

able to determine that part of the responsibility that is Mr. Thang's. His responsibility may be very great; it may likewise be very small. According to a principle of justice, we cannot base ourselves on someone's confession of having assumed a particular responsibility. We have seen, during the Land Reform, many good party members wrongly classed as reactionaries who confessed all the crimes they had been accused of, although they knew perfectly well that they were not at all guilty. Later on, the Party recognized the error. These people resumed their party membership and their previous functions. We have to learn from past experiences. *To correct mistakes does not mean to commit new ones.* Therefore, standing on the platform of true legality, I suggest the creation of an Investigation Commission made up of representatives of the National Assembly, of the Fatherland Front, of the Lao-Dong Party, with the cooperation of experienced senior judges. This Commission, following the ordinary methods used in tribunals, will make investigations throughout the whole apparatus, from top leaders down to cadres in charge of the execution and the realization of the Land Reform programme, in order to define the degree of responsibility held by each level and to find out those responsible. Some people may ask: What is all this for? My answer is: For profiting from past lessons, because I have the impression that we have not yet sufficiently profited from our past lessons. Politics is leading justice—that is perfectly right—but politics is impinging on justice, replacing justice; the case of Mr. Ho Viet Thang is quite clear and that means that we let the door open for new mistakes, for more dangerous mistakes.

After all, justice is a characteristic trait of civilized people. *All those who were wrongly sentenced are patiently waiting for justice. A mere bland political measure cannot satisfy anybody.* The tense situation in the countryside is proof of what I said. *A movement of revenge, of taking justice in one's own hand is widespread all over the country and is pushing us back to the dark age of prehistoric barbarism.* If you want to know the present state of mind of those who were wrongly sentenced you have only to read *Nhan Dan*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Past experiences oblige us to rebuild our conception of the *enemy* on a new base of justice and legality. The mistakes we have committed derived from our *political* conception of the *enemy*. That conception was too *shifting*, too *dialectical* and therefore, with that conception in mind *we could not make any distinction between friends and enemies and we merely struck at ourselves.* Today, in order to avoid the mistakes we committed yesterday, we must have a clear definition of the *enemy* and that definition must be in accordance with the penal code. And then we will be able to strike rightly at our enemies, to consolidate our revolutionary regime. We will bring back peace to people's hearts, restore order and security in the countryside, re-establish unity among all the strata of the population, guaranteeing for the masses a free life without threat of any kind and without abuse of power. We will be able to champion the basic rights of man. In short, if politics regain its conscience, if it willingly respects justice and establishes a regime of legal-

ity, it will, while always maintaining a leading role, set an example by submitting itself to this very concept of justice and legality. Politics will certainly then restore its past prestige and will have the warm support of the masses.

\* \* \* \* \*

We do not forget the self-criticism made by the Lao-Dong Party which was read before the present Congress by Mr. Truong Chinh. Our leader confessed that the Central Committee of the Party had committed the mistake of living too far from the masses, that the leaders knew the masses only through reports sent them by cadres and party members. This mistake is a very serious one, chiefly because the Lao-Dong Party is a revolutionary party which should take the people's path as a direction for leadership. This is the cause of our grievous failure in the Land Reform programme. *Contrary to our daily statements, we lack democracy towards our own People.*

\* \* \* \* \*

I have spoken too long, but I hope that you will forgive me, because you certainly know that I am highly interested in the success of the Revolution and in the future of the nation. I have respectfully presented to you some of my ideas; they may be wrong or right, but my only intention is to bring to the Congress a contribution, a very small one, which is nevertheless full of hope and of limitless belief in the future of the country. I welcome a new era in which, on a basis of a correct legality and a true democracy, our people, under the glorious and victorious leadership of President Ho, of the Lao-Dong Party, will reach an infinitely brilliant stage of socialism after the establishment of a unified, peaceful and democratic Vietnam.

## ON THE QUESTION OF COMMUNIST REPRISALS IN VIETNAM

(By Anita Lauve Nutt\*)

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Several recent public discussions on Vietnam have taken exception to President Nixon's prediction that a "bloodbath" of Communist reprisals, similar to the one that occurred in North Vietnam after the 1954 cease-fire, will take place in South Vietnam if U.S. troops are withdrawn precipitately. Referring to ICC (International Control Commission) reports after the Geneva Agreement of 1954, the discussants have drawn inferences therefrom to support their denial that widespread reprisals occurred in North Vietnam after the withdrawal of the French.

### I. REPRISALS

#### *Statements*

In his article in the May 22 issue of *Life* magazine, "Set a date in Vietnam. Stick to it. Get out," Clark Clifford stated that "The President bases his claim of 'bloodbath' on his charge that when the Communists took over North Vietnam in 1954, they slaughtered thousands upon thousands of North Vietnamese. In fact, the records of the International Control Commission disclose that, in the two years following the armistice of 1954, only 19 complaints were filed covering political reprisals in all of North Vietnam. Later, in 1955 and 1956, a peasant revolt was harshly repressed and the best estimate are [sic] that 10,000 to 15,000 may have died."

Tom Wicker made a more forceful rebuttal in his column in the *New York Times* of May 12, 1970, in which he called the President's prediction of a bloodbath a "historical hobgoblin," denied that there had been wholesale reprisals in North Vietnam after 1954, and accused the President of using an "emotional argument" that "seems to stem from something stronger than evidence. It is as though he wills it to be true, even though it isn't. . . ." In support of his own view of history, Wicker referred to several earlier articles by other writers. The first of these, "Vietnam: The Bloodbath Argument," appeared in *The Christian Century* of November 5, 1969. According to the authors, D. Gareth Porter and Len E. Ackland, "when proponents of the bloodbath argument mention massacres in the North, they are referring not to political reprisals against former enemies of the Vietminh, but to

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the harshly implemented land reform program of 1955-56." Citing figures attributed to the historian Joseph Buttinger, Porter and Ackland estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 persons may have died in North Vietnam during the land reform program. But the comment that Buttinger's "sympathies lay with Diem" seems to indicate that the writers doubt the validity of so high an estimate.

A second authority cited by Wicker is Professor George McT. Kahin. In a column in the New York Times of December 6, 1969, entitled, "Topics: History and the Bloodbath Theory in Vietnam," Kahin charged that the President's account of massacres in North Vietnam was "contrary to the historical record," and criticized the President for what he termed an "appalling misunderstanding of what actually happened after the 1954 Geneva armistice." In Kahin's words, "It was in the fall of 1956, more than two years after the Geneva Armistice, that violence occurred on a significant scale in the North. This was unconnected with the anti-French struggle and was not in reprisal against Vietnamese who had supported the French against the Vietminh."

### *Response*

The regime in North Vietnam did indeed harshly repress a peasant revolt in a series of incidents that took place in Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province, in November 1956. The repression was not in reprisal for the victims' activities during the hostilities, but in response to mass peasant protests against the detention of relatives and confiscation of property allegedly in connection with the land reform program, the denial of the right to move South during the regroupment period, and the severe punishment inflicted on those who had tried to move. North Vietnamese troops arrested and deported thousands of the protestors, and later fired indiscriminately on men, women, and children after villagers had given a sack of petitions to an ICC team visiting the area. According to Bernard Fall's report in *The Two Vietnams*, this Communist operation resulted in the execution or deportation (mostly the latter) of an estimated 6,000 peasants.<sup>1</sup>

The GVN (Government of South Vietnam) protested vigorously to the ICC charging North Vietnam with violating Article 15d (injury to life and property of civilians) and 14d (denial of freedom of movement).<sup>2</sup> The ICC team in Nghe An province received 1684 petitions from local residents. But since the ICC had earlier ruled that 15(d) was inoperative after the 300-day regroupment period, it ignored the large number of complaints under this heading. The 985 remaining petitions charging a denial of freedom of movement were referred to the Communist government in North Vietnam for comment.

About four years later, the ICC reported that the DRV's (Democratic Republic of North Vietnam) comments were "still under consideration," and in its eleventh and final interim Report, submitted in the fall of 1961, the commission noted that it had not "been in a position to consider 985 petitions received from Quynh Luu District."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1968, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter from the Republic of Vietnam to the ICC, dated Nov. 29, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> See the ICC *Tenth Interim Report*, Command Paper 1040 (HMSO, June 1960), para. 28; and *Eleventh Interim Report*, Command Paper 1551 (HMSO, November 1961), para. 80.

Communist massacres, however, had been going on for several years in North Vietnam prior to this particular peasant revolt. During the hostilities, the Vietminh had initiated an agrarian reform in areas they controlled. It began in 1953 with issuance of a Population Classification Decree that divided the rural population into categories, to separate "our friends from our enemies."<sup>4</sup> This decree clearly indicated that all "wicked landowners" who had to be eliminated were also "traitors," i.e., French collaborators. The training course for cadres, given in connection with the land reform program, stressed that "feudalism" (landownership) and "imperialism" (colonialism) were inseparable and had to be jointly overthrown.<sup>5</sup>

The wave of terror that ensued took care of both land reform and political opponents. After the cease-fire, it continued briefly in areas recently taken over by the Vietminh, but quickly subsided because the Communist regime wanted to stem the flow of peasant refugees to the South, and avoid charges of reprisals against those who had favored the other side during the hostilities. To accomplish the latter, the Ho Chi Minh government merely revised some of its land reform regulations, and reclassified the population in such a way as to provide a cover for reprisals while seeming to respect the prohibitions in the Geneva Agreement. The government decree established four categories of landowners: democratic people and patriotic scholars; landowners who participated in the resistance; ordinary landowners; and powerful, dishonest and wicked landowners, for whom special treatment was reserved.<sup>6</sup>

The wave of terror then resumed with added virulence in May 1955, after all French forces had left North Vietnam. The fourth category of landowners became the catch-all for those who had been associated with the French or the National Government during the hostilities. Among the victims were many village and district chiefs, minor civil servants, and former employees of the French. Many owned no land at all.

Regarding the number of victims during the program of land reform-cum-reprisals, the specialist on Vietnam, Bernard Fall, whose sympathies most definitely did not lie with Diem, said that "the best educated guesses on the subject are that probably close to 50,000 North Vietnamese were executed in connection with the land reform and that at least twice as many were arrested and sent to forced labor camps."<sup>7</sup>

Hoang Van Chi, for years an active Vietminh, wrote that "following an order from the Communist Central Committee in 1955, the minimum number to receive the death sentence was raised from one to five per village." Referring to "the staggering size of the death roll," Chi noted that the figure of 100,000 dead did not seem to be an exaggeration, "since, apart from the number of people who were sentenced to death by the Special People's Tribunal and publicly shot, there still were people who died in jails and in concentration camps, and

<sup>4</sup> Fall, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1964, pp. 151ff.

<sup>6</sup> DRV Government Decree No. 473TTG, Mar. 1, 1955.

<sup>7</sup> Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

those who committed suicide," In addition, "a far greater number of landlords' families—the majority of these being small children—died from starvation owing to the isolation policy.<sup>8</sup>

An even more authoritative report on the period following the 1954 cease-fire comes from French Professor Gérard Tongas, initially an enthusiastic apologist for the Vietminh, who remained in Hanoi after the Communist takeover, resolved "to collaborate loyally" with the Ho Chi Minh government—which he thought would be Socialist rather than Communist. Although Tongas gradually became disenchanted with the regime, he stayed in North Vietnam until 1959. By his own account, he was the only foreigner to hold a police permit that allowed him to travel when and where he wanted. Enjoying wide contacts of many years' standing, he took extensive notes on what he saw and heard.

With respect to the land reform program, Tongas writes that it was "the pretext for an indescribable slaughter that produced . . . one hundred thousand dead!" The victims died as a result of executions, imprisonment, or what was known as *dau-to*, a form of community ostracism that so completely isolated the families and friends of those condemned in public trials that they died of starvation. "In each village, the authorities—by means of intermediaries—designated arbitrarily those presumed guilty. Their number was set in advance: one per 500 inhabitants had to be found, which meant easily an average of five or ten per village."<sup>9</sup>

These comments indicate the scope of the terror, but Tongas also reveals the nature: "most frequently . . . the choice fell preferably on those who had held a job, no matter how modest, under the French." Although the wealthier landowners, who were unpopular with the villagers, and those who had failed to help the Vietminh were undoubtedly among the victims, Tongas points out that one did not have to be a landowner to be dragged before the People's Courts because, "contrary to the famous law that theoretically regulated the Reform, it was not the rich who were struck down but the subordinates; in flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreements, the Reform was a pretext for reprisals against those who had worked for the French."<sup>10</sup>

The summer of 1956—the period of the Communist "Rectification of Errors"—saw a lull in the campaign of terror, and after the autumn revolt in Nghe An there were fewer and less indiscriminate convictions. Nevertheless, reprisals for activities during the hostilities continued. As late as 1959 the Government of South Vietnam complained to the ICC that the authorities in the North were still perpetrating "inhuman reprisals against the former employees of the National Government." It expressed regret that the ICC had as yet taken no positive action "concerning the innumerable complaints

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>9</sup> Gérard Tongas, *J'ai vécu dans Venfer communiste au Nord Viet-Nam*, Nouvelles Editions Debresse, Paris, 1960, p. 222. Tongas attended some of the trials.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Immediately after the French withdrew from North Vietnam, the DRV conducted a detailed census that required all inhabitants in areas previously under control of the French forces and the National Government to report the positions they had held during the hostilities, and to state whether they had been associated with foreigners, specifically French or American personnel.

handed in by the Vietnamese Mission [to the ICC] as well as by the victims themselves or their families residing in the South.”<sup>11</sup>

## II. ICC REPORTS

### *Statements*

In discussing the incidence of reprisals in Vietnam during the first two years after the 1954 armistice, Messrs. Clifford, Wicker, Kahin, Portland, and Ackland used the ICC reports as their principal source of information. Noting that these reports listed many Communist complaints of reprisals in South Vietnam but very few French charges of reprisals in North Vietnam, they deduced therefrom that there had been no Communist bloodbath in the North in retaliation for cooperation with the French or the National Government during the hostilities.

Several of the writers observed that the ICC reports had revealed no Communist efforts to hamper ICC investigations in the North, but had complained of obstructions in the South and of the Diem government's decision to bar investigations of Communist charges of reprisals after 1956. They concluded from these facts, and from the statistics cited in the ICC reports, that if a bloodbath of reprisals had taken place in Vietnam after the 1954 cease-fire, it had occurred “in the South, not in the North.”

The willingness of these writers to accept the public reports of the ICC as the historical record is evident in their arguments. *The Christian Century* article specifically claims that “the International Control Commission reports, while not definitive, give us a reasonable account of the situation in North Vietnam after the 1954 Accords.”

### *Response*

The above statements and conclusions give rise to several important questions:

*Question. Why did the ICC reports list so few complaints of reprisals in North Vietnam if many did, in fact, occur?*

Answer. The Government of South Vietnam actually filed a great many charges, but because it took the position that it was not legally bound by the Geneva Agreement that it had not signed, in 1954 it sent its complaints to the French Liaison Mission to the ICC without referring to the Geneva Agreement *per se*, and without specifically asking for an ICC investigation. The charges were simply forwarded to the French Mission with the expectation that it would seek ICC action. It rarely did in 1954 for several reasons:

—The ICC refused to consider charges that failed to cite the Geneva Agreement—sole basis for the ICC's authority to investigate—and the French were unwilling to revise the GVN complaints and assume sole responsibility for them.

—The GVN charges often lacked the type of the substantiating evidence required by the ICC; for example, the ICC usually insisted on first-party complaints.

<sup>11</sup> “Violations of the Geneva Agreement by the Vietminh Communists,” Government of the Republic of Vietnam, Saigon, July 1959, Appendix No. 11, p. 157. The writer received copies of the many complaints that the GVN sent to the French Liaison Mission to the ICC between 1954 and 1959. These were forwarded at the time, to the Department of State, by the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

—The French were convinced that the type of evidence required by the ICC could not be obtained under the conditions existing in North Vietnam, and that it would therefore be wiser to concentrate on evacuating from the North as many potential victims of Communist reprisals as possible.<sup>12</sup>

For these reasons, the ICC report for 1954 listed no specific complaints of political reprisals in North Vietnam. It is noteworthy, however, that the report did state that the ICC had received 17,397 petitions during the four-month period covered, and that 11,035 of these dealt with “freedom of movement, democratic freedoms, etc. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Although the report failed to state how many of the petitions were from each side, probably the GVN’s numerous complaints about reprisals in the North were included, since reprisals and denial of “democratic liberties” were synonymous, both relating to wartime opponents, and both being covered by Article 14(c) of the Geneva Agreement. Also, Canadian and Indian members of the ICC privately acknowledged, at the time, that many petitions were hand-delivered to the ICC headquarters at Hanoi, often at night, while others were surreptitiously given to Canadian and Indian members of ICC teams in the North to prevent the Polish members from alerting the North Vietnamese authorities.

*Question. If many—or any—of those executed or imprisoned in North Vietnam in connection with the land reform program were, in fact, victims of Communist reprisals for their activities during the hostilities, why did the ICC reports fail to mention this fact?*

*Answer.* By the time the South agreed, early in 1955, to cite the Geneva Agreement in its charges against North Vietnam, and to request ICC investigations, Hanoi had already cleverly revised its legislation to provide the legal camouflage needed to undertake reprisals under the guise of “land reform.” The Australian Communist correspondent, Wilfred Burchett, noted that revisions of North Vietnam’s Population Decree—

. . . were partly made necessary by the “no reprisals” clause in the Geneva Agreements, partly based on the experience of the previous twelve months. Past collaboration with the enemy was no longer an offense . . . accusation meetings were abolished and replaced by the People’s Tribunals with judgments pronounced by the properly constituted provincial courts.<sup>14</sup>

But for those determined to investigate charges of political reprisals, the legal camouflage might not have been foolproof, for a “differentiation of treatment was made in the case of patriotic landlords, ordinary landlords, criminals, and despots.”<sup>15</sup>

Because, however, there were no subsequent ICC citations against the DRV for either reprisals or denial of democratic freedoms during the land reform program, the DRV legislation apparently met the

<sup>12</sup> Based on comments made to the writer, in 1954, by the Chief of the French Liaison Mission to the ICC.

<sup>13</sup> See the *First Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam*, Command Paper 9461 (London: HMSO, May 1955), para. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Wilfred Burchett, *North of the 17th Parallel*, published by the author, Hanoi, September 1955, p. 169.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

ICC's criteria, and the trials by People's Tribunals were accepted as a part of the civil administration with which the ICC could not interfere. If so, it may well be because the Hanoi regime was familiar with the viewpoint of certain key members of the all-important Indian delegation to the ICC, and drafted its legislation accordingly. This viewpoint is clearly exemplified in the writings of Dr. B.S.N. Murti, the ICC Public Relations Officer and Deputy Secretary General who was stationed in Hanoi, from 1954 to 1957, and was responsible for maintaining liaison between the ICC and the two signatories of the Geneva Agreement.

Pointing out that there was a "wide divergency in the theoretical concepts of freedom between the two parties," and that the member countries of the ICC, representing different types of democratic organizations, "could not have given a common definition of democratic liberties," Dr. Murti notes in his book, *Vietnam Divided*, that since democratic freedoms are not absolute but relative, they "had to be evolved from the current laws, regulations, and practices." Elaborating on this theme, he goes on to say:

Even though there was an implication in Article 14 that there must be a regime of democratic liberties for the whole population in the two zones, it presumed some standard *and that standard was related to the laws, regulations, and practices prevailing in the area . . . there was no implication in the Agreement that the same standard should be maintained both in the North and in the South.* Once the standard was established according to current laws and regulations, that standard should be applicable to all persons and there should be no discrimination against the previous resistance workers and they should not be deprived of what rights were available to others. *Such a standard of democratic liberties in Vietnam should be examined according to the standard prevailing at a given time in the area concerned.* But any legislation which was directly in violation of some provisions of the Geneva Agreement could not be accepted as the prevailing standard [emphasis added].<sup>16</sup>

The DRV made certain that its legislation was not in violation of the Geneva Agreement. Professor Tongas is brutally frank in his appraisal of the results. After citing the protection presumably afforded by Article 14(c), he asks, "What did we see in the DRV?" and then provides the answer:

The most bloody, the most vile reprisals were undertaken, especially against Vietnamese who had worked for the French. These, carried out in a more or less camouflaged manner on numerous occasions, were undertaken in a spectacular manner during the monstrous Agrarian Reform.

Faced with these terrifying violations of the Geneva Agreement, what was the attitude of the ICC? It saw nothing, knew nothing, denounced nothing. Why? Because it was not officially informed with substantiating proof. . . . Who then,

<sup>16</sup> Dr. B.S.N. Murti, *Vietnam Divided*, published by the Asia Publishing House, New York, 1964, pp. 61-62.

under such a regime of terror would dare to brave the official wrath? Determined men ready for any sacrifices, death volunteers—in other words, informants left behind, or sent by the other party, who would be able to submit to the ICC in South Vietnam well substantiated complaints, thanks to their valuable information. But there are no such informants in the North, whereas they are legion in the South, *which explains why it would appear from a reading of ICC reports that the authorities in South Vietnam are responsible for infinitely more violations of the Geneva Agreement than are those in the North. The truth is thus grossly falsified to the advantage of Communism. . . .* [Emphasis added]<sup>17</sup>

The frustrated Canadian delegation to the ICC was well aware of what was going on. One of its members who was in Hanoi during this period later wrote:

The International Commission, beginning in 1955, was kept informed of these developments by the South Vietnamese authorities through an increasing number of complaints submitted to it [of Communist subversion directed from Hanoi]. However, it took years before the Commission took any action. In the meantime, however, it diligently dealt with complaints from the Hanoi authorities that the South Vietnamese government was violating the rights guaranteed by Article 14(c) of the Cease-Fire Agreement to what Hanoi and the Commission called "former resistance members". . . . It also seems evident that North Vietnam was using the International Commission and complaints concerning Article 14(c) [prohibition against reprisals] to impose restraints on the limited efforts of Saigon to counter the terrorist activities of Hanoi's agents.<sup>18</sup>

*Question. Why did the government of South Vietnam, in 1956, bar further investigations of alleged reprisals in the South?*

Answer. Succinctly stated, the GVN felt that it was being discriminated against by the ICC. But the reasons for its action are best given in its own words. In November 1956, the Government told the ICC:

Since July 1954, the Vietminh "People's Courts" have condemned to death, or sent to concentration camps for forced labor, thousands and thousands of persons, former civil servants, community leaders, former military personnel, property owners, etc., with the population not daring to raise its voice to denounce so many crimes committed in the name of justice.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, despite Hanoi's admission of guilt during the "Rectification of Errors," the GVN noted that the ICC had stated that it was not competent to investigate the South's charges of reprisals unless there was

<sup>17</sup> Tongas, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

<sup>18</sup> William E. Bauer, "The Conflict in the Far East," in *The Communist States and the West* (Adam Bromke and Philip E. Uren, eds.), Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1967, p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> Unpublished letter from the Republic of Vietnam to the Secretary General of the International Control Commission, Hanoi, November 17, 1956.

proof that victims had been punished because of their former ties with the GVN, proof that was "practically impossible to obtain under a regime of oppression." The GVN complained that, as a result, Article 14(c) had been "practically inoperable" in North Vietnam, and therefore seemed to apply only to the South, whereas the alleged victims of reprisals in the South were "Vietminh cadres left behind after the 300-day period, or new agents sent to South Vietnam for the express purpose of subversion."

The GVN expressed regret that the ICC had not seen fit to consider Vietminh subversion in the South as a violation of Article 15d (which provided for noninterference in local government) on the grounds that this Article was no longer operative after the 300-day period.

For these reasons, the GVN stated that "it could no longer lend itself to the Vietminh propaganda game by continuing to follow up complaints that have no other purpose than to cover subversive activities and to discredit the National Government by slanderous charges of reprisals against former members of the resistance." Consequently, "the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, as of this date will no longer take action on complaints based on Article 14(c)." The letter was signed by Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam, Chief of South Vietnam's Liaison Mission to the ICC.

Colonel Nam, who for seven years signed his government's complaints to the ICC charging Hanoi with directing subversion in the South, became a victim of Communist reprisal himself. In September 1961, when the ICC finally decided that it could legally consider the GVN charges of Communist subversion in the South directed from Hanoi, it did so by a majority vote of the Indian and Canadian Delegates—the Polish Delegate contending, as he had for seven years, that subversion activities were "beyond the scope of the Geneva Agreement and consequently beyond the scope of the competence of the Commission."<sup>20</sup>

The ICC's vote was followed by swift Communist reprisal against Colonel Nam who had worked so diligently to obtain the vote. Two weeks later, he was kidnapped, brutally tortured, and murdered by Communist agents.

The GVN filed vigorous complaints with the ICC and provided evidence that the operation against Colonel Nam had been conducted by members of the "Front for the Liberation of the South" led by a Vietminh cadre who had gone North after the 1954 cease-fire, subsequently returned South with the rank of company commander, and had acted under orders from the Communist Provincial Committee at Bien Hoa.<sup>21</sup>

The ICC, however, did not charge the DRV with responsibility for Colonel Nam's murder—and consequently did not cite it for violating the Geneva Agreement—because the Commission contended that it had no proof that the DRV had ordered the assassination. If ordered by the "Front," there could be no question of a violation of the Geneva Agreement, for the Communist organization in South Vietnam (which be-

<sup>20</sup> See the ICC's *Tenth Interim Report*, op. cit., para. 24, and the Polish dissent in Appendix "A", p. 20; and the *Eleventh Interim Report*, op. cit., para. 82.

<sup>21</sup> Unpublished letter from the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to the ICC, October 24, 1961.

came the National Liberation Front) was not a party to the Agreement!

During the years that Colonel Nam served as Chief of the GVN Liaison Mission to the ICC, his opposite number was Colonel Ha Van Lau, Chief of the DRV Liaison Mission to the ICC. If Nam had not been murdered by the Communists, he would now be Lau's opposite number at the Paris Peace Talks.

*Question. Do the ICC reports really give us, as the Christian Century article contends, "a reasonable account" of the situation that existed in North Vietnam—or in South Vietnam—after the 1954 cease-fire?*

**Answer.** ICC reports during the two years after the cease-fire reveal:

—No violations by the DRV of Article 14(c), despite the bloody land reform with its reprisals and denial of minimum democratic freedoms.

—No violations by the DRV of Article 15(d), despite injury to life and property of civilians in the North during both the land reform and the exodus of refugees, and despite interference in civil administration in the South engineered by Vietminh cadres.

—No violations by the DRV of Article 17 prohibiting the introduction of additional military equipment, despite the fact that the Communists equipped 13 new divisions between 1954 and 1956,<sup>22</sup> and publicly exhibited, in Hanoi military parades, equipment of a type not present in Vietnam prior to the cease-fire.

—No violations by the DRV of Article 19, despite widespread evidence that Hanoi was directing Communist subversive activities in South Vietnam.

In view of the above omissions, one can scarcely maintain that ICC reports give us a "reasonable account" of the situation in Vietnam after the 1954 cease-fire. The account is not even a reasonable facsimile, as a number of the Indian and Canadian members of the ICC have privately conceded.

In 1962, when a Member of the British House of Commons used complaints recorded in ICC reports to support his charge that the South Vietnamese and U.S. Governments were responsible for the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, a representative of the British Government—Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina—responded:

The rebellion in South Vietnam is by no means just a spontaneous, popular uprising against an unpopular Government, as the hon. Gentleman and others of his hon. friends have tried to suggest. It is, in fact, a carefully engineered Communist take-over bid. Over a long period, there has been a steady infiltration of trained military and political organizers from North Viet-Nam into the South. . . . There is abundant evidence that the rebellion has been fomented, organized, in part supplied and wholly directed from the North. The principal weapons of this movement are terror and intimidation. . . .

<sup>22</sup> Documents Relating to the British Involvement in the Indochina Conflict, 1945-1965, Command Paper 2884 (HMSO, December 1965), No. 67, p. 124.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the number of complaints against the South Viet-Nameese contained in the reports of the Commission. We should not be misled into drawing wrong conclusions because of the number of these complaints from the North against the South. It was only in July, 1961, that the Commission decided that it was competent to deal with complaints about North Viet-Nameese subversion. This is the nub of the problem.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps if we look behind the ICC reports—the result of compromises by the Indian, Canadian, and Polish members to present a united front—we may conclude that a belief in the Communist reprisals that took place in North Vietnam after the 1954 cease-fire is a necessary first step in the prevention of similar Communist reprisals after the next cease-fire.

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<sup>23</sup> "Extract from the Proceedings of the House of Commons, 19 February, 1962," in *Documents*, *ibid.*, Document No. 109.

### III. THE COMMUNIST TERROR IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Excerpts from

#### VIET CONG REPRESSION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

By Stephen T. Hosmer

(A Report Prepared for the Advanced Research Projects Agency by the Rand Corporation) \*

*Stephen T. Hosmer, an analyst for the Rand Corporation, is one of the few Westerners who has made an in-depth study of the Communist use of terror in South Vietnam. In preparing his 250 page monograph on "Viet Cong Repression and Its Implication for the Future," he went through many thousands of captured enemy documents. (In the original study, all references to captured enemy documents are heavily footnoted with detailed descriptions of the captured documents quoted or referred to. In this very much abbreviated version of the Hosmer study, these footnotes have been omitted in the interest of brevity.)*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In the conduct of their fundamental strategy of revolutionary warfare, the Vietnamese Communists employ many and diverse instruments, both political and military. Designed to be mutually supporting, these are each focused on but one end: the seizure of political power in the South. The present study deals with one of the major instruments of this strategy, the systematic use of a variety of measures collectively called "repression," by which the Communists seek to eliminate, neutralize, and "reform" their known enemies in the Government of South Vietnam as well as others whom they suspect of being hostile or unsympathetic to their movement.

One aim of this Report is to provide a comprehensive account of both the Communist practice of repression in the South and the doctrine supporting it, as they are revealed in the enemy's own documents. A second purpose is to examine some of the implications of these repressive activities and theories for the dénouement of the Vietnamese war. . . .

\*A slightly revised version of the Rand Corporation Study has been printed under the same title by D. C. Heath and Company, Lexington, Mass.

Because the Communists' own testimony, as presented in captured documents, is most dramatically illustrative of their view and practice of repression, it constitutes the main body of the sources for this study. These documents, in their official English translations, have been allowed to speak for themselves, at some sacrifice of style and idiom. . . .

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All captured documents are forwarded to the Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC), a joint U.S. and South Vietnamese installation on the outskirts of Saigon. . . .

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The total amount of captured material that the CDEC handles is impressive; in 1967, for example it ran to approximately 16,000 pages a day. . . .

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In the preparation of the present Report, the author examined the output of the CDEC over the past several years for the information it might yield on the practice and doctrine of repression. The result of this search was the substantial body of documentation that constitutes the source material for this study: policy directives, resolutions, activity plans, attack orders, situation reports, minutes of Party meetings, circulars, indoctrination and training materials, correspondence, notebooks and diaries, rosters of persons executed or detained in thought-reform camps, blacklists of persons marked down for repression, and so forth.

Many of the documents have been produced by agencies of the Viet Cong Security Service, which has the primary responsibility for directing and implementing all repressive activities. Several comprehensive and authoritative policy directives originate with either the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) or Military Region Headquarters, and provide an excellent overview of the Communist stand on repression in general. These high-level documents are supplemented by numerous directives and activity plans issued by province and district headquarters and other subordinate echelons.

## II. THE TARGETS AND PURPOSES OF REPRESSION

Throughout the present conflict in South Vietnam, the Communists, in their quest for political power, have systematically repressed<sup>1</sup> large

<sup>1</sup> "Repression" is a generic term frequently employed by the Vietnamese Communists to denote the broad spectrum of measures by which they eliminate, neutralize, punish, and reform their enemies or persons suspected of being unsympathetic to their Revolution. These measures range from assassination, execution, and long-term imprisonment to such relatively mild disciplinary actions as compulsory indoctrination ("in-place reform"), forced confinement to village or hamlet ("home surveillance"), or several months in a thought-reform camp. While these last measures are used against "minor" offenders, whose only offense may be that they have a connection with the government, and, more generally, against civilians who are deemed uncooperative or "unsympathetic" to the Revolution, the "severe" actions generally are directed against GVN-connected persons who, by occupation, deed, or ideological stance are regarded as dangerous to the Communist movement or responsible for "crimes" against the Revolution. It is with the latter forms of repression and their victims that this study is primarily concerned.

numbers of persons in certain categories (including civilian and military officials, security and intelligence personnel, and political party leaders) whom they consider, or suspect of being, particularly dangerous, or inimical to the success of their movement, and whom they label as "tyrants," "reactionaries," or "enemies of the people." The form as well as the severity of the repression will vary. Over the years, it has meant assassination, execution after capture, or extended confinement to thought-reform camps for tens of thousands of persons in the target categories. Many others, including countless villagers with only a marginal connection or allegiance to the Government of South Vietnam (GVN), have been subjected to the less severe "in-place reform" (compulsory indoctrination), "home surveillance" (forced confinement to village or hamlet), and short periods of confinement in detention camps.

Repression has been a constant of Viet Cong policy in the South for over a decade. As early as 1957, the Saigon press was reporting an alarming incidence of assassinations and other repressive acts against "village chiefs, chairmen of liaison committees, simple guards, even former notables" in the countryside. One observer, writing in 1958, contrasted this new pattern of activity with that of the Viet Minh during their struggle against the French:

While the wartime Viet Minh forces generally limited themselves to the intimidation of the local administrators (village chiefs, notables) into a state of positive neutrality, the new terrorists seek out the local police chiefs, security guards, village treasurers and youth leaders and kill them in as spectacular a manner as possible.

The objective of this rebel activity, said the writer, was the "gradual 'insulation' of the central authorities from direct contact with the grass roots."<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, as the ferocity of warfare in the South has mounted, so have the scale and intensity of repression, as is perhaps most clearly reflected in the rising number of assassinations and abductions. In 1958 and 1959, they were occurring at a rate of 400 to 600 a year. In 1966, over 5,500 assassinations and abductions were officially reported; in 1967, the number jumped to over 9,000; and the figure for 1968 was probably considerably more than twice that for 1967.

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### *The Viet Cong Security Service*

The primary instrument of repression in the South is the Viet Cong Security Service. Though seldom mentioned in the open literature, this important apparatus (which the Viet Cong often call *An Ninh*) has long been known to Allied intelligence. Estimated at between fifteen and twenty thousand members in 1966—the number today is put at over 25,000—this highly professional, ruthless organization operates in all areas of South Vietnam (Viet Cong-controlled, contested, and GVN-controlled) under close supervision from Hanoi. As

<sup>2</sup> "South Vietnam's Internal Problems" by Bernard Fall, *Pacific Affairs*, September 1958, p. 257.

an organic part of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in North Vietnam, it reports regularly to that Ministry, and each of its echelons above district level is at times subject to direct orders from the Ministry. Hanoi's control is further ensured by the fact that many key posts in the Security Service, from the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) down to district and even village level, are held by MPS officials trained in the North. Their infiltration is known to have begun as early as 1960, and by 1967 was estimated to have reached a rate of five hundred or more men a year.

The Security Service is organized along pyramidal lines, with a 500-man headquarters located at COSVN, and subordinate echelons (Security Sections) at region, province, district, and village levels. Each echelon is immediately responsible, in the course of its normal activities, to the security hierarchy of the next higher echelon and to the Current Affairs Committee of the Party organization at its own level.

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### *The Targets of Repression*

One of the functions of the Viet Cong Security Service is to establish categories of persons who are to be the targets of repression. Following are the major target categories most frequently mentioned in Security Service directives and other captured enemy documents.

—GVN officials and administrative personnel from the central government in Saigon down to the city-ward, hamlet, and inter-family-chief level.

—“Leaders and dangerous tyrants” in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), and paramilitary forces, particularly officers and noncommissioned officers.

—Leaders and members of the GVN's intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies, including the Military Security Service (MSS) and Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), and all “spies,” “informants,” and “reconnaissance agents” in the service of these or other government agencies.

—Officials and personnel in the various GVN security organizations, including members of the National Police and Police Field Forces.

—“Chieu Hoi” (“Open Arms”) and psychological warfare officials, Revolutionary Development cadres, Census Grievance Team members, and other GVN functionaries who operate at the village or hamlet levels.

—Officials and members of “reactionary” political organizations such as the Dai Viet and Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD) parties, and persons who have been associated with the Can Lao.

—“Reactionaries” and persons “working under the name of religion” who “cause difficulties” for the Revolution.

—“Former” government administrative personnel, “reactionaries,” and political party members “who still oppose” the Revolution.

—Viet Cong defectors and “the surrenderers and traitors who become enemy henchmen.”

—“Other reactionary elements whose activities are harmful to the Revolution.”

As one can readily see, these target groups cover a wide spectrum; in the words of one security directive, they include virtually all "elements who actively counter the Revolution and are working for the enemy system."

\* \* \* \* \*

Persons from any of the groups listed above may be targeted for the severest repression: assassination or execution after capture. To illustrate, a high-level directive issued by the Security Section of COSVN and captured in January 1969 ordered subordinate units to "destroy" the following:

Cruel tyrants working for the Puppet Government's machinery on every level (*first, they must kill* policemen, security and intelligence personnel, spies, informers, and anti-revolutionary leaders who are directly exercising oppressive control over the people and interfering with our activities in our areas of operation). . . . Chieftans working in the enemy's police and security organizations, intelligence organizations, military security organizations, spies, informers, ralliers, members of pacification groups, persons who have surrendered to the enemy and committed crimes . . . and leaders of reactionary political organizations. (Emphasis added)

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Another directive went on to specify quotas of persons to be eliminated by the different subordinate units. "Each armed reconnaissance cell" operating at the district level, for example, was to "kill at least one chief or assistant chief in each of the following: Public Security Service, District National Police Service, Open Arms Service, Information Service, Pacification Teams," as well as "a District Chief or an Assistant District Chief." In addition, "each [district] cell must exterminate three wicked tyrants living in district seats or wards, and warn thirty other enemy personnel that they will be punished if they do not conform by rallying to our cause." Village units were also assigned a quota, being told that each "must kill three enemy and send a warning to thirty other personnel." According to the directive, all these quotas were to be met during the month of June 1969.

### *The Purposes of Repression*

#### *Disintegration of the GVN*

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The Viet Cong view repression as crucial to the development and the protection of their revolutionary movement in both urban and rural areas. Thus, a Top Secret directive prepared by the Security Section of Region II in May 1967 stated that the "elimination of traitors and tyrants in cities is an indispensable mission to protect and serve the development of [our] movement." It continued:

While the movement in [the] cities evolves, the Party in the city has to step up the elimination of traitors and tyrants

to press forward the disintegration of the enemy. The Party [must] also heighten revolutionary prestige and create favorable conditions for the strong advancement of the movement.

The elimination of traitors and tyrants must aim exactly at the objective. We have to wear down and destroy the most cruel and dangerous element of the enemy which is attacking and oppressing the movement. In this way, we can protect and serve the rapid development of the movement; heighten revolutionary prestige; increase confusion and doubt in the enemy's internal organization; create conditions to weaken their ranks; isolate stubborn tyrants; and, at the same time, diminish difficulties and complications for the coming counterrevolutionary repression.

But the primary object of repression is much more direct: It is the disruption and demoralization of the GVN's civilian and military bureaucracies, and is achieved, in the first instance, through the physical removal (by assassination, execution after capture, or incarceration) of substantial numbers of military and civilian officials, cadres, and intelligence personnel who perform important services for the GVN and who are not easily replaced. Another, broader purpose is to demoralize, neutralize, and paralyze those other government officials and cadres who may themselves escape repression for a time but who are fully aware of the fate of their less fortunate colleagues. Thus, by assassinating a selected number of hamlet officials in a given district, the Viet Cong hope to frighten other officials enough to force them to resign their positions; or to flee to the district town for protection (go into "exile"); or to become so security-conscious that they no longer carry out their prescribed duties effectively. The hamlet chief who refuses to sleep at home or who, afraid of an attack, is reluctant to move freely about his hamlet has, from the Communist point of view, been largely neutralized.

#### *The Viet Cong Concept of Crime*

Throughout the present study, reference is made to the "crimes" that allegedly have been perpetrated by those marked down for repression. Thus, the Communists in their blacklists give high priority to "investigating" and detailing the "crimes" of each individual. Persons captured by the Viet Cong frequently are required to make "full confession of all crimes," and those who wish to escape repression often are asked to "gain merits" in the service of the Revolution so as to "make up for past crimes."

By the standards of the Viet Cong, virtually any act harmful to their movement is a crime. For example, it is a crime to relocate villagers and to "herd" them into strategic hamlets. (Indeed, villagers who comply with relocation orders are themselves guilty, for "the act of obeying the enemy to dismantle the houses of the population is a crime.") It is also a crime to collect taxes for the GVN and to "rob and gather rice" in food-denial operations, as it is to "force the people to undergo political and military training"; to compel them to "pull day or night guard" duty; or to interfere with their free movement by sealing up "entrances leading to the city wards and hamlets." Govern-

ment officials who "force" civilians to join self-defense organizations are "tyrants" and criminals who merit death. Similarly, GVN officials who attempt to uncover Viet Cong agents and infiltration networks by ordering changes in the identification cards issued to citizens are considered criminals and legitimate targets for assassination.

It is a crime, furthermore, to "kill," "capture" and "detain" members of the Revolution, to burn or destroy the people's houses, to appropriate their land, to kill their buffalo or oxen, to extract bribes from them, to "scold" or "revile" the people, and to "oppress" them in any manner.

All forms of spying are considered serious crimes. This applies not only to those active agents and informants who are under the direct control of GVN intelligence personnel and who may receive payment for their services but also to any villagers who may report on Viet Cong movements and activities or disclose the identity or location of Viet Cong personnel to ARVN units entering their hamlets. A villager in Subregion 1, for example, was ordered arrested and sentenced because he was suspected of having disclosed the location of a tunnel in his village during an ARVN sweep operation. Indeed, in Viet Cong usage the label of "spy" is interpreted very broadly and often is applied to persons suspected only of consorting or "sympathizing" with the GVN, and even to villagers who do no more than maintain contact with near relatives serving with the government. Almost any type of activity may constitute "spying" in Viet Cong eyes. An activity report from Subregion 4 spoke of "45 monks" in a local pagoda as "spies trained by the Americans," and referred to "local women and children" who had been employed by the enemy "to do all kinds of social work in order to inquire [about] and discover our actions. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

Attempting to flee from a "liberated" to a GVN-controlled area and deserting from a Viet Cong unit also are considered "crimes." However, it is the defectors whom the Viet Cong regard as committing the most "tremendous crime" in that they provide "information to the enemy," who takes "advantage of it to sabotage our agencies and kill our compatriots and dear comrades." A Secret memorandum prepared by the political staff of the Phuoc Long Province Unit in May 1966 reflects the Viet Cong's profound contempt for all deserters, and the MACV summary of this document shows that the Communists expect the worst of them:

Being afraid of death, deserters or traitors usually prepare for themselves a guarantee to vouch for their sincerity and gain the enemy's confidence and good treatment. These guarantees could be either the stealing and consequent disclosure of our classified military information, the seizure of our weapons and the killing of our cadre. . . .

Once these deserters have joined the enemy, they completely change their behavior and mentality. They commit numerous crimes against our armed forces and against the people in exchange for an egotistic and petty life. Some become very dangerous and continue to resist us even after the success of the Revolution.

All such "traitors" are prime targets for assassination or execution should they fall into Viet Cong hands again.

The very service of the United States and its Vietnamese "lackey government" is a crime in Communist eyes. Military officers and civilian officials are "criminals" by virtue of the positions they hold, and the more vigorously and effectively these persons carry out their official duties, the greater their crimes. Thus, the dynamic official who attempts to organize his village against Viet Cong penetrations and actively combats the local Communist infrastructure is considered much more of a "tyrant" than is the passive official with a "live and let live" attitude toward the Viet Cong apparatus in his village. The Viet Cong also have a tendency to equate guilt with rank and with ideological firmness. Thus, the higher the official's position (the "high-echelon traitor"), and the more adamant his stand against communism ("the most stubborn elements"), the greater are his crimes.

All government servants, high and low, who have hurt the revolutionary movement or committed other serious "crimes" are regarded as owing a "blood debt" to both the people and the Revolution. The phrase frequently crops up in captured documents. For example, urban security cadres are urged to "keep records of the wicked individuals and those who owe a debt of blood to us so that we may properly convict them when we have liberated the city";

\* \* \* \* \*

### *The General Offensive and General Uprising*

The Tet Offensive of 1968 marked a significant shift in Communist strategy in Vietnam, for it introduced an entirely new revolutionary stage: the General Offensive and General Uprising. This strategic shift was accompanied by an important change in the intensity and scope of repression. In contrast to the doctrine of previous years, when the emphasis was on a controlled and flexible use of repression, closely geared to the tactical requirements of a given area, it now was seen as a central instrument for bringing about the rapid collapse of the GVN in both urban and rural areas, and was applied throughout the country on a greatly intensified scale.

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Repression played a major role in the offensive, because the elimination of GVN officials, military leaders, police, and other security elements was considered essential to breaking the government's "oppressive control" and creating the conditions in which the "masses" could be encouraged to "rise up" and establish "a revolutionary government." As one directive put it, "without the annihilation of tyrants and spies, there would be no uprising." Throughout the attacks, major emphasis was given to the systematic elimination of key groups within the GVN. Blanket directives called upon attacking units to "rapidly root out, kill or capture wicked tyrants, local administrative personnel and spies" and cadres were told that "violence" should be intensified to the highest degree and all "tyrants" assassinated.

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An activity plan of February 5 [1968] outlined how the "masses" were to be motivated and organized to "annihilate" government persons including pacification cadres and to track down the "remnants of the enemy troops":

*We must continuously motivate the masses to track down and completely annihilate puppet government agents and installations in the rural area (including all of the pacification forces). Then, we must track down and completely annihilate key personnel of the administration at district and province levels and partially annihilate the central level (including the intelligence, espionage and security networks) to completely break the enemy's oppressive control [over the population]. We must destroy the entire reactionary political forces in towns, cities and district capitals and continue to liberate the remaining jails and prisons.*

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The setting of quotas on the number of government persons to be eliminated by individual units was characteristic of the General Offensive period. A sapper unit in the Quang Da Special Zone, for example, was instructed to kill a total of 100 "tyrants"; a district force in Thua Thien Province was ordered to "completely destroy . . . 200 tyrants." A captured letter dated July 1968 concerning the conduct of security activities in Ben Tre Province called upon components of the Security Service to try to destroy 50 per cent of the GVN's administrative, police, and public security agencies at provincial, city, and district levels during a forthcoming phase of the offensive. Key cadres from the police, security, military intelligence, and psychological warfare agencies, along with village and hamlet administrative council members, were pinpointed as the main targets for liquidation.

### III. THE BLACKLISTS

For some years, the Viet Cong have assiduously compiled blacklists of large numbers of persons in both urban and rural areas of South Vietnam whom they choose to classify as "tyrants," "reactionaries," "counterrevolutionaries," spies, or, simply, opponents of their movement.

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. . . By no means restricted to key officials, the blacklists encompass a spectrum ranging from senior leaders in Saigon to low-level administrators and informants in the hamlets. These are the persons whom the Viet Cong have marked down for repression.

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A long-range purpose of the lists is to provide a master roster of enemy personnel, so that, once the Viet Cong gain control of an area,

they can systematically seek out and deal with individual targets.<sup>3</sup> The aforementioned Top Secret directive from Region II concerning the repression of reactionaries in urban areas was explicit on this aim:

A large part of the Viet Cong's blacklisting concerns personnel in the hamlets and villages, and village Security Sections are under constant pressure to produce dossiers on a wide variety of targets at this level. A letter on the "Mission, Policy and Security Tasks for the Last Six Months of 1967" in an unidentified province contains this revealing passage:

—We must know how many cruel elements there are among the village and hamlet administrative personnel, their homes, their offices, and places where they usually come to play.

—See how many petty tyrants there are among the pacification teams, who the commanders are; what elements these pacification teams consist of and how many police field forces, "people's aspiration," and Civil Health Service elements there are.

—See how many intelligence agents there are in the villages and hamlets, to include both the overt and covert types, and how many people they suspect.

—See how many religious factions there are which are serving the enemy or may cause damage to our activities.

—See what types of soldiers the enemy armed forces have, their weapons, names of their commanders. . . .

#### IV. THE FORMS OF REPRESSION

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##### *Repression in GVN Areas: Assassinations and Abductions*

In GVN-controlled areas, or in those contested areas where the government's presence is strong, repressive measures mostly take the form of abduction or assassination. Persons who are abducted are moved into Viet Cong areas, where they are interrogated by security service cadres and, depending on the severity of their "crimes," may be released after a period of indoctrination, placed in detention camps, or executed.

Aside from such physical repression, the Viet Cong also conduct an extensive campaign to intimidate or subvert government personnel in GVN-controlled areas by issuing various forms of "warnings" (letters written to individual targets, messages passed through relatives, etc.). Through such communications, individuals are advised that they have been marked down for repression and that, unless they accommodate themselves to the Viet Cong (by resigning their positions or cooperating with the Front as fifth-columnists or intelligence agents), the repression will be consummated.

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<sup>3</sup> There were numerous reports of this use of blacklists during the Tet Offensive in Hue and other cities. [One captured document said:] "Have the enemy situation in hand to serve the common activities of eliminating traitors in cities; carefully keep the names and records of counterrevolutionary individuals; classify these elements and suggest an examination to be able to take the initiative to eliminate them in every situation and prepare the coming counterrevolution repression."

The intimate connection between "warnings" and actual repression in Viet Cong operations is perhaps best summed up in an October 1968 provincial directive concerning the "task of killing wicked tyrants and eliminating traitors, and the task of launching political attacks" during the General Offensive:

To make the people in towns and cities (and the) puppet soldiers dare rise up and follow the Revolution, the important thing is that we must boldly and resolutely kill wicked tyrants and eliminate traitors. This action must be carried out concurrently with a strong and continuous political attack aimed at puppet troops, puppet government, public security and police personnel, spies and secret agents, reactionary elements, and stubborn wicked tyrants. We must resort to resolute measures and actions to suppress the enemy's morale.

Through the task of investigating the crimes of stubborn wicked tyrants, we must work out plans to kill them immediately. *As for those whom we have not been able to kill, we must use leaflets, slogans, banners, private letters, indictments, and warning letters to arouse public opinion, to denounce them to the people, to directly tell their families that if they do not mend their ways, surrender themselves and achieve merits to atone for their crimes, they will be punished.*

\* \* \* \* \*

... According to the statistics of the U.S. Mission, almost 44,000 persons were assassinated or abducted between January 1966 and the end of 1969. Slightly more than 4,000 of these victims were reported to be government officials or employees, while the remainder were classified as members of the "general populace." However, these estimates probably significantly underestimate the actual number of assassinations and abductions; moreover, the totals exclude all data for the month of February 1968 (the time of the Tet Offensive), when such activities appear to have been commonplace.

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### *The Armed Reconnaissance Units*

Prior to the Tet Offensive, primary responsibility for assassinations and abductions in GVN-controlled areas rested with the specially-trained Armed Reconnaissance Units, which the Viet Cong have established at various echelons of their Security Service. Believed to exist at the region, subregion, province, town, district, and village levels of the security apparatus, these units are administratively part of the Espionage Subsections of their parent Security Sections.

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Some indication of the professionalism and careful preparation which characterize many Armed Reconnaissance operations can be garnered from the specialized training that these units receive.

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One training document, entitled "The Task of Breaking the Enemy Control and Eliminating the Tyrants in the City," emphasized such topics as the weapons to be used, the personnel requirements for different assassination missions, the basic information needed in planning a mission, and the individual assignments for each team member during the three phases of the assassination operation—approach, attack, and retreat.

The document also specified three alternative settings for assassinations: "We can kill a person at his own house or at his office. . . . We can kill him when he is going to work or on his way home from his office, when he is riding a bicycle or driving a car. We can lure him into a love trap or kill him during a party."

Like other training materials, this document laid heavy stress on the need for meticulous preparation. Plans for all assassination missions were to be based on a detailed investigation of the target, including his habits and patterns of movement, and a thorough reconnoitering of his residence and place of work. Among the details to be established were the kinds of visitors the target normally received at home, the times and places where he ate and slept, the vehicles and streets by which he traveled to work, the clothes he wore, and any interests he might have such as "prostitutes, music, dancing, movies, sports, bicycle racing, wine, or opium." In carrying out their individual assignments, the document said, team members "must be determined and act bravely without hesitation or mercy." Heavy emphasis was given to the successful accomplishment of the mission: "If we meet the enemy [we must] try to execute him at once; we will pass up an opportunity if we don't kill him."

#### *The "Suicide Cell"*

In addition to calling upon the types of combat units described above, the Viet Cong decided to augment its repressive machinery for the General Offensive with an entirely new unit: the "suicide cell." In November 1967, a series of directives were issued by provincial authorities calling upon subordinate organizations to form three-man suicide cells for the purpose of suppressing "tyrants," "spies," and pacification personnel so as to help the populace break the enemy's control. These cells were organized mainly at the village level and often consisted of teenagers. In one district of Binh Dinh Province, for example, each village was ordered to establish a suicide unit of ten to twenty male and female members, 15 years or older, and to organize this unit into three-man cells. Their stated mission was to annihilate the Biet Kich (Special Forces), "traitors," and Rural Development cadres in their own area, and also to penetrate deeply into GVN rear areas so as to be able to attack key posts and billets of enemy commanders, "tyrants," and pacification personnel, with a view to breaking enemy pressure and liberating the rural areas.

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The employment of suicide cells seems to have continued throughout the various stages of the General Offensive, as there are references to them in captured documents produced as late as August 1968. One such document, dated August 8, concerned preparations for the Third

General Offensive in Quang Ngai Province. It directed all Party Committees and Military Command Committees in one district to—

. . . urgently establish "suicide teams," swear them in and prepare to infiltrate them into towns to assassinate tyrants and ringleaders in order to effectively support the destruction of the enemy's control . . . and create favorable conditions for the masses to rise up. Each village must establish at least a three-man suicide cell, preferably all Party or Group members, who will be equipped with light weapons such as two grenades, daggers. . . . These people should be ready to go upon order.

\* \* \* \* \*

### *Why Not More?*

When one compares the stated intentions of the Viet Cong (as reflected in the large target categories, the number of persons on black-lists, the high quotas assigned to individual units, etc.) with the numbers of persons actually repressed, one may wonder why the Communists do not kill, abduct, and incarcerate more persons than they do. It is clear, for example, that the Viet Cong have not been very successful in eliminating the senior GVN officials, and even at the lower levels, where the targets are comparatively numerous, they do not appear to be achieving anything like the attrition rate which their doctrine requires. Their assaults on the urban areas during the General Offensive in particular, with the probable exception of Hue, seem to have fallen far short of producing the attrition and quotas of victims called for in their security directives.

The fact is, quite simply, that *the Viet Cong want to assassinate or abduct many more people than they are able to*, and their leaders have manifested continual dissatisfaction with the success of repression. Thus, a COSVN security directive of November 1966 complained that—

Recent repression work has been crowned with a number of successes but still betrays many shortcomings yet to be overcome. Many areas still displayed a lack of determination when repressing the enemy or fell behind time in their duties, which resulted in failure of their missions. Consequently, a number of requirements of the counterintelligence movement could not be met, such as those for fighting the enemy, consolidating our positions, and countering enemy espionage activities. Prevalent symptoms are: a wavering attitude, lack of determination, [and lack] of courage in the repression mission.

Another COSVN document, in this case a letter addressed in February 1968 to the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh Region Headquarters, stated that the number of enemy "ringleaders killed" during the Tet Offensive was "still too small," and that "ringleaders of each District or Province administration must be destroyed." . . .

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A Viet Cong circular dated May 16, 1968, and addressed to the Security Sections of districts in Subregion 5 criticized the district personnel for failing to accomplish their assignments during the first ten days of the "Second Offensive Phase." It pointed out that no policeman or important official in the districts' towns or strategic hamlets had been killed, even though many such persons had been sentenced to death [in absentia] by the Party Committee. In numerous other cases, units have been criticized for failure to annihilate "tyrants" and local GVN administrative persons or to eliminate targeted pacification and intelligence personnel.

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. . . A postmortem of the Security Service on the Saigon operations during Tet cited a wide variety of shortcomings and errors, ranging from inadequate and inaccurate blacklists to the "hasty assignment of missions":

Generally speaking, the failure of the attempted assassination of the key enemy leaders affects our efforts to smash his organization, command and counterattack, and provides somewhat favorable conditions for him to stabilize the situation, strengthen his force, and motivate the population [to support him]. The reason for this failure stems from a collection of inaccurate information on the addresses of the [key] personalities, the vigilance and careful security measures taken in the protection of these persons, the hasty assignment of missions to our cadres and units in charge, the nonavailability of [military] forces to operate in some areas, the inexperience of the personnel who implemented the plan [security and youth], the shortage of weapons, the delay in the receipt of the orders, the lack of efforts to meet the requirement . . . and lack of determination to fight.

The incidence of repression is further limited by various other kinds of GNV and Allied counteroperations, such as the arrest by Saigon police of some 516 Viet Cong agents and demolition experts in the capital during the last three months of 1968.

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## VI. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

### *GVN Perceptions*

As has been shown, the targets of Viet Cong repression include leadership elements from all echelons of the GVN's administrative hierarchy, from such low-level personnel as hamlet and city-ward chiefs to the senior officials in Saigon. Also among the target groups are the civilian and military figures who now control the government's major instruments of power: ARVN and other military officers, officials of the National Police, and personnel commanding the several investigatory and security agencies. There is every reason to assume that members of all these target groups have very pessimistic expectations

as to their ultimate fate should a Communist regime come to power in South Vietnam.

The bloody record of the Land Reform campaign is well remembered by many GVN persons in the South today; it was widely publicized during the Diem regime, and there are, of course, many Northerners in the present ranks of GVN officials. Furthermore, government officials, military officers, and cadres must be aware that many of the victims of the Land Reform committed far less severe "crimes" against the Communists than those who are being targeted for elimination in the South today.

The net effect of this knowledge, combined with the more recent experience, is to convince many GVN civilian and military officials that they would become the victims of a major bloodbath if the Communists were to assume power. This is not to say that such a bloodbath is certain to occur in the event of a Communist rise to power. But it is clear that many in the South would expect one.

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### *Elections*

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... an examination of past Viet Cong policies and behavior may yield important indications of how the Communists might attempt to employ repressive instruments in a future election if they became convinced that repression was both necessary and politically advisable.

In the first place, it should be noted that "reactionary" political organizations have traditionally been prime targets for repression. A security directive issued in December 1965, for example, listed among the major targets "to be eliminated" those "elements who actively counter the Revolution" and who are to be found "in different reactionary parties" such as the VNQDD, Dai Viet, and Can Lao. Particular attention was to be paid to the "core reactionary agents" who operated in the various political associations "formed by the puppet administration and the U.S." Also targeted for elimination were the "reactionary elements" who "operated in various associations" and "exploited different religions such as Buddhism, Cao Daism, Protestantism, and Catholicism to counter the Revolution." One Top Secret directive stated that security elements in the "large" provincial cities had to "struggle to exterminate the heads of political and reactionary organizations who are waiting for an opportunity to jump into the direct sabotage of our movement." Another, concerning the "mission of eliminating traitors and tyrants" in the critical rural areas, stipulated that the major targets for repression were to include "reactionary factions and parties"; "key henchmen of the reactionary political organizations"; "the reactionaries working under the name of religion"; and former "party members who still oppose our actions and prevent the local movement."

The captured documents also provide ample evidence that rank-and-file political party members as well as the leaders of political organizations are subject to assassination or abduction and that, when such persons fall into Viet Cong hands, they usually are either incarcerated in thought-reform camps or executed. A roster of persons arrested in

various villages of Duc Pho District, Quang Ngai Province, from 1965 to early 1967, for example, contained the names of some forty-eight who were suspected of having "committed crimes" by being members of or closely associated with the VNQDD Party....

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Some idea of the intensity with which VNQDD officials and members are pursued by the Communists can be garnered from a directive entitled "On the Strong Repression of Nationalist Party [VNQDD] Members," issued by a Viet Cong agency in Quang Ngai Province on March 29, 1968.<sup>1</sup> This directive, which was classified Secret, claimed that during "the recent General Offensive and General Uprising... we killed 96 wicked tyrants, captured 148 others" and compelled 90 Nationalist Party members "to resign from their party and flee to various provinces." The directive nevertheless urged local agencies to place even "more emphasis on the liquidation of Nationalist [Party] ring-leaders and the disintegration, from top to bottom, of their various organizations." It ordered local units to—

—Carefully investigate the offices of the Nationalist Party at district, province, town, and village levels.

—Get an accurate estimate of its [Nationalist Party] strength.

—Make appropriate plans so that "suicide units" are able to suppress the Nationalist ringleaders who are considered "wicked tyrants."

—Strive to liquidate, as soon as possible, Nationalist Party followers who are living in various cities and towns and who have incurred a blood debt.

#### *Some Thoughts on the Likelihood of Repression Under a Communist Regime*

... it remains for us to examine the possible pattern of repression in the melancholy contingency that a Communist regime were to assume power in South Vietnam—that is to say, were to secure control over the central government as well as over the security forces (military and police) throughout the countryside. Would the bloody reprisals feared by so many GVN persons actually occur in such circumstances, or would the Communists, for reasons of political self-interest, adopt a policy of leniency toward their former adversaries and attempt to use a modicum of violence? Although any discussion of possible Communist behavior under such circumstances *must obviously be considered highly speculative*, it may be useful to examine some of the considerations that might influence the course of a Communist regime in this respect.

First of all, future policies toward the former "enemies" of the Revolution could in part be influenced by the manner in which the Communist regime gained power in the South. It should be remembered in this context that the Viet Cong leadership envisages as one of the most likely paths to final victory a series of General Offensives

<sup>1</sup> See appendix p. 114.

and General Uprisings of the kind attempted in 1968, wherein, through a sustained and intensive application of violence, they expect to break GVN control in both the urban and rural areas irrevocably. According to present doctrine, this would necessitate the systematic hunting down and annihilation of many thousands of government officials, civil servants, military leaders, "spies," and "reactionaries."

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. . . The pattern of executions exhibited in the Hue area in February 1968 could be replicated throughout the country, and the momentum of such violence might well extend into the time when the new regime was attempting to consolidate its power.

If, on the other hand, the Communists were to win control by a different road—say, through the gradual subversion and eventual capture of a coalition government established under an international arrangement—then the likelihood of widespread violence, at least *during the takeover period* might be significantly smaller.

Any Communist government presumably would want to avoid actions that might hamper its major task of political consolidation and mobilization. . . . to gain the initial goodwill of the population, the Communists might see merit in a policy of tolerance and leniency toward the large majority of those previously associated with the GVN, particularly the rank and file of the GVN's military and paramilitary force structure and persons who had served in nonsensitive echelons of the civilian bureaucracy.

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. . . the presence of a large and adequately chartered international supervisory body in the country might serve to inhibit mass reprisals, though one must keep in mind that the presence of the International Control Commission teams in North Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva settlement did little to prevent the widespread violence and terror of the Land Reform campaign.

While considerations such as those sketched above might serve to hold down the scale and intensity of postwar violence in the South, other interests and factors could lead a Communist regime in quite a different direction, persuading it to encourage, or at least permit, the widespread and violent repression of GVN persons and supporters who are now marked down as "enemies of the Revolution."

To begin with, a new régime might see such violence as essential to the consolidation of its control in the South. Any Communist government, having gathered the formal reins of power, would want to move swiftly to amplify and secure its control, particularly in those urban and rural areas which previously had been dominated by the GVN. It would seek to establish forthwith the supremacy of the Party at all echelons of the country's administrative hierarchy, and probably would embark immediately upon the twofold task of conditioning the entire population to accept both the authority and the discipline of the Party, and of preparing the "masses" for the economic and political policies that the Communists would deem essential to South

Vietnam's movement toward "socialism" and the consummation of their Revolution.

In confronting this problem of consolidation, a new Communist regime might be sorely tempted to purge the population at the outset of those *hard-core* supporters of the government who by past behavior and outlook had shown themselves to be implacable enemies of the Revolution. Not only would such persons be considered of little value in a Communist society, but, more important, they would probably be viewed as a dangerous source of potential opposition—the "stubborn elements" who would "lie in wait to sabotage" the regime and its programs.

To judge by the testimony of the Viet Cong's own documents, substantial numbers of persons (already classified as "traitors," "tyrants," "reactionaries," "counterrevolutionaries," etc.) could fall into that category of hard-core resisters too dangerous to leave unattended. The Viet Cong see "stubborn elements" at all echelons of the present GVN civilian and military hierarchy—from the "cruel" hamlet and inter-family chiefs, village policeman, security agents, etc. who now operate at the local level, to the numerous "wicked" civilian officials and military commanders who occupy positions at district, province, and higher echelons of the GVN structure. A future, Communist government might well conclude that these remnants of the old regime could only be absorbed into a "socialist" state at an unacceptable risk, and that it would be advisable to remove them systematically from the new society, be it by physical elimination or through long-term incarceration in thought-reform camps. Such a Communist regime, therefore, might seek to "purify" the villages, towns, and cities of the South as a whole in much the same way as the Viet Cong now attempts to "cleanse" their liberated areas of persons they deem undesirable.

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... Evidence from captured security directives and blacklists strongly suggests that the Communists have every intention of holding those now labeled "criminals" accountable, once they have control of the South.

If this were to happen, many thousands of South Vietnamese, because of their past positions or their alleged "crimes," could expect death or at least long prison terms. Among the categories of persons most in danger of such severe punishment would be Viet Cong defectors; intelligence and counter-intelligence personnel; National Police and other security personnel; government officials, including middle ranking officials in the provinces and districts and many hamlet and village officials; officers and noncommissioned officers; and officials and members of "reactionary" political organizations.

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Should a Communist regime in South Vietnam in fact decide to deal severely with persons from groups such as those listed above, as this author believes it would, the number of *executions alone* could well total many tens of thousands. One can only guess at what the *minimum* would be, but, given the size of the target categories in-

volved, this author finds it difficult to believe that the number would be much less than 100,000. Indeed, it might well be considerably higher.

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In conclusion, it should be noted that the above discussion does not address itself to one other possibility—namely, that a Communist regime might, at some time, attempt a radical and rapid transformation of society (including collectivization) by fostering in the South the kind of grass-roots violence that was employed in the North during the Land Reform campaign of the 1950s. If this were to happen, the addition of the “landlords” (including numerous small landowners, if the pattern of the North were followed) and of the mercantile (“comprador”) class would swell the number of potential victims, and the likelihood of an extensive bloodbath would be very great indeed.

## A FEW CASE HISTORIES OF TERROR

[From *Newsweek*, May 15, 1967]

### VIET CONG ATROCITIES

#### OFF WITH THEIR HANDS

Some months ago when Ralph Schoenman was asked whether the Russell tribunal was prepared to hear evidence concerning Viet Cong war crimes, his reaction was one of incredulity. "Lord Russell," he said, "would think no more of doing that than of trying the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto for their uprising against the Nazis." To those familiar with events in Vietnam, Schoenman's analogy seemed, at best, unfortunate. For over the past decade the Viet Cong have murdered, mutilated and otherwise brutalized tens of thousands of Vietnamese civilians. And far from attempting to conceal their atrocities, the guerrillas have performed them in the most ostentatious fashion possible.

In one typical act of terror, a Viet Cong execution squad recently burst into the house of a village chief named Huynh Huu Be, informed him that he had been sentenced to death and dragged him outside for execution. His wife, who had been bathing their 6-year-old daughter, ran out after the murder squad and flung herself in front of her husband, begging that his life be spared. She was shot first, then her husband. Meanwhile, Huynh's little girl had fled screaming behind a nearby bush. She was silenced with a short burst of automatic fire.

#### LESSON

On another night, in the town of Vinh Hanh, 90 miles southwest of Saigon, a Viet Cong official, flanked by two executioners, walked into a compound housing a group of canal workers. "Someone has been informing on us," said the guerrilla leader. Then, a wounded survivor recalls, the Viet Cong shouted angrily: "You must all die to teach others a lesson." Eighteen men, one woman and four small children were shot as they lay in their beds.

In some ways, those whom the Viet Cong kill instantly are fortunate. Lam Van Sang, a 55-year-old farmer, was arrested by the Viet Cong last year as he returned from market in his sampan. No charges were brought against him, but for the next four months he was kept in captivity, chained to eleven other prisoners. One day, as government troops drew near, the prisoners were blindfolded and an instant later their guards were slashing away at them with knives. (Gun shots would have given away the guerrilla position.) Sang, who was one of two prisoners who survived, was found by government troops with his throat partly slit and his chest grievously gashed in two places.

Since mid-1957, long before U.S. troops were on the scene, incidents like these have been a routine affair in South Vietnam—so routine that most Vietnam-based correspondents no longer find them newsworthy. All told, some 27,500 Vietnamese have been murdered by the Viet Cong so far and another 45,000 have been kidnaped. Moreover, the toll is still mounting; each week some 450 Vietnamese civilians are assassinated, wounded or kidnaped by the guerrillas—and this does not include the many inadvertent victims of Viet Cong mortar and rocket attacks on U.S. or South Vietnamese positions.

#### TARGET LIST

The purpose of the Viet Cong terror, of course, is to frighten the ordinary people of Vietnam into complete submissiveness and to disrupt the normal processes of government. To achieve this objective, the Viet Cong at first concentrated on village chiefs and notables. But more recently, social workers, schoolteachers and medical personnel—all those, in short, who might generate goodwill for the Saigon government—have been added to the target list. And in some areas of South Vietnam the terror campaign has succeeded only too well. Thousands of schools, hospitals and playgrounds have been closed down out of fear of the Viet Cong executioners.

Far from showing regrets over the use of terror, the Viet Cong currently are employing it more actively than ever. Recruiting and "tax collection" are both becoming increasingly difficult for the guerrillas, and as a result they are taking an increasingly hard line with those whom they suspect of shielding potential recruits or of withholding food and money from them. Sometimes they chop off a finger or a hand, just as a warning. In other instances, they disembowel a man or impale him alive before the eyes of his fellow villagers. And even as the Russell tribunal began its excoriation of the U.S. last week, the Viet Cong continued to deliver the black "death sentence" forms which they use to inform their victims of impending horror.