MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

By: Colonel Edward G. Lansdale,
   Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations

Subject: "Pacification" in Vietnam

This memo is in response to a recent request from CINCUSARPAC for information on this subject, to facilitate CAMG planning for PACOM countries. Apparently no reports or documents on the subject are available in the Pentagon. The information below is drawn from personal experience, including that of Chief, National Security Division, Training Relations & Instruction Mission (TRIM), Vietnam. TRIM was a combined French-U.S. mission commanded by Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Chief MAAG-Vietnam.

Situation After Geneva.

The problem facing the Free Vietnamese in late 1954 was how to establish their government in areas south of the 17th Parallel held by the Communist Vietminh. The Cease-Fire Agreement, signed by the French and Vietminh at Geneva 20 July 1954, provided for the withdrawal of Vietminh located south of the 17th Parallel by increments--specific assembly points were designated, with specific dates for withdrawal (mostly to sea ports for sea transport to North Vietnam). There were four such assembly areas south of the 17th Parallel, with varying deadlines (from 20 July 1954):

- Xuyen-Moc, Ham-Tan Area ............................................. 80 days
- Central Vietnam (Quang-Ngai, Einh-Dinh) Area - first increment 80 days
- Plaine des Joncs Area .................................................. 100 days
- Central Vietnam - second increment ................................ 100 days
- Camau Area ............................................................... 200 days
- Central Vietnam Area ................................................. 300 days

These areas had experienced 8 years of war. Bridges were blown, highways destroyed by cross-ditching, railroad lines sabotaged, the economy at a standstill (rice lands fallow, transport destroyed, markets in ruins), and disease and hunger were rampant. In addition, as the Vietminh withdrew openly, they left stay-behind organizations for covert political, psychological, and para-military operations. It was the evident Communist intent to continue domination of South Vietnam secretly.

The Geneva Agreement of 20 July 1954 was specific concerning the peaceful measures to be employed in the take-over of these areas. This meant that something different had to be devised other than the "pacification" measures of the French Army during the years of war (such as those started with the Tonkinese in 1950 in the Red River Delta and Operation "Atlante" in Central Vietnam in 1954--French Army officers familiar with such operations include Brig. Gen. Jean Carbonnel, former Chief of Staff of TRIM, and Col. Jean Roman-Defosses, my former Deputy at TRIM).
The Free Vietnamese had just started governing themselves. There were only a few trained, experienced government administrators. 80% of the Vietnamese civil service personnel were in the capital city of Saigon; largely experienced as minor functionaries under French administrators, they were mostly city-dwellers with no desire to accept government positions out in the "wild", troubled countryside of the provinces.

The only nation-wide organization in the Vietnamese government was its National Army. Its battalions were stationed throughout the country, with communications to headquarters in the national capital, and with an officer corps with some training and experience in leadership and administration; nearly all field grade officers had college educations (a rarity in Vietnam then). Thus, it was decided to make use of the Vietnamese National Army, as fully as possible, in extending the administration of the government in Saigon over the provinces, including areas from which the Communist Vietminh were withdrawing under the Geneva Agreement.

Unfortunately, there were complications in using the Army for this extending of central government authority. During the first 100 days period after the Geneva Agreement, there was considerable plotting within the Army to overthrow the government (led by the Chief of Staff, General Hinh, and marked by murders of officers, rebellion of units, desertions, etc.). The loyalty of the Army to President Ngo dinh Diem had to be established; this was finally accomplished in December 1954.

Another complication was equally serious. The Army was typical of forces in Asia and the Mid-East, used to imposing its will on civilians by force of arms and weakened by poor logistics (which in turn offered opportunities to some grafting officers). The result was that the man in uniform was not the best representative of the new government—he was accustomed to mistreating civilians at checkpoints and to obtaining his food gratis from civilians by the weapons he carried. The National Army soldier was in sharp contrast to the Vietminh soldier who served under "iron discipline" and who conscientiously made friends with civilians as a helpful comrade, to fulfill the Chinese Communist dictum that "the people are the water and the soldier is the fish".

Early Measures.

Under informal American auspices, (usually in my house, at my personal invitation), meetings were held in August 1954 between Vietnamese government officials and Vietnamese Army staff officers, to work out a modus vivendi for establishing the government throughout South Vietnam. The provision of neutral (American) "good offices" permitted bringing together officials who were deeply suspicious of each other (including staff officers who were plotting a coup and government ministers who would be targets of the coup). An uneasy team of Vietnamese civil and military officials was formed. "Indians" who would carry the brunt of the work for the "chiefs" were selected and taken, under American guidance, to the Philippines for first-hand observance of Philippines Army-Government team-work in stabilizing former Communist Huk areas. (The operations of Civil Affairs Division, Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines, from late 1950 through 1954, provide excellent examples of the use
of armed forces in re-establishing government authority against Communist politico-military opposition; methods developed there have been adapted successfully in Malaya, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma. Major Jose M. A. Guerrero, Philippine Army, has personal knowledge of the work of the Civil Affairs Division during the entire Huk campaign.

The Vietnamese team, plagued by the internal strife of South Vietnam, worked out methods for occupying the "80 days" and "100 days" areas south of the 17th Parallel being vacated by the Vietminh. These methods were only partially employed and had only partial success.

The resolution of the Army coup plotting in December 1954 and plans for U.S. participation in the training of the Vietnamese National Army finally opened the way for concrete organization, planning, and operations for solution of the problem.

National Security Action.

By the end of 1954, the experiences of the French in their pacification work in the Indo-Chinese States, the British in Malaya, and the Filipinos in Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao, had been studied and methods then developed for use by the Vietnamese. To provide a legal basis, directives were developed for issuance by the President, the Minister of Defense, and the Armed Forces General Staff, (the latter two being implementing directives of the President's policy guidance). English translations of these directives, in seriatim, are attached as Annexes A, B, and C.

The new Vietnamese government had an antipathy for the French colonialists with whom they had struggled for freedom. Thus, the Vietnamese rejected use of the French term "pacification", and substituted a Vietnamese term, translated as "national security action". The two terms were inter-changeable, and were usually referred to as "pacification".

After issuance of the Presidential directive on 31 December 1954, implementation needed to be worked out quickly. The take-over in Camau was to start on 8 February 1955; conditions in areas already evacuated by the Vietminh, and elsewhere, were hardly favorable to the Vietnamese government and required constructive action. At the same time, permission for U.S. participation with the French in working officially with the Vietnamese Army was proceeding with diplomatic sedateness. Something needed to be done, so General O'Daniel quietly jumped the gun and informally initiated the cadre for TRIM, organized into divisions for Army, Navy, Air, and National Security. The National Security Division was to advise and help the Vietnamese with National Security Action. Advice was to be given discreetly. The Divisions of TRIM alternately had a chief of one nationality and his deputy of another. The National Security Division had an American chief, a French deputy, and a combined staff of both nationalities; there was some difficulty in operating, due to this Division's mission of giving sensitive politico-military advice to Vietnamese who mistrusted the French; (the Vietnamese at times solved this by presenting false operational plans at staff conferences and keeping actual plans secret).
There were two immediate problems in National Security Action. One was in organizing the operation to take-over the Camau area, starting 8 February. A commander needed to be appointed, a staff organized, logistics planned, troops assigned and trained for pacification duties. Col. Duc, an officer loyal to the President and with previous pacification experience was appointed. American advisors moved into his field headquarters and quietly helped him get his organization, plans, and training underway; (in late January, the French came in and assisted). Troop training for pacification was assigned to the Vietnamese G-5 (Psychological Warfare and Troop Morale), with Americans quietly helping devise and implement the program. Condensed instruction was given (by Vietnamese, based on a course of instruction developed by the Americans) to groups of instructors, who then were assigned to troop units as they moved into assembly areas. These quickly-trained G-5 officers then instructed all officers in the units to which they were assigned, with unit officers, in turn, training their own troops. This hasty instruction was assisted by demonstrations, (how to enter a village, how to greet civilians, and how to pay for goods), and by skits enacted by G-5 teams, often on the backs of 6x6 Army trucks (good and bad soldiers were portrayed, playlets given illustrating answers to Communist propaganda and how to handle a Communist-inspired demonstration, along with talks on collecting operational intelligence and locating hidden arms caches). The appearance of the individual soldier was improved by the issuance of standardized equipment and uniforms and the carrying out of rigorous inspections.

The second immediate problem was to obtain Defense and General Staff directives implementing the Presidential Directive of 31 December 1954. This required some quiet encouragement by American advisors, in the Presidency, the Ministry of Defense, and the General Staff. Finally, the Minister of Defense (Ho Thong Minh) organized and chaired a meeting in Saigon, 3-5 February 1955, attended by all civil and military leaders concerned with pacification throughout the country. Personnel attending included cabinet ministers and general staff officers down to provincial officials and arrondissement commanders.

At this meeting, (which included some remaining French holding civil and military positions in the Vietnamese government), there was unusually candid reporting on conditions in each area of the country, and equally frank remarks about the Presidential Directive. The Defense Minister explained the Directive, taking particular care to describe the zoning and the government’s desire to transfer local authority as quickly as possible from military to civilian control. Zoning was one of the key factors in pacification. In case the attached directives are not clear, the following outlines how the zoning actually worked (with a little help in the Presidency to obtain decisive actions); each province (sometimes part of a province only) was classified according to its condition of law and order and then placed under the proper authority, as follows:

Pacification zone (many dissidents and acts of violence) - the Army commander had full civil and military authority, usually with an appointed civil Province Chief as an advisor.

Transition zone (law and order being established, but Army patrols still required) - depending upon each local situation, the top authority was either a military commander with a civil deputy, or a civil official with a military deputy.
Civil zone (law and order again established) — under civil administration.

**Camau Operation**

The occupation of Camau was carried out by Vietnamese Army units roughly equivalent to a U.S. Army division, under the command of Colonel Duc, and with a staff put together for the operation; (at the time, the Vietnamese National Army was organized in battalions, with battalions being grouped into a temporary task force when larger missions so required). The Camau occupation was given a name: Operation Liberty. Battalions were moved up into jump-off positions along the border; transport was readied (with only one entry road, small boats were needed for transport on canals and rivers); headquarters was set up at Soc Trang, which had a concrete landing strip for transport aircraft.

While the troops were being hurriedly readied, intelligence operations were carried out in the Vietminh-occupied area. (Incidentally, this is the Communist area visited by the American journalist Joe Alsop, who wrote a series of newspaper and magazine articles about this trip behind the "Bamboo Curtain" just prior to Operation Liberty). Until late in 1954, Intelligence collection in Camau had been carried out by G-6 of the Vietnamese National Army; (G-6 was called "Military Security" but was patterned to some extent after the French Army's G-5 in Indo-China, with an organization for intelligence collection and unconventional warfare in denied areas, as well as a capability for carrying out politico-military measures, such as goon squad secret actions). G-6 had been active in Army coup plotting against the government and was restricted at the end of 1954. G-2 was still French-controlled and, due to Vietnamese mistrust of the French, was little used for this Intelligence mission. Most of the Intelligence operation was locally improvised by the commander, Col. Duc, with the personal help of President Ngo dinh Diem (who defected a Vietminh military unit, which was then successfully employed in intelligence and unconventional warfare missions).

Intelligence reports indicated that regular Vietminh military units, with dependents, were departing on schedule from their West Coast port of embarkation, but that political and intelligence nets were organized for stay-behind, and that a covert para-military organization was preparing a base in the Go-Cong, a drowned mangrove forest on the west coast of the Camau peninsula; (these reports were later confirmed).

The operation began on 8 February. Troops were preceded by an air-drop of leaflets, which explained the peaceful mission of the Army and asked the people not to be afraid. Speeches by President Diem, to the troops and to the population, had been put on tape and were used by propaganda teams of the Armed Propaganda Company organic to the Army's regional headquarters. USIS worked closely with National Security Division and Vietnamese G-5 in developing tapes, leaflets, and posters used in Operation Liberty. This same close team-work continued in later operations.

Many of the troop units arrived too late for training, with neither officers nor men understanding their mission. Thus, in the early days, there was little success, except for areas occupied by trained and well-motivated units. Some of
the units simply moved into their designated areas and then sat in idleness. There were many incidents of stealing food, molesting of women, and similar misbehavior by these untrained troops. These errors were gradually corrected. The trained, indoctrinated units would immediately establish law and order, act as disciplined soldiers, and lend helping hands to the civilians in rebuilding ruined public markets, bridges, and dwellings. Army engineer units built bridges and roads.

The Army had attempted to organize some military government teams (GAMs), to establish local government under Army authority. These teams were undermanned and had little training for this duty. Thus, most of the government authority established in villages was done locally by unit commanders after a quick loyalty check of village leaders. The ex-Vietminh unit defected by President Diem became a scouting force and was usually the first to enter a village. It carried out the security screening, uncovered Vietminh stay-behind nets, and located hidden Vietminh arms caches. Many of these ex-Vietminh became local leaders and have demonstrated loyalty to the anti-Communist Diem government.

A comment on these ex-Vietminh is required. They were non-Communist, like the vast majority of the Vietminh who fought the French during the 8 years of the Indo-China War. The Communists captured the Vietminh movement, which was largely a struggle to establish a free and independent Vietnam, by placing Party personnel in key control positions. Some Vietminh military leaders were convinced non-Communists, who were most resentful at having to serve under Party members of lesser military ability. Thus, after Geneva, some Vietminh leaders and units deserted. It was such personnel who swore loyalty to Diem for the Camau occupation; their backgrounds were well-known to officials in the Presidency.

Aside from these ex-Vietminh, there were two other outstanding organizations in Operation Liberty: the propaganda teams of the Armed Propaganda Company and the Filipino medical teams of Operation Brotherhood. Both deserve fuller description.

Propaganda Teams

The propaganda teams were 20-man squads, composed mostly of combat soldiers who had been trained in psychological warfare and who were selected for their patriotic motivation. They were armed for commando combat, if necessary, with weight given to automatic weapons. Teams were equipped with hand, portable public address equipment (U.S. Navy loud-hailers such as used by beach masters and "Little Bull Horns" developed commercially in the U.S. for use of police and firemen). Some larger French voice amplifiers, tripod-mounted, requiring a squad to set them up, were part of Company equipment, but carried only by several teams; these French amplifiers were excellent, carrying a voice for 5 kilometers. The teams also carried leaflets, booklets and posters. These were re-supplied from central stocks held by the Armed Propaganda Company headquarters which moved with the command headquarters. The teams also carried phonographs, films, film projection equipment, and simple medicines (mostly for giving first-aid to civilians).

These teams were attached initially to Army units as they entered the occupation zone. Once the Army unit had established its headquarters and
explored its particular area of responsibility, the propaganda team operated within the area on its own, selecting its own targets. The teams were successful in penetrating remote regions, attracting crowds through the distribution of simple medicine (such as aspirin) or showing of movies—and then talking to the crowd to explain the peaceful mission of the Army, the aims of the Free Vietnamese government, and then distributing leaflets and booklets.

One successful trick used by these teams was to offer villagers a bright new colored picture of President Diem in return for the villager's old faded picture of Communist leader Ho Chi Minh, which had been hanging in his hut for years. Exchanges were made readily in most cases. The teams knew that if they entered the huts and pulled down the pictures of Ho Chi Minh, they would only anger the villagers. This successful picture exchange became a standard procedure in pacification operations.

**Operation Brotherhood.**

The Vietnamese Army medical corps was an embryo organization. At the last minute before Operation Liberty, some of the very few Vietnamese civilian doctors were drafted and immediately sent to Camau. Lack of preparation made this operation not too successful. As a substitute, Army units distributed mosquito netting, soap, and blankets to civilians where these items were most sorely needed. The Vietnamese Army refused generous offers by the French Red Cross and French Army medical teams, stating that the Vietminh agitators would exploit the presence of French with the Vietnamese Army, claiming this Army to be mere puppets of the French. (The French were deeply hurt by the ungracious turn-down of their offer, and unjustly accused American advisors for making the Vietnamese so act; they forgot that the Vietnamese had been their enemy in eight years of war).

The outstanding medical and public health work was carried out by Filipino volunteer doctors, nurses, dentists, and nutritionists of Operation Brotherhood. This organization had been founded shortly before by the International Junior Chamber of Commerce, with its leading spirit, organizer, and operational leader being Oscar Arellano, a young Filipino architect, who was then Vice-President for Asia of the International Jaycees. Operations Brotherhood was privately funded; many Americans contributed. Initially, the teams were all Filipino volunteers. Later, many nations contributed medical volunteers to the teams.

The esprit de corps of the Filipino volunteers of "OB" was a major factor in overcoming Communist political work. These were Free Asians, who cheerfully and energetically helped their fellow men—in strong contrast to the grimness of life during the long war. The Filipinos had defeated the Communist Huk guerrillas at home, and imparted hope for the future. The "OB" teams made up their own songs, held parties in off-duty hours, and were a real tonic to the dispirited; (many an American on MAAG duty in the provinces was later "adopted" by the "OB" Filipinos and will confirm this psychological impact). One side effect of the presence of pretty Filipino girl doctors, nurses, dentists, and nutritionists was that many a male Vietnamese started learning English so he could talk to them.
The first CB team moved into Camau with the leading troops, establishing their first "hospital" on packing crates by the side of the road. The Army turned over a building for CB and the Filipinos established a field hospital for the people of Camau -- who had been without medical aid for years. Despite the smallness of the team, this hospital was kept open and operating 24 hours a day. When additional Filipinos arrived, field teams were formed and travelled throughout the area, not only doing medical work, but instituting public health measures, distributing soap and mosquito netting, giving inoculations, teaching malaria control, and conducting classes in nutrition. At the hospital, they trained local Vietnamese volunteers in nursing and hospital operation, so that a going institution could be turned over to the Vietnamese to run for themselves.

(Comment: Perhaps the highest compliment paid to "OB" was by the Communists, who not only singled it out as a propaganda target, but also imitated it. Later, in North Vietnam, medical teams of foreign "volunteers" (mostly white Czechs, who looked too much like the French to win acceptance) were sent into the provinces. The East Germans established and operated an excellent hospital in Hanoi. Chinese "volunteer" teams attempted social welfare work similar to that of "OB", suffering considerable loss of face when the Filipinos showed Vietnamese farmers how to build fish ponds just south of the 17th Parallel, which the Chinese failed to do.)

Preparatory Work.

The Camau operation had many faults. Most of these were caused by a late start and considerable lack of understanding by Vietnamese officials, with resulting poor preparation and execution. The initial good effects of the psychological effort wore off when there was poor follow-through of action, particularly by the troops. Thus, there was only partial success in turning the Camau population's loyalty to the Vietminh into real support of the new government -- a task we knew not to be an easy one, but a task that had to be done.

The National Security Division, working closely with Vietnamese officials, started planning for the remaining take-over of a Vietminh area, in Quang-Ngai and Binh-Dinh provinces in Central Vietnam, as soon as personnel could be freed from Camau support work. The first task was to take a hard look at the successes and failures of Operation Liberty. A study of "Lessons Learned in Camau" was prepared in English, French, and Vietnamese and copies were circulated to all staff sections of Vietnamese Army headquarters, Vietnamese ministries, TRIM divisions, and to U.S. and French economic and information missions. (A copy of this study is not available for inclusion in this memo).

A commander, Col. Kim, was appointed for the Operation. He was the outstanding staff officer of the Vietnamese Army, the former "chef de cabinet" (executive officer) of the Ministry of Defense, and Chief of the General Staff. His home province was Binh Dinh. Although pacification was strange to him, he quickly grasped the principles. An operations plan was drafted and was presented to a combined staff of Vietnamese, American, and French military and civil authorities, who critiqued the plan, and were then given work assignments. By this time, the new Central Vietnam operation had received a name (from G-5): "Operation Giai-Phong" (meaning "breaking of manacles").
One thing was made plain. Every action of the Vietnamese National Army and of civil authorities was to be keyed to its psychological value with the people in the area. As quickly as troop units were designated, their special training and indoctrination was begun; frequent inspections insured that training and indoctrination were being carried out thoroughly. Intelligence on conditions in the area, its people and customs, was included in the indoctrination. The minimum training received by any unit which finally participated was 30 hours.

As soon as an operational task force staff was formed, intelligence collection was stepped up. The operational area consisted of one province and half of another, lying along 150 miles of coastline, south of Hue and Tourane. The area was noted as being the cradle of rebellion in Vietnam, its agrarian socialism being turned to Communism in the 1930s. During the Indo-Chinese War, French movements into the area were mostly met by "scorched earth" resistance. The Vietminh had a strong hold on the area.

Intelligence indicated that the Vietminh had restored some of the destroyed railroad running along the coast, but bridges were still down. The highways were still largely destroyed through cross-ditching. Famine was reported in some areas, where no rice had been seen for 8 years, and local land was impoverished. Most of the people in the area had no medical attention for years. On top of this, as the number of civilians volunteering to go North with the Vietminh Army started dwindling, the Vietminh made a decision to take all the youth north with them, by force if need be; initially, this was youth down to 12 years of age, then later to 8 year olds. Families started to hide their children in the hills.

Preparation continued. The Vietnamese Medical Corps was strengthened, principally by corps men (doctors remained scarce). Supplies were stockpiled for shipment to designated storage points in the operation area, including 2,000 tons of rice for distribution to the population. Operations Brotherhood was invited to establish a hospital just north of the operational area, from which they could move teams in with the troops. 20 armed propaganda teams (including personnel from Operation Liberty) were attached to units. Psywar officers (specially trained for Operation Giai-Phong in psychological warfare, public relations, and morale action-troop information and education) were attached to all units assigned to the operation. Over 300 civil service personnel were trained in local administration, to establish civil government in the villages under the Army commander; (there was partial conflict later as partisan politics received impetus through the new National Movement for Revolution Party, which was just being organized).

The Operation Giai-Phong commander was assigned a G-5, who coordinated all psychological actions. He had a staff of some 20 officers and men, equipped with mimeograph machines, a portable photographic laboratory, and radio receivers for news broadcasts. The armed propaganda teams attached to the units had psywar equipment and medicines as they had in Camau; in addition, they had portable bulletin boards to set up in market places of villages when occupied. Several tons of leaflets, posters, and other material were prepared well in advance. A motion picture, showing the better side of the Camau operation, was prepared and used.

Comment: As in Camau, the Vietnamese gave permission for only one American officer to accompany the troops—in civilian clothes. In Camau, he worked mainly
with the G-5. For Operation Giai-Phong, he became the operational commander's advisor. Lt. Rufus Phillips, III, of the National Security Division of TRIM, served in both operations. His duties included being an expeditor on the spot, as did those of other U.S. officers in this Division, which maintained an assigned radio channel during the operation. If supplies or supporting action requested by the operational commander were not forthcoming, word was radioed back and National Security Division officers would then follow-through with the Vietnamese General Staff or government ministry indicated. This means of expediting worked extremely well.

**Operation "Giai-Phong"**

The operation began on 22 April 1955. There were last minute changes of troops assigned, caused by the United Front actions of sect forces and the need for troops in Saigon-Cholon and the West, where the National Government fought the Einh-Xuyen and Hoa Hao. By this time, the Vietnamese National Army was being re-organized into regiments. Forces assigned to Operation "Giai-Phong" initially were nearly equivalent to a U.S. corps; need for troops elsewhere reduced this at the last minute to about the equivalent of a light division. (The involvement of National Security Division, TRIM, in attempting to resolve the problem of these sect forces, and the street fighting in Cholon around TRIM and MAAG headquarters, added difficulty to staff support).

The population had been heavily indoctrinated by the Vietminh that the Vietnamese National Army would pillage and misbehave, as they had at times during the war. Instead, each soldier and unit behaved extremely well, and the people lost their fear. After the first hours of the operation, civilians started bringing out bowls of water for the troops marching in. The soldiers, in turn, who had not been particularly enthusiastic about the necessity for good behavior, began to go out of their way to offer their services to civilians at rest stops, such as cutting wood or hauling water. The friendliness of the troops passed by word-of-mouth rapidly throughout the area, with snowballing effects—the soldiers and civilians becoming more friendly and helpful to each other with each passing hour, until the advancing troops were greeted with flowers and cheering crowds, and soldiers eagerly pitching in to help with reconstruction. Not one single incident of misbehavior was recorded in the entire operation.

The Vietminh had demanded that the occupation be done in successive zones from north to south. There was evidence that they had hoped to build resistance to the Vietnamese Army, but the exemplary behavior of the Army boomeranged on the Vietminh. As the last of the Vietminh pulled out, they were boo-ed by the population and some rocks thrown at them. A good share of the reason was that Vietminh propagandists had told a number of lies to the people, and the Vietnamese Army was quick to perceive and exploit. Some of the lies concerned Vietminh paper currency (which became drastically devalued), expected aid from Russia and China, promised atomic power plants, and similar promises. The Army made effective use of a mimeographed newspaper, published daily by the G-5 section with the operational commander, and distributed by bicycle messengers to all villages.

Medical stations were established throughout the area, and were treating 10,000 people daily at the height of the operation. Army engineers reconstructed
bridges and highways, as well as built landing strips. Free rides were given to civilians on Army vehicles, dramatizing what good roads meant while demonstrating the Army's good will. Critically ill civilians were evacuated to hospitals by air; such events were photographed by Army photographers, and then printed for leaflets and used on village bulletin boards; such help gave real meaning to the Army's slogan: "The People and the Army are Brothers". As buildings in the villages were reconstructed, the Army established public schools, temporarily using Army personnel as teachers.

One of the major effects of this type of operation, (well proven in Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos, Malaya, and Burma), is that the "raw take" of operational intelligence increases greatly as troops show a brotherly attitude towards the people. This is vital when operating against covert forces hidden among the people themselves. In Operation Giai-Phong, information volunteered by the civilian population led to the seizure of tens of thousands of land mines, grenades, rifles, mortars, and ammunition secretly cached by the Vietminh before departure. Their stay-behind nets were disclosed, as well.

A week after the last Vietminh troops left the port of embarkation, President Diem made a surprise visit to the area. In Qui Nhon, an estimated 30,000 people gave him an enthusiastic welcome, to the considerable surprise of foreign military, diplomats, and journalists. The welcome could not be organized, (as it frequently was elsewhere), due to only several hours of advance notice. Visits to small towns brought crowds of 10,000 from the surrounding countryside. The warm enthusiasm of the population was an indication of the effectiveness of the pacification campaign among a million Vietnamese who had been under Communist control for years.

Civic Action

The Americans serving in the National Security Division, TRIM, had long been interested in other means to extend government administration throughout the provinces, working particularly with the Ministries of Social Action, Education, Public Health, and Youth and Labor, as well as the Delegate for South Vietnam. Shortly after Geneva, these Americans encouraged the work of the Ministry of Social Action in introducing self-help, community development programs, (public safety, public health, and primary schools mostly) in areas surrounding Saigon; these Americans also taught methods of secret balloting (with symbols designating candidates for illiterates) for electing community officials. (Comment: Pat Byrne and Anita Lauve, both of the U.S. Foreign Service and serving in the Saigon Embassy political section, observed this work in some of the worst slum areas of Saigon-Cholon, noted as Communist hotbeds. The girls made a big hit with the people by bringing large sacks of hard candy and distributing them to the children. This gave a real fiesta air to the elections).

One of the most promising ideas of this period came from Kieu Cong Cung, who was sponsored by Defense Minister Minh. Cung's idea was to place civil service personnel out among the people, in simple dress, where they would help initially by working alongside the people, getting their hands dirty when necessary. The Vietnamese functionaries were aghast, since they cherished their desk work in Saigon and their dignified white-collar authority, and they fought hard within the
government machine to kill the idea. It took some months, with the personal intervention and insistence of President Diem, to get a pilot Civic Action program initiated. It was given administrative support by the Ministry of Defense, at first, simply because no other Ministry would help, although it was established as an entity of the Presidency and its policy decisions were made in Cabinet meetings.

With 80% of the civil service personnel stationed in the national capital, provincial administrators were so understaffed that few of them could function with even minimum effectiveness. A French colonial administrative system, superimposed upon the old Vietnamese imperial system, was still the model for government administration. It left many gaps and led to unusually complex bureaucratic practices. There was no uniform legal code, no uniform procedures for the most basic functions of government. The Communists continued their political dominance of many villages, secretly.

Cung established a training center in Saigon and asked for civil service volunteers, for field duty. With none forthcoming, he then selected a small group of young university-trained men from among the 800,000 refugees from Communist North Vietnam, after security screening. Cung was working on a shoe-string, so his training had added realism in the form of rough living quarters, outdoor classes, and students learning to work with their hands by constructing school facilities. All students had to dress in the "calico noir" of farmers and laborers, which became their "uniform" later in the villages. (Provincial authorities originally refused to recognize Civic Action personnel as government officials, due to the plebian dress; Cung, dressed in the same manner, and as a high functionary close to the President, made a rapid tour of the provinces and gained grudging acceptance of this new style of government employe.)

Originally, four-man teams were formed; during training, the members of each team were closely observed, to judge compatibility, with the weak and unwilling being weeded out. After graduation, each team was assigned to a district of a province, with responsibility for a number of villages. When the team finished its work in the first village, it would move to a second village, revisiting the first village periodically to check on local progress. This would continue until all villages in a district were covered, at which time the civic action team directly under the governor in the provincial capital would take over district work, now organized and ready for administration.

When a team entered a village, they would call a village meeting, explain their presence and plans. The following morning, they would set to work to build three community buildings with local materials; if they had been successful in winning over the population, the villagers pitched in and helped. One building was a village hall, for meetings of village officials. Another was a primary school. The third was a combination information hall (news, information about the government, etc.) and dispensary (using the village medical kits developed by ICA). Following up was the building of roads or paths to link the village with provincial roads, if in a remote area, build pit latrines, undertake malaria control, put in drainage, and undertake similar community projects. Villagers were trained to take over these tasks, including primary education and first aid.
The work of Civic Action teams, at the same grass-roots level as that of Communist workers, proved effective. They became the targets of Communist agents, with political attacks (such as stirring up local Cochin-Chinese against Tonkinese Civic Action personnel) and then murders. Even while the field work was in its early development stage, President Diem ordered the teams to start working directly with Army commands in pacification campaigns, as the civil government "troops" in what were essentially combat zones. As Civic Action proved itself, it was extended to all provinces south of the 17th Parallel.

Civic Action was adopted by the Royal Laotian Army for its pacification work and then by the Royal Lao government. U Nu, of Burma, was so impressed by Civic Action in Vietnam that he arranged visits by the Burmese Army staff, who used its own adaptation with success along the Chinese border. It should be noted that the Vietnamese, Laotians, and Burmese who developed their own local programs all had visited the Philippines to study similar operations there which had been initially sponsored by the Department of National Defense under Magsaysay, to counter Communist operations at the "grass-roots" level, and later were taken up by civil agencies of the government.

Later Developments

Vietnamese National Army "national security action" (or "pacification") and Civic Action, working together, formed the basic pattern for bringing security and stability to the country-side. There were later refinements and additions, but the basis had been established.

One excellent later addition was the Village Self Defense Corps, under the Ministry of Defense and developed with MAAG help. Volunteer villagers were security screened, given training and weapons, and then formed into a village guard for local defense. Local military commanders were given responsibility for these units. Military inspectors were trained and continuing inspection was established. (Comment: Those Americans who have criticized Ngo dinh Diem as a "dictator" should be interested in the underlying philosophy he re-iterated time and again while struggling to get the Self Defense Corps established. He wanted the population as far as possible, since an armed citizenry, with rights and responsibilities under a responsive government, was the one thing which Communism could not tolerate and remain alive. He was thinking of Communism as a dictatorship, and was fully aware that an armed citizenry, earning the right to bear arms, would oppose any dictatorship.)

In a later operation, the government experimented with forming a pacification task force built around Garde Civile (national constabulary) forces, Civic Action teams, and strengthened by a company of Army Security troops. This was only partially successful, and finally was given up in favor of using larger Army units.

In the campaign against the Hoa Hao sect forces of Soai and Ba Cut in mid-1955, it was interesting to note that the operational commander, Col. Duc (who had commanded Operation Liberty), started in immediately training troops assigned to him with courses on behavior, with emphasis on the customs and history of this religious sect. President Diem appointed a political advisor, with long local
experience, to work with military commanders in the various operations against dissident sect forces.

Final Comment

It is a wise soldier who learns the weapons of his enemy. The Communists have been highly successful in combining political-psychological action with their military action. The political-psychological section of the Communist forces not only equals the conventional forces in command and staff authority from small units up through the highest headquarters, but in numerous operations has actually provided the senior commander. This is particularly true of Communist guerilla or partisan forces. In many countries where there are U.S. MAAGs and Missions, the first Communist enemy opposing the work of U.S. military men is usually the political-psychological soldier, frequently operating covertly. He is a skilled and dangerous enemy, with many successes to his credit.

In making use of local armed forces to stabilize the situation internally, with heavy use of political-psychological action, the American should remember that in many countries of the world today, particularly in the so-called "emerging" countries of new nationalism, this type of action is actually the borrowing of a weapon from the enemy. Just as we have Americanized other weapons we "borrowed" from past enemies, so should this one be Americanized.

Our political principles, our history, and our own military education all speak plainly on how to Americanize this weapon. Following the precepts well known to you, it becomes relatively easy to advise a foreign army on command extending down from a top civilian authority representative of the people, of the temporary nature of martial law, of true military courtesy expressed in relations with civilians. All you need is the ability to recognize bad soldiering by U.S. standards, to figure out corrective actions, and set out to correct them with tact and patience.

With such guidance, a national armed force can become the most important stabilizing force in a troubled country, constructing a firm basis for political and economic development, without establishing a military dictatorship or without building up such popular resentment against the military that our enemies can capture the populace.