ITEM 34

Translation of a letter, March 28, 1960, from the Communist Nambo Regional Committee.
Letter From The Regional Committee
To All Members of Cells

1. The general situation in the South now shows certain developments which are greatly to our advantage. This is due to the fact that our Party cells (DANG DO) have put into practice the policy of "promoting the political struggle in close and exact combination with armed and propaganda activities", which has given satisfactory results.

2. In this letter the Regional Committee and the comrades review the past and present situation and the comrades discuss ways and means of developing our victory, correcting errors to strengthen the Movement and advance a further step.

I. In the past we have taken the first step and have won a number of successes.

3. Compared with the previous period, the struggle of the masses, based on democratic and daily life slogans like "oppose the gangs"; "oppose round ups"; "oppose the Agrovilles"; "oppose the seizure of land"; "oppose terrorism and oppose the enemy's forcing the masses to form reactionary organisations", made important progress in the last two months of 1959 and the first two months of 1960 in a number of regions. In many places in the rural areas, the masses have been able to utilise the enemy's (word illegible) and have won the first victory for democratic freedom and economic rights.

4. In a number of regions where there was previously no movement, or where the movement was weak, there are now many campaigns, a few relatively strong.

5. In a number of campaigns the Party cells have assembled mass strength in large numbers, at times as many as two thousand people.

6. In the towns and the rubber areas movements have also begun to develop, especially the school children and students movement in SAIGON and the workers movement in the rubber estates in the East.

7. The reason for this initial success is that we have correctly carried out Central's resolutions and instructions and the resolution of the Fourth Regional Conference (October 1959). It is also due to the spirit of enthusiasm, the determination for the task, and the unflagging efforts of all our comrades. Since studying the resolutions of the Fourth Regional Conference, there has been a spirit of increasing enthusiasm for the struggle within the Party cells. By their own initiative the comrades have overcome many of the difficulties of the earlier period and have successfully put into practice the Party's policies. Although this is but the first step, these successes are a favorable basis for our Party cells to go ahead and carry out fully its duty to the Party and the People.

8. The most significant point is that in the past period we have boldly made use of armed activity in combination with the political struggle. Thanks to our work in eliminating traitors, striking at those who will not learn, and thanks to our offering appropriate resistance to terrorism, the masses in many places have been able to step up the struggle with the enemy.

9. These facts prove that our Party's policy of "promoting the political struggle in close and exact combination with armed and propaganda activities" is, under present circumstances, absolutely correct.
10. Correct guidance has aroused wide enthusiasm among the masses of the people. The masses in the farming villages welcome and whole-heartedly support our armed self-defence activities. The struggle movements in the farming villages have had a strong effect in the towns. The attitude of all classes in the towns, including all the upper classes, display sympathy for us.

11. The activities of the people of A in the past period have exercised a considerable influence within the enemy's ranks.

12. Generally speaking, faced with the mass movement the enemy are alarmed and in a state of panic, especially those in the bases. In many villages the enemy administrative machinery has broken down, in some cases the breakdown extends throughout a whole arrondissement (QUAM). Their former aggressive spirit has declined very greatly.

13. This situation shows us clearly that the basis of the administration of the South is very weak indeed. We believe ever more strongly that if we give correct guidance the mass movement can paralyse the enemy's administrative machinery and has the capacity to obstruct and frustrate the schemes and policies of the enemy.

14. Public opinion is now discussing the failure of the military policy of the Americans and DIEN and the collapse and inevitable defeat of the Government of the South is being widely talked of among the people and in the very heart of the enemy. This is an important advantage of which we must be careful to make use in time.

15. In short, the struggle movement of the people of NAMBO which has in the past dealt with and overcome a number of difficulties, is on the way up and has a new spirit. As a general appraisal of the Movement over this period the Regional Committee unanimously considers that the Movement is developing on a firm basis and in strict accordance with the direction laid down by Central.

16. Besides the initial success described above a number of Party cells have committed errors, including a number of very serious errors.

17. The most serious error is that the armed self-defence forces in a number of areas have not acted in strict accordance with Party policy, and have overflowed on to objectives which are not of primary importance; they have punished certain elements when it was not yet necessary to punish and have given indiscriminate warnings and threats to the village Council (TĐ) and spies.

18. In some districts the command organisations have reached a point of rash impatience in breaking up the administrative machine, telling the people to tear up their identity cards, inciting some of the people to engage in provocative actions like robbing camps, burning houses in villages, chopping down trees, erecting road blocks, etc.... In general they reach a point where they destroy the legal standing of the masses.
19. Some places have issued orders forbidding the movement of traffic, ordering privately-owned mills to stop operating, forcing the people to grind their rice themselves, thus hindering them in their work.

Errors of Organization

20. Some Party cells have failed to see that the situation is most favourable for developing and consolidating Party Group (DANG) and mass bases, they have no plans for going ahead with the work of consolidating and building up bases really urgently. On the contrary, many bases have been exposed, many Party members and Group members from being secret have become overt, giving rise to a situation which causes considerable alarm. At present many Party Groups are seriously worried about the task of combining and building up overt cells. There have been some who talk lightly of the work of consolidating and developing secret cells.

Errors in Front Policy

21. Some of our comrades have failed to apply correctly the Party's present strategy, and have at times defined the word "VIEO-GIAN" (traitor) too widely, making it include all those who have worked for the enemy for a bowl of rice or a shred of clothing. At times no distinction has been made between landlords, all landlords being lumped together and considered to be direct enemies of the Revolution, regardless of their political awareness, and without distinguishing the evil landlords from the rest.

22. Regarding enemy soldiers, generally speaking you have paid insufficient attention to propaganda explaining our policy, and laid too much stress on threats to make them afraid. You have failed to realise that what we are asking is that you should win their sympathy, isolate those who are stubborn, cut off the higher ranks of the administration in the South, and generally show contempt for the Americans and WNM. There are even places where the stubborn spies in the [word, unlegible] have, in the past, when forced with a situation which frightened them, sought out our comrades to apologise, and our comrades and the masses have not tried to win them over but have chased them away.

23. Generally speaking there are now many places which are prejudiced in favour of creating armed self-defence organisations, and directing armed self-defence activities, while they scorn to launch or lead the political struggle movement of the masses.

24. Our sins of omission listed above have produced the following unfavourable situation.

25. The masses are enthusiastic, but because they do not clearly understand the Party's policy, they think that "the moment has come to rise", erroneous and impatient idea. In some cases the masses have stopped working for their living, their idea is just to wait.

26. At the same time, some of the masses are disturbed and worried, they cannot see how things are going to turn out, they are particularly apprehensive of the enemy vengeance and terrorism. For this reason a few have evacuated from the towns and a few others have taken refuge deep in the base areas.
27. The stubborn members of the Administration have gone underground, and the soldiers, village council and civil servants in general do not know our policy. They are perplexed and afraid of being taken in by the enemy's tricks.

28. This situation has to some extent restricted the victory of the Movement and has created additional difficulties for a number of Party cells.

The reasons why we have committed the above errors are:

29. First and foremost because a number of our comrades have not fully appreciated the present comparative strengths of the enemy and ourselves.

30. Recently, the Movement has increased in size compared with the earlier period, the masses have just begun to participate in the struggle so that in a number of economic actions and in a number of other essential mass actions the Movement is still not strong. The Movement has not developed equally in all areas, in particular it is still weak in the towns, and in many other strategic areas the Movement has not yet attracted really large numbers of the masses. Many classes and circles have not yet stood up against the policies of oppression, exploitation and war-mongering of the Americans and BEP. The areas and the classes have not yet created a solid body of mutual defence.

31. Although Party and Group bases have been re-established and developed in a number of places, the work of building up the Party Group has, generally speaking, proceeded slowly. In many places revolutionary bases are still being lost, or having to be set up again.

32. While the enemy are weak and perplexed they are not yet at the point of complete collapse. The enemy are still capable of concentrating their forces and using their organisations for oppression and can still attack the Movement strongly and violently, creating difficulties and obstacles for us. We may beat the enemy in one place, while they cause us losses elsewhere.

33. We are now having a tug-of-war with the enemy, but the time has not yet come for direct revolution, that is to say, the time has not yet come to overthrow directly the Administration of the Americans and DIK and win power for the people. During this period we must push ahead, build up, protect and develop the bases. Generally speaking we must firmly maintain the Movement on a legal footing, and not eliminate the enemy administration but only create difficulties for it. We are actively strengthening the struggle movement for the change from the period of tug-of-war to the period of direct revolution. For this, we need time.

34. To want impatiently to jump straight into the general uprising without taking any account of the relative forces is to commit the error of rashness and foolhardiness leading to violence and forcing us on to the defensive - a very dangerous thing.

35. The second reason is that a number of our comrades have not yet fully understood the direction in which the revolution in the South is progressing.
36. We are aiming in the direction of an armed general uprising to seize the administration in an enthusiastic fight. In order to fix this direction, the essential thing is that we must put forward a lively political struggle movement of the masses at all levels, as widely as possible, energetic, lively and strong.

37. Armed activities occupy a position which is auxiliary to the Movement. Armed forces and armed activities cannot replace the political forces and the political struggle of the masses.

38. In the past we have made the mistake of under-estimating the auxiliary role of armed activities. Today, generally speaking, we must strengthen armed activities to the right level, and at the same time we must avoid a dependent situation and carry out armed activity correctly.

39. The third reason is that we have not yet gone ahead actively with the work of educational propaganda on the Party's policies among the masses, and we have not yet made the masses understand fully the situation and the Party's present line. We have not yet paid sufficient attention to disseminating the Party line in the enemy's ranks, and still under-estimate the work of BINH-VAN and QUYEN-VIN (winning over soldiers, winning over the Administration).

III. What Must We Do Immediately?

40. We have many advantages. The Movement is in a position to advance.

41. At the same time the enemy are preparing and carrying out attacks on Party cells and the masses in the near future.

42. Faced with this situation, we must all energetically rouse ourselves, overcome the difficulties and lead the Movement forward along the course mapped out by the Party. Determination and an enlightened understanding of the course, policy, direction and strategy of the Party now have a vital significance.

43. We are now faced with several vital tasks:

(i) To strengthen energetically and continuously the political struggle movement of the masses, to win and preserve living and democratic rights for all classes of the people; to oppose taxes, to oppose collections of funds, to oppose the seizure of ancestral rice fields, to oppose the establishment of closer settlement areas, to oppose the enemy's forcing the people to go on guard, and to join reactionary organisations, to oppose terrorism and murder, to oppose conscription, to demand law and order, demand free labour and land to earn a living, buy and sell, to demand the abolition of harsh laws on which people are weighed down with obligations, to demand democratic elections for village administrations, etc. . . . . . . we must exert every effort to unite a really large number of the masses in the slogan campaign outlined above. Attention must be paid to the Movement in the farming villages and the towns, among the masses and among the soldiers and the staff of the Administration, in every class and sphere. We must recognize that the masses are enthusiastic and eager for our armed propaganda action and the confusion of the enemy which will carry the Movement forward in a lively and forceful manner everywhere.
(ii) To set in motion an attack on public opinion to arouse an atmosphere of widespread discussion among the masses of the people, to win the sympathy and support of public opinion, of every class, of the basic masses as well as of higher class masses, in the farming villages as well as in the towns, regarding armed self defence activities, punishment of the dishonest and wicked, and regarding the struggle Movement of the people. In many forms, we must build up a powerful public opinion which will pass judgement on the war mongering and terrorist policies of the Americans and DIEM, denouncing their savage crimes and making everybody recognise that the situation of increasing terrorism in the farming villages today is the result of the utterly reactionary policy of the Americans and DIEM, and demanding that the administration in the South should change its policy. Only by such a powerful attack on public opinion will we be able to extend opinion widely among the masses, and give everybody the correct view of the righteous cause, give the lie to the fabrications of the enemy and put them on the defensive, more obstructed than ever. Our work or guiding public opinion in the past has proceeded too slowly in comparison with developments in the situation. We must definitely overcome this serious shortcoming.

(iii) Continuously to strengthen armed propaganda activities, to make them follow closely, and quickly reach the same stage as the political struggle of the masses. We must thoroughly understand the course of action, military operations and the elimination of traitors of our armed forces. Propaganda is more important than military operations. Military operations and the elimination of traitors must be strictly limited, and armed propaganda activities must not be allowed to obstruct the struggle of the masses nor cause harm to the bases. We must ensure a legal standing for the masses. Generally speaking, we must prevent or correct every error, all indiscriminate actions, and widespread punishments. The work of armed propaganda must serve the work of mobilising the masses for the struggle, organising the masses, building up the Party and the Groups, the work of the Front, and the Binh Van.

(iv) To strengthen our work of winning over the people and the staffs of the Administration and enemy soldiers. To push ahead urgently with the work of winning over all classes in the farming villages and the towns. We must carry out the front strategy of the Party strictly and actively, and win over everyone who can be won over, and isolate our high-level enemies. At present we are in a very favourable position to develop our work of winning over the enemy's soldiers and administrative staff.
(v) To push ahead urgently with the task of consolidating and developing the Party, Groups, and the network of active key personnel. Generally speaking, in the past period we have paid too little attention to the work of building up bases, developing the forces of the Party and Groups, and the network of active key personnel. In the course of the struggle in the past many progressive elements have been discovered among the masses, and we are in a position to widen the ranks of the Revolution, and spread ever more widely the forces of leadership. All our comrades must realise clearly the importance of the work of building up and developing the bases and make every effort to achieve successful results. At the same time we must understand that the present policy for building up the Party is orderliness, secrecy, in a more (word illegible) manner, ensuring that the Party merges with the masses, and adheres closely to the masses throughout the whole period of the long drawn out struggle with the enemy, overcoming our errors in disclosing our forces. Secret comrades who have a legal position must be intelligent and hold on to their secret legal position, and must most emphatically not run after the armed propaganda forces, so that if they are arrested they can keep away from the masses (etc). The building up of cells which include overt comrades calls for caution, step-by-step planning, avoidance of impatience and carelessness, and the activity must aim at ensuring that the political struggle does not harm the secret bases of the Party. We must make every effort in order that the work of education and training is of high quality for cadres, Party members, Group members and masses.

44. Apart from the five major tasks listed above, we must at present deal with the following actual situation.

45. In a number of areas raised to a high level by the mass Movement the village council (TE), the heads of family Groups, spies, reactionary organizations like the National Revolutionary Movement (MONG-TRACO CACH-MONG QAC-GIA) Republican Youth (THAN-NIEN CONG-HOA) etc. have been broken up. There are villages which now have no Council (TE) or other reactionary organisation. There are villages which only have village Councils (TE), but they have withdrawn from the towns or posts. There are places where a few scattered enemy posts have run away. In a small number of areas the village Council (TE) have been broken up through our mistakes, and the Council (TE) machinery exists no longer.

46. What must we do to meet this situation?

(i) First and foremost we must affirm once more that in the present period we have not advocated the break-up of the village Council (TE), and have not advocated the abolition of the enemy's administrative machinery. The essential thing at present is to "shackle" the village Council (TE) (i.e. to make them unable to carry out the enemy's policy properly, destroy their prestige, limit their capacity to oppress the masses, reduce the number of evil elements in the Council (TE) machinery, and win over the majority who are wavering). We must nibble at the Council (TE) (i.e. ensure that the Council (TE) machinery is no longer intact, is under-staffed, and cannot cover all villages, so that it exists in some and not in others, with some branches un-staffed. However,
in places where it has either been broken up by us or abandoned by them, and there is now no adequate Council (TE) we advocate:- not to call the Council (TE) back, not to ask the arrangement of provincial authorities to re-establish the Council (TE). What we demand is a tug-of-war struggle with the enemy.

(ii) We must take active measures against this situation:

A. Before The Enemy Arrives

(a) Stabilise the thinking of the masses. Make the masses understand that the destruction of the Council (TE) will be brought about by an increase of our power while the enemy's power declines, and that this will be a major victory for us. We must take advantage of this situation to mobilise the masses to enthusiasm and confidence. Show the masses that it is possible for the enemy to re-establish the Council (TE). In the future, in these places, there are two possibilities. The first is that if they come back they may turn to terrorism and revenge, and the other is that if they return, they may be closer to the masses than before. While we must resist falling into a passive outlook, constantly seeing the enemy among the masses, we must avoid falling into the opposite error, that of alarming the masses, by overrating the enemy. If we merely emphasise that the enemy will return and terrorise them we will cause panic among the masses. And this we must avoid at all costs. Guide the masses to earn a living in a normal manner, to come and go normally, not to be afraid, not to run away. The masses must still maintain their legal status, keep their identity cards, still go to market in the chief towns, etc. Counter the enemy's propaganda, expose their arguments to uphold the justice of our cause and harden the spirit of the masses.

(b) Mobilise and win over the masses to an active struggle:

Mobilise the fighting spirit of the masses, give them confidence, determination, prepare them for the struggle against the enemy when the enemy come.

Organise the masses tightly, key groups (TE), active groups, progressive groups, and other forms of overt mass solidarity (overt organisations, etc.)

Give the masses guidance in advance in how to reply to the enemy when they come. The enemy will usually ask about armed forces, overt comrades, and exert pressure on the masses "who have associated with the VIP OUT CAMP" etc., to terrorise them. We must discuss with the masses in advance and prepare our arguments, perfectly logically, avoiding provocation but also avoiding submission to the enemy.
(c) Make our Party policy widely known among the soldiers, village Council (TE) and public servants. In the present favourable situation, we must make the soldier, Council (TE) and public servants understand clearly that our policy is to fight for peace, re-unification, independence and democracy, to demand an improvement in the standard of living of the masses, that the reason why we must have armed self-defence is because of the policy of cruel terrorism of the Americans and DI8M, and call on them to stand up and fight for their rights and join the Revolution, making them understand clearly that we will only punish evil individuals and units, and that these evil gangs are their enemies. Either directly or through their families, or by pamphlets, explain the above points. With regard to those stubborn individuals who have committed many crimes, but have now gone underground because they are afraid of the masses, we should follow a policy of toleration (and we must also ensure that the masses understand this policy of toleration). We should describe their crimes, urge them to come back and lead an honest life. But we must make every effort to be on the alert against these people. They may have run away from rear of the masses (but they may, if the situation changes come out and strike a blow at the movement), or it may be an enemy trick to send them in to keep an eye on us. Therefore we must stipulate firmly that only overt comrades are to have anything to do with these people, and they are only to be allowed to have any contact with legal masses and the masses must never under any circumstances disclose any secrets to them. Plans must be made to keep a close watch on them, and a constant one, as discreetly as possible.

(a) Maintain our line of action in these places. Our activities in the villages must be as discreet as possible. Our line of action in these places is unchanged, i.e. overt legal activities are the most important, and are combined with semi-legal and illegal activities. We must mobilise the masses individually to join our armed and traitor-elimination forces. The comrades, group members, key personnel and active members are not overt, and will still work in accordance with the non-overt system, and still maintain their legal status. The comrades, group members, key personnel and active members will also not travel around at random, indiscriminate contacts would expose the secret comrades and expose the masses. The enemy reaction may be strong or weak when they return, the vital thing is whether we now carry out the Party's methods and policy correctly or not.

B. When The Enemy Come

(a) Lead the masses in the fight against terrorism. The forms and methods of resistance to terrorism will be the same as in the past. The important thing is to bring into the political struggle large numbers of the masses.
(b) With regard to the masses, we must have definite plans for their guidance, when the enemy first arrive we must bring up the old men and women into the struggle, the young men and women, and the middle aged, depending on the situation, can be kept apart temporarily, especially those who are more or less suspect. Those who are kept apart will come back gradually. The following errors are to be avoided:-

When the enemy arrive everybody joins in the struggle. In this case there is the possibility of arrest by the enemy and losses for the masses.

Those who are temporarily kept apart will return at once, and go straight into illegal activities. This is most disadvantageous and must be avoided.

(c) If the enemy bring the Council (TE) back we should not resist but should put forward demands for democratic elections and the selection of local men. But if they bring back the old evil gang and a new gang of criminals we must determinedly fight against them. If the relationship between the forces does not permit this, some way must be found of restricting the evil gang, and efforts made to bring in people comparatively more apathetic.

(d) With regard to the Council (TE) in the smaller villages (AP) we must struggle in the same way as in the larger village (M) but there are regions where we must try not to let the enemy establish these Councils (TE). (Whether this can be done or not will depend on whether the masses are strong or weak). Reactionary organisations are to be boycotted. If our forces are weak, then the limitation of these organisations a. that they do not operate among the masses will be the responsibility of the executive committee in the larger villages only.

C. Armed Self-Defence Activities.

Alongside the political struggle we must make efforts to strengthen armed self-defence activities according to the line described in the earlier part. The following points must also be noted:-

Consolidate the village self-defence units especially as regards quality and at the same time raise the standard of operational techniques.

The self-defence units must participate as an auxiliary to the political struggle Movement, opposing terrorism, releasing cadres and masses who have been arrested and attack evil units (naturally they will carefully weigh the prospects).
In eliminating criminals we must be right on the target, not striking at random, not opening an excessively wide field of punishment. Education must be the principal objective. Only in cases of reluctance should there be punishment.

The self-defence units must not concern themselves only with the elimination of criminals, their most important task is to take part in the work of educational propaganda, in organising the masses, in mobilising the masses to struggle with the Party Group organisation and the system of key personnel and active members.

Dear Comrades,

47. The situation is in many ways favourable, but at the same time we face many difficulties.

48. We are confident that if we steadily and with determination carry out strictly and thoroughly the resolutions of the Party, we will without fail carry forward the Revolutionary Movement in the South to many further victories.

49. With this impetus from us the people of NAMBO will certainly shorten the period of the tag-of-war stage, and quickly sweep the Revolution in the South onwards to a new period, the period of the direct overthrow of our enemies and the fulfilment of the democratic national revolution.

50. Under the glorious leadership of the Central Executive Committee of the Party and Chairman HG all comrades will press forward courageously.

51. The Regional Committee sends to all comrades friendly greetings and the will to win.

NAMBO, 28. 4. 60

Regional Committee.