vietnamese people have inherited from their fathers the spirit of Revolution. With the spirit of revolt and unsubmitness, the struggle movement becomes stronger and stronger everyday. The people are determined to smash the war plot by the Americans and Diem in order to attain peace, unification, independence and democracy throughout the country. While facing failure, the Americans and Diem have more dangerous plots. They are building agrovilles everywhere. Agrovilles are big prisons and hells on earth. When these agrovilles are completed, they will concentrate the peace-loving patriotic families and people there in order to exploit their wealth, to draft young men so that they have enough forces to start the invasion war with the North, causing bloody killing among brothers.

At My Thuan, you have proved yourself an efficient servant of the Americans and Diem, and you collaborate closely with the hamlet chief every day.

The young men in the village, due to their poverty which constantly keeps them busy around the house, are always late to their work. At times, you let entire companies remain under the sun, force each young man to buy insignia for 5 piasters apiece, compel them to mount guard regardless of age and illness. You are very efficient in the recruiting of workers for agrovilles. In this undertaking, you and the hamlet chief accept bribes from people. If anyone wants to remain home, he has to pay you privately, such as in the fourth collection of pay in lieu of work on March 27, 1960. You have forced hundreds of people to work at Tan Luoc agroville. Some of them who have not yet finished with their farming work came to you to ask for a cancellation, and you threatened to bring them to the village council to settle the matter, and you accepted bribes from those who stayed home. There were people who had to pay you four times in lieu of work. Besides bribes in cash, you and the hamlet secretary accept bribes in kind such as mang cau (some kind of fruit) vegetables, tea, etc.

During New Year of this year, you collaborated closely with the hamlet chief to carry out plot by the Americans and Diem to impoverish people. In the most critical and urgent situation, the Revolution of the South breaks out. The Revolution and people do not fully recognize the present regime and the reactionary organizations of the Americans and Diem. The Revolution and people, in My Thuan as elsewhere, have taken strong opposition attitudes, but you still stubbornly, either secretly or in the open, continue to serve the rebels under different forms.

On behalf of the Revolution and people, we, the commanding staff of Company 256 of Battalion Ly Thuong Kiet, once again order you to stop your servant job under any form.

If you violate this order the Revolution and people will not guarantee your life or your property.

War Zone, March 29, 1960
BCH Company 256
—Sealed—

64
BIBLIOGRAPHY


