

THE HISTORY, ORGANIZATION AND MODUS OPERANDI
OF THE VIET CONG INFRASTRUCTURE

A Thesis

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by

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nam and directs the extensive undercover activities of the Viet-Cong--the "Infrastructure".

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INTRODUCTION

The term Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) is used to describe the Communist apparatus in South Vietnam. Those who know Communist parties and the Communist modus operandi throughout other parts of the world will find much here which is familiar.

However, one should be forewarned that in Vietnam, both in the North and in the South and ^{among?} in the Northern and Southern Vietnamese people there was, and is, a built-in attraction to the infrastructure--as a moth to a flame. Within the Vietnamese, "there is a sociological drive for clandestine organization".¹ A variety of factors have helped develop a collection of blood brotherhoods, militant national organizations, and general purpose clandestine associations which have helped the Vietnamese cope with a society which to them consists of a host of dangerous and conflicting forces. The organizations are clandestine and so are the memberships. All such organizations consist of at least two parts, the overt face and the secret apparatus. But the organizations are flexible, ever-changing to fit the circumstances.

Douglas Pike in the 1967 edition of his book "The Viet Cong" said, "The model of the clandestine organization leader of course is the man now known to the world as Ho Chi Minh".² For over half a century Ho Chi Minh baffled his enemies and even his friends, hiding behind a kaleidoscope of aliases and organizations. In the same book Douglas Pike says, "No other world leader in modern times is as enigmatic as Ho Chi

Minh. And, in the tradition of the best clandestine organization leader, he has done nothing to clear up the mystery".³

This affinity of the Vietnamese for clandestine organization further complicates a problem of study when compounded with Communist security, deception and compartmentation. To identify and describe any organization, especially its modus operandi within such an environment is difficult.

A. THE PROBLEM

The first problem encountered is in the definition of the term, the Viet Cong Infrastructure. Viet Cong is a normal contraction of the Vietnamese words Viet Nam Cong San,⁴ which in English means Vietnamese Communist. To Americans and to most Vietnamese the term infrastructure is even more confusing. This writer spent five lengthy afternoons as a member of a commission appointed by President Thieu of South Vietnam, to find a new word for infrastructure for the Vietnamese language. Members of this commission consisted of US/GVN military and civilian officials of the Joint US/ GVN National Security Program. After five lengthy and rather hot (both in humidity and temperament) sessions, the decision was reached—the word that was presently in use would be retained. The Vietnamese word was "ha tang co so", its literal translation in English is "lower layer of an installation", or "the underlying foundation". As mentioned above the commission was appointed to find a word for infrastructure that would be more meaningful to the Vietnamese people. Except for officials concerned with the infrastructure, the

Vietnamese layman did not know what the government connotation of the word "ha tang co so" really meant. So after five afternoons even the Vietnamese experts could not come up with a suitable word. Herein lies the basic crux of the problem in the allied attack against the infrastructure. If the South Vietnamese government cannot get across to the South Vietnamese people the danger of the VCI through an adequately descriptive word, then how can they hope to combat them.

For the purpose of this paper, this writer will use the term "Viet Cong Infrastructure" in its most precise sense, that is, the Vietnamese communist apparatus which guides and controls all facets of the insurgency in South Vietnam. In order to accomplish this task it is the intent of this study to: (1) examine historically the Communist involvement in the Vietnamese conflict, (2) dissect the Vietnamese communist organization, (3) describe their ^{its?} modus operandi, (4) look at the future prospects of the VCI in South Vietnam.

B. APPROACH

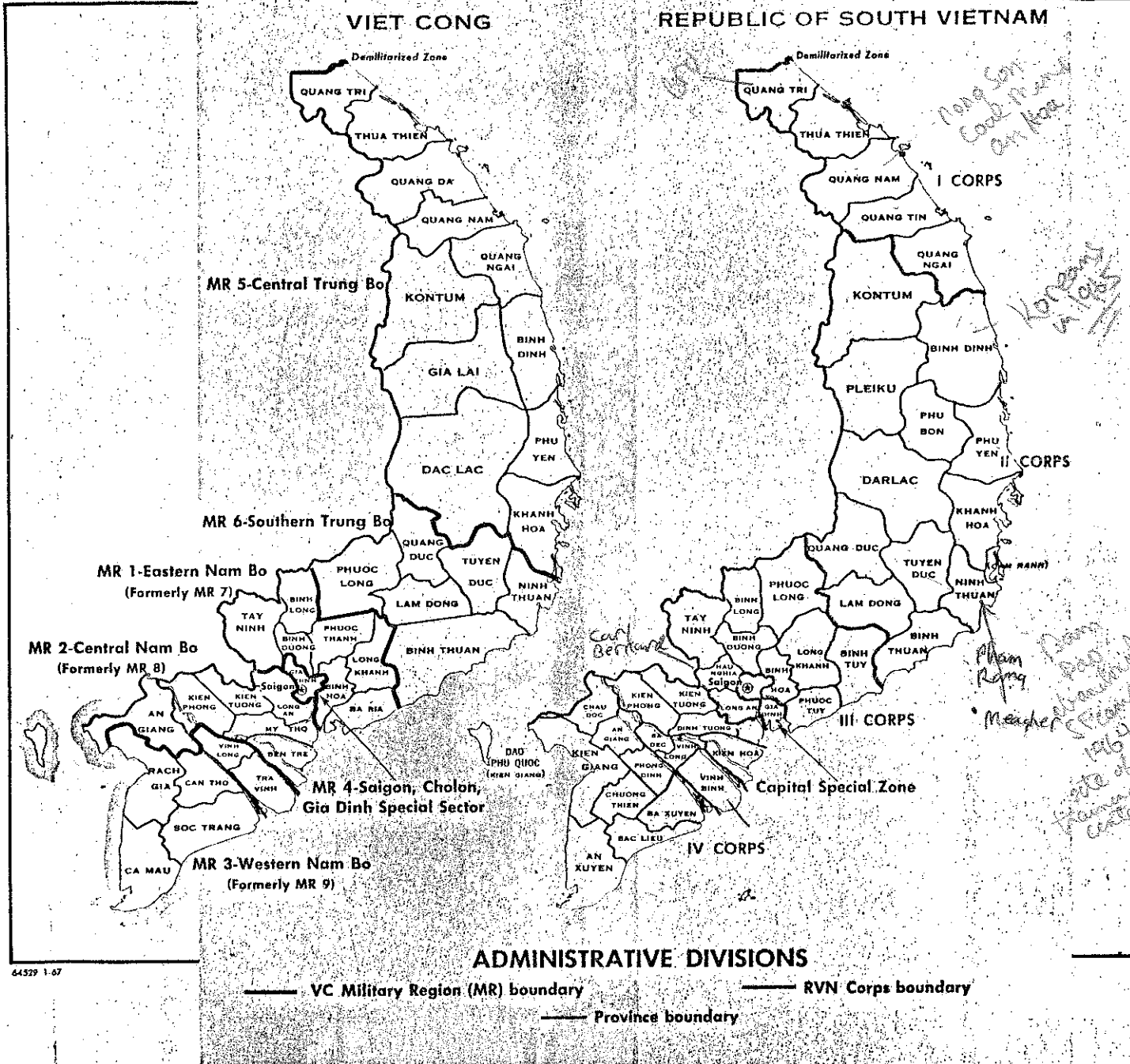
[It should be made clear to the reader at the outset that] it is not the intention of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of Communist theory, identification of the leaders, or to inundate the paper with minutiae and organizational charts. There are numerous scholarly and, sad to say, numerous unscholarly works that cover the above facets. Rather, this paper is intended to set forth information that will be beneficial to future readers of this study. This ^{the writer} intends to accomplish

by relying on my ^{his} own background ^{regarding} [on] what is necessary to know and what is just "nice to know". I will try to accentuate the necessary. Even Douglas Pike who has been ^{ac} claimed ^{as} the foremost expert on the Viet Cong by the news media and other authors, ⁵ obtained nearly all his information secondhand, i.e. through translated documents and interrogation reports, and through the interrogation of prisoners using an interpreter, all of which are extremely risky at best. Translations are never to be considered one hundred percent correct, unless read and confirmed in the original language by the same reader. Interrogations conducted through the vehicle of an interpreter are never really effective and much information is lost and misinterpreted.

Therefore, in this study, ^{we shall} I will attempt to set forth ^{personal} [my] own [knowledge gained through ^{some} over three years of experience [of] dealing with the VCI, principally as Director of the Provincial Interrogation Centers Program and as Chief Interrogation Advisor to the South Vietnamese Police Special Branch. [At this time I would like to note for the information of the reader, that] the South Vietnamese Police Special Branch ^{it should be noted} (PSB) is the only SVN organization that has the primary mission and responsibility for the attack against the enemy infrastructure. ⁶

^{The author} I left South Vietnam in April 1969, so to reaffirm and substantiate dates, organizational data and operations, ^{he has} I have used the services of several excellent works including magazine and newspaper articles.

SOUTH VIETNAM



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CHAPTER I

"The Great Thing is to Get the True Picture, Whatever It Is."

Winston Churchill⁷

A. THE RISE OF HO CHI MINH

No serious study of the Viet Cong Infrastructure can be fully understood without first looking at its historical development, and that development is the story of one man—Ho Chi Minh. By starting with Ho Chi Minh, then and only then, can the "true picture" be seen.

The beginning of the Communist movement in Vietnam can be said to have begun in Canton, China in 1925 with the establishment of the Comintern directed Association of Vietnamese Revolutionary Young Comrades (Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi), generally referred to as the Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA). The father of this organization and the father of Vietnamese Communism was Ho Chi Minh (then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc), who was at that time a Vietnamese agent for the Comintern.⁸ He did not then plan to establish an independent Communist Party in Indo-China, but sought instead to develop an elite organization for propagating doctrines that would be initially nationalist, and subsequently Marxist-Leninist.⁹

By 1929 the leadership of Ho's Revolutionary Youth Association had been split by internal dissension and had to be re-

organized. In 1930, Ho met with representatives of these factions and other young Vietnamese exiles in Hong Kong and organized the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (ICP). After the ICP was organized, it was then accepted into the family of Communist parties.

During 1930-1931, ICP activities in Indo-China were severely repressed by the French and their apparatus disrupted. At the request of the French Government, British authorities in Hong Kong arrested and imprisoned Ho from 1931 to 1933. After being released, Ho suddenly vanished only to reappear in Southern China several years later. Very little is known about Ho's self imposed exile, except that he made his way to Moscow. ^{its?} *Source?* There he attended Communist schools—one being the celebrated Lenin School. In 1938, "he was back in China as a communications operator with Mao Tse-Tung's renowned Eighth Route Army".¹⁰ Subsequently he found his way back to Southern China. [The only concrete evidence available on Ho's period ^{stay} in Southern China is *found in* from several books published in North Vietnam. These books contain numerous copies of letters, documents and orders which Ho, keeping his finger on the pulse of Vietnamese Communism, wrote to his ICP comrades in North Vietnam. Ho wrote in July 1939, "...that the Party lives and the Central Committee must control the party members and not have them get disheartened".¹¹ Then in 1941, after the ICP held its Eighth Central Conference in Cao Bang, North Vietnam from the tenth to the nineteenth of May, Ho issued a statement "...exhorting all comrades to liberate the people, establish the Viet Minh Front... call all revolu

-tionary soldiers to stand up and unite with the people and throughout the Japanese and French".¹²

[It is] after this conference [that] the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc—"Nguyen the Patriot" ^{was} is supposedly dropped and the future leader of the Vietnamese Communists assumes the name that will be forever known to the Vietnamese people and to the world, Ho Chi Minh—"He who Enlightens". There are numerous debates as to actually why and specifically when Ho changed his name. One writer claims that Ho was imprisoned by the Chinese Nationalists and Ho agreed to cooperate with them and to gain his freedom, "He changed his name in order to be released surreptitiously".¹³ Another source claims that he took the name Ho Chi Minh when the Viet Minh took over Hanoi in 1945.¹⁴ In American University's monumental work for the Department of the Army—"The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy", they state, "...the party of Nguyen Ai Quoc, who in May 1941 took the name of Ho Chi Minh..."¹⁵

Yet from NVN sources the first document that Ho appended his new alias to was the North Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, dated September 2, 1945.¹⁶

It might seem to the reader that the writer is getting involved in minutiae which he stated he would not. Yet this uncertainty by Western authors about when Ho changed his name is part of a web of uncertainty that ^{unfolds?} consumes the story of Vietnamese Communism, and to any American who has been "Vietnamized", it tells the story of the Vietnamese people, both North and South.

The mystic^{ism?} about Ho Chi Minh can best be summed up in his own words, "...I am an old man, and an old man likes to hold on to his little mysteries".¹⁷

B. BIRTH OF THE VIET MINH

It lasted from the tenth to the nineteenth of May, 1941, it was the Eighth Central Conference, and it was held at Cao Bang, North Vietnam. This date, conference and place was the precursor of present Asian and U.S. problems in Vietnam—it was the birth of the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh)—better known as the Viet Minh.

Let us just go back a decade from the 1940's to the 1930's. In the late 1920's and early 1930's a small, growing number of French educated Vietnamese began to use the body of Western political literature as an ideological basis for criticizing the French colonial regime. Gradually their opposition reached the stage of open agitation. When the authorities responded with repressive steps, the opposition abandoned open political organizations in favor of clandestine leagues and associations. The best known of these early clandestine bodies was the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang-VNQDD). This organization was virtually destroyed when it was ruthlessly repressed by the French in 1930 following the Yen Bay mutiny, in which the VNQDD had the principal part. Thereafter, the leadership of all nationalist resistance to French colonial rule fell to the Vietnamese Communists.

As in other Asian countries the Japanese occupation in World War II established the conditions that enabled the Vietnamese to unite on the road that would lead to independence. During the Eighth Central Conference, Ho, with great daring and

imagination was able to piece together a coalition of Vietnamese nationalists and Communists. Ho's key words to the delegates were, "...establish the Viet Minh Front...unite...and throw-out the Japanese and French."¹⁸

Ho's actions projected him as a leading Vietnamese nationalist, yet ideologically Ho Chi Minh was a Communist; but politically the movement he headed, the Viet Minh, was undeniably nationalist in terms of mass support. During World War II the Chinese Nationalist Government financed the supposedly nationalist led Viet Minh,⁹ this financing strengthened the Viet Minh structure and enabled them to consolidate their ranks.

The end of the war caused a sudden political vacuum in Vietnam for which no one was very well prepared. In March of 1945, the Japanese interned the Vichy French with whom they had collaborated and established the Emperor Bao Dai as the head of a puppet government. However, on August 23, 1945, Bao Dai abdicated in favor of Ho, ignorant of the true nature of Ho's new committee the "Committee for the Liberation of the Vietnamese People". Less than two weeks later, on September 2, Ho announced the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam", with himself as the head of the new provisional government. The heart of the new provisional government was the Viet Minh and the core of the latter body was the Communist Party.¹⁹

In September 1945, French troops began to arrive in Saigon and a new resistance movement began in the South. In the North, the Communists were obliged to negotiate with a Chinese Nation-

alist occupation force. Since the Chinese were also opposed to a return of the French, a modus vivendi became possible. Elections were held and an ostensibly nationalistic, coalition government was formed, headed by Ho Chi Minh. In November 1945, to show their devotion to the nationalist cause, the Communists declared the Indo-Chinese Communist Party dissolved. However, a new "Association for Marxist Studies" emerged the same day to take its place.²⁰

Early in 1946, the Chinese acquiesced in the return of the French. After the Chinese had left and before the French returned in force, the Viet Minh instituted a reign of terror to eliminate the nationalist ³opposition, and to ²solidify their hold on the government. ¹With this strong position, the arrival of French troops ^{challenged the Viet Minh position, control?} only led to a steady deterioration in relations. Then in November 1946, shooting broke out in Haiphong, ¹and the subsequent bombardment by French vessels reportedly slaughtered 6,000 Vietnamese. By December 1946, the protracted guerrilla war which was to last eight years and be concluded at the Geneva conferences of 1954 had commenced.

B. THE WAR

C. THE FRENCH-VIETNAMESE WAR (1946-1954)

By the time hostilities broke out, the Communists had been able to establish broad support for the nationalist movement against the "French Colonialists". Organizationally, Ho, the master of organization that he was, continued to move ahead. He formed another front organization, known as the Lien Viet

(Lien Hiep Duoc Dan Viet Nam) which absorbed the Viet Minh (though the name Viet Minh remained as a term for those who fought against the French).

Initially the French underestimated the seriousness of the Viet Minh challenge and failed to understand the depth and intensity of Vietnamese nationalist sentiment. General Phillipe LeClerc, the commander of French Forces in Indo-China from October 1945 to July 1946, realized that the returning French were up against a popular movement which would be difficult to defeat militarily, and he was also aware of the numerical weakness of the French Forces. On the other hand, Admiral d'Argenlieu, France's civilian High Commissioner to Indo-China and a firm believer in a tough colonial policy, discounted the seriousness of the threat. Backed by the old-line "Indo-China hands" in the colonial civil service, d'Argenlieu's views prevailed over those of LeClerc.

During the war the Communists continued to tighten their control over the whole of Viet Nam through formation of Communist cells and ^{to} extending the organization of "people's committees", and "liberation" or "national salvation" front associations.²¹ In the North, these committees became very strong and were linked to provincial and district level committees and in turn, to the central Viet Minh government. In the South, the Viet Minh had far less success in establishing these administrative units and finally settled for utilizing their scattered strong points as base areas. This is not to say that

the Viet Minh did not wield strong influence in the South. But their chief problem was not how to kill the French but how to build a competent, tightly knit organization that would not disintegrate when first threatened. According to Douglas Pike, "The Southern area was operated on a base-network basis, not as a Viet Minh governmental structure as in the North".²²

In 1951, the "dissolved" Indo-Chinese Communist Party re-emerged, this time under the title "Vietnamese Workers Party" (Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam). The Lao Dong Party swiftly assumed political prominence within the Lien Viet Front and began to overtly carry out its program under the slogan, "The anti-imperialist and anti-feudal fights are of equal importance".²³ What this slogan meant was not to be fully realized until 1956 when the Party's purge of the "feudal landlord" resulted in the death of thousands upon thousands of Vietnamese.

D. THE GENEVA ACCORDS

The fall of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 and popular pressures in France brought about a French-Viet Minh settlement to end the conflict. A Viet Minh victory over the French was ratified in the 1954 Geneva Accords. Deliberately the country was once more divided, this time along the 17th parallel, and became the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in the South and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the North. Ironically the agreements written at Geneva benefited all parties except the winners. There is some speculation as to why Ho Chi Minh settled for half

the country. According to Douglas Pike, Ho was persuaded by a Sino-Soviet effort to settle for half, believing that he would win the other half during a free election.²⁴ Exactly why Ho believed elections would be held is not known, since the entire idea of elections is completely alien to any Vietnamese concept of settling a political problem. In the Final Declaration of the Geneva Accords, article 14 makes passing reference to "general elections which will bring about the unification of Viet Nam".²⁵

The legal predecessor of the present Saigon Government was a participating member of the conference (as the "Associated State of Viet Nam") ^{though?} and none of the documents at the conferences mentioned it by name. Two of the signatories at the conference were France and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. ^SSince then the Saigon Government has objected strenuously, ^{insisting} stressing that it was not a party to these agreements and therefore is not bound by them.

E. REGROUPMENT

During the Geneva settlement a major movement of personnel took place, for the most part from North to South. Almost one million refugees are said to have moved South during Operation Exodus in order to escape the Communist regime. In the South approximately 100,000 refugees proceeded North. Initially in international circles, the large movement South was interpreted

as popular repudiation of Communism by the population at large. In fact, this was an incorrect assumption since the number of people going North was held small by order of the Viet Minh.²⁶ Apparently the Viet Minh wanted its sympathizers to remain in the South, to prepare for the forthcoming elections. These cadre, if the reunification took place as planned would become the in place authority of the returning Ho Chi Minh regime. If the elections did not take place, they would be the cadre that would begin an insurgency in the South.

It would be these in place elite Viet Minh veteran guerrillas—that never came out in the open, that quietly buried their well greased weapons, and hid their radio transmitters and turned to farming, that would be the vanguard of the insurgent movement, which would engulf the South in a war that is continuing to the present day.

F. RISE OF THE INSURGENCY

In Saigon, President Ngô Dinh Diem's fledgling regime was trying to cope with the new influx of refugees and the administrative chaos resulting from partition. On the other hand the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam emerged as a full fledged power. Its political and administrative institutions were in place, and it boasted a victorious and formidable army capable not only of waging a protracted revolutionary war but also of fighting against conventionally armed Western Forces. The North Vietnamese Communists had succeeded in building a solidly entrenched,

totalitarian regime, based upon a disciplined party structure and the largest land army in Southeast Asia.

Communist perpetrated incidents in South Viet Nam had remained at a low level during the 1954-56 period, when there was still talk about the holding of reunification elections (which the DRV expected to win), but such incidents started to pick up intensity immediately after South Viet Nam refused to agree to the holding of elections in July 1956.²⁷ In mid 1957 the first deliberate offensive of the insurgents began. On July 11, 1957, a group of armed men machine-gunned to death seventeen occupants of a bar in Chau Doc, South Vietnam. On September 14, the district chief of My Tho and his whole family were stopped in broad daylight on a main highway and killed in cold blood.²⁸

The Communist insurgents' target was simple and well-chosen—the village official. In a country in which 80% or more of the population lives in villages, the village chief or secretary, and the "notables" who make up the village council are the key links between the central government and the people. Once this link is broken by terror, "feedback" ceases and the central authorities gradually become isolated from the country at large.²⁹

Communist guerrillas began a methodical process to take over control of the only thing worth holding in a revolutionary warfare situation—people. Besides village chiefs, Communist terrorism was directed at all elements whose function^{item} is nec-^{ness}

essary for an organized society—school-teachers, agricultural workers, health officials, government clerks and others.

At the Third Congress of the Lao Dong Party of North Vietnam, held in Hanoi on September 5, 1960, the party secretary and a former Viet Minh leader in the South, Le Duan issued a report which for the first time recognized a "southern people's revolutionary struggle" and advocated the creation of a "broad national united front".³⁰

The now famous National Liberation Front for South Vietnam (Mat Tran Dan Toc Giai Phong Mien Nam Viet Nam—MTDTGPMNVN), usually called the NLF, was formally established on December 20, 1960. The NLF was formed to establish a single organization in the South to act as an "umbrella" for their activities. The NLF met several [of their] needs. It formed a mass base. Since the Lao Dong Party was not a massed base organization in South Vietnam, it afforded [them] a governmental structure for possible future use and it also gave the "political dissidents" in the South an opportunity to join an organization even if it was Communist. In order to complete the facade of a popular Southern liberation front, Hanoi created a Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party in the South. This Southern branch is the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP). With the formation of the PRP, the NLF had its "core", and now the front could start the insurgency (in earnest) to "liberate" the South.

CHAPTER 2

"The die is cast."

Julius Caesar³¹

A. ORGANIZATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP)—TERRITORIAL

The PRP is the Southern branch of North Vietnam's Lao Dong Party and ultimately receives direction from Hanoi through the Central Office for South Viet Nam (COSVN). Branching out horizontally from the PRP is its Front organization (the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam) and the Liberation Army. Thus, there are three elements of this insurgency: The Party, the Front, and the Liberation Army. [It must be remembered that] the Party is the center, and the lines of control go down and out from it; it is the dominant control element. The Central Office of South Viet Nam (COSVN), or the Central Committee of the PRP—they are one and the same—receives policy guidelines from the Reunification Department of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi. The Central Committee, of COSVN, then issues orders for the regional committees to implement.

(1) COSVN

COSVN is the center of the insurgency in the South acting on Hanoi's orders. Within COSVN are a variety of committees or sections which carry out the planning for specific func-

tions, finance and economy, security etc. Its current affairs section is responsible for all Party, Front and Military Party activities. Individual current affairs members generally oversee one or more of these functions, and are probably the most important and knowledgeable individuals in the insurgency in the South. COSVN also directs and controls both the Front and the Liberation Army and houses Party Schools. This lateral control is also evident as we go down the vertical Party Structure and each will be discussed in turn.

(2) INTERZONES

The interzone central committee is basically a liaison and administrative echelon since the geography and security situation prevents the complete centralization of leadership by COSVN. At present there are three interzones and under them are seven zones (regions) which are not command units but subdivisions of the interzone established to facilitate communication and liaison procedures.

(3) REGION

At this time it is believed that there are at least seven Viet Cong regions (sometimes called inter-provincial committees).³² These are Military Regions one, two, three, four, five, six and ten. Saigon and its immediate surrounding areas of Cholon and Gia Dinh are considered important enough to con-

LAO DONG PARTY
CENTRAL COMMITTEE
CENTRAL REUNIFICATION DEPARTMENT

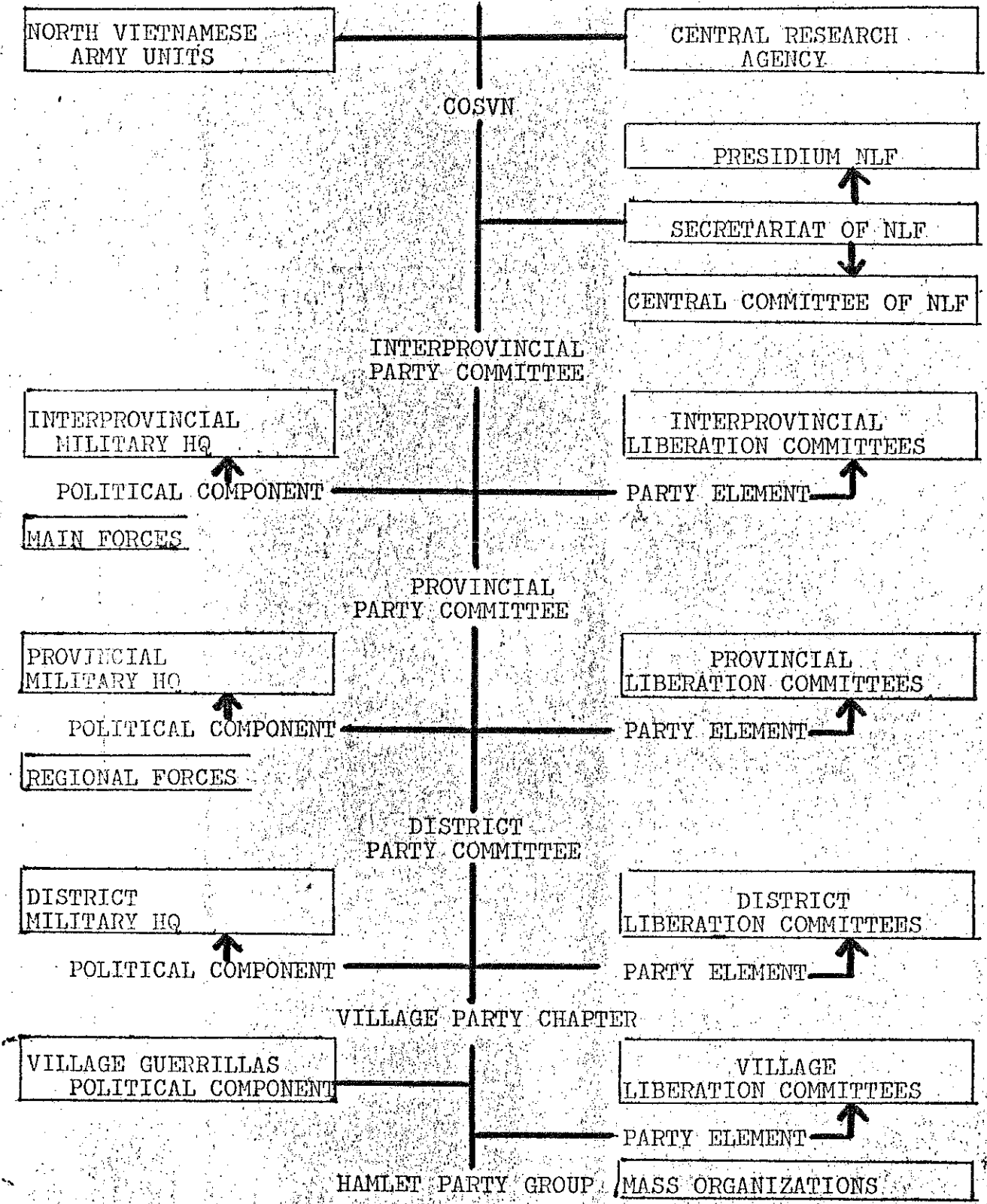


Figure 2. Party Control Apparatus (Shown in Red).

stitute a region (MR-4). There are also several other special regions. The large swampy area that covers the shipping lanes into Saigon, is known as the Rung Sat Special Zone. The northern-most provinces of MR-5, Quang Tri and Thua Thien are known as the Tri-Thien-Hue Region and are directly subordinate to North Vietnam. At each of the seven major regions there is a Party Committee with its functional sections. The Regional Committee has the main task of coordinating the activities of the province committees and apportioning finances and manpower among these provinces.

(4) PROVINCE

Although the provincial and regional bodies tend to resemble one another, a distinction must be made. The regional committee is primarily a planning and supervisory office; the province committee is the party's all critical operational headquarters.

A breakdown of the functional agencies of the provincial committees will vary with the requirements of the area and the situation. A province committee will have between five and thirteen party members. Although the province PRP committee executes directives of the region Party committee, it appears to have some discretion on adding and deleting certain staff offices as a given situation requires. The province committee may receive general guidance from COSVN and region on a particular policy or plan. It will then analyze the situation

and prepare a plan for implementation after consultation with the concerned district committees.

(5) DISTRICT

The district committee is the principal overseer of Viet Cong policy implementation. The number of district committees, naturally will vary from province to province but due to its closer association with the people, it remains small for security reasons. The keystone of the district committee is its flexibility in areas fully controlled by the guerrillas; the district committee will normally duplicate the organizational format of the province committee.

Before a district committee can be formed, it must be proposed by the province committee and approved by the regional committee. To have a district committee, there must be at least three village committees. (Each village committee, in turn, must have at least three hamlet-level chapters).

The district committee, basically, is responsible for generating the operations required to consolidate Viet Cong gains, and to extend Viet Cong control or resist GVN encroachments.

(6) VILLAGE AND HAMLET

The village committees are the first echelon of geographic administration, and to have a village committee there must be at least three chapters. These chapters, at hamlet level, are the basic link relating the Party to the masses. A chapter is

ABSTRACT

Without the adverse publicity that the Joint United States/ Government of South Vietnam (US/GVN) Phoenix (Phung Hoang) program has recently received, few people would be aware of what the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) actually is or does.

What is really disturbing is that few people in the military (except for those directly concerned with operations and intelligence against the infrastructure), really understand the importance of the infrastructure to the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam (NLFSV), the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) and North Vietnam's Lao Dong Party. Initial efforts to counter the insurgency in South Vietnam were aimed at the guerrilla, yet few persons realized that the underlying foundation of the insurgency, the "Viet Cong Infrastructure", merited equal or greater attention.

The Communist Regime in Hanoi directs, controls and supplies the entire Viet Cong political and military effort to conquer the Republic of South Vietnam. All control—political and military—comes ultimately from the Central Committee of North Vietnam's Lao Dong (Communist Party), which maps broad strategy.

The Reunification Department (of the Northern Government) controls the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, and the Military High Command in the North is responsible for the military training of the men who infiltrate into the South.

Of paramount importance though, a central intelligence organization in Hanoi—the Central Research Agency (Cuc Nghien Cuu); maintains an elaborate intelligence network in South Viet-

is composed of from three to ten members and depending on its size, may be subdivided into cells. It is a characteristic of Vietnamese Communism that they treat the cell as the smallest unit but one which cannot exist unless integrated into a chapter, which is the basic Party unit. In the hamlet the minimum party cell is comprised of three to five members.

It is the village with its hamlets that have been the mainstay of the Viet Cong successes in South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh based his organizational concept on the village. Utilizing the history of Vietnam, whereby the village was divorced from the central government, i.e. established their own laws, set their own tax rate and did not inform the government on births, deaths, and population, Ho was able to solidly establish his cadre in the villages, knowing they would not be exposed to any GVN investigations or census takers. The village has been the sociological anchor of Vietnam, and for Ho Chi Minh it has been more than an adequate shield for his cadre.

(7) URBAN

The Party committees in urban areas are roughly equivalent to district committees and normally will follow the same boundaries of the city precincts as their district boundaries. One variation of the urban Party committee from other committees is ^{the existence of} there is a greater variety of functional elements directed against the more varied categories of the population (students, intellectuals, merchants, etc). Another variation

is that communication and liaison sections assume greater importance than in rural organizations.

Overall, the Viet Cong urban organizations in South Viet Nam have not developed to the extent that the Viet Cong had hoped for, especially in the field of recruitment. They have, ^{indeed?} however, a special and continuing problem, as was evidenced by the Viet Cong Tet offensive of 1968.

CHAPTER 3

"Ho Chi Minh values his two cadres (political agents) in every hamlet more highly than ten military divisions."

Nguyen Van Thieu
President of South Vietnam³³

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY

PARTY—FUNCTIONAL

(A) PARTY COMMITTEE

Party committees vary in size and organizational complexity, but basic to each committee is a secretary, leadership group or current affairs section and several functional subsections, the chiefs of which generally serve on the committee. The names and the number of personnel in these sections vary from region to region and occasionally from province to province, but primarily there will be sections for proselyting, finance-economy, current affairs, propaganda, organization, military affairs and security. Additional sections may be created for a specific purpose and then disbanded when the need no longer exists.

(B) CURRENT AFFAIRS SECTION

The Current Affairs Section is the highest ranking leadership group at each geographic echelon. The Party secretary is normally the senior member of the Current Affairs Committee.

It has both decision making and policy implementing roles and

also acts on recommendations or directives of higher authority and when necessary, translates these into specific directives. Besides the Party Secretary, the Current Affairs Section also has a deputy secretary of that Party committee plus two or three other members, who may or may not be heads of one or more of the functional sections. The members of this section at any echelon are the most knowledgeable and are the heart of the Party apparatus.

In 1969 the Current Affairs Section was the recipient of more responsibility⁶, the Provincial Party Committee decentralizing its authority, decided that from now on the Current Affairs Section ^{would} have the right to examine the death sentences passed by village security sections and chapters.³⁴ Normally this responsibility would have been passed straight to the Provincial Party Committee for their approval or disapproval.

(C) MILITARY AFFAIRS SECTION

The Military Affairs Section is responsible for the planning and staffing of military operations, for controlling military activities, for maintaining the rear services support activity for the military and for collecting military intelligence. At the lowest echelons (village and hamlet), the Military Affairs Section Chief besides serving as the Local Force Commander frequently serves as the Political Officer.

When the writer was last in Viet Nam (1967-1969), it appeared that the Viet Cong may have decided to replace the Military Affairs Section with the Military Affairs Party Committee.

Recent research by the writer failed to disclose any ^{such} confirmation of this change. A change promulgated by COSVN Resolution No. 04/A8, and dated mid-1965 emphasized a shift in military operations from small unit warfare to that of major units. ³⁵ After their heavy losses in 1968-1969, and recent speeches by Le Duan and Vo Nguyen Giap emphasizing the need for small unit action, and the lack of any large scale enemy activity on the battle front may indicate they have rescinded that order. Establishment of a Military Affairs Party Committee over a Military Affairs Section would indicate the enemy needed a command structure that would effectively support and direct a large scale effort of major units. A Party Committee could also issue and receive orders directly without having to go through the normal party apparatus at that echelon.

To the writer's knowledge and from numerous documents and sources investigated, there is nothing to indicate that the Military Affairs Party Committee has superceded the Military Affairs Section at present. It is the writer's belief that in all probability the enemy did make this change in the last few months of 1967. This enabled them to support the large scale Tet offensive of 1968 and the following May offensive. But seeing the terrible losses they took in VCI, as well as regular Main Force and NVA troops, they undoubtedly reverted right back to the Military Affairs Section structure.

(D) FINANCE AND ECONOMY SECTION

The Viet Cong have an intricate, generally efficient and extensive economic organization within South Vietnam. They exercise a great degree of economic control over at least seven million people—~~Half the population~~ of South Vietnam, and control large areas of production vital to the South Vietnamese economy.³⁶

Party economic policy is formulated at COSVN, and its orders and directives are executed by the Finance and Economy sections at each echelon down to and including the lowest hamlet. Normally the Finance and Economy section at Regional level determines the tax rate; Province then levies amounts by District; District then determines the amount to be collected from each village. The Finance and Economy section can be involved in numerous other enterprises, i.e. handicraft and trade shops, textile factories, bond drives and other fund raising schemes. In urban areas, the writer discovered that the local Finance and Economy Sections had a penchant for operating "TV and Radio Repair" shops. In 1961, the Finance and Economy section of the Fifth Interprovincial Party Committee controlled a paper manufacturing plant and ran several "trade teams".³⁷

Besides tax collection and operating businesses, the Finance and Economy Sections are involved in the purchase, storing and distribution of food and other essential supplies as well as farm production.

The staff of the Finance and Economy section at the pro-

vince level consists of a chief, a deputy and a varying number of subsection heads along with some clerical help. Where extensive production activities are undertaken, workers under the direction of the staff sometimes number several hundred. Usually, however, each subsection is composed of from five to ten members.

(E) INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SECTION

The Intelligence and Security section is responsible for maintaining internal security within the Party apparatus and *to* function as a police and intelligence collection mechanism for the Party. In addition, it has a counterintelligence responsibility to detain political prisoners, as well as ordinary criminals and in some areas has judicial responsibilities. This section normally maintains blacklists on local residents working for the GVN.

In contested or GVN areas the Chiefs direct activities of penetration agents and other underground agents. The Intelligence and Security section is a key control mechanism in the infrastructure and works closely with the military and civilian proselyting sections in acquiring agent personnel.

(F) POSTAL-TRANSPORT-COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

Postal-Transport-Communications (PTC) sections, often referred to as commo-liaison sections, operate the complex Viet Cong postal and transportation network. The importance of this aspect of insurgent activities was asserted in a Lao Dong

Party statement to its courier and liaison personnel, "The Party's communications and liaison network is similar to the blood vessels of a man. If the blood vessels stop the man will die. If communications and liaison stop, the Party's work will come to a standstill."³⁸

The PTC functions include maintenance and security of a country-wide corridor system, used for the transport of mail and military and non-military freight. Along these corridors or routes of communication, the PTC sections maintain a series of commo-liaison stations used to accommodate travelers and to serve as storage depots. The PTC network varies in size, complexity and sophistication depending upon location, security requirements and needs. It can vary from a complex radio network at the higher levels to courier stations and pickup points throughout the country. The majority of these latter type stations and points are often operated by women and teenagers.

(G) ORGANIZATION SECTION

The Organization Section from COSVN down to District level is a small section serving a strictly administrative function concerning ^{ad with} manpower and personnel. This section is sometimes called the office, or political section. It maintains records on all cadre in the District, Province, etc., and provides information which is used by the various level Current Affairs Committees to determine promotion, transfers, nominations ~~and~~

for Party membership and other personnel matters.

(H) PROPAGANDA, CULTURE AND INDOCTRINATION SECTION

The Propaganda, Culture and Indoctrination (PCI) section, is the heart of the Viet Cong psychological warfare program. This section is commonly but incorrectly called the Training and Propaganda section. The PCI generates propaganda, political and ideological indoctrination and party training courses. It formulates cultural and entertainment programs and trains the travelling entertainer teams. At Province level the PCI is responsible for providing training courses for Province, District and Village cadres, for publishing leaflets and posters, and distributing books and magazines. Leading cadres here, by ^{the} nature ^{and} of the scope of their work are aware of many areas of Viet Cong vulnerability as well as Viet Cong objectives.

(I) MILITARY PROSELYTING SECTION

The function of this section is obvious, however, besides recruitment its activities include dissemination of propaganda, establishment of prisoner of war policy, and the detention of prisoners. The Chief of this section has the responsibility to place penetration agents in the Army of Viet Nam (ARVN).

Increased emphasis has been placed on military proselyting since the 1968 offensives. (In Military Region, Tri-Thien-Hue, by order of the High Command in Hanoi, military proselyting has been given full section status under the military headquarters.)

(J) FRONT PROSELYTING SECTION

The function of the Front (or Civilian) Proselyting section is to try and get the general population, by force or by propaganda to join the mass associations of the National Liberation Front. During the 1968 offensives, the Front proselyting cadre suffered heavy losses when they surfaced openly to try to organize the general uprising in the cities against the GVN. Usually the proselyting cadre are good speakers, well-educated and highly indoctrinated Communists.

(K) PUBLIC HEALTH SECTION

The Public Health section generally concentrates on sanitation and hygiene problems and other preventive health measures in Viet Cong controlled communities. This is one area where the Viet Cong have failed miserably and surprisingly enough they have done nothing to correct it. It is only the remotest peasant or the peasant population that is completely Viet Cong controlled that has not been exposed in one form or another to the massive US/GVN health and sanitation programs. Undoubtedly the Viet Cong do not have the facilities, equipment, supplies and trained personnel to counter the US/GVN efforts in this area.

II OPERATION OF THE PARTY

The Party is more than a bureaucracy, or a composition of sections, positions and people. The Party is a dynamic, versatile, resilient organization. It has proved this over and over again. This ^{is} comes as a result of its organizational techniques which have managed to combine strict discipline with native ingenuity and initiative in carrying out the basic mission of generating and controlling the forces needed for the "national liberation" struggle.

When issuing directives, the higher echelon^S of the Party have been careful to leave the districts and chapters as much leeway as possible in choosing their means of implementation. The top Party echelons say "why" a certain policy is to be carried out, but the "how" is left up to the local administrations, wherever possible. This has enabled the Party to take local peculiarities and conditions into account when implementing their policies.

The Party's propaganda and information output is massive, and, most important of all, is carried out whenever possible on a person-to-person basis. As a result the average peasant is quite likely to be overwhelmed by the persistence and skill of the PRP's political cadres and all too often finds himself endorsing Party policy openly.

(A) PARTY MEMBERSHIP

A potential Party recruit must be sponsored by two other Party members who are responsible for his actions after he joins the Party. The recruit must complete a personal history statement and then be accepted by the Party chapter or committee. If accepted, he then serves as a candidate member for six months to two years depending on his class background. To be appointed as a Party chapter or committee member, he must have served at least five years in the Party. Naturally for higher and more important positions in the hierarchy, a candidate must have been a Party member for at least 15 or 20 years.

(B) THE PARTY CELL

Basic to the control of Party members is the cell unit structure. At each level of the infrastructure, members are organized into cells, with an elected or appointed chief for its three to five members. Actually the cell is the lowest, most fundamental organizational unit,³⁹ it is this same three-man cell that has served communism so well for the past fifty years.³⁹

(C) PARTY YOUTH GROUP

The same admission procedures for candidacy in the Party apply to membership in the Revolutionary Youth Group. The Party Youth Group was formed in mid-1962,⁴⁰ during the 1962-1964

period, it remained a rudimentary organization; however, fragmentary evidence indicated it was well disciplined, highly dedicated and well camouflaged.⁴⁰

This Party Youth Group is the PRP's youth organization in South Viet Nam and it must be differentiated from the Liberation Youth Association Front. It is open to all youths 16—25 years old who demonstrate sympathetic attitudes towards the Party and the revolution and who have good class backgrounds. Its main function is to serve as a recruiting pool for the Party and to provide cadres for youth organizations of both a political and military character. An adjunct of the Party Youth Group is a Vanguard Youth Group, open to all children from 12—15 years old.

III ORGANIZATION OF THE VIET CONG. FRONT

GENERAL

The organizations of the NLF, controlled by the Party, seek to mobilize a sympathetic mass of the populace to activities which will support the insurgency. The National Front is the Viet Cong overt administrative body responsible for civil administration within Viet Cong controlled and semi-controlled areas. It is also responsible for the organization and control of the various front groups and associations which aim at the organization of all members of various social, political, religious, and ethnic groups based on age, sex and profession.

The highest decision making body is the Front Central Committee. It consists of a chairman, deputy chairman, and numerous committee members responsible for the various Front activities. It contains sections which function as the national and local administration in any country. The Front exists to provide the country with national and local administration and receives its guidance from the PRP. At each echelon, there are regional, provincial and district front committees, but these committees do little other than issue propaganda and announce Front policies. It is at the village and hamlet level that the National Front is a viable organization, seeking to control and marshal the populace to the Viet Cong cause.

(A) LIBERATION FARMERS ASSOCIATION

The primary organization at the village or hamlet level is the farmers' or peasants' organization, the Liberation Farmers Association. With 80% of all the populace in Viet Cong controlled areas being farmers, this is the major mass organization. All peasants over the age of 16 are eligible. Dues are one piastre a month. The LFA cadre, recruiters and organizers try to portray to the peasant the image of Communist peasants elsewhere. The class struggle is the dominant theme—throw off the yoke of imperialism and enjoy the fruits of your labor is the Communist cry. To the NLF, the Liberation Farmers Association is one of the chief instruments and the heart of the group of associations by which the Communists hope to come to power.⁴¹

(B) LIBERATION WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The LWA is responsible for sentry duty, treatment of wounded soldiers, organizing food production and being the forefront of anti-GVN demonstrations. The LWA represents a potent source of support to the Front; in 1965 it claimed 1.2 million members.⁴² The rural market place, a natural social entity in Viet Nam, serves as the center of communal life; it is run primarily by women who operate fruit, fish, vegetable and dry goods stalls. The market place then offers a superb center for clandestine activities; couriers can use it as a way station, food can be purchased under secure conditions,

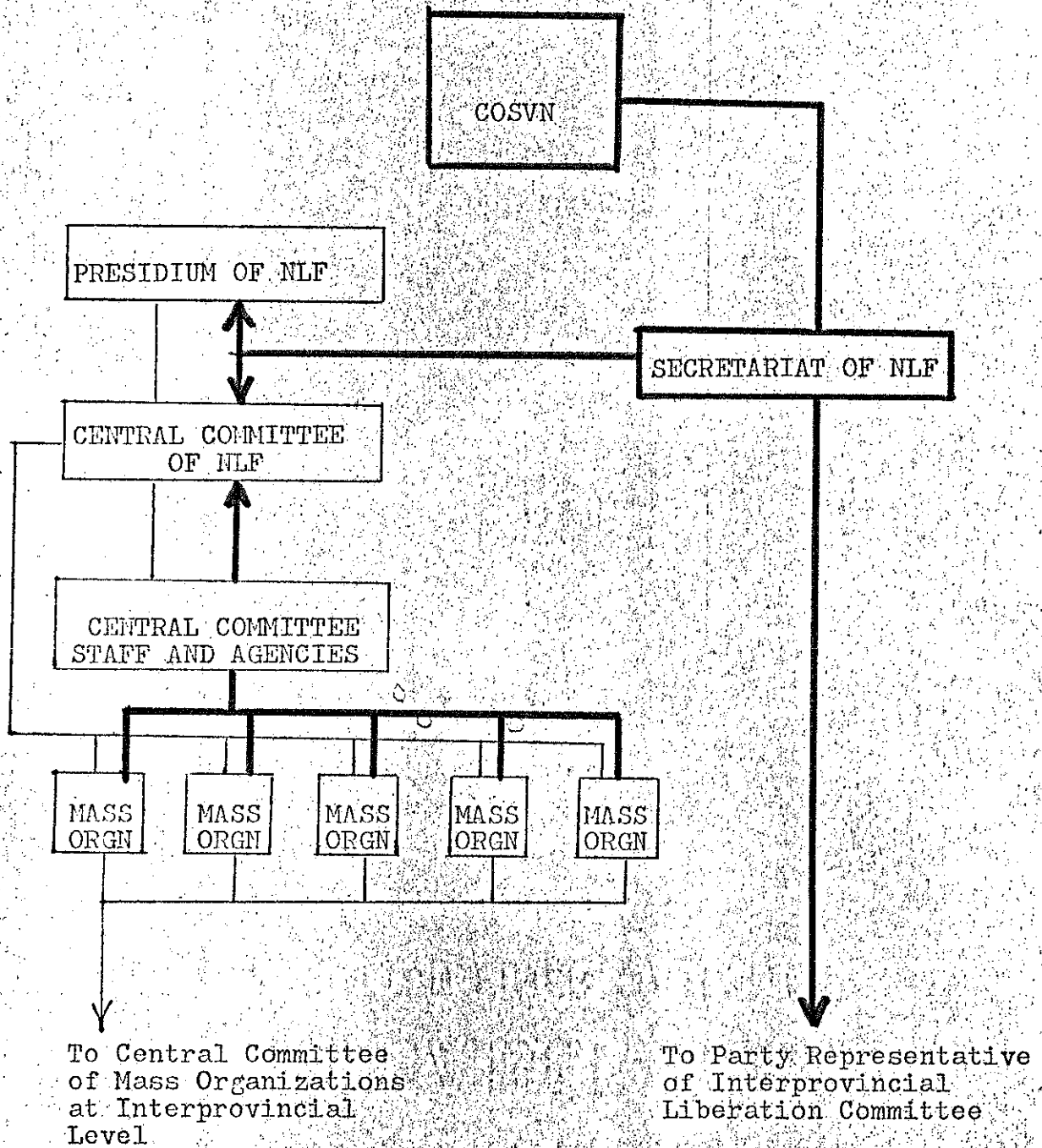
and gossip can be translated into military intelligence—the list is practically endless.

(C) LIBERATION YOUTH ASSOCIATION

The LYA members' duties include opposing the GVN draft, developing unity, educating younger children and participating in guerrilla activities. The more select cadre of the LYA usually are transferred into the Party Youth Group. Membership in the LYA is open to any male or female from 16—25 years of age.

(D) AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

The range of coverage by Front affiliated organizations is wide. Smaller associations, but important in their own right, include the Association of Writers and Artists, the Democratic Party, Patriotic Buddhist Association, the Cultural and Scientific Association and numerous others. It appears that the Communists left no stone unturned in forming these associations; they have covered every possible profession, trade, occupation and business.



_____ Party Control Channel
 _____ NLF Organizational Command Line

Figure 4. Party Control of National Liberation Front

CHAPTER 4

"You will kill 10 of our men and we will kill one of yours, and in the end it will be you who will tire of it."

Ho Chi Minh⁴³

MODUS OPERANDI OF SELECTED VCI CADRE

General

During the 1968 Tet offensive and the later May offensive, the Viet Cong, certain of victory, surfaced for the first time their key cadre; the subsequent losses, which mounted in the several thousands have had a devastating effect on Viet Cong modus operandi even to this day. Some of these cadre were well trained, die-hard, long standing Party members that cannot be replaced overnight. ^{who} As an example in November 1968, six months after the May offensive, members of elite sapper units were being utilized as commo-liaison guides; due to the fantastic losses that occurred among commo-liaison personnel when they attempted to lead enemy units into the cities.⁴⁴

Many Viet Cong committees were fractionalized, and certain functions had to be disbanded as a result of lack of personnel. Many of the surviving cadre then had to assume the responsibility for several other functions, or step down a position or two to add "leavening" to the heavily depleted ranks of the lower functionaries.

(A) PROVINCE PARTY SECRETARY

The Province Party Secretary (PPS) is responsible for directing all V.C. operations in his province, and initiates all policies as directed by Region. He normally acts as a participating member of the Regional Party Committee for his province. He resides in remote base area camps, preferably in the jungles or mountains, and ^{in contrast} ~~contrary~~ to party secretaries at lower echelons, seldom leaves his base area.

His different section chiefs are normally spread out but not ^{so} ~~that far~~ ^{apart that} ~~whereby~~ it would hinder communication.⁴⁵ Normally his most important subordinates will report to him orally, rather than compromise their locations by voice communications. Whenever he leaves his base area, he will be accompanied by armed guards, ~~and~~ often the area he will move through will be thoroughly scouted beforehand.⁴⁶

The Province Party Secretary Headquarters is always heavily defended by local force troops.

Since there are only approximately 50 Province Party Secretaries, just the capture of ^{even} one would be a "feather in the cap" of any allied unit. In over three years in Viet Nam,

the writer knew of no PPS ever being captured; there was in-

formation from informants that occasionally one had been

killed in an ambush or airstrike, but there never was any sub-

stantiating followup information to confirm it. The capture

of just one PPS, (and if he talked), could severely curtail

enemy operations throughout a whole Region. The information

he should have would include; names (including aliases) and

*filed under
Procedures*

locations of almost all of the Regional Party Committee, Names of the entire Province and District committees and their location, [and] the information he could provide on COSVN and Regional directives and Province plans would be invaluable.

Since he is the most important V.C. Committee member in the Province, access to him is limited to Province and District Committee members. This is to prevent any attempted assassinations by Allied penetration agents or V.C. "sellouts".⁴⁷

Naturally this limited access also severely curtails any information the Allies can obtain on his modus operandi.

(B) DISTRICT PARTY SECRETARY

The District Party Secretary (DPS) is the indispensable link between COSVN, Region, Province and the villages. The DPS translates all COSVN and Party policies, directives and orders into action. He supervises the work of all the District Section Chiefs and may give direct orders to the District military unit without permission from Province.

Unlike the Province Party Secretary, the DPS moves frequently; he may operate in the same District Capitol or village, but will change to a different "safe house" or hamlet whenever he chooses to do so. Normally, he will move whenever a cadre has been captured, defected, or ^{has} ~~killed~~ ^{been} (in case the dead man was carrying incriminating documents). Like the PPS he is normally armed with a pistol or light sub-machinegun, and when he moves will be accompanied by one or

two armed guards.

In all probability, District Party secretaries have been killed (but not too frequently) but the carrying of the weapon has labeled him as a V.C. guerrilla, or unit leader in the after action body count.⁴⁸

Like the PPC, the District Committees do not normally have their offices and sleeping quarters in the same immediate area. The DPS does not usually sleep in the same house or even hamlet where his family lives. This is to preclude any injury to his family during assassination attempts or Allied raids.⁴⁹

(C) VILLAGE PARTY SECRETARY

The Village Party Secretary is responsible for implementing District orders in his village. He will sometimes double as the Chief of another staff section, dependent on the amount of activity in his village. He travels alone and visits the hamlets he is responsible for almost daily. Most of his business is conducted person-to-person; by visiting the various cadre in the rice fields or at the local village or hamlet cafe and barbershop. The Village Party Secretary is the most important man in the village, even above the village council of notables, and is known by most adult residents.

His job is largely one of coordination, if V.C. or NVA troops are expected to pass through his village, he has to make sure the responsible sections are alerted to take care of

billeting and feeding. Like his superiors he also maintains different houses to sleep in. He is responsible for seeing that appropriate caches are maintained to keep a continuing store of weapons and supplies for troops operating in his area. Frequently Village Party Secretaries have been captured trying to pass through road blocks or on village cordon and search operations; [since] the VPS maintains and keeps ^{on his person} what village documents and records there are [himself], [for some unknown reason, he carries them on his person, usually in a plastic bag.] Quite frequently [in the Allies' favor], he is [usually] caught with the incriminating evidence.

(D) MILITARY AFFAIRS SECTION CHIEF

At different echelons the Military Affairs Chief (MAC) can serve in different positions. At District he may be the Political Officer of the Local Force, at Village he commands the Village guerrillas, At the lowest echelon (hamlet) he serves as Commander or Political Officer of the Local Force unit.

At Province and District level he will supervise the Military Political staff and Rear Services staff. He uses his guerrillas in a variety of roles; as a joint sentry and warn-system, in combined action operations with other villages and District, as laborers if association members are in short supply, and as replacements for higher echelon units. The MAC also supervises the Local Youth Groups in the transporting of

equipment and the evacuation of VC/NVA wounded. At the lower levels (Village or Hamlet) if the MAC ^{is} ~~is~~ killed or captured, his deputy assumes the position as Chief. At higher levels this is usually put to a vote, or discussed at a monthly Committee meeting. The Military Affairs Chiefs unlike the Party secretaries, do not change their abode too much. Probably because of the variety of duties he supervises, he must remain in one place for liaison and coordination. The MAC because of the nature of his duties, is exposed more to Allied operations and suffers proportionate fatalities.

(E) SECURITY AFFAIRS CHIEF

The Security Affairs Chief (SAC) has many functions, at District level he establishes and supervises the Village security sections; conducts investigations that cannot be handled by lower echelon security cadre; establishes lists and dossiers of GVN civil and military personnel; conducts interrogations and in "liberated" areas maintains a prison. In contested or GVN controlled areas the SAC directs the activities of penetration agents and informants. Since the SAC has numerous functions to perform, he will normally have an assistant and several cadre to assist him.

The SAC and his cadre are responsible for maintaining law and order in "liberated" villages. Any important prisoners ~~that~~ are captured, he ensures that they are immediately transferred to District or Province. He watches those people who

have relatives working for GVN and sometimes talks to GVN officials he knows to try to persuade them to rally to the insurgent's cause. The SAC normally presides over executions and carries these out publicly for the "benefit" of the local populace. Since he is responsible for executions, he is naturally held in great fear, And in GVN or contested areas he will sleep in a different place each night. The SAC is literally the "strongarm" man for the local committee; he carries and can carry the power of life or death.

(F) PROPAGANDA AND INDOCTRINATION SECTION CHIEF

He is responsible for ^{the} disseminating ^{most} news and propaganda, indoctrination of the peasants in party doctrine and procedures, entertainment and education. At Province level the P-I section is responsible for providing training courses for Province, District and Village cadres, for publishing leaflets and posters, and distributing books and magazines.

He is generally responsible for "Beating the drum" for the insurgents; and will attempt to persuade the village youth to enlist, the villagers to pay their taxes, and provide an instructional capability for that echelon. His office is wherever he maintains his duplicating or printing machines. In Districts and Villages he is usually found to be one of the local tailors and will move around quite frequently, supposedly delivering "goods". The P-I chief is usually an excellent speaker, well educated by Vietnamese standards and a hard core Communist.

(G) FINANCE AND ECONOMY CHIEF

The Finance and Economy Chief is the "capitalist" of the Party Committee; he supervises tax collection, manages "liberation" bond programs, establishes fund drives and may even manage a local V.C. business.

Due to the nature of his activities he is extremely vulnerable to identification and capture. Many an innocent Vietnamese found carrying a large amount of money has been automatically branded as a Finance and Economy Chief or tax collector until he was able to prove his innocence. At the Village level the majority of villagers know who he is and during US/GVN cordon and search operations he is often picked out by a ^{DK} rallier.

If he personally collects the taxes, he may be accompanied by one of his cadre, and if other members do the collecting, they usually operate in pairs to lessen the chance of embezzlement. A typical Finance and Economy Chief at Village level tries not to hang on to large sums very long, but passes the money to the Village Party Secretary as soon as possible. He also maintains tax lists, income and expenditure logbooks, and census data. If the taxes are to be paid in rice, vegetables, etc., he will make arrangements with a local V.C. merchant for the food to be brought directly to the merchant by the villagers.

In non-liberated areas, taxes are collected at night. Normally agents in the village or hamlet will provide a signal (flashlight, oil lamp, lighter) to notify the tax collectors

that it is safe to enter the village.⁵⁰ In the cities, taxes are collected from almost all businesses, including American owned firms.⁵¹ The bars and restaurants frequented by Americans are naturally the ones forced to pay the highest taxes.⁵²

(H) COMMO-LIAISON CADRE

The Commo-Liaison cadre work for their respective Postal-Transportation-Communication section (PTC). Commo-Liaison agents at Region, Province and District levels operate full time and carry sealed messages. Village level agents often operate only part time and carry verbal messages.

Commo-Liaison relay points are often in people's homes, but are also found in the market place, at pedicab stands and in restaurants. The points are usually changed once a month. The Commo-Liaison cadre seldom exchange the information at the final destination, but will meet someplace in between. This is to preclude a compromise of both stations if a cadre is captured. Common-Liaison stations cover everything from a thatched lean-to in the jungle to a large hotel or plush restaurant in Saigon. At these different stations, several people or a few hundred can be accommodated for indefinite periods.⁵³ Commo-Liaison personnel try to avoid major routes or roads, whenever possible they prefer to travel cross country. The Commo-Liaison Chiefs prefer to use young girls or women with GVN identification as they have a far better chance of getting by police control points.⁵⁴ The Chiefs can coordinate

transportation (bus, air and boat) requirements with the Forward Supply, Finance and Economy and Military Affairs Sections.

Contrary to popular belief, Commo-Liaison work is a highly professional operation; during the 1968 offensives, Commo-Liaison cadre utilized fleets of civilian buses and trucks to infiltrate enemy troops into the cities. The task of getting the enemy troops through police check points, into the cities and to safe-houses with their weapons and equipment was a professional job of the highest order, and was never fully detected until it was far too late. In the ensuing offensives the Commo-Liaison personnel suffered heavy casualties, even though they might be classified as "non-combatants". Even today the Party Committees are still trying to fill the diminished ranks of the Commo-Liaison cadre.

CHAPTER 5

"I am not concerned with the military successes of the US/GVN. I would only become concerned when the US/GVN began to destroy the Viet Cong political infrastructure."

Vo Nguyen Giap⁵⁵

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE VCI

The Past

According to Sir Robert Thompson, "---the U.S. misunderstood the nature of revolutionary warfare,---relied on conventional military force in the field rather than on attacking the political substructure of the insurgents-----." ⁵⁶ What Sir Robert Thompson said above, had been said repeatedly by a handful of junior intelligence officers in the early and middle 60's. If only some of our effort then had been directed against the VCI, we would not be having the problems we have today in trying to identify and eliminate the VCI. Admittedly the priority should be to destroy the enemy's combat forces, but a good portion of our forces should have been assigned to the task of eliminating the VCI far earlier than 1967.

Prior to 1967, in October 1966, a program named Project Corral was initiated to collect information on the infrastructure at the Province level. The primary concern was collection, processing and reporting at Province and District level,⁶ very little concern was directed to targeting and elimination. The primary mission seemed to be to collect paper.

Then in 1966-67, operations such as Fairfax and Cedar Falls took place. Although there was much back slapping and smiles of success by the higher ranking officers after these operations, the ^{net} results were negligible. What was needed was a concerted, coordinated national program.

In August 1967, a program was established called "The Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation for Attack against the Infrastructure" (ICEX). This program was to be the focal point of the U.S. intelligence effort against the Viet Cong Infrastructure. Since this was a U.S. initiated effort, the South Vietnamese naturally had the tendency to reject it and continue on their own. Finally, after many meetings and debates ^{among} between the different agencies and officials concerned, on December 20, 1967 the National Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program was officially born. 57

Up until the 1968 offensives, the VCI cadre were almost untouchable and any losses they had suffered prior to 1968 were insignificant. Confident of almost certain victory during the 1968 Tet offensive, they surfaced their key cadre. The results are well known, the attacks cost the Viet Cong thousands of their most valuable cadre, including irreplaceable veterans of ten to twenty years of revolutionary activity.

It should be remembered that ^{Now} Phoenix was created December 20, 1967 as a Vietnamese Program, the U.S. officials later changed the name of the U.S. program, ICEX, to Phoenix, the

English translation of Phung Hoang. The planning of the future development of Phoenix in its attack against the Viet Cong Infrastructure was still very much on the drawing boards when the enemy launched their massive TET offensive. Even though the Phoenix Program was to be the main punch in the Allied attack against the VCI, the TET offensive threw it temporarily offstride.

The Present

According to political theorists, the NLF has lost control of the countryside, therefore ^{losing} losing its recruiting base. The Front's vaunted organization is in disarray or worse; in many areas it is said to be non-existent, or dependent on a handful of local cadre where once there were hundreds.⁵⁸ The optimists are rampant. According to one article, "...soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade have entered every village and hamlet along the coastline, reopened highways and roads and reduced to almost nothing the Viet Cong Infrastructure....", the reporter writing this article had just interviewed the Brigade Commander.⁵⁹ This claim has been made over and over again and it undoubtedly makes good reading,^o but it makes you wonder and want to ask, "How does the Brigade Commander know the VCI has been reduced to nothing?". Just because there has been no activity in his area and the peasants are not being bothered openly, is not sufficient reason to make claims that the VCI has been reduced to nothing.

The optimists claim that since the Phoenix Program came into being, it has resulted in approximately 30,000 suspects having been "captured, killed or defected". With a total of around 70,000 persons in the infrastructure, it should only take two more years before the entire infrastructure is totally eliminated! From the writer's experience, using a monthly figure of 1000 to include captured, killed and defected, only about twenty-four a month were deemed worthy of being important enough to warrant an indepth interrogation. Normally 500 or more would be released for lack of evidence and the rest given sentences of up to two years. (The maximum, as VCI are considered civil defendants and not armed combatants). The writer knew of several VCI who had been picked up at least half a dozen times, given three months sentences, served their sentences, ^{been} ~~were~~ released and ^{then gone} ~~went~~ right back into their VCI positions.

As of December 1969, the South Vietnamese Ministry of the Interior was still trying to have a law put through authorizing longer sentences.

The Future

We have defeated the enemy's combat forces in every major engagement, yet we have only begun to scratch the surface on neutralizing the hard core VCI. The infrastructure is the cancer of our war in Viet Nam, it has to be cut away and destroyed. This won't be tomorrow, next year or even ten years.

from now; as long as there are diehard card-carrying Party Members left, there will always be an infrastructure. Our mission is to cut away what infrastructure we can and contain any further growth.

On Sir Robert Thompson's recent trip to South Viet Nam at the request of President Nixon he found that the entire Viet Cong Infrastructure was being powerfully and quite rapidly eroded. However, he was far from satisfied with the effort made to date to track down and eliminate the higher command groups of the Viet Cong.⁶⁰

The future of the VCI does not depend on how many VCI are eliminated, but will depend on major decisions to be made by the leaders in Hanoi and at COSVN. If a coalition government is established, the higher level cadre will undoubtedly surface to assume positions of responsibility.

This eventual sharing of power will involve naming Viet Cong leaders to cabinet posts, but more likely the composition of a postwar government will be determined by elections at which the Viet Cong will be a formidable contender.

If Hanoi loses completely, their cadre will undoubtedly go underground completely as they did in 1954-56 and then wait for a political revival.

One of our missions in Viet Nam will be to continue to neutralize what VCI we can and not let our guard down even though it looks like the VCI has been "reduced to nothing".

But there is one ^{contribution} thing that the VCI has ^{made to} done for us. It has given us a nucleus of experienced young officers who have operated against the VCI on their ground and on their terms. The Vietnamese Communist movement has repeatedly espoused the desire for a Communist domain which includes North Viet Nam, South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia. There is ample evidence ^{for} available to the intelligence officer and decision maker that the designs of Communism does not stop at the Vietnamese borders, witness Laos, Cambodia and North East Thailand. Undoubtedly sometime in the near future we will have to call upon this experience we have and if we do participated in another insurgency, let us not make the same mistake by ignoring the enemy's infrastructure and "scratching him where he doesn't itch".

FOOTNOTES

1. Douglas Pike, The Viet Cong, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1966), p. 9.

2. Ibid., p.10.

3. Ibid., p.10.

4. No attempt has been made in this study to add diacritical marks ~~(to Vietnamese words, which are an essential part of Vietnamese writing.~~

5. See jacket of Douglas Pike's book, "The Viet Cong"- some of the authors and newspapers that claim Pike as an expert are, The Washington Post, Bernard Fall, Joseph Alsop and Brig. General S.L.A. Marshall.

6. On 1 July 1968, President Thieu of South Vietnam signed into being a decree; No. 280-A/TT/SC which officially sets forth the primary mission and responsibility of the South Vietnamese Police Special Branch in the National Phung Hoang (Phoenix) Program.

7. Robert D. Heinl Jr., Col. U.S.M.C. (Ret), Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations, (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1966), P. 161.

8. Bert Cooper et al, Case Studies in Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare: Vietnam 1941-1954 (Washington: Special Operations Research Office, American University, January 1964), p. 70.

9. Phillipe Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 a 1952, (Paris: Editions du Sevil, 1952), p. 58.

10. Alden Whitman, "Ho Chi Minh Was Noted for Success In Blending Nationalism and Communism", New York Times, 4 September 1969, p. 17.

11. The Truth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh from 1920 to 1945, (Hanoi, 1960), p. 197. (This book is printed in Vietnamese.)

12. Ibid., p. 198.

13. Henry S. Bradsher, "Story of Ho's Life Is A Modern History of Homeland", The Washington Evening Star, 4 September 1969.

14. Whitman, op. cit., p. 17.

15. Michael Charles Conley, The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure In South Viet Nam: A Study of Organization and Strategy (Washington: Center for Research in Social Systems, American University, November 1966), p. 3.

16. Truth Publishing House, op. cit., p. 197.

17. Whitman, op. cit., p. 17.

18. Truth Publishing House, op. cit., p. 198.

19. Conley, op. cit., p. 4.

20. George A. Carver, Jr., "The Faceless Viet Cong", Foreign Affairs, Volume 44 (April, 1966), p. 348.

21. "The Viet Cong: The Front Technique" (U.S. Information Agency, Office of Policy and Research, April 20, 1967), p. 4.

22. Pike, op. cit., p. 47.

23. Carver, op. cit., p. 352.

24. Pike, op. cit., p. 52.

25. Carver, op. cit., p. 356.

26. Cooper et al, op. cit., p. 8.

27. Bernard B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 359.

28. Ibid, p. 160.

29. Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 359.

30. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness, op. cit., p. 239.

31. Heintz, op. cit., p. 282.

32. To somebody just beginning the study of the enemy organization in South Vietnam, this interchanging of names can be confusing. Some authors refer to Regions, others Inter-provincial Committees, and still others use both interchangeably. The most common term is Region and that is the term the writer has used in this study.

33. Denis Warner, "Vietnam: The Need for a Loyal Opposition", The Reporter, December 14, 1967.

34. David Overstreet, Jr., "To Kill Someone Fill Out A Form", The Washington Evening Star, December 22, 1969.

35. Captured documents in writer's possession

36. Civilian Office of Revolutionary Development Support, Staff Study, Saigon, May 1968.

37. Conley, op. cit., p. 32.

38. Ibid, p. 27.

39. Pike, op. cit., p. 229.

40. Ibid, p. 150.

41. Ibid, p. 167.

42. Ibid, p. 175.

43. The Washington Daily News, (Editorial page heading on the death of Ho Chi Minh), September 4, 1969.

44. This chapter will be based mainly on knowledge and experience the writer gained conducting personal interrogations while serving as Chief Interrogation Advisor to the South Vietnamese Police Special Branch.

45. In Ca Mau, An Xuyen Province as in many other Provinces the Provincial Party Committee Headquarters was dispersed over a several kilometer area. This is to preclude losing all personnel in an attack on the headquarters either by ground, air or artillery fire.

46. Undoubtedly Provincial and District Party Secretaries have been ambushed and killed during Allied operations. Because they would be carrying a pistol or sometimes a submachinegun, during the after action body count, they normally would be classified as a guerrilla, or small unit leader, unless there were substantiating documents on the body.

47. The Joint US/GVN Civilian Incentives Reward Program provides monetary rewards for information leading to the capture or death of members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure.

48. Op. cit., see No. 46.

49. The Allies have frequently found out where District Party Secretaries live and raided their homes; and in an ensuing fire fight, the Secretary's wife and children have been killed and injured *or killed* *may*.

50. The V.C. tax collector is a favorite target of the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), as the members of the unit are allowed to keep any money found on the collector.

51. From 1965 to 1969, the writer knew of no American Oil Company trucks being ambushed. On one occasion a V.C. road block let an American Oil Company truck pass, then 15 minutes later stopped a South Vietnamese bus, disembarked all the passengers, collected "tax" money, and then shot two ARVN soldiers who were in uniform.

52. Bars are taxed extremely high. During the period 1964-1967, it was fairly common to read of a hand-grenade being thrown into a bar. This was normally attributed to terrorism by the press, but police investigations usually showed that the owner had refused to pay taxes to the V.C. It is uncommon to read or even hear of this now, undoubtedly the bar owners have agreed to pay their taxes.

53. Prior to the 1968 TET offensive, a pro-V.C. owner of a hotel billeted over 200 V.C. for a week.

54. It was at a roadblock in Hau Nghia Province in 1968, that a South Vietnamese policeman, was checking the papers of a young girl when she became extremely nervous and openly admitted she was a V.C. com-mo-liasion agent. Under interrogation she revealed enough information to enable the Allies to roll up the 83rd Rear Services Group. The roll up extended all the way from Saigon to Nha Trang, besides dozens of cadre captured, a large quantity of civilian trucks, buses, and caches of weapons were seized.

55. Joseph Alsop, "Briton's Report on Viet Nam Must Have Heartened Nixon", The Washington Post, December 5, 1969. (This statement has also been attributed to Ho Chi Minh).

56. Sir Robert Thompson, No Exit From Viet Nam, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc. 1969) Jacket.

57. The writer was a Special Branch representative on the Phoenix Planning Committee.

58. Robert G. Kaiser, "TET Seen As Viet Cong's Peak", The Washington Post, October 31, 1969.

59. Donald Kirk, "G. I.'s Show Off Pacification Success",
The Washington Evening Star, January 15, 1970.

60. Alsop, op. cit., Editorial Pages

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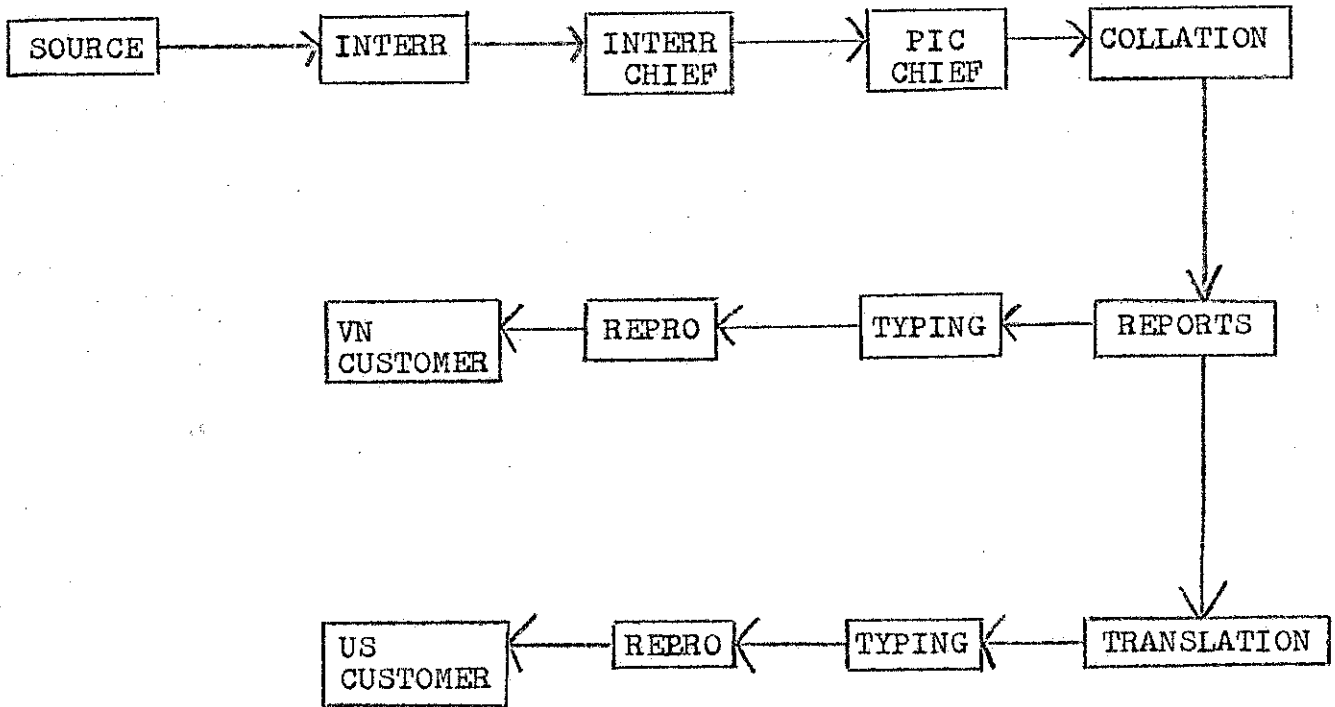
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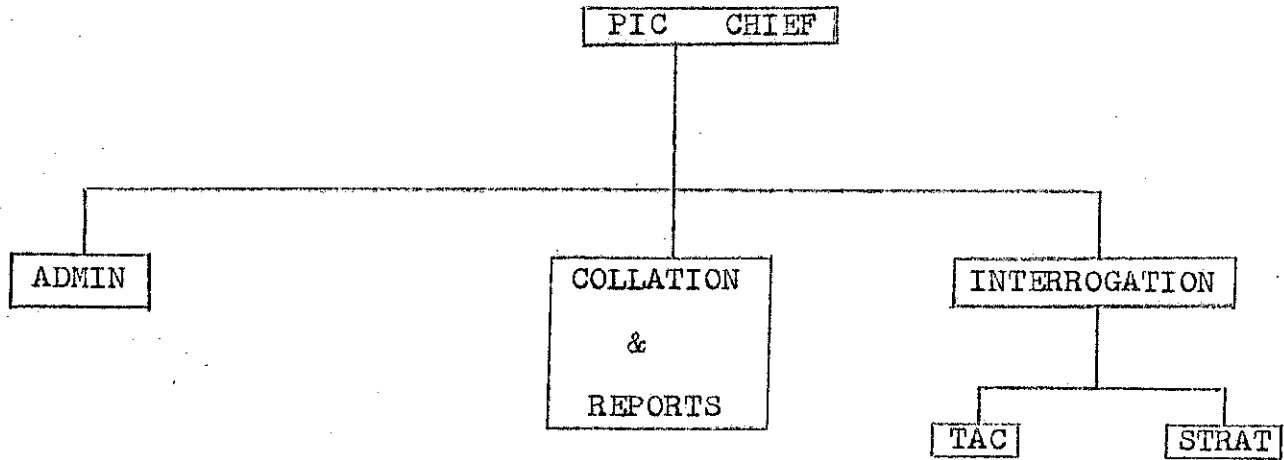
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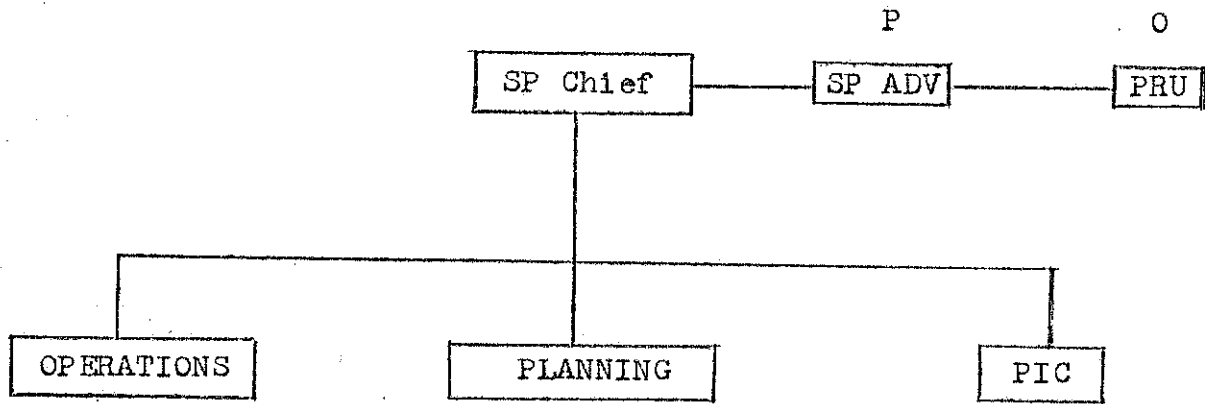
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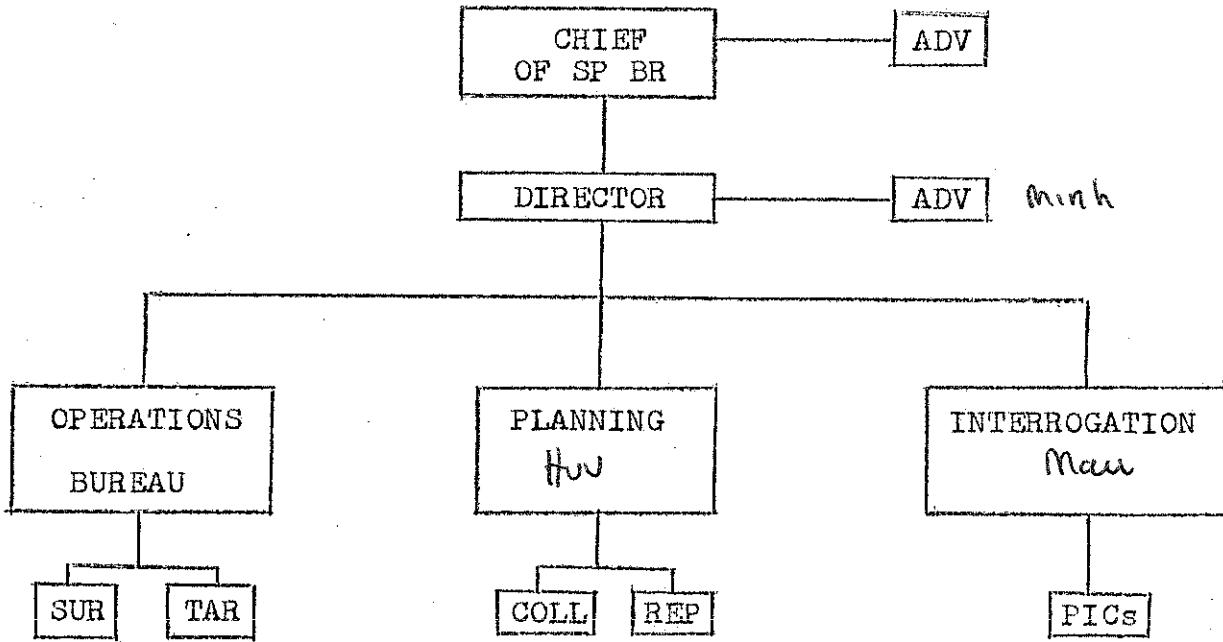
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PROVINCE



NATIONAL LEVEL



SOURCES

