for this role was required.

In view of the security situation which required the permanent presence of military forces and because of the inability of schools and training centers to handle at any one time a large training load, special emphasis was placed by MACV on the use of combined US-ARVN mobile training teams (MTT), which were activated in 1967.

In the beginning, MACV initiated the training of fourteen MTTs, each team consisting of twelve officers, one team for each of the four corps and ten infantry divisions. Each province would later be assigned from two to three MTTs depending on its size, and the number of its territorial units. Each of the MTTs earmarked for the ARVN regular forces was assigned a US adviser and provincial MTTs also had US members. Training programs conducted by MTTs lasted about two weeks for regular forces and three weeks for regional forces. This was followed by the training and formation of forty-four MTTs for popular forces, each team composed of five members (two officers and three NCOs). These teams were to provide training for all popular forces located in 243 districts throughout the country.

US Field Forces at the same time also came up with other mobile training variants but all were designed to achieve the same goal, that of improving territorial forces for their pacification support task. Each team was composed of five US members and two Vietnamese. These MTTs were placed under the control of province senior advisers who deployed them to districts to help RF and PF units organize outpost defense systems and train them in small unit tactics, with particular emphasis on night ambushes and the use of combat support such as artillery and tactical air.

There were also Combined Mobile Improvement Teams (CMIT) and Combined Mobile Training Teams (CMTT) that the US I Field Force activated in II Corps area. The composition of these teams and the concept of their employment included some variations but their mission and purpose remained the same, i.e., improving the combat effectiveness of territorial forces. However, this regional training effort was not sustained for long and in the end all CMITs and CMTTs were reorganized into standardized Mobile Advisory Teams that MACV had initiated throughout the country.
In January 1967, MACV/CORDS first used the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), a computer based measurement to discern the status of rural security, the progress of the pacification program, and identify problem areas. The district senior adviser filled in a questionnaire on each hamlet. The hamlet data was forwarded through the chain of command to MACV/CORDS where it was collated and analyzed. The questionnaire covered two major areas: hamlet security and progress in civil operations.

To ascertain the extent of security, the questionnaire covered all enemy disruptive activities in a hamlet or in adjacent areas such as harassment fire or shelling, terrorist actions, sabotages, propaganda, proselytizing actions, kidnappings, and assassinations. Other data concerning friendly activities to provide security and protection for the local population were also recorded in the form of answers to such questions as (1) How effective were those activities? (2) Who actually held the initiative: friendly or enemy forces? (3) Were friendly forces capable of providing security? (4) What results did friendly activities achieve? (5) What casualties and damage were caused to the local population in terms of human lives and property, both by friendly and by enemy forces?

In addition to security, the HES also measured the progress of efforts in civil operations. Data for this part included answers to questions about the maintenance of law and order in the hamlet, the behavior and attitude of local government officials, the degree of popular sympathy toward GVN cadre, the elections of village and hamlet councils, the influence of the GVN and that of the enemy on the local population, the extent of development in public health and education, the availability of schools, dispensaries, maternity wards, and the influence of local political parties.
All the questions concerning security and civil operations were printed on a card. The district senior adviser filled out the appropriate answers on the card and submitted it through channels. The data provided in the cards were elaborate and scientifically devised. They were tremendously helpful to higher authorities or field commanders, who were able at a glance to visualize what happened in a certain area and to assess correctly the situation. There were, however, certain shortcomings inherent in the RES, the most readily discernible of which was the relative time-lag of the reporting system.

Reports submitted by district senior advisers, for example, took weeks to reach the central echelon, and before MACV/CORDS compiled and sent them to agencies and major units for exploitation at least one month had elapsed. There were other data contained in the RES monthly report, concerning actions to be taken by various agencies for example, which were no longer effective since by the time the RES report was published these actions had already been taken. A RES report recorded, for example, that the PF unit in a certain village was short of M-79s or M-60s due to combat losses; but in reality these losses had been replaced during the month it took the district senior adviser's report to reach MACV/CORDS and get published. A major cause for the slow reporting system was the delay in the RVNAF postal service or the lack of mail routing facilities, which became especially serious after the redeployment of US forces.

The data recorded by district senior advisers were obtained partly from village and hamlet officials' reports, partly from information provided by friendly forces or through the advisory channel, and partly from actual visits to villages and hamlets by the senior adviser and the district chief. A question arose, however, as to the validity and reliability of the reports thus obtained; doubts about accuracy and timeliness. The most reliable way to have accurate data was to make visits to the villages and hamlets and see for oneself. But the truth was that even if all the time available were devoted to visits, and even if road communication and transportation facilities and helicopters were available at all times, no one could possibly cover all the villages
and hamlets of a district in a single month.

The HES was subsequently transferred from MACV/CORDS to Vietsnamese authorities. The JGS took over the task of evaluating territorial forces while the Central Pacification and Development Center took charge of civil operations reporting. The operation of the system became less efficient, partly because at the district level the GVN did not have officials as knowledgeable as the advisers to estimate and record with accuracy HES elements, and partly because of the large costs involved in supporting the system, which the GVN could scarcely afford.
CHAPTER VI

Social Reform and Economic Development

Objectives

South Vietnam subsisted on foreign aid, primarily US aid. Its consumption far surpassed its production because of the lack of an extensive industrial base. Due to security improvements after 1970, the GVN set about to achieve long range goals that can be summarized in a "three selves" policy. All plans and programs were geared to and guided by this policy.

Self-Defense meant the people were to defend themselves, their families and their communities. The PSDF were a means to provide this kind of self-defense, being organized and manned by the people themselves, and armed and assisted by the government. The goal to be achieved gradually was to use PSDF for the defense of villages and hamlets in place of territorial forces who would take over territorial security responsibilities from regular ARVN forces. Then the ARVN could be freed to take over combat responsibilities from US forces.

Self-Management was designed to promote democracy and a democratic way of life. The people elected representatives to run their own affairs, administer their own villages, and manage their own budget. The people also participated in groups, associations designed to develop a mutual assistance spirit. Village properties and resources were managed by the people through their representatives with the technical assistance of the government.

Self-Sufficiency was to be achieved through self-help programs and projects in which the people contributed their own capital and labor.
The government provided assistance only when required. Self-help projects were initiated and managed by the people, from start to finish. The ultimate goal was not only to bring about a more prosperous life for the people but also to sustain the war effort for as long as it was required, without relying too heavily on foreign aid.

The Self-Help Hamlet Development Program

The purpose of the Self-Help Hamlet Development Program was to promote moderate and short-range projects which were of practical value to the population of the hamlets. It did not require advanced techniques and was not a duplication of the projects in the permanent programs supported by various ministries.

Examples of self-help projects were:
1. Irrigation equipment for the production of two crops in a year.
2. Repair of village and communal roads, and construction of small bridges and of sewage systems.
3. Construction of dams, and digging of drainage ditches to prevent floods.
4. Digging of ponds for hamlet fish breeding.
5. Construction of pens for pigs, cattle and poultry.
7. Digging of wells.
8. Construction or repair of market places.
9. Cultivation of plants for the production of seedling plants.
10. Repair of hospital and maternity dispensaries that involved no new construction.
12. Construction of latrines, wells, water tanks, and a flag pole for the hamlet school.
13. Repair or erection of religious structures.

The programs would lead to success when they reflected the true aspirations of the population, and would fail if the provincial and district authorities compelled the people to work only according to officials' desires. All projects were to be deliberated and decided
by the population under the guidance of the hamlet managing committees, and with the assistance of the provincial technical cadres who would provide advice during discussions.

The efforts of the hamlet population were considered as the main factor while the support coming from the outside, such as funds and materials, was only of secondary importance and used primarily to get the projects off to a good start. Invitations to bid on the projects under the self-help hamlet development program were absolutely prohibited.

All projects would be established by a committee composed of the representatives of the Hamlet Managing Committee, the RF cadre team operating in the hamlet, the Parents and Teachers' Association, and the popular associations in the hamlet. A decision was then made by the province chief to provide funds and materials for the projects. Each project received the same funding of VN $50,000 without distinction as to locality. ¹ To assist the project, materials such as cement, iron, and roofing sheets were provided by CORDS.

The provinces were authorized to carry out projects for more or less than VN $50,000, depending on circumstances but the allotted funds should be less than the total expenditures and the provinces were not allowed to spend more than VN $150,000 for three projects. In very special cases, if the project required more than VN $150,000, it was subject to prior approval by GVN authorities.

Rural Health

Health service was poor in rural areas. The traditional method used by peasants to heal wounds and cure diseases was through the

¹In October 1969, the exchange rate was set at $1 US: VN $285. As inflation worsened, the VN piaster continued to be devalued every year. In 1972, the exchange rate was adjusted at $1 US: VN $240, the $1 US: VN $475 in 1973 and $1 US: VN $560 in 1974. By 1975, it was set at $1 US: VN $700.
administration of medicinal herbs, or Oriental medicine while city inhabitants relied on modern medicine and there was a critical shortage of doctors in the rural areas.

There was usually a hospital in each province but its medical facilities were deficient and medicine was frequently in short supply. Provincial hospitals had small capacities and could not accommodate an entire province population, particularly during the periods of heavy fighting. Each district was equipped with only a dispensary, but it did not have a resident doctor or registered nurses. It dispensed first aid in emergency cases but patients were evacuated to the provincial hospital because the district dispensary did not have hospitalization facilities. Each village had a rural medicine chest but its limited supplies were inadequate for the needs of the village population.

With the active participation of US forces the public health effort improved in keeping with the pacification program. The GVN public health program received substantial support and assistance from the US as well as from international humanitarian organizations. Such projects as constructing additional provincial hospitals; equipping, modernizing, and expanding existing hospitals; providing doctors, nurses, and technicians to work with Vietnamese medical personnel; and constructing and increasing the equipment of district dispensaries so as to have limited medical treatment were all undertaken with American and allied support.

A major goal of the GVN public health program was to improve rural health service. In each hamlet, for example, a maternity dispensary and drug station operated by a rural midwife and a laborer were to be established. The model design included a room for prenatal care or for delivery of babies; a confinement room; a drug dispensary; a bedroom; a kitchen; two latrines; and a water well or tank. The hamlet maternity dispensary and drug station was constructed with good, strong, durable materials. A funding of VN $250,000 was allotted by the Central Rural Development Council to cover construction. Support provided by CORDS included, for each construction project: 175 bags
of cement, 153 roofing sheets, and 100 kilos of iron. The cost of training midwives was covered by a special allocation granted to the Ministry of Health by the CRDC. With this allocation, the province was able to purchase training equipment, instructional materials, and office supplies for the organization of re-training classes for rural midwives for a period of three months. Rural midwives and laborers were recruited by the provincial health service, which was also responsible for conducting training classes for rural midwives.

To make full use of the support provided by the US and other Free World nations, the RVNAF, in coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Health, initiated a program called "Civil-Military Medical Cooperation," designed to establish jointly operated medical facilities for the benefit of both the civilian population and servicemen. A coordination committee which included representatives of the RVNAF Medical Service and the Ministry of Health was set up to manage the program.

During 1968, the Civil-Military Cooperation program operated in 10 out of 26 provincial hospitals and in 86 out of 193 district dispensaries. The Ministry of Health was responsible for additional construction and for providing medical equipment and medicine supplies while the RVNAF Medical Service provided medical personnel. These jointly run medical facilities accommodated wounded servicemen, as well as civilians, free of charge.

In other hospitals and dispensaries not covered and operated by the program, the treatment of servicemen was subject to reimbursement by RVNAF Medical Service for the cost of food during the hospitalization period.

In addition, other humanitarian organizations such as the West German and the New Zealand Medical Groups, the Philippine Civil Action Group (PHILCAG), and, particularly, US charity and relief organizations, all operated with philanthropic devotion in rural areas. In these rural areas doctors and nurses treated thousands of peasants and distributed free medicine to others.
US forces also contributed significantly to the GVN rural health effort through their Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP). While conducting military operations, US forces placed special emphasis on organizing sick calls and dispensary service for the local civilian population. US medical evacuation helicopters, while primarily serving US servicemen, were frequently used to evacuate civilians in emergency cases, especially casualties caused by the fighting. It was estimated that about 70% of civilian casualties were evacuated by US MEDEVAC helicopters and many lives were saved.

Finally, US contributions to the GVN health program also included the invaluable service rendered by the hospital ship HOPE which twice called at South Vietnamese ports, each time staying for a period of several months. This floating medical facility succeeded in saving the lives of many Vietnamese whose illnesses or diseases could not be cured by local doctors or with local medical facilities and technology.

The Rural Education Development Program

The rural education development program was designed to provide educational facilities and opportunities for children. It was an interim step toward compulsory education at the primary level and for the construction of hamlet classrooms. For pacified and consolidated hamlets, the maximum number of classrooms allotted to each hamlet was three which corresponded to the three lower grades — 5, 4 and 3 — of an elementary school.²

²Prior to 1973, Vietnamese elementary schools had 5 grades: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, which corresponded to US grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively. After 1973, the RVN education systems was patterned after the US model: elementary, 6 grades (from 1 to 6), and secondary, 6 grades (from 7 to 12).
Hamlet classrooms were usually built as semi-permanent structures with brick or cinder block walls and a tin roof. The GVN policy was to implement the rural education program through community development or under state supervision just as for the rural health program. Similarly, the construction of classrooms by private contractors was also unauthorized.

In order to achieve lasting results in the establishment and protection of schools, the following guidance was provided by the GVN:

1. An imprest fund was established by the province and cash was distributed to districts for construction under government supervision.

2. The hamlet population, especially parents and teachers, were urged to volunteer their efforts in the construction of classrooms. All forms of commandeered labor were forbidden. More than any other program, the rural education program was widely acclaimed by the people. There was absolutely no coercion of any kind for their participation.

3. A committee in charge of project management was to be created that included representatives of the local government and population in order to supervise the construction and provide protection for the school.

Funds and materials for the construction of rural classrooms were allocated by the CRDC. For each classroom, VN $60,000 were allotted for construction and VN $25,000 for furniture (desks, tables, benches, blackboards and bookcases). Construction materials were provided by the regional CORDS. These included, for each classroom, 75 bags of cement, 80 roofing sheets, and 600 kilos of iron rods.

The province chief was authorized to use funds earmarked for self-help projects or other special funds at his discretion, to build school facilities as might be required. In the case of schools built before 1966, the provincial and municipal RD councils were authorized
to use self-help project funds to build such school facilities as latrines, water tanks or wells, and flag poles. Each site having from one to three classrooms was allotted VN $25,000 by the GVN and construction materials by the regional CORDS. The materials included 60 roofing sheets, 45 bags of cement, and 500 kilos of iron for the construction of two latrines, one water tank and three water jars.

Teachers recruited underwent a three-month training course and upon graduation and assignment, received a monthly salary of VN $3,500. The need for hamlet teachers was decided by the provincial and municipal RD councils, upon recommendation by the regional education service, and based on procedures and criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

Finally, to assist peasant families in supporting their children in school, a special allowance of VN $300 was granted each family to cover school supplies.

The Relief and Resettlement of Refugees

Prior to 1965, there was no GVN agency created for the care, relief, and resettlement of refugees and war victims. As of 1965, however, with the increasing number of refugees and war victims, the GVN began to care for them. The responsibility was shared by differing agencies. The Ministry of Social Welfare, for example, assumed responsibility for dispensing emergency assistance while the Ministry of Rural Development made resettlement payments to people who, because of continued insecurity, acquired a semi-permanent refugee status.

In March 1966, a Special Commissariat for Refugees was established to take over full responsibility for refugee assistance and resettlement. The Commissioner General for refugees was empowered
to co-opt both personnel and financial resources from the two ministries which had previously shared this responsibility. A considerable institutional structure was thus built in a very short time. At the GVN level, for example, the Special Commissariat for refugees had over 200 staff members and at the regional level it was represented by over 800 field personnel who constituted the staff of 46 provincial and municipal refugee relief services.

The next stage in the evolution of organizational arrangements to deal with refugee problems came less than two years later when, in November 1967, the Special Commissariat for Refugees was integrated with the Ministry of Social Welfare to become the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees. At the same time, provincial and municipal refugee relief services were merged with local social welfare services.

The final change was the integration of the refugee relief and resettlement effort into the pacification and development program. As of January 1969, all provincial and municipal pacification and development councils were required to include plans for refugee relief and resettlement in their annual pacification plans, and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees became the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Relief. This Ministry was responsible for keeping a census of resettled and returned refugees, for disbursing funds and materials, and for providing personnel and equipment to operate hamlet or village dispensaries and maternities.

The GVN policy of relief for refugees was a realistic one in that it sought first to provide emergency help and then to resettle the refugees in secure areas where they would find opportunities to make a living by themselves. Depending on the circumstances, the GVN might in a few instances allow refugees to return to their home villages. This home-returning effort was particularly strong during 1969.
The relief and resettlement program included three distinct programs in one, each concerned with one specific phase of the refugees' reception and care by the responsible authorities.

Initially, the program provided for emergency or temporary care for a period of thirty days, or in certain cases, up to a maximum of sixty days. At the end of this time the refugees should, either with or without government assistance, have been able to return to their homes or, if security conditions did not permit, have been resettled in a secure area where some means of livelihood was obtainable. The alternative to the second phase or resettlement in a new location, if this was not possible, was the conversion of the temporary center in which a refugee had been provided shelter into a permanent resettlement site, the refugee being eligible for resettlement assistance both in cash and in kind, and the site receiving priority in government development programs. The third phase of resettlement was the "Return to the Village" program.

Due to the difficulties in screening and classifying people fleeing from the war and from the Communists, it was required that a refugee meet certain conditions to be entitled to assistance. By GVN definition, a refugee was a person who had been displaced from his home village for reasons of insecurity and unwillingness to submit to Communist control, or a person whose family had been compelled to evacuate his home village by local authorities or by friendly operational forces.

Refugees were also classified into two categories: those who lived in camps and those who lived outside. Refugees who lived in a temporary refugee center received assistance, protection, and control from the GVN. Those who lived out of camps were people who were not under the control of GVN refugee authorities but made up separate colonies or lived with their relatives.
Refugees living in GVN-controlled camps were issued a "green" card which entitled them to emergency relief during a period not exceeding 30 days, each day being worth VN $15 in cash or 500 grams of rice and VN $5 for meat and vegetables, for each person; and temporary relief during a period which could be classified as "resettled", with each being allotted a lump sum of VN $7,500 and 10 roofing sheets, and rice rations for six months on the basis of 15 kilos per person per month. Montagnard refugees received, additionally, 600 grams of salt per month for six months.

Even though classified as resettled and having received these benefits, a refugee might still, at any time, apply for assistance to return to his home hamlet if it had become secure. If he did, he also became eligible for aid under the "Return to Village" program, amounting to cash payment of VN $5,000 per family for housing, cement, and roofing, or cash in lieu, and a six-month rice allowance.

An out-of-camp refugee, because he was in principle outside government control, had to be accepted for registration and issued a "white" card before he could claim any of these benefits, and in his case, the benefits were somewhat reduced. To be accepted for registration, such a refugee had to meet at least two of the following conditions: (1) he must have become a refugee since 1964; (2) he must have originated in an insecure village or hamlet and have fled to avoid VC influence or control; and (3) he must be living in controllable groups of twenty or more families. If he met all three registration criteria, he was entitled to temporary aid and return-to-village benefits only, not resettlement allowance. If he satisfied the first two conditions, then he might claim only return-to-village benefits, forfeiting temporary and resettlement allowances.

Non-registered refugees forfeited all assistance under the relief and resettlement program but retained the right to claim return-to-village benefits provided that their home villages had been pacified and that they had returned to them during the 1968 and 1969 pacification campaigns.

The last category of refugees were those who had become refugees
after 1 January 1969, either by moving voluntarily or by being evacuated by military authorities from insecure villages. If their villages were not scheduled for pacification, they were given temporary aid for seven days only, and then the resettlement allowance at the established rate during the period they stayed in the reception camp. If, on the other hand, their villages were scheduled for pacification, they were entitled to seven days emergency aid which, depending on the pacification progress, might be extended to 30 days, but in no case were they entitled to resettlement benefits. They had to apply to return to their villages as soon as security conditions permitted, and when they did, they received a full back-to-village allowance, whether or not their homes were destroyed by military operations.

The cost of the refugee relief and resettlement program was enormous. Food allowances for refugees living in-camp amounted to VN $526 million in 1967, VN $835 million in 1968, then was reduced to VN $709 million in 1970 and only VN $236 million in 1971. Resettlement costs amounted to VN $760 million in 1967, VN $1.2 billion in 1968, and up to VN $2.2 billion and VN $2.4 billion for 1969 and 1970, respectively. These expenditures provided relief and assistance for 3.5 million refugees during the war years. (Chart 18)

Refugee resettlement centers or camps were each provided with an elementary school. The cost of operating these schools, including teachers' salaries, was supported by the school programs which were transferred to the Ministry of Education. In addition, each resettlement center was also provided with a maternity ward and a dispensary if the refugee population amounted to 10,000. Other self-help projects such as sewage, drainage ditches, road repairs, etc., were undertaken under the community development program and allotted VN $50,000 each. On an average, each resettlement center received about VN $1.5 million for self-help projects.

The refugee relief and resettlement program was a gigantic effort that succeeded only because of the great financial assistance provided by the US government and other Free World countries. It was a truly humanitarian program that helped to heal the wounds caused by the war.
US agencies and some other international organizations played key roles in contributing to the success of the program. They provided refugees with medicine, food, and relief necessities. They helped in vocational training, in developing education, and in caring for orphans and the sick and the wounded. Altogether, 12 US and international organizations were involved in the refugee relief and resettlement program. Some were responsible for distributing relief items donated by US government or charity organizations. Others, such as the American Red Cross and the International Red Cross provided personnel and staff to assist in the operation of refugee camps or resettlement centers. In addition, these organizations also helped train refugees in farming techniques, handicraft, construction work, and in cattle and poultry breeding, and assisted them in the settlement or resettlement process. The Community Development Foundation, in particular, conducted training courses in refugee camp operation for personnel of the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Relief. Other vocational training courses were also organized by charity and non-profit organizations to train refugees in new occupations.

Agricultural Development

Vietnam is basically an agricultural country. Its production output was still low because of its conservative techniques. Agricultural reform therefore became a concern and the GVN initiated many programs to pursue it within the pacification framework. Such programs as animal husbandry, agricultural affairs, Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry, and fisheries were designed to contribute to the rural development effort and to improve the national agriculture. In each province, these programs were established and implemented by the provincial rural development council, with the cooperation of technical services.

The Animal Husbandry Program

The purposes of this program were to teach farmers modern animal husbandry methods, to protect livestock with preventive immunization
and medical treatment, and to distribute livestock to poor farmers. In hamlets other than those earmarked for pacification, the scope of program activities was limited and aimed only at continuing and consolidating the achievements obtained during the previous years. They included the recovery of the livestock distributed for profit-sharing in the previous years and its redistribution to farmers living in the same hamlet, and continuation of preventive immunization and medical treatment. The GVN also provided additional funds for each province to purchase more livestock for distribution.

In the New Life Hamlets, the program was more extensive. It included training farmers and distributing pigs, chickens, and ducks, and other kinds of livestock. Farmer training taught new animal husbandry methods, how to build pens and farms, how to choose livestock breeds, the advantages provided by mixed feed to livestock and how to cure livestock diseases. The purpose of pig distribution was to popularize the improved breeds of pigs and at the same time to support to some extent the poor farmers who could not afford animal husbandry. Each needy family willing to raise livestock was allotted two breeding pigs, and on an average, each hamlet was allotted 40 pigs.

The distribution of pigs to hamlet households was implemented on the basis of certain criteria. First, piglets raised for meat should be crossbred from Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than eight kilos. Sows should be almost of pure Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than nine kilos. Boars should be of pure Yorkshire, Berkshire or Danish breeds, weighing more than two kilos. Then medicine for the elimination of parasites and preventive shots should be given to the pigs kept for distribution. The procedure used for distribution determined that sows were allotted on the basis of the sharing of litters, but boars were allotted free. The animal husbandry office would take one two-month piglet from the first litter.

Chickens and ducks were only distributed to the hamlets that had not received an allocation of pigs. However, chickens and pigs could be distributed simultaneously to those hamlets having a large population and animal husbandry abilities. Each family was allotted 10
breeding chickens or from 40 to 50 ducks; all free of charge. For the province that had requested a distribution of chickens but had not received it in due time, ducks could be provided in lieu of chickens.

As to other kinds of livestock, depending on the local situation, the province could provide a distribution of oxen, goats and rabbits for farmers. This was on the basis of profit-sharing in the case of cows and goats.

The Agriculture Affairs Program

The agricultural affairs program was designed to provide guidance to farmers concerning advanced agricultural methods, distribute seeds and seedlings to poor farmers, protect crops against insects and diseases, and train Montagnards in agriculture.

For the hamlets that were not targeted for pacification, the scope of program activities was limited to continuing operations initiated in previous years, especially the protection of crops and limited distribution of seeds and seedlings to very needy farmers.

In New Life Hamlets, the program was focused on training farmers in advanced farming methods, particularly in the methods adopted for new and improved breeds, on distributing seeds and seedlings of new or improved types, and on helping poor farmers with farming facilities. The seeds varied according to the region: rice, corn, beans, etc. Each needy family having farming abilities received an allocation of from 20 to 40 kilos of seed for the planting of about one hectare of land.

To protect crops, sprayers and pumps were distributed to each hamlet as common property of the community, but were placed under the control of agricultural cadres. Pumps were only provided where such a need could be justified and for minor farming activities. The distribution of powerful water pumps to carry water to rice fields lay within the scope of the irrigation program. Insecticides were provided free.

Montagnard Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

In provinces where many Montagnards were settled, a Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry center was established with the purpose of training Montagnards in farming, animal husbandry, and fish culture.
methods. Guidance was also provided to Montagnards concerning certain trades, such as blacksmith, carpentry, sewing, etc.

An average Montagnard agriculture and animal husbandry center was operated by a manager, an assistant manager, two instructors, five laborers and one clerk. Montagnard RD cadres were also assigned to each center; their role was to encourage agricultural activities in Montagnard villages. Each Montagnard undergoing training at the center received a daily food allowance of VN $50.

The Fisheries Program

The fisheries program was designed to provide guidance to farmers concerning fresh water fisheries and to fishermen concerning salt water fisheries, provide support to poor fishermen such as breeding fish and fishing gear for the development of fisheries, and to improve fisheries by motorizing fishing boats. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture also ran a permanent program which provided for activities concerning salt water fisheries, the survey of lakes and ponds to determine fishing suitability, the compilation of fishing statistics, the digging of fish ponds, and the construction of refrigerating rooms.

At the hamlet level, the program provided training for farmers and fishermen in fish culture methods, the use of fishing equipment, the digging of ponds for fish breeding and rearing, the preparation of fish food, etc. To encourage fish breeding and rearing, breeding fish were distributed free to the hamlet people who had the abilities for such activities. Different kinds of fish were provided depending on the availability of fresh or salt water in the areas. Fish were distributed on the basis of one fish per square meter of lake or pond.

Outboard motors, boats and fishing gear were provided for by loans and were to be reimbursed in cash. The terms of payment were one year for fishing gear, and two years for outboard motors and boats. Fishing gear worth less than VN $200 were distributed free.

For the construction of fish market places, a fund of VN $250,000 was allotted for each site for the construction work and the digging of
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For the construction of fish market places, a fund of VN $250,000 was allotted for each site for the construction work and the digging of
drainage ditches. Market places were constructed according to a standardized plan provided by the Bridges and Highways Program and with the support of CORDS, which supplied for each construction work 80 roofing sheets, 1,000 kilos of iron and 200 bags of cement. For fish drying yards, a fund of VN $20,000 was allotted for each yard. This program was implemented by the province through self-help projects.

The implementation of the fisheries program as well as other programs such as agricultural affairs and animal husbandry was handled by technical offices staffed by technical personnel and cadres. Depending on requirements, each office was assigned one or two technicians who were selected from engineers, controllers or instructors. Contract salaries were paid to technical personnel on the basis of diplomas and according to a pay scale determined by the Ministry of Agriculture. Salaries included cost of living allowance and family allowance but no per diem allowance.

Cadres worked in hamlets and received a monthly contract salary of VN $3,500. They were technically trained in various schools of agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry prior to assignment. Technical personnel and cadres had to pledge to serve the programs for at least one year and they were released when the programs were terminated.

An Evaluation

The GVN faced a tremendously difficult task in trying to reform a rural society as complex and as backward as South Vietnam's. Despite the trend toward urbanization and the depletion of male population during the most intensive war years, the countryside remained the major ground of contest where the GVN emphasis was placed on restoring the rural economic infrastructure and improving health and education. These efforts were the mainstay of pacification and development.

The Hamlet Self-Help program was a move in the right direction since the hamlet was the basic communal unit. The range of projects embraced by the program reflected its realistic goal of rebuilding the war-shattered rural infrastructure and bringing about immediate,
practical benefits for the peasantry. The GVN also hoped that a rebuilt rural area could contribute significantly toward developing the national economy. A key feature which accounted for its initial acceptance by the local population was the self-help character of the program. Experience showed that when their own interests were at stake, and when they had a voice in the management of their own affairs, the people voluntarily and willingly cooperated. In the district of Cu Chi, Hau Nghia Province, for example, the local population repaired rural roads and culverts, built market places, and classrooms, all within the space of one year. In the Mekong Delta, peasants in the Plains of Reeds took up by themselves the task of dredging and clearing canals of obstacles because farming and business depended on these waterways. Civic actions conducted by US and FWMA forces during the period of their commitment, 1965-1972, gave the program great support, particularly in those areas near operational bases. In addition to providing construction materials, the allied troops frequently contributed labor and turned the finished work over to the local population as gifts. Some overzealous local governments, however, turned the program into a coercive enterprise, requiring the people to meet arbitrarily established deadlines, often at the cost of relinquishing their own business. Despite this, the overall program received wide acceptance by the peasantry.

In health and education, the period from 1969 to 1972 was a period of vigorous development in terms of efforts committed and results achieved. The rural education program virtually eradicated illiteracy among peasant children and youth, and effectively increased the elementary student population multifold. More students went up to high schools because the majority of villages were provided with a first-level middle-school (four-year program, equivalent to US 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grades). This was an unprecedented opportunity for rural students who during the previous years had to go to the only middle-school at the district town, sometimes at prohibitive distances from their villages. The remarkable progress made in rural education was possible due primarily to aid funds which helped subsidize higher salaries for rural teachers, build new schools or additional classrooms and provide free textbooks,
and not infrequently free school supplies as well, for the under-privileged students. But extensive as it was, the development in rural education was but part of an outdated educational system, based primarily on old French methodology and devoid of a new national spirit. The system belatedly underwent some improvement and modernization in 1974.

Despite the GVN efforts, the benefits the rural population enjoyed in terms of medical care seemed to derive chiefly from programs sponsored by allied countries, international organizations and, in particular, US forces in Vietnam. The US MEDCAP program was especially beneficial to the local population living in US areas of operation. Allied medical teams and international charity organizations were active in several provinces in the 2d and 3d Military Regions. In the central highlands, the US Special Forces did a splendid job helping the Montangards fight diseases and improve sanitation. The GVN rural health program was a laudable effort but it was inefficiently managed and plagued by problems such as the lack of medical personnel and medicine. Pilferages and illicit traffic in drugs further aggravated the problem by enabling the Viet Cong to purchase large quantities of critical medicine.

By far the heaviest burden the GVN had to shoulder during the war years was the problem of refugees. The highest figure recorded after the 1968 Tet offensive was about three million or 1/6 of the total population. The GVN effort was twofold: providing temporary relief and helping in resettlement. Despite the availability of aid funds which provided up to 80% for the refugee resettlement costs and the humanitarian help of US charity organizations, the task was monumental and the effort an uphill struggle. From 1969 to 1971, the problem was alleviated thanks to improved security which allowed most refugees to return to their villages. There remained, however, about 300,000 refugees living in camps for whom care and resettlement were constantly needed. Most relief items donated by US charity organizations such as powdered milk and western clothes usually found their way to local markets since they were alien to the Vietnamese rural way of life. Part of them also never reached the refugees but were resold to pad the greedy camp officials' pocketbooks.
The GVN effort to resettle refugees was not very successful since most resettlement areas were located in insecure areas and became targets of VC harassments. There was also not enough cultivable land and water for irrigation. The result was, after a certain time living under relief, refugees drifted away again and not infrequently ended up in a refugee camp. Several refugees did this five or six times, all at the expense of the GVN. But the resettlement effort greatly improved with Dr. Phan Quang Dan's program of Land Reclamation and Hamlet Resettlement which began in early 1974. This was a large-scale effort, well-planned and well-supported, which was welcomed not only by refugees but also by veterans who voluntarily joined the program. The program had a good chance of resolving the refugee problem when it was thrown in utter disarray by events in early 1975.

In keeping with the pacification progress, agricultural development projects also brought about rosy achievements during 1969-1971. This was possible due to the availability of seeds, insecticides, fertilizers and farm machines purchased through the economic aid program. For a time at least, the rural area took on a prosperous outlook. Cultivated acreage was expanded and rice production per hectare greatly increased. The fishing industry also improved and expanded, thanks to motor boats and refrigeration technology. Increased production in rice, however, failed to meet consumption demands with the results that in 1972, the year of greatest expectations, South Vietnam continued to rely on imports. (Chart 19) This did not make sense, however, because estimates of actual production indicated at least a level of self-sufficiency. Most province chiefs did testify in effect that there were no rice shortages, except in the MR-1 provinces. The problem, therefore, seemed to involve speculation by greedy Chinese businessmen in the Mekong Delta and purchases made by the Viet Cong who always offered to buy at high prices. A belated effort made by GVN authorities in 1974 to control the traffic in rice failed to produce any significant results. The rice problem seemed beyond the GVN capability to solve, this hurt its efforts at rebuilding the national economy and achieving real progress in pacification.
BANANAS: 15,500 HECTARES
SUGAR CANE: 32,000 HECTARES
CORN: 28,000 HECTARES
MIRACLE RICE: UP TO 850,000 HECTARES

SELF-SUFFICIENCY LEVEL IN RICE

YEAR

5,327 5,185 4,821 4,336 4,688 4,366 5,115 5,650

PLANNED
For all its efforts, the GVN was still a long way from solving the social and economic problems that plagued South Vietnam, especially in the context of a war in which the enemy always held the initiative and had the capability to wreck any achievements any time he chose. This happened in 1968 and again in 1972 when a few months of attacks undid years of hard toil. Unless South Vietnam was free from North Vietnam's military threat, pacification or any nation-building task remained a hopeless proposition.
CHAPTER VII

The GVN Political, Information and Chieu Hoi Efforts

Information and Propaganda

Information and propaganda were designed to exert a favorable influence on the population by publicizing the government policies and programs and eliciting popular trust and support for them. When employed properly, they were sharp-edged tools for the advancement of political and military goals, shattered the enemy's morale, made him feel disenchanted, and incited him to rally.

As they were practiced in South Vietnam, all information and propaganda activities were conducted and coordinated by the GVN Ministry of Information through a system that reached down to the village level. At the province level, there was an information service; at the district level, an information section; and in villages, an information hall. Prior to 1965, the GVN information and propaganda facilities were scant. In each district town there was only a tiny information hall adorned with outdated pictures and magazines. Information personnel were few because the entire GVN information service was organized as a general directorate, and not as a ministry as it was later under the Second Republic.

After the active participation of US forces in the Vietnam War, however, the GVN information service expanded substantially due to the considerable assistance and support provided by such US agencies as the United States Operations Mission (USOM), United States Information Service (USIS), and Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO). Each province information service was provided with movie projectors, a film library, and a mobile projection unit using Lambretta van-scooters as vehicles for shows in villages and hamlets. The rural population was given the opportunity to watch film shows at least once a month, a kind of entertainment
unavailable to most of them before then. USOM and USIS also provided funds and information equipment for all provinces and even district information halls were supplied with domestic and foreign newspapers and pictures. The GVN Information Ministry, with the support of JUSPAO, purchased nineteen out of twenty-four daily newspapers published in Saigon and distributed them to village information halls.

Additional radio stations were built in major cities and, to expand radio broadcasts into rural areas, a total of 100,000 JUSPAO-supplied transistorized radios were distributed free to peasant families living in villages and hamlets. In addition, the GVN also imported great quantities of inexpensive radio receivers so that the population could afford to buy them. The voice of the GVN could thus reach the majority of the population across the country. Even in the central highlands, a radio transmitting station was built to broadcast programs in several Montagnard languages. Twelve radio stations eventually operated across the nation. In outlying areas not covered by the GVN information service, aircraft were used, again with US support, to drop leaflets or to broadcast messages. These psychological operations were designed both to inform the population and to call upon enemy cadre to surrender or rally.

South Vietnam did not have a TV broadcasting station until 1966. At first, JUSPAO made TV broadcasts through an airborne transmitting station. A TV studio and broadcast station were subsequently built in Saigon and GVN information personnel were trained by JUSPAO in the operation of the station and the production of TV programs. The TV network was later expanded through additional transmitting and relay stations at Hue, Can Tho and Nha Trang.

Aided by the US, the GVN was in command of a vast array of information and propaganda instruments which were more numerous and sophisticated than those that the enemy possessed. The problem was that the information cadre did not properly exploit these instruments to produce the desired effect. Despite his meager resources, the enemy appeared to get more results out of his propaganda efforts. It seemed that the enemy knew how to make better use of his propaganda means and, by properly exploiting mass psychology, he was also able to arouse popular sympathy more successfully.
For a short period following the Paris Agreement, some progress was achieved by the GVN in information and propaganda. It purposefully built up and exploited the people's hatred toward the Communists. For the first time a genuine effort was made to put the arts and literature at the service of propaganda. Songs and plays, for example, no longer displayed languid lyricism as in the old days. But the most extensively read news mediums in the country, the daily newspapers, were left unexploited for propaganda purposes. The majority of them were owned and operated by private entrepreneurs who were more concerned about commercial success than the anti-Communist cause. The GVN was unable to exert any influence on the daily newspapers, except for the ARVN-owned "Tien Tuyen" (Front Line). Despite several stringent measures that the GVN imposed on the free press such as censure, temporary suspension, fines, revocation of license and legal prosecution, they were all ineffective in rallying the press to the national cause.

The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program

The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms), or Great National Solidarity program was initiated by the GVN to subvert the morale of enemy cadre and troops and call upon them to leave their ranks and rally to the national cause. The basic theme was that both sides were brothers in the same family and, since both wanted to end the war, the best and least costly way was to renounce internecine bloodletting, forsake hatred, and cooperate with each other to rebuild the shattered nation.

During a decade of implementation, from 1963 to 1973, the Chieu Hoi program produced impressive results; 159,741 enemy troops and cadre rallied to the GVN cause.¹ Most notorious among the ralliers were some high-ranking military cadre such as Tam Ha, Huynh Cu, and Le Xuan Chuyen, who returned to the GVN side well before the cease fire period, and the

¹This total breaks down into: 97,696 military cadre and troops; 45,173 political cadre and 16,872 others. These ralliers also surrendered 10,699 individual weapons and 545 crew-served weapons to GVN authorities.
political commissar of Lam Dong province and the personal secretary to the Saigon-Cholon political commissar, both of whom rallied during the post-cease fire period. The number of ralliers reached an all-time high during 1969 when 47,087 enemy cadre and troops chose to side with the GVN, apparently as a result of Communist setbacks during the previous year.

The Chieu Hoi Ministry controlled a country-wide organization which consisted of Chieu Hoi services and centers in the provinces, Chieu Hoi sections at the district level, and Chieu Hoi offices at the village level. Enemy ralliers were grouped at provincial Chieu Hoi centers or at centers in Saigon where they underwent reeducation and readjustment to a free and decent life.

During the period of reeducation and readjustment, ralliers were well fed and well treated. They were allowed to correspond with their families and receive visits. They were never roughly treated or compelled to do hard labor as in enemy-run so-called "reeducation centers". While living in a Chieu Hoi center, ralliers were free to converse, watch TV, listen to radio broadcasts, read books, or just relax. Depending on personal desires, ralliers were given vocational training in such courses as tailoring, embroidering, handicraft, etc. The GVN policy was to help each of them acquire a skill to earn a living when he was returned to normal life. The reeducation period usually lasted from 45 to 60 days, and upon release from Chieu Hoi centers, ralliers were permitted, depending on their readjustment and repentance, to apply for public service jobs, enlist in the armed forces, or seek jobs in private industries. Those who wanted to return to their home villages and live a quiet, honest life, were given transportation allowances.

Another GVN effort to win over ralliers completely —politically and psychologically — and also to make the Chieu Hoi effort more meaningful, was to provide the ralliers with housing facilities once they were released from reeducation centers. The GVN constructed a total of 42 Chieu Hoi villages, one for each province, consisting of housing units which were allocated free of charge to ralliers. This was a most welcomed program which really helped the ralliers begin a new life without hardship.
In general, ralliers were more extensively employed by U.S. forces and U.S. Embassy agencies than the GVN. In MR-1, for example, U.S. Marine units used ralliers as informants, interrogators or scouts during operations, especially when U.S. units staged raids against Communist bases. Because of their intimate knowledge of local terrain, ralliers were very effective as scouts.

In addition, ralliers were also used in intelligence work against the VCI by U.S. Embassy agencies. Ralliers made up the bulk of Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), a para-military force organized, armed and financed by the U.S. Embassy. Later, the PRUs were placed under the control of provincial police chiefs as a striking force for the elimination of the VCI. This was done after the National Police was made responsible for the implementation of the Phoenix program in 1968.

Out of the total ralliers who volunteered for GVN service as of October 1970, it was calculated that 27.1 percent were employed in civil servant positions in the GVN or served in regular, territorial, and para-military forces and in national cadre teams such as RD, armed propaganda and PRUs. Another 20.5 percent was employed by private industries or businesses and the remaining returned to their home villages and lived as farmers after being given tilling land by the GVN, like other citizens.

All told, the Chieu Hoi program was a meaningful and humanitarian effort which provided real opportunities for wrongdoers to mend their ways and begin a new life. The large number of enemy personnel who chose freedom gave some measure of the effect of the program. The figures differed from year to year; the higher figures were recorded when the fighting was more intense. Ralliers generally helped our side know more about the true situation on the other side, and they sometimes provided invaluable intelligence. It was learned from their stories that by and large, Communist morale was low and the troops were confused. Because of protracted fighting, most of them became disenchanted with the war and longed for reunion with their families. Other ralliers told of the lack of medical treatment and medicine, spartan living conditions, unbearable hardships and human losses that sometimes edged entire enemy units toward despair and to defection attempts. Had it not been for
fears of retaliation against their relatives, several complete enemy units would have chosen to defect after their 1968 defeat.

Because of the potential of the Chieu Hoi program, the enemy made efforts to counter it. Communist political commissars, for example, told their troops that ralliers were all killed by the GVN.

For all its merits, the Chieu Hoi program had some shortcomings. For one thing, the GVN placed no control over those ralliers who had been released to return to their home villages. The local governments also failed to keep track of the former ralliers. As a result, there occurred several cases of false rallying. Upon release, they conducted subversive activities for awhile and then returned to their base areas. The allocation of free housing for ralliers also caused great animosity and jealousy among ARVN troops and veterans, many of whom were disabled. The disabled veterans' grievances soon gave rise to unlawful acts of house squatting in open defiance of the GVN. They felt that as soldiers who had risked their lives to fight the Communists, and had become casualties as a result, they were not treated as well as the ralliers who only recently had shot at them.

The GVN had pushed the program too far without due consideration for the sensitivities and welfare of war veterans. In a program such as Chieu Hoi, the pros and cons of certain benefits should have been carefully weighed in the context of a war-ravaged society and sounder priorities should have been established. Despite this, however, the Chieu Hoi program was one of the most effective and least costly ways of ending the war. After all, the cost of killing an enemy soldier was much greater than the amount spent to induce him to rally.

**Relations with Ethnic Minorities**

The Central Highlands of South Vietnam occupied an important strategic position in view of its continuity with Laos, Cambodia, and especially with the enemy North-South infiltration and supply corridor, which ran along the entire length of South Vietnam's western border. The area was sparsely populated, mostly inhabited by Montagnards who numbered
nearly 1 million and consisted of 29 different tribal groups, each having its own language and customs. These tribal groups usually lived in isolation from the Vietnamese and were generally oblivious to the fact that there existed a GVN and national laws.

Under the Bao Dai government, the central highlands were decreed a "territory of the Imperial Court", a kind of government reservation where homesteaders had to secure a special permit. During the first Indochina War, from 1949 to 1954, the French paid special attention to the central highlands, where they set up a separate administrative apparatus. The Viet Minh were equally interested in the area and made a special effort to win over the Montagnards to their cause. Some Viet Minh underground cadre even went so far as filing their front teeth and stretching their ears to make them look like Montagnards. Some Viet Minh lived with the Montagnard tribes and some married Montagnard girls and were accepted as tribe members. After the French withdrew from Indochina in 1956, the central highlands were virtually forsaken by the GVN.

Beginning in 1961, the GVN took renewed interest in the highlands and sought to rally the ethnic minorities by making certain overtures such as forbidding the use of the derogatory appellation *Moi* (savage) by Vietnamese and encouraging the use of the newly-coined substitute "new Vietnamese compatriot" when referring to Montagnards. In addition, a special education program was initiated which encouraged them to learn Vietnamese and granted special credits and waivers in all kinds of examinations. Finally, special tribunals were established to provide Montagnards with a fair trial process, based not on Vietnamese laws but on each tribe's customs and manners.

At the same time, with the concurrence of the GVN, the U.S. Special Forces began to make inroads into the highlands. They initiated civic action programs such as dispensary service and the distribution of medicine with the purpose of rallying their support. The Special Forces'...
objective was to shake off the lingering influence of the French and Viet Minh among the Montagnards and turn them into guerrilla fighters, gradually organizing and arming tribal villages for self defense. The first of such self-defense villages was Enao in Ban Me Thuot province. Despite these efforts, the Montagnards were still heavily influenced by the French and especially by the Viet Minh-instilled idea of an autonomous state which would replace GVN authority and prohibit Vietnamese homesteaders among them. These feelings were fomented by Montagnards who made up the FULRO (Unified Front of Struggle for the Oppressed Races) movement and erupted into open rebellion in 1964 in Ban Me Thuot. The FULRO, masquerading as representative of all tribal groups, demanded an autonomous state in the central highlands and equal rights with the Vietnamese. Some Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), trained by U.S. Special Forces and led by ARVN officers, joined the rebellion on 20 September 1964, killed their commanders, and took hostages to press for their demands.

The rebellion was finally quelled but this was a sobering experience for the GVN. To deal with the Montagnards' grievances the GVN initiated a systematic effort designed to improve their political and social standing, beginning in 1965 under the Nguyen Cao Ky administration. The government created a Ministry of Ethnic Minorities, headed by a Montagnard, whose responsibility was to look after all problems concerning the development of tribal groups. Provinces of the central highlands, such as Ban Me Thuot, Pleiku and Kontum were placed under the control of Montagnard province chiefs; the departmental services in these provinces were also headed by Montagnards. In the ARVN and territorial forces, Montagnards were also promoted to field-grade officers and given commands or responsible positions. Elected officials in village, city councils, and in the Senate and the Lower House also included Montagnards.

Montagnards were given certain privileges such as a specially designed education program, compensatory grades in examinations, and an increase in draft age so that they could compete in fairness with Vietnamese and pursue their education without interference. A special training program for Montagnard teachers was conducted by the Ministry of Education to supply adequate teachers for tribal villages.
In public health, emphasis was placed by the GVN on teaching Montagnards body hygiene, public hygiene, house sanitation, and child care and upbringing. To further Montagnard education and to broaden Montagnard knowledge of domestic affairs, the GVN constructed local radio stations in the central highlands that broadcasted in Montagnard languages. Information cadre employed by the GVN in the area were all Montagnards. Efforts were also made to publish propaganda pamphlets and other education and information materials in Montagnards languages.

To operate the pacification program in the central highlands, the GVN created Montagnard RD cadre groups whose members were trained in a special RD training center in Pleiku, the Truong Son Training Center, which was established in early 1967 as a Montagnard counterpart to the RD Training Center for Vietnamese at Vung Tau. Developmental programs were also undertaken by the GVN for the benefit of Montagnards without any hint of racial discrimination. Montagnards were taught new methods of farming to replace their old slash-and-burn technique, and were given modern agriculture equipment. At the same time, crop lands reserved for Montagnards were greatly expanded and the conservation of forest and forest resources were emphasized. In addition, Montagnards were encouraged to grow fruit plants such as bananas, oranges, and prunes, to plant tea, coffee and corn, to build reservoirs for irrigation, and to construct fish ponds.

In general, the GVN strove to improve the Montagnards' lot through the pacification program. But the rate of progress in the highlands was somehow slower than elsewhere, perhaps because they were still suspicious of the GVN goodwill, and probably because the Montagnards were chary of a newly transplanted culture which was not at all like their way of life.

Land Reform and The "Land-To-The-Tiller" Program

To the Communists and the GVN alike, the rural area was of strategic importance and both admitted this fact. The majority of the rural population were peasants who as a class could be rallied to any worthy cause.
if properly motivated. One of the best incentives for their motivation was land ownership since for generations the Vietnamese peasants who eked out a meager living from the land were mostly landless farm workers or sharecroppers. At the root of the conflict, there were also problems of social injustice, oppressive landlords, and the class struggle which could all be attributable to the inequality between the haves and the have nots.

Land reform became a conscious effort undertaken with variable degrees of success by successive governments of South Vietnam which felt they had to beat the Communists at their own game. For, to both sides, land reform was the indispensable tool to bring about social justice and a better life.

Under the Bao Dai regime, land reform was initiated through the distribution of public land to peasants, and by a reduction of land rents whereby no more than 15% of crop returns were allowed to be levied by land owners. In addition, no farmer was authorized to own more than 100 hectares of farmland. The maximum amount of farmland then authorized each owner varied according to the region and his capabilities for production. In North Vietnam, the range was from 12 to 36 hectares per head of household; in Central Vietnam, from 15 to 45 hectares; and in South Vietnam (old Cochin-China), from 30 to 100 hectares.

The First Republic of Vietnam also decreed, by an ordinance in 1957, that no landowner was allowed to keep more than 100 hectares for his own farming effort. All farmlands in excess of this maximum allowance were confiscated and reimbursed by the government. Reimbursements were made by a 10% cash advance, the rest to be paid back in 12 years at an annual interest rate of 3%. The GVN was able to purchase, both from departing Frenchmen and from Vietnamese landowners, 450,000 hectares, but only 122,000 hectares had been redistributed by the time President Diem was overthrown. Special measures were taken by the government to help farmers struck by natural disasters.

The Viet Minh also undertook a land reform program in North Vietnam after 1954, but their goal was entirely different from what South Vietnam tried to achieve. The Viet Minh began the program with a campaign of
inciting the hatred and enmity of landless peasants toward landowners. The Viet Minh coaxed the peasants to denounce crimes committed by landowners such as their enriching themselves by the peasant's blood and sweat and levying excessive land rents. It was true that in some areas, landowners in North Vietnam took away from the sharecroppers from 34 to 50% of the crop returns and charged interest rates ranging from 57 to 73% on credits extended for farming. As a result, this land reform program turned into a class struggle movement in which, after being denounced and indicted by their former sharecroppers and summarily tried by a people's court, landowners were stripped of all their possessions. The land thus confiscated was distributed to the landless peasants who had worked for the revolutionary government and to disabled veterans. The true goal of the Communists was obvious enough. Their land reform was nothing but a way of eliminating the landowner and petite bourgeoisie class and reinforcing what they called the proletariat and peasant class, and equalizing all differences between these two classes.

Under the Second Republic of Vietnam, there were also attempts at land reform during the initial years, but not until 1970 were there any significant and purposeful efforts. Land reform was undertaken on a scale extensive enough to take on a revolutionary outlook through the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 3/70 which authorized all peasants to become small landowners. Each peasant was allocated a fair amount of land for farming purposes entirely free of charge. The decree also officially terminated the practice of land rent and determined that the farmer was entitled to all the fruits of his labor and in fact owned the piece of land he actually tilled.

Due to the political significance of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" program, the date of the Presidential Decree that initiated it — 26 March 1970 — was proclaimed as a national holiday. For the rural population, this was truly the greatest and most total revolution ever attempted. For the first time in generations the peasants' aspirations had been realized and this was indeed the boldest move that any government had ever made in South Vietnam.
During 1970 a total of 210,371 hectares of land was distributed, a figure that surpassed the planned objective by 5%. By April 1973, the amount of land which had been planned for free distribution to landless farmers during the period from 1970 to 1973, had all been allocated, a total of one million hectares or 2.47 million acres. The rapid progress of the program was made possible by the substantial assistance provided by the U.S. in terms of experts, automatic data processing facilities, land surveying aircraft and the enormous fund of 500 million dollars which had been earmarked for the entire program.

In addition to free distribution of land, the GVN also established the Rural Development Bank (RDB) to extend credit to farmers. By the end of 1970, a total of 22 branch offices of the RDB had been established across the country; the goal was to establish 42 of them, one for each province. Total credit extended to farmers by the end of 1970 reached VN $3.6 billion out of $5.7 billion earmarked.

Other agricultural development projects were also undertaken such as modernization of farm equipment and machinery, the digging of new canals and the cleaning of ditches, irrigation, use of herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers, import of better hybrid seeds of miracle rice (which could yield up to three crops per year). All of these projects had the devoted support of the U.S. In addition to agricultural development, the GVN also sought to improve nutrition for the population by importing cattle and poultry, increasing meat production and family income by importing better farm animal feed.

The "Land-to-the-Tiller" program in time became one of the GVN's major successes. Its achievements by far surpassed whatever previous governments had obtained. Its success depended primarily on the large assistance provided by the U.S. in terms of technology and the funds required to reimburse former land proprietors and to purchase land and farm machinery.

3 The basic allocation was three hectares per farmer.
Politically, the program was also a resounding success. It brought about prosperity and a decent life for the great mass of the peasants, eradicated injustice and created a new class of landowner-peasants. Although the peasants appreciated land reform, the program met with some adverse reactions on the part of urban people who thought that they had been forsaken. It was true that urban areas also needed help since inflation was rampant and unemployment was widespread. To solve these problems, the GVN initiated programs to develop urban areas, clear slums, and create jobs for slum-dwelling people.

The impact of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" program was profound and far-reaching. Social justice was restored, the GVN prestige grew everyday, and it appeared that it was on the way to win the war. The enemy, in the meantime, strove hard to wreck these achievements. By devious means, he incited the people to oppose and undermine the program; for example, he forbade them to pay back loans owed the GVN, sabotaged the machinery imported for the farmers, stole farm machines, or took them away from farmers for ransom.

Village and Hamlet Elections

Traditionally the village is the basic political, social and economical unit of Vietnam. It has its own territorial boundary, a population and its own resources, and usually enjoys administrative autonomy. In the old days, the village was a self-contained microcosm with its own government and laws, and the village chief was not unlike a lord who reigned over his tiny kingdom. In most instances, the village customs prevailed over the laws decreed by the imperial court and the village was governed by a council of notables which made all the important decisions for the village chief. This system was perpetuated over the generations and, with some modification in organization and name, became what it was in modern times, the village council, with the exception that its members in modern times were chosen through the popular vote.
Village elections were an effort by the GVN to develop democracy at the grass-roots level and at the same time to expand GVN control and authority throughout the nation. In contrast to traditional times, members of the village council were now elected instead of being appointed. This ensured that only people with prestige and popularity could hold office, in the place of the rich people who traditionally bought their way into office and exclusively shared among themselves the prerogatives of power.

As an administrative unit, the village incorporated several hamlets. Hamlets were geographic subdivisions of a village and placed under its administration. Throughout South Vietnam, there were 2,151 villages with a total of 10,522 hamlets.

The village government consisted of two bodies, the Village People's Council (VPC), and the Village Administrative Committee (VAC), which represented the legislative and executive branches, respectively. In 1966, a GVN decree determined that the Village People's Council was composed of from six to 12 members elected by the village through universal suffrage, direct and secret ballot. This represented a big step toward democracy at the grass-roots level as compared to village elections enacted under the First Republic, since the 1966 decree instituted a legislative body which had been missing up until then.

During the balloting, the member who won the largest number of votes became the chairman of the VPC and the member who ranked second in popular votes, the deputy chairman. After election, the Village People's Council convened its first session to elect the chairman of the Village Administrative Committee from among its members.

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4 The specific number of village council members to be elected was determined by the province chief on the basis of village population:

- Up to 2,000 inhabitants: 6 members
- From 2,000 to 5,000 inhabitants: 8 members
- From 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants: 10 members
- Above 10,000 inhabitants: 12 members

The Village Administrative Committee was composed of one village chief, one deputy village chief, and from one to four commissioners to perform the functions of security, propaganda and civic action, social welfare and agriculture. The other two important functions, civil status and economy-finance were assumed by the village chief and his deputy, respectively. (Chart 20)

The village chief or chairman of the VAC was elected by the village council from among its members, but he was not authorized to assume concurrently the functions of chairman, deputy chairman or secretary general of the village council. If the chairman of the village council happened to be elected village chief, the deputy chairman, VPC would take over his functions. The term of office of the VAC was three years. It terminated at the same time as the village council. The deputy village chief and commissioners were appointed by the village chief with the concurrence of the village council and the ratification of the province chief or district chief.

The village chief was responsible for enforcing laws and regulations, implementing GVN policies, and maintaining order and security in the village. His commissioner for security was usually the leader of the popular forces platoon assigned to protect the village.

The hamlet was placed under the administration of a Hamlet Management Committee which was composed of one hamlet chief and two assistants, one for security, one for propaganda and civic action. In hamlets with a population exceeding 3,000, the hamlet chief was assisted by a deputy. Both the hamlet chief and his deputy were elected by hamlet people through secret ballot in the same way as the village council.

People running for public office at the village and hamlet level were usually selected from among the anti-Communists who had good records, and frequently included veterans or retired civil servants. Any village resident could apply to run for office. His application was submitted to the district, and if his police record was clean, the application was forwarded to the province. There, the province election committee which included members of the security committee would screen
Chart 20 - Organization, Village and Hamlet Government

Village
People's Council

Village
Administrative Committee

Village Chief
(Also Commissioner for Civil Status Affairs)

Deputy
(Also Commissioner for Economy and Finance)

Propaganda and Civic Action

Security

Social Welfare

Agricultural Affairs

Hamlet Management Committee

Hamlet Chief

Deputy

Security

Propaganda and Civic Action
all applications and make its recommendation to the province chief. Again, if the applicant's record was clean, he could be placed on the ballot. In practice, the province election committee exercised control over who would run for office at the local level. After the first term, village and hamlet officials might be reelected several times. With a view to improving the effectiveness of the local government apparatus, the GVN conducted training courses for village and hamlet officials at the National Cadre Training Center at Vung Tau. The purpose was to consolidate the village and hamlet officials' anti-Communist spirit and train them in administrative procedures so that they could serve the people more efficiently. This was also in keeping with the pacification long-range goals that the GVN had set to achieve: self-defense, self-management, and self-sufficiency. Since only a solid infrastructure could bring about the conditions for achieving these national goals, efforts focused on the village and hamlet officials who operated and maintained that infrastructural foundation.

Elections at the village and hamlet level were a political innovation which attempted to institute democracy in a rural society still heavily influenced by traditions. Held within the context of a raging war, these elections met with some serious difficulties. In many villages there were very few youths left and the majority of their population consisted of elderly people, women and children. As a result, the GVN had to bring in people from other localities and even allowed servicemen on active duty to run for office. When elected, these officials could not function effectively, partly because they were strangers, and partly because the village population would not work with those they did not feel were their own people. Thus, despite their devotedness and hard work, such officials could achieve very little because they did not enjoy trust and support of the villagers.

Despite difficulties, village and hamlet elections proceeded with remarkably good results, due to improved security. By 1971, out of a total of 2,151 villages, 2,053 or 95.5% had elected village councils. (Chart 21)
Chart 21 — Village and Hamlet Elections, 1970

Village Elections Held

\[
\frac{2,053 \text{ Villages}}{2,151 \text{ Villages}} = 95\%
\]

Hamlet Elections Held

\[
\frac{9,986 \text{ Hamlets}}{10,522 \text{ Hamlets}} = 94.8\%
\]

Village Officials Elected

\[
\frac{17,305}{18,109} = 95\%
\]

Hamlet Officials Elected

\[
\frac{47,296}{52,810} = 89\%
\]
In 1972, however, the village and hamlet elections program had to be suspended in the wake of the Communist Easter offensive because of deteriorating security.

In addition to elections and training of village officials, the GVN still wanted to move toward total democratization by reforming the old administrative apparatus. The first step toward complete reform was the decentralization of authority. Province and district chiefs were empowered, for example, to solve all problems concerning the local population's aspirations; the central government would not meddle into local affairs. The GVN encouraged village and hamlet inhabitants to participate in various groups and organizations that served their interests such as farmer's associations, 4T clubs, etc. All these groups and associations were designed to foster a mutual assistance spirit among the population and to provide them with needed help in case of illness or disease.

People's Self-Defense Forces

The People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) was not a political or military organization or an affiliate of some religion, but a people's organization. With government assistance in armament and training, its members were supposed to defend themselves, their families, and their property against the Communists.

The need for a PSDF organization arose in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive as a result of the spontaneous demand from the people. The attacks waged by the Communists during 1968 completely alienated the people who had incurred heavy losses, not so much because of the fighting but because of Communist atrocities. Several thousands of Vietnamese, among them Catholic refugees from North Vietnam, asked the GVN to give them arms so that they could defend themselves and their communities. In response to this popular demand, the GVN initiated the People's Self-Defense program, which was established by the Mobilization Law of June 1968. The basic objectives of the PSDF program were to provide the people with the means to defend their families, homes, and
hamlets or villages in both rural and urban areas; to assist the National Police and RVNAF in maintaining security and order; to promote community development activities for self-help and improvement in both rural and urban areas, and to assist the police in identifying the enemy.

A National People's Self-Defense Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, served as a policy-making body under the operational control of the Central Pacification and Development Council. The implementation and operation of the PSD program was the responsibility of the PSDF Directorate under the Ministry of Interior. The PSDF director's duties included the detailed direction of the PSDF program, and guidance to the subordinate echelons on PSDF matters.

At each lower echelon of the administration, save for the corps tactical zone level, a PSDF committee administered and supervised the program. Thus there were PSDF committees at provinces, in Saigon and other autonomous cities, at districts (or precincts), and at village (wards or quarters) and hamlets. (Chart 22)

Under the Mobilization Law, all able-bodied men in the age groups of 16-17 and 39-50, except those joining the RVNAF on a voluntary basis, and males between 18 and 38 (draft age) deferred from military service were required to be members of the PSDF. Veterans who had served full terms of military service, elderly people, and women who were not physically capable to serve as combat PSDF could join support groups.

Combat PSDF were organized into groups with an authorized strength of 134 and consisted of three inter-teams of 44 members each. Each inter-teams was further broken down into three 14-member teams. A team was composed of a team leader, an assistant leader, three cells of three male members each and one cell of three female members. In case there were no woman volunteers as combat members, the strength of a group was reduced to 107. (Chart 23)

The positions of PSDF commanders at the capital, provinces, cities, and districts were assumed by the deputy mayor, deputy province chiefs, deputy mayors and deputy district chiefs, respectively. These officials served as the formal heads of PSDF in their areas but were not expected to exercise tactical control since PSDF were not designed to fight
Chart 22 — Organization, PSDF

National PSDF Committee

PSDF Directorate
Ministry of Interior

Province PSDF Committee

District PSDF Committee

Village PSDF Committee

Hamlet PSDF Committee

Saigon PSDF Committee

District PSDF Committee

Ward PSDF Committee

Neighborhood Committee

Municipal PSDF Committee

District PSDF Committee

Quarter PSDF Committee

Neighborhood Committee
Chart 23 — Organization, PSDF Combat Group

GROUP

1 Group Leader
1 Deputy Group Leader
132 Members

Inter-Team

1 Inter-Team Leader
1 Deputy
42 Members

Inter-Team

Team

1 Team Leader
1 Deputy
12 Members (4 cells in each team)

Cell

Women Cell

Cell

Cell
large-scale operations. Combat group, inter-team and team leaders were all elected by PSDF members themselves.

By the end of 1970, the PSDF had grown into a sizable force which included a total of 1,397,000 combat members out of 1,500,000 planned and 2,400,156 support members out of a planned 2.5 million. Combat PSDF members were armed with 463,752 individual weapons of assorted types. Across the country, 95% of villages and hamlets had their own PSDF organizations by this time.

People's Self-Defense Forces were employed primarily in villages, hamlets and urban and suburban neighborhoods against local enemy guerrillas. They generally operated in 3-man cells out of a fixed command post but frequently changed their guard stations, particularly at night. The village chief was responsible for the employment of PSDF. His commissioner for security, usually a PF platoon leader, assisted him in planning and controlling the deployment of PSDF for the village defense. The PF platoon was usually used as a reaction or back up force, supporting the PSDF by patrol and ambush activities outside the village. In city wards and neighborhoods, PSDF cooperated with the National Police in maintaining law and order, fighting crimes and social vices, and guarding against enemy sabotage or propaganda activities. Combat PSDF were supported by support elements who provided such assistance as first aid, medical evacuation, supply, morale, and comfort.

At this early stage of organization the PSDF were plagued by several problems, particularly an acute shortage of able leaders. In several instances, PSDF group leaders turned out to be draft dodgers and it became difficult to apprehend them for military service without undermining the PSDF program. The problem was obviously sensitive and was not solved despite joint efforts by the Directorate of Manpower and the PSDF Directorate.

In addition, although self-defense duties were a civil obligation, in big cities many residents sought to avoid PSDF guard duties by hiring other people as replacements. This practice was widespread among the rich and the influential people, particularly among wealthy Chinese-businessmen. The result was that many PSDF members turned into
"professional" men for hire, whose sole occupation was to take up permanent guard duties for a fee.

The PSDF were regarded as a handy source of weapons by the enemy and he focused on proselyting or intimidating PSDF members. Many weapons were thus lost to the enemy but the number of weapons captured from him and lost to him by PSDF members about cancelled out each other. The loss of weapons to the enemy through PSDF turncoats was particularly serious in the Mekong Delta. Therefore plans were made by the JCS at one time to employ NCOs on active duty or those approaching retirement age as PSDF group leaders in their home towns or villages. The PSDF could have turned into a most effective defense force if properly commanded and led.

An Evaluation

The GVN efforts at instituting grass-roots democracy, informing and educating the people, winning over their support, rallying the enemy's infrastructure members, and bringing about social and racial justice achieved only mild, superficial successes, except in the case of the "Land-To-The-Tiller" program. The truth seemed to indicate that the political achievements of a regime could never be better than the regime itself which was built on personal loyalties rather than popular consent. The "soloist performance" during the presidential elections in 1971 reflected the true light of a democracy which existed only for form's sake. Many knowledgeable Vietnamese believed that as a nation, South Vietnam failed because of bad political leadership.

Through the balloting process, the GVN attempted to institute democracy at the village and hamlet level. The quantitative results obtained by 1971 were impressive but failed to convey a true picture of real political life. The first truth was that the Vietnamese villages could do without elections if people were allowed to manage their own affairs without interference from the central government. For generations, the traditional Vietnamese village had been the most democratic institution even under the most despotic monarchies.
Villagers used to manage their own affairs through a council of respected elders and notables. Village customs defied and always won over the monarch's laws and the mandarins' authority. And French colonial rule never affected nor dared touch the autonomous microcosm of the village. But things began to deteriorate when the village chief was appointed, not by the council of notables who were installed by popular invitation, but by executive orders back in 1955; hence, the need for elections to re-institute a lost popular way of managing village affairs.

But the new generation of elected village councilmen seemed not to enjoy popularity nor command respect among villagers. Many of them were young people, introduced and backed by the district government, and some were not even villagers. The electoral process thus degenerated into some sort of wholesale appointment under the cover of ballots. As a result, most village councilmen behaved in a subservient way as if they were the province chief's appointees, not the people's representatives. They operated under pressure and direction of the provincial government, always mindful that the province chief was empowered by law to remove any of them from office any time he found a convenient pretext for it. The remarkable thing about it all was that elections were held only where GVN control was tight to give the provincial government effective leverage over village councils. And when this control was in jeopardy such as in the aftermath of the 1972 Easter offensive, the opportunity to stop the elective process altogether was too good to pass over.

Information as a national activity was for some time paired off with the Chieu Hoi effort. It was hoped in effect that through effective, straightforward information, the people would become more aware of the GVN achievements, of the free and prosperous way of life under the RVN regimen as contrasted to coercive and spartan life with the Communists and that enlightened elements of the other side would be attracted by it and come over. This policy worked but the results were modest. Somehow, the GVN information effort, to include clumsy attempts at propagandizing, never seemed effective enough despite advanced techniques and large budgetary outlays. The reason seemed to
derive partly from the blase mood of the educated public, partly from the fact that the GVN had very little to show for its political cause. To the rural population, occasional movie shows, propaganda leaflets, and outdated newspapers were just curious things that seemed far removed from reality. The case of the neglected hamlet information hall spoke eloquently, for the GVN always measured success in information in terms of misleading statistics, never in terms of popular responsiveness.

This perhaps accounted for the modest results achieved through the Chieu Hoi program. While the statistics appeared impressive — the number of ralliers was always on the rise — a closer look usually revealed that almost all returnees were low level military and cadre or even stray people who chose to rally to stay away from war hazards, for family reasons or for a chance to earn a living and seldom because they were ideologically convinced by the GVN overtures. The most important catches merely totaled a few relatively high-ranking cadre and most of them defected in the wake of the 1968 Communist military fiasco. The reason? They simply believed they could not win militarily.

For all its potential and merits, the Chieu Hoi effort may not have been fully worth its cost and returns. For one thing, the GVN was only half-hearted in employing ralliers for any useful purpose, out of suspicion and fear of its inability to control. This was not the case with US forces who employed the same people with remarkable success. For another, the program was costly and caused frustration among the troops who felt their lot was much worse than a rallier's.

As to the problem of ethnic minorities and the Montagnards in particular, it was more of a political than a socio-racial issue. The GVN became more alert to this issue after the FULRO-instilled rebellion erupted in 1964. The rebel leader, Y Bham, demanded autonomous status for the Montagnards, which practically amounted to political secession. This was entirely unpalatable to the GVN and to the Vietnamese in general. Racially, the Vietnamese always felt superior to the Montagnards whom they condescended to treat as equals only for political purposes. But the integration process, like other socio-racial problems, was slow and frustrating, for both sides. It might take generations
or it might perhaps remain a problem forever. But the GVN policy and actions seemed to be consistent with the long-range goal of achieving national unity.

One of the key pacification objectives for the GVN was to institute self-protection for the people, hence the creation of People's Self-Defense Forces. This effort fell in line with the overall pacification strategy of employing different forces against different levels of enemy organization. It was also the least expensive among the military efforts. But the PSDF idea, like the RD cadre, was not entirely a GVN invention. It was rather an imitation of Communist people's war doctrine adapted to the RVN cause. Unfortunately, the PSDF were neither as well disciplined nor as ideologically indoctrinated as the Communist militia. The initial gung-ho fervor gained in 1968 soon faded and gave way to a tedious routine in which stand-in guard duties were sometimes performed for a fee. This happened mostly in urban centers where wealthy people could afford hiring substitutes. But in insecure hamlets and in certain areas under religious influence, the PSDF performed much better and were rather well disciplined. In both cases, they appeared to be genuinely motivated by the need to protect their communities. The pattern seemed to indicate that voluntary work succeeded only where motivation and self-interest came into play. In general, the PSDF were plagued by several problems, the most serious being the lack of direction and supervision. If well motivated and under good control, the PSDF could have been a formidable force to contend with.

Among the pacification achievements, only the "Land-To-The-Tiller" program stood out as a resounding success which might portend considerable political gains in the long range. It might eventually become the model for social justice in backward agrarian countries if sustained and capped by a more popular political regime. In the case of Vietnam, agrarian reform had always been a political instrument. The Viet Minh did it in 1954 in North Vietnam to hasten the process of conversion to socialism. Ngo Dinh Diem tried it to bolster his regime but his half-hearted, small-scale program failed. The success achieved by the
Second Republic in 1970 was possible only because of the availability of American financial and technical aid. It succeeded because it was the right thing to do at the right moment. But while the peasantry acclaimed it, it also turned a cool back on the regime that sponsored it. Nevertheless, the program was a bold step in the right direction. Its long-range impact, unfortunately, did not have the chance to materialize.

The political experience gained through pacification thus seemed to demonstrate that whatever instrument or ploy the GVN used to gain popular consent and support only worked to the extent of credibility and popularity of the regime. The results expected could in no way be better than the regime itself. In fact, they mirrored accurately the standing of the regime and its acceptance by the citizenship.
CHAPTER VIII

An Assessment of Pacification:
Some Achievements, Difficulties and Shortcomings

The Ideological Aspect of Pacification

The war in South Vietnam polarized Vietnamese into Communists and anti-Communists and brought them onto a head-on collision course. Some called this war an ideological conflict. This was true but only to some extent because although opposed to Marx-Leninism, the nationalist cause hardly showed a doctrinal cohesion worthy of being an ideological rival. Several Vietnamese intellectuals, therefore, felt the need and actually searched for a codified, political doctrine capable of providing ideological guidance and motivation to the nationalist cause. Ngo Dinh Nhu for some time succeeded in selling this syncretistic version of "personalism" from which he also derived certain cohesive concepts as the doctrinal basis for his strategic hamlet program. Genuine as his concern was, the complexity of his philosophy enlightened no one, much less the peasantry, and served no useful purposes. Other efforts in general never went beyond "tea room" chats or magazine articles. The futility with which the search for an ideology met indicated that this was perhaps a pseudo-problem, which interested only the educated elite and that the peasantry, faced with the pressing and immediate questions of livelihood and security, would benefit more from a pragmatic approach to pacification and nation-building.

The conflict was also termed a civil war, which is probably more appropriate, since the issues at stake had deep roots in the political, social and economic fabric of Vietnam. The Communists, Viet Minh or Viet Cong, were dedicated revolutionaries in the sense that they wanted to destroy all traditional institutions and values and move toward disciplinarian and collectivized life under socialism. Those who opposed
them, by contrast, adhered to a liberal, humanistic way of life sustained by cultural traditions and economic prosperity. Pacification, therefore, provided the RVN with the opportunities to preserve and develop this way of life which most Vietnamese, I believe, if given a free choice, would certainly prefer over dehumanized, coercive collectivization.

It was in this direction that every GVN effort had moved, regardless of the regime or the name assigned to it. The strategy of pacification underwent very little change over the years. The Ngo Dinh Diem government was more ambitious in trying to make its strategic hamlet philosophy a national doctrine but its Communist-inspired methods were harsh and self-serving. The five-family group system, for example, despite its purported goal of "mutual assistance" and protection against Communist penetration, was a Machiavellian scheme, an instrument for control and repression. The dominant role of the village youth leader, who was the sole appointee among elected councilmen and directly responsive to Mr. Nhu's Republican Youth, was another example of the control techniques so common in authoritarian states. It was, in the end, the methods that negated and defeated the doctrine which itself professed to be humanistic.

The next few military governments that succeeded Mr. Diem attempted to improve on and revitalize the Strategic Hamlet program by adopting a new attitude toward pacification, symbolized by a new name: New Life. In essence, the effort amounted to pouring the same old wine into a new bottle since the center of interest was still the hamlet. It was remarkable not in what it professed to do but in its efforts to avoid treading the path of abuses and excesses that had led to Mr. Diem's demise. Hesitant and half-hearted, the New Life effort made no new inroads of any significance.

Pacification was greatly aided by the CORDS arrangement which for the first time provided cohesive support for the GVN effort under Nguyen Cao Ky. Also, Ky attempted to cover pacification with an ideological veneer. He professed that his government was a "poor man's government" and made use of revolutionary terminology to suit his good intent. He called himself "Chairman of the Central Executive Committee" instead of prime minister and addressed his cabinet ministers as "commissioners."