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# HANOI'S STRATEGY OF TERROR

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# FOREWORD

**D**uring 1969, the Communist Vietcong were responsible for nearly 11,000 terrorist incidents in South Vietnam, in which about 22,000 civilians were killed or wounded. In addition, the Communists abducted more than 8,000 civilians.

Despite the heavy casualties among the civil population, the Vietcong terror campaign does not seem to have weakened the people's faith in South Vietnam's Government. On the contrary, terrorism has focussed the people's attention on the ruthless tactics of the Vietcong and has strengthened their conviction that security and freedom are best attained within a democratic framework.

This booklet—which attempts to explain the reasons for the Communists' use of terror as a tool of warfare—is an edited version of "The Viet Cong Strategy of Terror", a monograph written by Douglas Pike for the United States Mission, Vietnam, in February, 1970.

An experienced observer of the Vietnam scene, the author is a United States Foreign Service Officer, but his opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of his government.

# Communist Aims

**T**HE goal of the Communists in Vietnam is unification of North and South Vietnam under the Communist banner. Their leaders have reiterated this goal in virtually every speech since 1954. It is implicit in their every act, in Vietnam or in Paris [at the Vietnam peace talks]. To most South Vietnamese, this is what the war in Vietnam is all about. The issue is not peace, the issue is forced unification.

In seeking their objective over the years the Communists have employed various grand strategies:

- Unification by relying on French diplomacy (1954-58).

- Unification by fostering anarchy, chaos and social pathology in South Vietnam (1959-64).

- Unification by big-unit war, i.e., 130 battalions of North Vietnamese soldiers in South Vietnam, doing 80 per cent of the day-to-day combat (1965-present).

Through the years the struggle in Vietnam has had a dual character, in effect it has been two wars. One war, in Communist terminology the *armed struggle*, pitted the Liberation Army and later the North Vietnamese Army against the South Vietnamese Army and later the Allied armies.

This kind of combat is as old as war itself—contending armies each trying to destroy the other. It is an adjunct to the more central war, the *political struggle*\*

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\* *Political struggle as defined by the Communists does not preclude the shedding of blood; it would be more accurate to use, in English, the term non-military violence programme.*

waged on the Communist side by various specially-created organizations collectively (and inaccurately) termed by the world the Vietcong.

The individual fighting this other war is the man in the black pyjama of the Vietnamese peasant. His mission is to steal people away from the government. His concern is almost exclusively control of the people, as distinguished from the big-unit war, where the concern is "control" of the enemy's army. He seeks to achieve this through programmes designed to control the people, programmes augmented and made possible by as much (and as little) military effort as is required.

## Population Control

Control of the people, and here we are chiefly concerned with the two-thirds or so of the population living in the nation's villages, is sought through a number of specific methods. One means is enmeshing the villager in a network of social movements and organizations which develop social pressures to keep the dissenter in line, probably the most powerful force in any society.

Another is through intensive communication efforts: education, "thought reform", agitation, propaganda. A third means is coercion, force and terror. All, and others besides, are essential to the system.

To understand fully their use by Communists, one must understand the political and social instruments through which the Communists work. This apparatus includes the party, the various military elements, the popular front organization and mutual interest groups. All are engaged in various types of programmes. All of these programmes contain elements of terror, not as

a capricious addition, but as an integral part. In short, the Communists operate a population control system resting in part on terror.

This does not mean a system in which terror is dominant, all pervasive and always at the forefront. Quite the contrary. What is vital to the system is not terror which has been employed. Terror employed, at that point and in that particular case, must be put down as a programme failure. What is vital is the underpinning of terror, the ominous spectre always hovering in the background; ideally, threatening but never emerging. Of course credibility demands periodic demonstrations that one still is able and willing to use terror.

Too often Communist terror is portrayed in simplistic terms: viciousness for its own sake, terror simply to terrorize, the Communists presented as sub-human sadists indifferent to the blood on their hands. Those who paint it thus do a disservice to truth and a greater one to understanding.

The average Communist in Vietnam thinks of his system not in moral but in utilitarian terms. He finds terror to be the single greatest advantage he has over the government, one which he credits for making possible most of his successes. This being the case, he can intellectualize and semanticize its use and easily come to regard himself as a finer person than those whom he terrorizes.

It has become an axiom for the Communists that their successes are a direct function of the degree of people's sense of insecurity: the greater the insecurity, the better their prospects. This is well known and fully understood at all Communist levels. Insecurity is not

exactly the same as terror, but is closely allied to it. Conversely, for the government, the more security the brighter its prospects. To the government, security is not exactly the same as organization, but it is its heart.

Thus, in effect, the tool of the Communists in establishment control consists of those programmes which terrorize, just as the indispensable device of the government, also seeking to establish control, is organization. This is not to suggest that terror is the only concern of the Communists any more than that the only concern of the government is organization. In each case it is the respective essence. All Communist programmes therefore have development of insecurity/terror as their centre.

A frank word is required here about "terror" on the other side, by the government and the Allied forces fighting in Vietnam. No one with any experience in Vietnam denies that troops, police and others commanding physical power, have committed excesses that are, by our working definition, acts of terror. No one can justify there, no one can condone them. They are wrong and beyond atonement. The heat of battle is no excuse. Neither is the argument that every army, now or in history, has been similarly guilty.

But there is an essential difference in such acts between the two sides, one of outcome or result. To the Communist, terror has utility and is beneficial to his cause, while to the other side the identical act is self-defeating. This is not because one side is made up of heroes and the other of villains. It is because, as noted above, terror is integral in all the Communist tactics and programmes and the Communists could not rid themselves of it if they wanted to.

Meanwhile, the other side firmly believes, even though its members do not always behave accordingly, that there is a vested interest in abstaining from such acts.

One might remark that terror from passion is the same as terror from policy, but in fact there is a world of difference: the difference of one side seeking to maximize its use and the other seeking to eliminate it from its ranks.

## Rationale

Two devices are employed constantly and intensively by the Communists in verbalizing their use of terror: semantics and legalisms.

The Communists choose their words most carefully when writing or talking about what we here define as terror, and it is virtually impossible to condemn them out of their own mouths by quoting them. A whole range of terms and words are studiously avoided. In print especially the subject of Communist violence is treated delicately, alluded to, or circumnavigated.

Communist writers are masters of the technique of writing around a subject, leaving the desired impression without ever dealing directly with it. Something of the nature and flavour of this exercise in semantics is contained in the following examples taken from Communist announcements and reports.

● **Blowing up Saigon Police Headquarters.** "At 0830 hours on August 16 a commando unit of the Liberation Army, Saigon-Gia Dinh area, attacked valiantly the Saigon puppet administration's Directorate General

of National Police at the intersection of Vo Tanh street and Cong Hoa Boulevard... The hooligan police faced with the violent attack dared not resist and their losses were very heavy... This was an appropriate blow directed at these lackeys of the Americans, notorious for their dishonesty, wickedness and cruelty." (*Radio Liberation*, August 21, 1965).

● **Execution of two American prisoners of war.** The punishment on September 26 of U.S. Captain Humbert R. Versace and Sgt. Kenneth M. Roarback is a fully justified act, severe and well deserved... a proper protest against the Fascist sentence and execution by the lackey government of three patriots [convicted by the South Vietnam Government (GVN) of terror acts]. To prevent further such crimes on the part of the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen the NLF [the National Liberation Front, the Communist front organisation] has carried out its severe verdict against the aggressors. (*Nhan Dan* the Communist Party newspaper as quoted by *Hanoi Radio*, September 28, 1965).

● **Killing of civilians.** "We never did it without reason. We advised people who worked with the government to stop. Some of them were very stubborn. We would warn them three times, but still some refused to leave the government side. Since they stayed with the government, it meant they supported the government's Fascist suppression efforts. So they deserved to be punished."\*

● **Killing government social welfare workers.** "The (enemy) is concentrating its greatest efforts against the

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\* Remarks to the author by hoi chanh, (a person who comes under the GVN Chieu Hou or National Reconciliation Programme) chief of assassination unit, My Tho province, November, 1969.

countryside. It is trumpeting about the vanguard role of the so-called Revolutionary Development groups. These are people who are given a quick training course to turn them into hunting dogs to operate under the cover of cultural, educational and social welfare work, using intimidation and demagogy... We are attacking and punishing these cadres right in their dens or when they crawl out to spray their poison...." (*Radio Liberation*, April 5, 1969).

● **Killing government civil servants.** Smash the enemy pacification scheme... The U.S.-puppet vile terrorist methods have given (our) self-defence armed combatants new urgent tasks, which are to heighten vigilance..., wipe out enemy spy organizations, maintain security for compatriots... (Our people) have relentlessly demonstrated their gallantry, steadfastness, resourcefulness, determination and boldness." (*Radio Liberation*, December 5, 1968).

Note the absence of any words that imply terror. In Communist output (and this is generally true of internal documents circulated only among party members as well as published statements) one is seldom shot or decapitated; he is *punished* or the *Front has exercised its power*. The victim is never a civil servant but a *puppet repressor*, or a *cruel element*; never a policeman but a *secret agent* or a *lackey henchman*. One is not an American, Korean or Thai, but an *imperialist aggressor* or *imperialist aggressor lackey*. One is not a member of a political or religious group opposing the Communists but a *key reactionary* or *recalcitrant elements* (when more than one) in an *oppressive organization*. Always *cruel Fascists* are *brought to justice* or *criminal acts against patriots avenged* or the *Front has carried out its severe*

*verdict against the aggressors*, not that non-combatants have been slaughtered. Such is the language that can rationalize use of terror.

The second device employed is the facade of legalism. It is no accident that the head of the NLF is a lawyer. Or that the NLF has carried on extensive public communication over the years with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a Communist-front group, including sending representatives to each of its meetings, even those in Central Africa.

All Communist efforts in South Vietnam are cast in terms of having a judicial base. A codified system always is intimated, even though none exists. Assassinations are carried out after a "trial" in a "people's court". The "verdict" is handed down and then "implemented". For an example of this effort to create an image of code-based law, consider the tone and language of two public pronouncements, the first dealing with the execution of the two American prisoners cited earlier:

"Faced with this situation (GVN execution of Communist terrorists), the NLF could not let the U.S. aggressors and their lackeys go unpunished. Logically, the U.S. aggressors captured by us should have been brought before people's courts for trial long before, because they illegally invaded our country and committed many crimes against our people... To punish the U.S. aggressors and their lackeys for having massacred our compatriots indiscriminately, the Liberation Armed Forces command ordered the punishment of the two aforementioned U.S. aggressors." (*Nhan Dan*, as quoted by *Hanoi Radio*, September 28, 1965).

The second:

"In order to severely punish the reactionary agents and spies, defend the revolutionary power and safeguard the people's lives and property, the people's courts of Ca Mau and Can Tho provinces recently held public trials of the reactionary agents and spies who had created disturbances and undermined public safety in the liberated area." (Radio Liberation, February 24, 1969).

This is the language of law, seeking to convey the aura of the courtroom, the judicial process at work. It is a constantly-employed screen with which the Communists hope to avoid the stigma of illegality for their terror-based programmes.

# Communist-Controlled Villages

**S**OME 400 villages of the 2,500 total in South Vietnam, chiefly in the more remote parts of the country (and incorporating about 10 per cent of the population) are under Communist control and it is the programmes in these villages that we seek to examine briefly here.

Some of these villages have been under more or less continual Communist control for a generation and have come to be something of an enclave Communist society. Not a great deal is known about life in these villages but it is known that certain social institutions have changed considerably—production and marketing of rice, the parent-child relationship, the nature of social organization, for example.

In this sub-society the aims are: internal order, external security, expansion of geographic size, revolutionary justice and mutual welfare, in that order. Its economics are semi-collectivist with considerable socialist competition. Its political tools are custom and terror. Its cloak of authority, party ceremony and symbolism. Political obedience exists in these villages because of villager self-interest and habit resting on fear and force with outward manifestation of inertia, deference, sympathy or numbed resignation.

A host of social organizations at the village level enmesh the villager in a web of social control. Strong

social sanctions—physical, psychological and economic—are used to force conformity. There is no escape except to flee the village for the government area. This villagers have done by the tens of thousands. Most of the so-called refugees in Vietnam are not refugees from battle but are self-displaced war victims, having as much attempted to escape the repressive hand of the Communists in their villages as to escape dangers of war. “Refugees” do not come from secure government-controlled areas.

The Communists portray the “liberated village” as a sort of peaceful, tranquil Shangri La where not only hostility but even animosity has vanished and the only worry is the intrusion of the government. Those who come from such villages, however, depict them as places of never-ending “urgent tasks of revolution.” Cadres constantly harangue villages to raise more food for the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN), who are soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army serving in the South; to engage in corvée labour such as transporting supplies for the military; to join local “self-defence” units; to buy more “war bonds” or pay more “national defence taxes”; to root out spies. These are merely some of the tasks in a never-ending list.

Authority in the village is essentially negative, denying the government access to the villagers. Adjudication of non-political internal disputes is handled casually by local committees. All else, especially anything involving security, is handled by district level cadres virtually as they please. Such a cadre is judge, jury and executioner rolled into one. Freed prisoners from Communist “jails” have told bonechilling stories of Communist justice in action. The most grievous crime

is "spying" which can be any act the Communists decide is hostile. Cadres, as well as the *apparat* as a whole, have developed a paranoid preoccupation with spies in recent years.

Any suspect may be arrested by any cadre. He is then handed over to the district level political officer along with his dossier and a bill of indictment. He goes before a "People's Court" which tries and sentences him—to death or imprisonment. Usually the death penalty must be approved by provincial officials. District cadres may sentence persons to prison or detention up to one month. Longer sentences must be approved by provincial officials. An exception is "anyone who uses force to prevent the people's will... he may be executed on the spot by the district cadre..."\*

To handle a rather large volume of villagers who are suspected of harbouring anti-Communist thoughts and are therefore not to be trusted, but who have committed no known act of "spying," a "sentence of surveillance", which is in effect house arrest, has been devised. A captured directive described its operation:

"The following persons should immediately be put under the sentence of surveillance: Those enemies of society whose arrest and execution or imprisonment would not be beneficial to the Revolution; those guilty of being enemies of society who have not repented but whose cases are not so serious as to warrant imprisonment; former inmates of (Communist) prisons who have not repented. Names of all persons under surveillance sentence must be sent immediately to district cadres. Persons in this category must make a public confession

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\* Numerous descriptions exist in captured documents, this one came from the *Makong Delta*, circa 1965.

and denounce their accomplices. They must present themselves every 15 days to the village security cadre and make a public report on their re-education progress. They must perform forced labour to redeem themselves. The surveillance sentence can last up to two years at the end of which time the person, if still unredeemed, will be tried by a People's Court."

Thought reform sessions were introduced by Northern cadres in 1966 and have since become a standard institution in the areas tightly controlled by the Communists. The magnitude of the effort is indicated by one captured document from the zonal level (roughly 10 provinces) in the Mekong Delta in which it was reported that 2,700 people in a three-month period had taken the district-level "thought reform course".

The system employed with such people is as follows: He (or she) is persuaded to go voluntarily to a district level camp established for the specific purpose of thought reform. If he refuses he is taken under guard. The "classes" in the camp run from two weeks to a month, after which the individual, if reformed, is allowed to return home. If he indicates he is not "reformed" he is run through the course again. If he still remains recalcitrant (and one wonders why he would not overtly go along with his captors) he is sentenced to jail at the provincial level. A person who is allowed to return home finds that his relatives have been notified ahead of his arrival that they will be held accountable for his behaviour. This is the so-called double-hostage system, also employed in the military ranks (if a son serving the Communist forces deserts, his parents will be punished; if they do not support the cause, the son will suffer).

Captured records describe individual villagers who have been sent through the thought reform course several times. One report described a villager in these words: "He remained totally unrepentant, continued to work for the enemy by creating confusion in the village and doubt (about Communists)."

One cannot help but wonder about such a person, his motivation, his source of courage, his stubborn refusal even to pretend to bow before those who have a life-death hold on him. How many of these have gone defiantly to the firing squad we do not know. How many remain to fight we do not know. But in such is the great untold story of this Vietnam war. Such a person is by any standard an authentic hero of that war. Alone, in silence, facing incredible odds, with no very great hope of accomplishing much, he fights on against the deadly Communist *apparat* in the most dangerous arena of all, the Communist-controlled village.

# The Contested Village

**T**HE true battleground in the "other war" is the so-called contested village, with its struggle for power between the Communists and the government, between the two contending programmes resting on two separate bases.

The Communist programmes now are chiefly defensive. They seek to blunt and nullify the government efforts known as Revolutionary Development or as the pacification programme. Revolutionary development or pacification is not so much a programme as a concept, alternative generic terms covering a whole host of specific programmes, which range over the entire social, political and economic spectrum in Vietnam.

Included are the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) or amnesty programme; specific offers of *doan ket* or national reconciliation to higher ranking cadres who quit the Communist side (offers including everything from money to specific political posts, but made to cadres as individuals, not as members of the NLF); organization of the People's Self-Defence Force, which is a new village defence group, static in concept, composed chiefly of youth under draft age and of old men—an armed homeguard; the local election programme under which the villagers choose the people who run affairs in their villages through a council; economic development in the rural areas, chiefly through improved methods of rural credit and marketing as well as introduction of innovations in agricultural technology; and finally, increased communication efforts with focus on better two-way communi-

cation between leaders and led, between the village and Saigon.

This is what is meant by Revolutionary Development or pacification. This is the gauntlet thrown down by the government, an organizational offensive which the Communists seek to destroy.

The attention paid by the Communists to this challenge is relatively new. In the years after the big-unit war began, in 1965, the Communists allocated few resources to disrupt the various government programmes in the countryside. Their focus was military. Part of the trauma of the Tet Communist offensive in February, 1968, was the high Communist casualty total, which caused the leadership to reassess its doctrine of victory through big-unit war. And part of the trauma, a reflection of those personnel losses, was a resounding improvement (from the government view) in the security condition of the country-side especially in late 1968 and early 1969. The Pacification Programme, which previously had not been taken seriously, gradually assumed major significance for the Communists. A full-scale attack on it is under way, and in fact, one could approach all present Communist programmes in the contested villages in these terms. For example, *hoi chanh* (especially officers) are sought by large numbers of "defector-hunting teams" who would otherwise be engaged in combat.

Whereas the Communists previously made little effort to prevent villagers from becoming "refugees" (and may in some instances have encouraged it, to add a further burden on the government), now considerable effort is made to prevent them from leaving their home area; in fact this is the primary duty of many main

force companies in the Mekong Delta. Resettlement camps are harassed, or worse.

The People's Self-Defence Force is a primary target, as might be expected. It is an impediment to Communist tax collectors and recruiters, but equally important, since it is from and of the village it defends, it serves there as a stabilizing and unifying force.

Village elections, also ignored at first by the Communists, now are physically disrupted. The government's social welfare projects occupy the attention of several thousand Communist cadres whose only duty is to disrupt them, sometimes employing terror that is beyond explanation; consider, for example, what could have been the policy decision behind an act such as this:

"They (the Communists) are particularly interested in closing schools (in this area). For example, last month an armed propaganda team stopped a local school bus on a side road one morning and told the driver the children were not to attend school any more. The driver conveyed this message to the parents who could not believe the Communists were serious. The bussing continued until a few days later when the same team stopped the same bus, took off a little girl and cut off her fingers. The school has been closed since." (Official report, February, 1969).

Revolutionary Development is attacked chiefly through its personnel—the cadres specially trained at a school at Vung Tau or the individuals who are part of the various programmes at the village level. Revolu-

tionary Development cadres and other governmental officials working in the countryside are first targets for assassination, either directly or following kidnapping.

The second most important target—and certainly not a new one—is key individuals in the villages—not just officials, but the natural village leaders, those individuals who hold no office but who, because of age, sagacity or strength of character, are the ones to whom people turn for advice and look to for leadership. They may be religious figures, school teachers or simply people of integrity and honour. Because they are superior individuals they are the Communists' most deadly enemy. Steadily, quietly and with a systematic ruthlessness, the Communists in 10 years have wiped out virtually a whole class of Vietnamese villagers, and many villages today are devoid of natural leaders. Natural leaders are perhaps the single most important element in any society, representing a human resource of incalculable value. This loss to Vietnam is inestimable; its replacement will take a generation or more.

Specifically there are 15 types of South Vietnamese who come within the scope of the assassination programme. This "Fifteen Categories" list has been frequently found among captured documents; the language varies slightly, but this typical:

"1. Enemy personnel in fields of espionage, police, public security, special forces psywar (psychological warfare), including covert organizations.

"2. Members of reactionary political parties and organizations, and parties working behind a religious front.

"3. Members of enemy military and para-military organizations.

"4. Puppet government officials, from inter-family level upwards.

"5. Leading and key popular organization leaders (i.e., village organizations such as farm co-operatives, women's and youth organizations; trade unions).

"6. Members of the enemy's cultural, art, propaganda and Press establishment.

"7. Leading and key members of religious organizations still deeply superstitious.

"8. Thieves, assassins, gangsters, prostitutes, speculators and fortune-tellers.

"9. Defectors who have given information to the enemy, who have taken with them automatic weapons or important documents, or who are suspected of having done same; or who were cadres or officers.

"10. Members of the exploiter class and their spouses who have not specifically sided with the workers. (The Communists in Vietnam as elsewhere divide society into exploiter and exploited.)

"11. Individuals with backward political tendencies, including those who do dishonest and corrupt deeds, yet try to justify them.

"12. Relatives of persons engaged in enemy espionage, security, special forces or psywar organizations; relatives of important members or leaders of reactionary political parties or religious groups still deeply superstitious; families of military above the rank of private;

members of families of government officials from village level upwards.

"13. Relatives of persons who have been punished by the Revolution (i.e., in earlier years) and who subsequently have grumbled about the Revolution; relatives of those jailed by the Revolution for spying.

"14. Deserters or AWOL's [those who go "absent without leave"] who have returned to the Revolution but without clear explanation (i.e., who may be government penetration agents.)

"15. Individuals with suspicious background or record of past activity."

It has been estimated that this list, if strictly applied to all of South Vietnam, would total at least three million. This probably is what Col. Tran Van Dac, the highest ranking *hoi chanh*, meant when he said in Saigon in February, 1969: "There are three million South Vietnamese on the (Communist) blood debt list."

## In the Urban Areas

The Communist calculation (basic Maoism) has always been that assault on individuals, as individuals and as key members of organizations, should begin in the villages and work its way up through district and provincial levels until finally a direct attack is made on the establishment in Saigon. For this reason there never has been as concerted an assassination effort as might be expected in the more secure areas, which include most cities. As far as can be determined only recently did the Communists begin a concerted effort to assassinate

cabinet-level government officials. Before this such attempts were regarded as "adventurism", wasteful of resources even if successful. Now there are indications this is changing. Attempts in 1969 were made on the lives of two cabinet-level officials, one of them successful. From reports of Communist training camp activities it can be expected that there will be a step-up in urban terror, especially kidnapping and assassinations.

# Doctrine

**T**HE public rationale for use of terror employed by the Communists is that the enemy has permitted no alternative. Such justification, or any other for that matter, never has been an easy matter among the rank and file. The natural abhorrence of Vietnamese for systematic assassination was and is a major and continuous doctrinal problem to the cadres. To the locally recruited especially, even the use of force seems both repugnant and unnecessary. Among the more sophisticated cadres, especially those from the South, there was widespread belief that victory could be obtained by political struggle alone and would not require terror. The response by the leadership to this view was to mix thoroughly the violence programme and the political struggle and to call the result political. It also involved administering massive doses of indoctrination to cadres to convince them that victory could be achieved only through force and violence.

The doctrinal underpinnings for use of terror have tended to shift over the years. The present doctrine seems to be that terror is required to achieve three major proximate objectives :

- 1. Terror to diminish the opposing force**, both in the sense of eliminating key individuals and in reducing the totality of power which the other side has accumulated. Terror weakens greatly and that is the single most important gain the Communists achieve in its use. This is a hard objective with little of the fuzzy psychological considerations of other objectives. A person is kidnapped

and killed or is assassinated: gone not only is an individual, but a service, a resource, an asset which the enemy had and now is without. From a doctrinal standpoint any one in any of the 15 categories is someone that the country would be well rid of and that is excuse enough for his removal. But there are limiting factors. One is expediency: one does not kill a prominent "neutralist" because the party currently is wooing neutralists. Nor is it as easy to kidnap, say, a province chief, as an outsider might assume, and the mortality rate on would-be assassins (as well as the failure rate on assassinations) has been exceedingly high.

Therefore cost is a factor; the price must be worth it. A kind of priority exists. The criterion followed is: How much power is subtracted from the other side. From this, for example, follows the policy that it is better to kill a Vietnamese official than his American advisor since: "If we destroy the Americans, they are capable of bringing in replacements. But (it is) difficult to find replacements for the experienced old foxes (i. e., GVN officials) who are familiar with the local situation." (Captured document dated March, 1967.) The measure of this objective: it contributes to the cause to the degree that it diminishes the force opposite.

**2. Terror to sustain Communist morale.** This may not be considered by outsiders as a serious objective. But a guerrilla leader knows that the morale of his followers is far more ephemeral and subject to greater swings from euphoria to dysphoria than is the morale of regular soldiers. And he knows that a sense of impotency is the most debilitating thought that can infect his men and drive morale down to the point where he dare not commit them to action. Always the guerrilla

sees himself alone, beleaguered, surrounded, out-numbered. Initially terror builds confidence; later it sustains morale. Nothing so sends guerrilla morale soaring, and wipes out past feelings of despondency and doubt, as a shattering blow delivered the enemy in his lair, one expertly planned, faultlessly executed and culminating in unscathed escape. In a moment the enemy's great fire power, his overwhelming numbers, his huge logistic base, shrink into unimportance. Whether the blow the terrorist struck was little more than inconvenience to the enemy does not matter. Prowess is demonstrated; invulnerability again proven. The caution, of course, and the worry to the leader in serving this objective, is that the act must be perfect. If it is botched, he is far worse off than if he had never attempted it.

**3. Terror to disorient and psychologically isolate the individual.** Terror is a rot in the social fabric. Terror to disorient and isolate relates directly to the Communist subliminal goal: raising the level of the people's sense of insecurity. The Communists need only a single index to measure their progress (assuming it can be measured objectively)—a people's anxiety-level graph. If it goes up and stays high long enough, the Communists will have won; if it goes down and stays there, they will have lost. Obviously, and even by definition, nothing serves to increase a sense of individual insecurity as does terror.

But here we are also concerned with the social context, what terror does to the relationship of the individual to his society. An assassination in a village not only frightens a villager but it destroys part of the structure which previously was a source of security. Terror of any sort shifts the ground strangely, as an

earthquake. It removes the underpinnings of the elderly system leaving confusion as much as fear. A civilian expects safety and order in his society and when it vanishes he becomes disoriented. Terror isolates. An individual can no longer draw strength from customary social support. He can rely only on himself. Physically he may be untouched by a terror act, but because of it he is suddenly terribly alone and in anguish. A terrorized village, said an American psychiatrist in Vietnam, is a case of collective anxiety neurosis, the victim seeking only relief. The victim, in this case the village, stops behaving as a normal social unit; each individual is fragmented within, searching desperately to fix his own personal security. When this happens, the third Communist proximate objective has been served.

These programmes and doctrine are the face of Communism which the Vietnamese people in the past decade have come to know well. Much water and blood have flowed beneath the bridge. The Vietnamese people are wiser, and sadder, even if the world is not. How outsiders can assume they would prefer Communism to an extension of the security being brought them by the government is a universal and never-ending puzzlement to all in Vietnam, Vietnamese and foreigners alike.

The impression with which one is left, following a survey of Communist terror uses, is that its effectiveness as a political and psychological weapon has been over-rated by the Communist leadership. Despite intensive efforts, the villagers' sense of insecurity is not driven upwards or, if it is, refuses to stay there. The villagers' anxiety is converted into hatred and increasingly they have taken calculated risks to strike back; the nominally indifferent Buddhist leader is incensed and angered

by Communist rockets dropping into a school yard; the average man's reaction is no longer fear, but anger.

Yet the Communist leaders are prisoners of their own policy. If they were to eliminate terror as a base they might win worldwide commendation but would commit suicide; and theirs is a power struggle, not a popularity contest. There will be increased efforts to terrorize but with diminished effect.

One also concludes that to end the military defence in Vietnam, to halt opposition to these Communist programmes, would not, as has often been suggested, bring an end to the long suffering that has been the plight of the Vietnamese people. Considering the integral part terror plays in Communist social change, it does not follow that the quick and sure route to peace, to a moratorium on death, is to permit the Communists to assume power.



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