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## CONVERSATIONS WITH NVA AND VC SOLDIERS: A STUDY OF ENEMY MOTIVATION AND MORALE

Konrad Kellen

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Were you disappointed with the results (of an inconclusive battle)?

Sincerely speaking I was never disappointed with the result of any battle. Fighting the war we always think that there will be times when we lose and there will be times when we win, and we should not be too optimistic when we win or too disappointed when we lose. When we lose we must find out what caused us to lose and gain experience for the next time.

Deputy Squad Leader, VC (K-13)
January 9, 1969

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 1

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS..... 16

Section
I. BATTLE EXPERIENCE..... 19

II. THE LEADERS..... 33

III. MECHANISM OF CONTROL..... 40

IV. SELF-IMAGE AS A VC/NVA SOLDIER..... 48

V. THE SOLDIER'S RELIABILITY..... 55

VI. CAREER IN THE ENEMY FORCE..... 64

VII. EXPECTATIONS REGARDING WAR TERMINATION..... 73

VIII. PERCEIVED COURSE OF WAR..... 82

IX. THE ENEMY SOLDIER AS A POLITICAL MAN..... 88

X. THE FISH'S WATER..... 94

XI. IMAGE OF THE AMERICANS..... 103

XII. THE STRUGGLE IN RETROSPECT, FROM THE POW CAGE..... 111

CONCLUSION..... 113

Appendix
A. PRELIMINARY TABLE OF RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS..... 119
B. PERSONNEL DATA ON RESPONDENTS..... 120

# INTRODUCTION

## A WORD ON MORALE STUDIES IN GENERAL

Interest in an enemy's morale and motivation makes sense only if (a) one is unable or unwilling to destroy him by sheer force and is therefore searching for exploitable psychological vulnerabilities; or (b) if one wants to reach an assessment of just how big or what kind of an effort it might take to break down his will, or whether his will can be broken down at all, short of simultaneous physical destruction.

In almost any individual or group there is a gap between basic material, physical or technological capabilities and actual capabilities; few will score 100 percent with what they have. The higher the morale of a fighting force, the narrower that gap will be, and vice versa. The gap, of course, is not necessarily constant. It is subject to vacillation, to the degree that morale either improves or declines. Where morale is exceptionally high, we say individuals or groups "surpass themselves" which, of course, is just a way of speaking: No person or group can literally surpass themselves; it will only appear that way if under special psychological conditions they really marshal all, or almost all, their resources. In the opposite case, men will "throw away the game," i.e., remain in their performance a long way below their capabilities. Morale is the decisive element in all such cases.

In wars which tend to last a long time, and in the course of which the forces fighting it tend to be exposed to a vast array of positive and negative stimuli, observations, experiences and so on, morale tends to both go through certain large cycles or curves, and also to show smaller short-term fluctuations in the process, somewhat like a fever chart that fluctuates within the general curve it describes. And, like temperature, morale tends to be relative. But contrary to, say, the body's temperature on which everyone agrees as to what is normal or the "base line," there is no such thing in the area of morale, nor can a specific base line for a particular fighting force be tailored from which fluctuations can then be read off such as, say, Morale at the Beginning (or any given time) of the Conflict in Vietnam. (More precisely, such a base line can be built, of course, but it cannot be made

to conform reliably to reality.) As a result, enemy morale and its development over time is often in dispute among those observing it. As soon as prisoners or defectors complain about hardships they endured or some difficulties they experienced in connection with their mission, analysts tend to attribute poor morale to the enemy forces. They often overlook the fact that a mere description of what a man has experienced in the combat area, even if he does not at all mean to complain, tends to sound like a complaint, his tale being after all a catalogue of woes. The story of a soldier who has been in combat -- exposed to gunfire, bad weather and bad food, with no roof over his head or bed to sleep on, the separation from his home and his loved ones, to name just a few of his tribulations -- is not a happy one. Moreover, because that is so, the mood of most soldiers _is_ what one might arbitrarily call low, at least in some respects, if by low we mean that he is by no means jubilant to be where he is.

In short, most soldiers in action are not happy. But, of course, the equation of happiness with morale is a mistake and one of the most frequent sources of error in assessing enemy morale. A very unhappy man can be very effective. One observer who understood this phenomenon well was Joseph Goebbels who coined the distinction, with regard to morale, between _Stimmung_ and _Haltung_, terms not quite adequately translated with _mood_ and _behavior_. Behavior can be very good when the mood is very low. Of course, there is a link between the two which is likely to be effective over time: If the mood is consistently low, the behavior is likely eventually to decline, and vice versa. But, absolutely speaking, the mood is only one factor in an equation that has many. Therefore, even the soldier who objectively and subjectively suffered a great deal while still in combat did not necessarily have low morale, morale being a composite of many impelling forces. To name just one: belief in one's cause.

Perhaps most distorting in attempts to analyze the morale of soldiers in the Vietnam War is an unconscious projection: The observer tends to feel: How would _I_ react if I were roaming around the jungle with a rifle and a few rounds, or a mortar or even some hard-to-carry rockets, eating a handful of rice, bombed and strafed and napalmed by

day and night without air support of my own, faced with tanks, artillery, sensors, navies and no rational expectation of ultimate military victory? How would my morale be under the circumstances? But while empathy is an important factor in gauging morale, this kind of empathy would be putting oneself only into one shoe, not into both shoes of the enemy. For the other shoe consists of real (not just perceived, though perhaps over-estimated) support by the people, a very simple and urgent cause, a constant feeling of great accomplishment (for holding the technologically vastly superior enemy in check), a basic orientation congruous with the aims and conduct of the war, and several other material and psychological assets that usually more than outweigh the hardships and disappointments the enemy must endure.

There often are two other major sources of mistakes in morale estimates. The first is the intelligence officer's insatiable thirst for "good news," not only for his own personal and ideological comfort, but also for that of his superiors who will appreciate it -- and him -- if he uncovers enemy vulnerabilities. The author does not mean to imply for a moment that some conscious prevarication or even "doctoring" of data takes place on the field of battle or in the Headquarters' offices of the supporting military bureaucracy. But, having been an interrogator and intelligence evaluator himself in World War II in the ETO, this author is aware of the tremendous drag for encouraging news that sweeps upwards through functional and command channels in times of war.

Besides, the officer dealing with enemy soldiers and their statements is a believer in his cause, too, in the sense that he considers that cause both righteous and destined to be ultimately victorious, to such an extent that he often cannot imagine anyone genuinely holding a contrary view. It does not matter which war it is; if he comes up against a man who insists, on his part, that <u>his</u> cause is just and that <u>he</u> will ultimately win the war, the intelligence man will always have a hard time taking such a fellow as seriously as the one who tends to bend more to his own thoughts. There are deep ideological roots for that. Most of us cannot believe that some apparently sensible man, who sits right across from us and moreover shares with us some very fundamental emotions, such as longing to be back home with his family,

can really be a devoted follower of Ho Chi Minh and the VC. We are simply more inclined to believe him if he denies it than if he asserts it. And being so disposed, we tend to assume that his morale must have been doubly poor, fighting under such deplorable conditions and for a cause no sane man can believe in.

Therefore, all intelligence services, no matter how they strain to be open-minded, experience an irresistible drag toward defectors, deserters and other persons unrepresentative as subjects, and misleading as sources. The trap here is particularly dangerous because defectors tend to speak the truth in some areas, generally the material areas. A defector will give us enemy secrets if he knows any, he will lead his newly found friends to caches of food, or tell them where enemy strongholds are, or whether and where he traveled through Laos. He therefore seems reliable. And he probably tries to tell the truth about the enemy forces as a whole, how they think or feel, or how they act and react, but there he may be very much in error. For the fact is that for the defector, too, the wish is the father of the thought and, having defected, he tends to wish that his side should soon give up, and to think that it soon will, and therefore tends to imply or even say that it will. No matter how securely the interrogator, Ulysses-like, tries to tie himself to the mast of objectivity, the siren-song of the defector is most often too strong for him, and he would do better to do as Ulysses' sailors did and fill his ears with wax, shutting out the song of the sirens.

If this author dealt with defectors at all, as he did in some of his earlier studies,* it was only in order to search for certain atypical elements that might reinforce certain observations. In essence the author found only one which had also been detected by several other observers in Saigon and Washington, and also by Pauker as

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*A Profile of the PAVN Soldier in South Vietnam, RM-5013-ISA/ARPA, May 1966; A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp, RM-5462-ISA/ARPA, October 1967.

far back as 1965* and Gurtov in 1967:** even defectors tended not to be hostile to their immediate leaders or their cause. This was regarded by this author as evidence of cohesion. However, having found that much, the author dispensed with defectors in the current study altogether (from assorted interrogations he saw that their general responses were still the same), as he felt their depositions while always sweet, were always only misleading, and certainly not representative. Besides, many "defectors" are not even soldiers.

In trying to gauge morale, it must also be considered that a man's morale is continuously affected by both macro and micro factors. On the macro side there are conspicuous victories or defeats; on the micro side there may be a new and better rifle or the takeover by a nasty cadre. Morale being both amorphous and all-encompassing, the soldier may on both levels, until war's end is very close and obvious in one way or the other, be continuously exposed to contradictory morale stimuli. And more often than not, hopes arise (and are amplified by the rumor-mill) that are later dashed to the ground.

As to the enemy in Vietnam (on the macro level at least) he must have been through his share of that. Both bombing cessations of the North -- the 90 percent and the 100 percent one -- and the defeat of Johnson/Humphrey at the polls and several other "turning points" might have raised his hopes considerably and led him to expect developments more favorable to him that actually occurred. On the other hand, though generally not a practicing Buddhist, but still influenced in his general outlook to some extent by a climate propitious to the practice of equanimity in fortune and adversity, the enemy may not have gone through morale gyrations as wild as we might have under comparable circumstances. Be that as it may, some of the foregoing has been discussed mainly to show that, although it is difficult

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*Viet Cong Motivation and Morale, RM-4507-ISA, by John C. Donnell, Guy Pauker and Joseph J. Zasloff, March 1965

**The War in the Delta: Views from Three Viet Cong Battalions, RM-5353-ISA/ARPA, September 1967, by Melvin Gurtov; Viet Cong Cadres and the Cadre System: A Study of the Main and Local Forces, RM-5414-ISA/ARPA, December 1967.

enough to make a morale study, it is even more difficult to make a valid and meaningful trend study in morale. In particular, the enemy's proven capacity of rebounding from morale declines would make a formal trend study extremely complicated, methodologically controversial and unreliable as a predictor of things to come. Besides, in this particular case, all the studies conducted, from 1965 on, were based on significantly different interviews, so that a formal comparison of results would be impossible anyway.

This does not mean, however, that the current analysis is not comparative in some informal ways. In its conclusion and summary, the author will have something to say on whether, in his estimation, morale has undergone significant modifications since his mid-1967 study on cohesion* which may or may not have a bearing on the future.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

This report is the last in a series of investigations into what in broad terms would be called the morale and motivation of the enemy forces in Vietnam. The first of these reports -- based as all the others in the series on interrogations of enemy soldiers by RAND-trained and RAND-designed questionnaires -- appeared in March 1965. Produced by RAND staff member Guy Pauker and RAND consultants John Donnell and Joe Zasloff,** it showed that enemy morale was high.

Since then, about a dozen more reports have been produced on the basis of data accumulated on the same topic. Some of these reports, restricted more or less to a search for vulnerabilities for purposes, among others, of feeding psywar activities, detected a variety of weaknesses, particularly to the extent that they include Hoi Chans as sources. But more of those inquiries that tried to "feel the pulse" of the enemy force as a whole, reached the conclusion that the enemy forces, whatever else they lacked in the fighting, had high morale and strong motivation. These findings remained constant over time: From

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*Kellen, op. cit.

**Pauker, op. cit.

the Pauker/Donnell/Zasloff analysis in mid-1965 to this author's own analysis in mid-1966, and again in mid-1967, morale of both VC and NVA forces -- forces that became increasingly intermingled -- registered as high. And some additional research memoranda by other authors, dealing only with limited groups of the enemy forces, found the same.*

The author's 1967 report on enemy morale went considerably beyond merely trying to form a view of the status of that morale, however. By trying to bare and examine the principal strands of that morale and uncover how the various elements interacted, and what in particular they seemed fed by or sensitive to, the author reached the conclusion that the enemy's morale was based on factors that make it well-nigh indestructible and not likely to be significantly lowered by pressures on the soldiers in battle. If we consider that due to the inevitable time lags involved in the complicated process of producing such a study, the interrogees who furnished the materials had for the most part surrendered or been captured in 1966, one can say that the enemy forces, at the time of the reading contained in the 1967 report, had the extensive military actions brought to bear against them by the U.S. Army still ahead of them, as 1967 and 1968 were the years when maximum efforts were made by all available means to search out and destroy them. Yet, despite the enormous losses they suffered and the pressures to which they were subjected, their morale held, to the astonishing degree where they were not only able to deny the U.S. and ARVN forces any major successes, but retained the capability and will to initiate more of the actions than our own forces, and particularly the Tet offensive of 1968.

It was the enemy's morale above all -- not his guerrilla or other techniques or the support from his allies** -- that enabled him to survive under and frustrate General Westmoreland's strategy. Though most comparisons are ultimately only games with notions and concepts, this

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*Gurtov, op. cit.

**Nor, for that matter, his organization. This author has always disagreed with the technique and the organization theories as sole explanations for the enemy's effectiveness.

author is led to the conclusion that, had the enemy had the mental and psychological makeup of the Nazis, or the Koreans, or the Chinese in Korea, he probably would have crumbled under the blows and pressures inflicted on him and under that strategy and its effects, i.e., the multifarious forms of discouragement that must have assailed him every day and in every engagement when looking at his losses, his situation and his chances in it. But the Vietnamese soldier, whether a cadre or a simple fighter, whether a member of the NVA or the VC, did not crumble under what may well have been the best possible -- and not as some continue to think -- the worst strategy the United States could muster.

Of course, some enemy soldiers did give up the struggle, and the total number of Hoi Chans to this day is, very roughly, 70,000; besides there have been large but unknown numbers of deserters who simply skipped out of the enemy forces. But the number of surrenderers was never big enough from our point of view, and in fact there is no evidence that it seriously affected the enemy at all. Probably, he anticipated that there would be quite a few men incapable of "taking it" under the conditions in which he had to fight. Therefore the thought occurs that what he lost in men to the Chieu Hoi program and also to desertion may have been in its effect somwhat similar to what he lost in men and materiel as a result of the bombing interdiction: essentially inconsequential, if all he was interested in, in connection with the former, was the "throughput" or, in connection with the latter, the number of men effectively and continuously available to him at any given time. (Besides, wars are not won through defectors.)

What was no doubt of particular importance to him, or, more precisely, additional reason for him to be confident, was that even most defectors (and presumably also most deserters) left their forces in body only but not in spirit. Contrary to defectors from the Nazi armies, the Korean armies, the Chinese armies and even the refugees from behind the Iron Curtain, there were hardly any defectors at any time that had become ideologically disaffected. None ever had a bad word to say about Ho Chi Minh (compare that with the tirades of

defected and even captured German soldiers against Hitler![*]) or about the "Revolution" or any of its aspects. Defectors, like all other soldiers in the enemy forces, tended to retain a good deal of their faith in their leadership and even their cause. Where they quit they sometimes quit because the hardships had become too much for them, but more frequently they gave up the struggle for reasons of personal grievances due to lack of promotion, or for family reasons. This would indicate, if nothing else, that support for the cause might co-return in most of these defectors under more favorable conditions. But, perhaps even more importantly, it shows how deeply imbedded the leaning toward the cause appears to be.

The 1967 study on enemy cohesion found, further, that the enemy forces did not just have very high morale due to factors that all tended to reinforce each other, and a most ingenious system of redressing such morale or prevent it from sagging under the impact of great stress (the aforementioned 1965 and 1966 studies had already traced those to some extent), but tried to extrapolate into the future. In doing so it reached the conclusion that " . . . in sum, the enemy may well be 'incapable of giving in'" and that, because of his cohesion within his own structure, and his perhaps slightly deteriorating but amply adequate emotional and working relations with the population, he could "force us not only to accept increasing losses of our own, but also to kill more of him (and his civilian population) than can be in our national interest."[**] Our experience on the field of battle seems to have borne out this conclusion, made in mid-1967 and based on depositions of men captured as early as the end of 1966.

The author then tried to undertake a similar morale study again in 1968 on the basis of interrogation reports routinely arriving at RAND in Santa Monica, but too many other tasks intervened. He did, however, produce a mere slip of paper in that year, almost immediately

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[*] M. I. Gurfein and Morris Janowitz, "Trends in Wehrmacht Morale," The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1946), p. 78.

[**] Kellen, op. cit., p. 74.

after the Tet offensive, in which he tried on the basis of a very few interrogations, to get some feeling for how this convulsive event had affected the enemy soldiers. Characteristically, the result showed that Tet which had been both a great success and a great failure -- in different ways -- for the enemy, but of which, at the time when prisoners or defectors were questioned, only the failure was fully apparent, had no more shaken the enemy's morale than anything else before. Due to the great losses suffered, the absence of the promised and expected General Uprising, the now inevitable prolongation of the war whose end had been expected and hoped for, the morale of some of the soldiers had apparently sagged somewhat after Tet as it had many times before on other occasions. But once again, the cadre and particularly the political officers, individually and in Kiem Thao sessions, had apparently "redressed" the fighters' morale very effectively. This confirmed, among other things, that even if formal trend studies could be made and would show declines in morale, the findings would be quite possibly unreliable, as the "bouncing back" under the ministrations of those charged with it is perhaps the most outstanding feature of enemy morale in Vietnam.

Finally, in the beginning of this year, the writer was encouraged by Fred Ikle to take one more look at the structure of enemy morale and produce what, informally, was called a "Cohesion Revisited" effort while it was inpreparation. To undertake the study, the analyst did not have to start from scratch, for the reason that he had in the beginning of 1967 designed some interrogation schedules particularly tailored to search for morale and motivation factors. These questionnaires had been put in the field in mid-1967 and tested extensively They were now used -- in the early months of 1969 -- to produce a final set of interviews, before the transfer of RAND's interview team to SDC. On the product of those interviews this study -- which one might call an exercise in military sociology -- is based.

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In designing the questionnaires for the interrogations upon which this study is based, clusters of questions were built around indicators of high (or low) morale. These indicators were culled out of work done on Wehrmacht morale,* work on Korean and Chinese prisoners in the Korean War,** and lessons learned in several years of interviewing prisoners and defectors in the Vietnam War. Also, central in the thinking that went into the designing of the indicators (and had gone into the writing of the mid-1967 analysis on Cohesion) were the considerations put down by Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz in their classical study "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II."***

Particular attention was paid in testing for phenomena that, toward the end of both World War II and the Korean War, had been harbingers of incipient disintegration, such as disturbed relations between officers and men, group disobedience, failure of control mechanisms and so on. Also, pains were taken to design the questions in such a fashion that no particular premium would seem likely to accrue to a respondent for answering in a certain way. The following areas of inquiry were predominant in the study:

1. Expectation of Victory or Defeat.
2. Righteousness of Cause in the mind of the respondent.
3. Expectations of Consequences of either Victory or Defeat.
4. Attitude to and Compliance with Orders from Superiors.
5. Attitude to Leaders.
6. Internal personal Relationships.
7. Manifest Reasons for "Sticking It Out."
8. Political Postures.
9. Nature and Stringency of Control Mechanisms.
10. Experiences in Combat.

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* See Daniel Lerner, Sykewar, New York, 1949, pp. 109ff, 291ff.

** See Alex George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, New York, 1967, pp. 14ff.

*** The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. XII (1948), p. 300ff.

11. Faith in Internal Communications.
12. Relations between the Forces and the People.
13. The Personal Side -- Hardships, Fears, Frictions.
14. View of Americans.
15. Self-Image of the Soldiers.

In addition, several other elements were probed, such as possible change in views and attitudes after the great Tet Offensive of 1968.

Lest the reader should think that the results of the study may be lop-sided in the direction of disintegration, just as some readers thought the author's former study was lop-sided in the direction of cohesion: Cohesion and disintegration are of course always only opposite sides of the same coin, and the individual phenomena probed (confidence in leadership, or win expectations, and so on) would, depending on whether the findings are positive or negative, yield indications of the one or the other.

## ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In analyzing the data produced by the questionnaires the respondents were extensively quoted verbatim in the main body of the report (which might be called a qualitative analysis), and a "nose-count" of certain findings was put into Appendix A (which might be called a quantitative supplement). The method used in preparing the main body was primarily to let the respondents speak for themselves, i.e., to quote them extensively on all the subjects under discussion, at the risk of straining the reader's patience. In connection with every question dealt with in this report, the author saw to it that at least one of the four categories dealt with in this report (NVA cadre, NVA private, VC cadre, VC private) would be quoted; and that both the typical and the atypical answer would be recorded.

The interviewees on whose statements this report is based were selected as follows: " . . . The interviewers would select the type that was needed most. If it turned out that the individual was not sufficiently knowledgeable he was dropped and another selected. This process was reiterated. A rough guess was that five people were

discarded for each one finally accepted. This was particularly true of the interviews at Bien Hoa."*

In all, 22 interrogation reports underlie this study. The respondents fall into the following categories:

| Cadre | | Fighters | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NVA | VC | NVA | VC |
| 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 |

Fuller data on the individuals quoted in this report can be found in Appendix B.

The first question that will of course come to the reader's mind is whether anything valid or useful can be deduced from a sample that is not only not representative, or at least most unlikely to be, and is moreover what is called "tiny." Even if the author should have extracted the essence from the interviews without over- or under-emphasizing this thing or that, what reason is there to assume that the feelings, thoughts, experiences and convictions expressed here mirror in any way those prevalent in the enemy forces still facing us? It is all well and good to know what 22 men out of an estimated force of at least 200,000 say, but what does it mean?

In the author's view, these interviews probably do reflect the climate in the enemy force as a whole, for several reasons. In the first place, each interview -- even though different answers were given to many questions -- is consistent in itself. Secondly, the interviews are consistent with each other. Thirdly and most importantly, they are consistent with roughly a thousand other interviews the author has read in the past four years. Finally, the 22 interviews were conducted not with men from one or two units or regions, but with men from a considerable variety of units, with very different backgrounds, and from areas of operations in 15 different provinces.

The reader may also object to the slight preponderance of cadre among those quoted in the text and say: Well, of course, the cadre have high morale and are well indoctrinated. But there is nothing

*Letter from Anders Sweetland to author, dated 1 March 1969, Saigon.

"of course" about that. The non-coms in the Wehrmacht, for example, faltered quite rapidly in the West after the 1944 invasion, as a result of which the Wehrmacht no longer held.* The non-coms are indeed the "steelframe" of the armed forces, as the enemy likes to say, and if they hold, his forces are likely to hold. Therefore, they deserve particular attention, as soldiers we actually confront in the field.

Naturally the very high ranking cadre up to and including the leadership of the Lao Dong, both North and South, may have different views and feelings. The morale of the top leaders may be either high or low, on the basis of intricate calculations they may make in which the lower ranks in no way partake. For all we know, they may be inclined to give up now, or in a year, for whatever reason, whether to gain time, or just to quit. But that is not likely. For generally in history it is precisely the other way around: The top leaders are more determined to go on than the lower ranks and for a longer time. But, as said before, this analysis does not address itself to the higher leaders or their estimates and intentions. It only tries to determine whether, if those higher leaders wish to continue the fight, they still have the instrument -- consisting of the low cadres and the fighters -- to be able to do so.

In answering this question the low ranking cadre such as the ones looked at here -- squad leaders, platoon leaders, sergeants -- are of critical importance. Not only have many of those risen from the ranks of fighters at an accelerated rate since Tet 1968 and are therefore essentially the same kind of fighters, but it is upon their orientation and energy that the armed forces depend in such large measure. No armed force, to the knowledge of this analyst, has ever disintegrated whose low level network of cadre had remained intact, loyal and vigorous. To dismiss the depositions of a cadre qua cadre, or to assume that they distort the results, would be like dismissing our economic or technological might from the picture (as the enemy occasionally does, undoubtedly to the detriment of his assessments). Despite the considerable emphasis on cadre, however, the morale configuration

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*Gurfein and Janowitz, op. cit., p. 80.

of the plain fighter -- both VC and NVA -- has not been neglected, but has also been given its full due.

Except for two cadre who are 37 years old, the average age of the men with whom we are dealing is about 25, for both cadre and fighters. We are not, in other words, dealing with senior members. And the highest rank is held by a lieutenant. The rest of the men are privates and non-coms.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this report are hard, if not impossible to summarize. Theoretically, they could be summarized in two ways. One would be to give short, consolidated answers to the questions that were asked, such as: The respondents said food was adequate, or, the Americans were responsible for this war, or, their leaders were good leaders. One also could make a short statement as to the enemy's morale and motivation, such as: Morale is high, and the enemy's main motivation is his belief in the "Revolution." But such summaries -- even though they are interesting in that they confirm and thus to some extent explain, the tenacity and valor which the enemy displays daily on the field of battle -- would not contain the essence of what is put down in the following pages. Only the full text can yield the content.

Reading the following pages the reader may have two adverse reactions. One would be: "The same old stuff! That's what they said years ago!" To this the analyst can only say that such continuity and sameness of responses, after the enemy forces have been assailed for years by the twin thrusts of our military and our political activities, is in itself a finding, perhaps a most important one, deserving careful consideration.

The second adverse reaction by the reader may be: "Why repeat all this communist propaganda? I know what the line is on most of these subjects from the newspapers!" But it makes a world of difference whether some web of totalitarian "lines" is enunciated by the Lao Dong and promulgaged over Radio Hanoi and Radio Liberation in South Vietnam, from where it finds its way into the newspapers and privileged reports, or whether the lower rank and file absorbs it all, makes it its own, assimilates it and believes it, professes it and teaches it to others. It is well known that totalitarian propaganda is often not "bought" by the lower levels, at least not in its entirety. There usually is considerable slippage. On the other hand, when it is bought it often is repeated in a parrot-like fashion, which may indicate brittleness. The latter is what we call indoctrination, a term we also tend to apply to those on the enemy side who follow their leaders

willingly, and which, in the view of this author on the basis of what follows, is a particularly ill-chosen term. For in the case of pure indoctrination the victim is generally made to believe something of which he had no personal experience and about which he really has little personal opinion or feeling. But the enemy soldier's views and responses in Vietnam are different, and therefore deserve, in this analyst's view, the reader's patient attention.

Only by immersing himself into these responses can the reader obtain a "feel" as to how high morale or how strong motivation really is on the other side, and how likely or unlikely these two related forces are of disintegrating, and under what circumstances. The enemy's picture of the world, and his country, his mission, and ourselves in it is remarkable by its simplicity, clarity and internal consistency. And the tenor of his responses is remarkable in the control of passion (which the respondents share with the highest leaders of the Lao Dong); in what we would nowadays call its coolness; and in its matter-of-factness and clarity. In all these respects the responses are strikingly different from the ramblings found in most interviews with Westerners in World War II (and also refugees from behind the Iron Curtain).*

Finally, the responses are impressive by their straightforwardness. Anyone who has read prisoner or defector or refugee interrogations cannot but be impressed by the absence of all effort at ingratiation with the interviewer, but, at the same time, also with the absence of -- on the other end of the spectrum -- defiance or hostility or sullenness. These men just report and explain -- one is tempted to say: patiently -- to the interviewer what they have experienced and what they believe and think.

As the Conclusion will demonstrate, neither our military actions nor our political or psywar efforts seem to have made an appreciable

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*Of course, the statements are translations. And translation may lead to distortion. But (and this author, by chance, has been concerned with translations for the better part of 25 years) it is always possible to reconstruct, from translations, certain essential features of the original.

dent on the enemy's overall motivation and morale structure. That that is so, and why, can only be garnered (at least to some extent) from the actual text of this report which, after all, is in itself only a summary of more than a thousand pages of basic text.

The findings also are, just as in the aforementioned 1967 study of the enemy, that morale and motivation in fighter and cadre ranks are not likely to collapse under similar circumstances in the foreseeable future.

# I. BATTLE EXPERIENCE

## FREQUENCY OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, CASUALTIES

As the heading to this first chapter indicates, no attempt has been made to describe in objective terms what the battle situation on the enemy side actually was, at least not comprehensively. Rather, this section represents a collection of impressions and opinions on how the actual military clashes look to the enemy soldier from his side; how he experienced them. The only "hard facts" in this section are the number of engagements in which the respondents claim to have participated, and even those may not be regarded as too hard because the term "engagement" is very stretchable.

The analyst was interested in determining the frequency of combat to which the respondents had been exposed, in order to gain an impression as to how heavy or continuous the pressure on the enemy soldiers really is. In the previous report on enemy cohesion, cited above, it was found that the average combat exposure of those interviewed had been extremely small.* For the current study it was not possible to provide parallel figures, partly because the nature of individual engagements seems to have changed somewhat. Contrary to what the soldiers were reporting earlier, most respondents are now speaking, in addition to "battles fought," of "counter-sweep operations." "Battles fought" were more frequent, often exceeding two to three in the last six months before the prisoner was actually captured. "Counter-sweep operations" are reported to take place much more often, but as they can be anything from a bloody clash with a pursuing ARVN or U.S. force to a quick unilateral withdrawal from a merely suspected sweep, it would be meaningless to include them in figures on combat exposure. Only one thing is "clear" to the analyst: combat exposure, though still well within the limits of what the soldiers seem to be able to endure, has apparently become somewhat more frequent per month that it has been in previous periods.

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*2.32 engagements in an average of 26 months of service, Kellen, op. cit., p. 76. Due to many ambiguities, however, this is not a "hard" figure.

At first glance it would appear that the reason for this -- aside from greater proficiency on the part of the allies to search out enemy units -- would be found in the fact that attrition has worked after some fashion and that therefore more fighting devolves around the remaining soldiers. However, in view of the fact that it seems to be enemy policy not to commit heavily decimated units to combat, but place them in a rest area where they are waiting for replacements, such a conclusion probably does not hold. Rather, and particularly in view of the fact that most engagements still appear to be enemy-initiated (at least they appear that way from the interrogations), it would seem that the enemy leadership is demanding somewhat more of their soldiers than it has in the past. But of course whether the enemy leaders believe they have to do this out of necessity, or whether they do this because of certain opportunities they now see which they did not see before, or for other reasons, is a matter of sheer speculation. In any event, what matters to us here most is how the soldier himself views the frequency of combat to which he is exposed.

A VC cadre captured in September of 1968 and asked how many operations his unit had gone on in the last months before his capture, stated: "None. This was because after the offensive in May 1968, my unit's losses were not replaced before I was captured." (K-2) Thus, strangely enough, the cadre was out of combat for four months after the May offensive. How did he do in the months preceding? "My battalion took part in the Tet offensive in Cholon and the attack at Gia Dinh in May 1968. These were the two main operations. By the way, we also took part in some anti-sweep operations which were of very small scale and should not be called operations." How did he make out personally? "During the Tet offensive in Cholon I was slightly wounded after three days of combat. I rested for some time in my home base. In May 1968 I went along to my unit to Gia Dinh and was wounded again..." (K-2) This VC cadre also reported that the Tet operations were "more fierce" than any battles he had hitherto experienced, adding in a matter-of-fact way that in the course of it "more than 50 percent of my unit's strength were killed and wounded." He added that "during the second-phase offensive" (presumably the May offensive) "my battalion was reorganized

with a replacement of more than 60 NVA soldiers." This apparently represented one of those heavy infusions of NVA men into VC units in the course of 1968. The cadre, who had actually only become one after May 1968 because of the heavy losses incurred, reported, when questioned about the battle at Gia Dinh in May, that "our loss in this battle was more serious than in the Tet offensive. About 80 percent of my unit's strength was killed, wounded and captured." (As his unit he gave a company that eventually had shrunk to 30 men.) It may be remarkable that the same cadre remained entirely undismayed in the face of such formidable losses and expressed confidence in his leaders and the ultimately favorable outcome of the struggle.

A VC cadre, in this case a squad leader, reported that in the last months before his capture, "my battalion went on two operations," and that during the six months before his capture he had been on five operations. Asked whether he thought that "fighting five or six battles in six months is few or many?" he answered: "Few." He added that he would consider 8 to 10 battles in six months as "many." Were the battles won or lost in which the squad leader participated? "We won all five battles." The interrogator asked: "How come your unit was so good that it won all five battles?" The squad leader replied: "We were always ready in our strong defensive positions, we had good weapons and plenty of ammunition, and this is why we defeated the attacking force." Asked to relate what had been his "most successful battle" the squad leader said: "After attacking An Hwu in Dinh Tuong Province, my unit withdrew to Cailan in Kien Tuong Province. The U.S. force pursued our unit to Cailan where they met our strong defense. We repelled their attack. They were not able to enter the village." (K-9) It may not be insignificant that the cadre cited this defensive success as his most successful battle, or that he at least speaks of U.S. rather than VC initiated operations. If he and his comrades see the war from this perspective, they will in their own minds be forever successful (as long as they are not physically wiped out).* The squad leader had a

*Of course, to some extent the same can be said of our own side, and this may go a long way to explain why both sides have continuously and probably quite sincerely claimed "successes" at times when the situation has actually not changed.

few words to say on the respective strength of the units that clashed at Cailan. "We had one battalion and the Americans had two battalions. The action took place sometime in September 1968. We learned from our source that the Americans lost one platoon and only two of our men were wounded. The battle lasted one day, from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M." Asked whether his unit had been more successful in the "past six months," the squad leader said "more successful." Why? "By fighting more battles we gained more experience." As to losses, the squad leader reported that his battalion "which consisted of about 300 men"* lost "one killed, four wounded, and two captured" in the last six months before his capture. If we can trust the squad leader's report, we see here enormous differences in the casualty rate from unit to unit if we compare what he has to say to what the other VC cadre (see above) reported.

Just as with regard to combat exposure that varied widely from unit to unit, the number of casualties reported varied also -- so widely as not to permit the establishment of any kind of pattern. Some respondents reported only a handful of men killed in the course of six months. Others dryly spoke of 25 percent and more that had actually been killed in action.

The interviews contained a few odds and ends on the subject of combat that deserve to be included. One respondent (K-8) reports that, as before, enemy units still <u>discuss</u> their missions before they go on them: "Before moving on to our objective we met with the platoon leader to discuss our job and how to carry it out. Everybody was invited to give his opinion. Through this meeting the platoon leader learned what would be best to do. The procedure was also applied at squad and cell levels." One VC cadre (K-9) expressed the view that "seven men out of ten were good fighters, the other three were new." Whether, as the cadre implies, all old fighters are good fighters can, of course, not be taken for granted. A statement by an NVA cadre attests to a certain amount of ingenuity on the part of the enemy: "My company had a 107mm mortar

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*Of course almost all enemy units have been what we call "under strength" for a long time, if not from the beginning.

but we did not use it because it was too heavy. By firing at Nha Be, we only employed the shells. We placed them on a dirt mound, measured the angle, then connected them to an electric current to fire."

One VC private describing heavy and inconclusive fighting in the area of Trang Bang and, asked how he explained that his unit had lost this and similar battles, replied: "Generally speaking we didn't lose, we were just not able to take the targets, but we didn't suffer heavy casualties." He added: "In the first battle in Suoi Sau we failed taking over the outpost because we were discovered during the move. Though we suffered casualties in the second and third battles in Trang Bang, the casualties we suffered were light as compared with casualties suffered by the enemy. In these two battles in Trang Bang, we moved deeply into the district town and caused heavy casualties and losses to the enemy side prior to our withdrawal. But the last battle in Trang Bang resulted in heavy casualties for us because we were not able to withdraw before the airplanes came. Many of us got wounded because of bombs. I don't know how many were killed." (K-22)

## "HARDSHIPS," TREATMENT, R&R

"Hardships": "Hardships" to which the enemy soldiers are exposed, if objectively or subjectively unbearable, can of course be one of the crucial elements in breaking an enemy's morale. By making the hardships too numerous or heavy to bear one can, at least theoretically, defeat a force one has not defeated strategically; therefore the respondents were questioned extensively on the subject in an effort to determine whether the burdens of war were wearing them down. Conversely, just as hardships can break a man's morale, so can the absence of relief from hardships, such as inadequate medical services or insufficient Rest and Recuperation policies. In view of the close relationship between these elements, they are being treated together here.

"What" an NVA cadre was asked, "were the greatest hardships you and your unit suffered since Tet?" He replied: "Of course, fighting involves hardships. Lacking food* is a hard thing to bear.

*Generally, food is reported to be adequate. See below, pp. 27ff.

However, I would consider the greatest hardship that in operations since Tet we had to move to another place immediately after we attacked some place in order to avoid the artillery and the planes." How did the hardships caused by such moving around affect the fighters? "As I said, moving was a hardship. But at the news of going down to the plain, the men were enthusiastic although they knew they were going there to fight. They would feel lonely and depressed if they had to stay too long in the jungle." (K-15) Another NVA cadre stated: "The troops did not complain about anything. We felt uncomfortable restricted at one place, but we gradually got used to it." He added, "Since we began operations in Long An Province in March of 1968, we did not have to stand any great hardships at all. We only lived a rather uncomfortable life for we were restricted to the jungle." How did that affect the soldiers? "The troops did not complain about anything. As I just said, we felt uncomfortab le restricted to one place, but we gradually got used to it." (K-3) An NVA Master Sergeant and company commander said: "We actually experienced no hardships except for movements across rivers and streams." Asked whether he considered ARVN sweep operations a hardship he answered: "That was a usual element of combat and not a great hardship. Naturally, when we did not hunt ARVN troops they looked for us. That is war." He added: "The troops made no complaints. Though moving was strenuous, it was necessary in order to avoid discovery. Everyone realized it." (K-4)

A VC private, who had been operating in the IV Corps area, was somewhat "softer" in listing the catalogue of what he considered to be the principal hardships: "Since Tet, the Delta has been frequently swept by allied troops. I and all the others in my unit were unable to eat and sleep properly. In the staging area my unit was generally widely scattered in small groups. Any group that was spotted was immediately attacked by American airborne troops. When we tried to counterattack, more airborne troops were immediately sent on the spot to surround us." (K-19). An NVA private tried to take a resigned view: "Naturally we had to stand it [the hardships]. What else could we do?" Asked what his comrades felt, he replied: "They did not say anything

but I think they were unhappy." How about the cadres? "The cadres tried to encourage us. They said we should endure the hardships today in order to have a happy future." (K-8) Finally, this NVA private, a student who had infiltrated the South in May 1967 and been captured in September 1968 after operating in Long An and Tay Ninh Provinces, reported: "The greatest hardships since Tet were air attacks and sweep operations. We had to move very often in order to avoid being discovered and bombed. Every three or four days we had to flee from sweep operations once we knew we hadn't enough strength to deal with the enemy's forces." And how did these hardships affect him and the other fighters? "We all knew there were always hardships while fighting a war. We disregarded them because we were fighting for the country, for the independence of the country, and we should expect all kinds of hardships and if necessary even the sacrifice of our lives. Therefore, we never complained about the hardships." (K-12)

One cadre stated that: "It was tiresome to have to avoid operations conducted by the enemy, if we had to stand such a situation for a long period of time. [But] I did not hear anyone complain and I think there was nothing worth complaining about. That was war." (K-4)

Treatment (Health): Asked about the health of his men in the last six months before his capture (September 1968), a VC cadre stated: "As compared to previous times the health of the men had deteriorated. Before, our base was seldom attacked by air, artillery or helicopters. Later, while we were at Tan Nhut, sweep operations were conducted more often. We soldiers could not sleep at night, moved often and feared sudden attacks. Our health was not as good as before." (K-2)* The cadre added that "each company had one medic who took care of the lightly wounded. This cadre also had medicines to cure general sicknesses like headaches or bellyaches, and to dress light wounds.

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*Throughout the responses it appears that by far the greatest hardship on the enemy were the sweep operations, or what used to go by the name "search-and-destroy." It thus was confirmed once again that this particular military strategy that has so often been criticized was, even if not sufficiently effective, still more effective than anything else that was tried.

Soldiers not seriously wounded and sick would stay with the unit, while the seriously wounded or sick would be sent to Ba The Military Hospital." (K-2) An NVA cadre stated that "the troops in my company were all healthy. Only a small number had malaria, but they still continued to fight. None of them were so sick that they had to stop going on operations." And how was the medical care? "As I have just said none of the men in my company was seriously wounded or sick. We had enough pills for treatment of malaria, headache and so on." (K-3) An NVA cadre operating in the Delta found that "since we moved to the Delta the health of the troops improved. However, their health was relatively unsatisfactory because my unit consisted of people who had recovered from illness. A couple of them had malaria, but were not serious cases, and still able to operate." (K-4)

From the perspective of an NVA fighter the situation was not entirely satisfactory: "When in battle medical care was not very good because we had only two medics. One was good and the other was not. He was too scared and used to stay behind." (K-8) The soldier added that in the six months prior to his capture "a great many" of the men had been sick with malaria -- "20 or 30 out of 70." Another NVA private took a more optimistic view: "Generally speaking, the health of the men in my unit improved in the last few months because they got better food, and they got used to the climate in the South. When we first arrived in the South, we were tired and many of us had malaria. I think that was because of our long and hard trip to the South." (K-11) Another NVA fighter confirmed this: "Generally speaking, the health of the men in my company was good . . . the health of the men was much better after early 1968 as compared to 1967 when we first arrived in the South." He elaborated: "When we first arrived in the South we were not used to the climate and at the same time we were very tired after the long trip walking [?] all the way to the South, therefore many of us got sick with dysentery and malaria. But we had medicines and rest, and we got gradually used to the climate, and after several months we recovered." And, since Tet, "we moved around the Delta areas where the people were living, so we had more and better food

to eat than in previous times, therefore our health improved." (K-12) One VC soldier, on the other hand, though also confirming that men with malaria would go right on fighting, stated that medical supplies were "pretty short" (K-22), while another stated: "We didn't have good medical care because medical supplies were not adequate." (K-19) A VC cadre confirmed that the health in his unit was poor because the climate in the jungle was "terrible." He too stated that health improved after moving to the plains. (K-14)

As to the care for the wounded, no clear picture emerges. Some respondents claim two medics per company, some two medics per battalion; others spoke of even fewer medics.* In all, there seem to be few serious cases that were returned from the hospital to duty, so that information about hospital care is largely absent. But as to local treatment for "slight wounds" it was generally regarded as adequate by cadre and fighters alike. Finally, on the sensitive matter of the wounded and dead being left behind rather than taken along during retreats (with most respondents in the category of wounded who were left behind) there were no complaints. The rigors of battle were held responsible, and the respondents agreed that all humanly possible efforts were made to bring the wounded back: "Yes, the men in the units always made efforts to remove their wounded and dead comrades from the battlefield for medical care and burial. But in some cases they were not able to remove all the wounded or dead because of enemy air attacks after the ground attacks were over. In such cases, the men had to concentrate their efforts on removing the wounded, and of course the dead were left behind." (K-11)

As to food supply (included here under the general heading of Battle Experience because it is of such crucial importance to the combat soldier, and particularly the guerrilla soldier) a VC cadre said that "were were not short of rice. Our rice ration always remained the same -- one liter per day. The food allowance also remained the same -- 8 piasters a day. Our monthly pocket money was 60 piasters

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*Of course, it must be taken into account that these units are often seriously "understrength."

per man. However we were short of foodstuffs to go with the rice. Before, we could buy these foodstuffs at the market easily but later on, due to frequent sweep operations, we not longer dared to go and buy foodstuffs." (K-2) An NVA cadre: "There was a section which took care of the rice supply for us. Rice was shipped to the riverbank where we were stationed. We just went there to pick it up. We were never short of rice." (K-3) Another NVA cadre said: "Generally speaking, the procurement of rice was difficult, for at many places the people didn't have any to sell to us . . . nevertheless we never encountered food shortages." (K-4) (It might be commented in this connection that whenever soldiers report that the population was short of rice, they still ate, and that if they ran short of food on rare occasion due to battle dislocations, the matter was invariably immediately remedied. This would indicate that herbicide operations, while depriving the villagers, continue to fail in denying food to the enemy.)

An NVA private: "Since Tet we have received more and better food than we used to have before." Why so? "Since Tet we have been moving around in people's areas where the people provided us with better foodstuffs." Did the people provide food for the entire unit? "Yes." (K-11) And a VC private confirmed that food was always adequate: "While I was still with the 5th Battalion we purchased rice from the people and never encountered any food shortages." (K-18)

Rest and Recuperation: Just as food is of course of great importance to the combat soldier so is rest and recuperation. It was not quite clear from the interviews just how much rest and recuperation the soldiers were given after engagements. Actually it seemed that the periods varied considerably from unit to unit and area to area. Some soldiers spoke of "ten or fifteen days of rest after an operation." (K-11) Others spoke of five to ten days, others again from three to five days, and some stated that on occasion they had even less than that to recover from some combat operations. This does not necessarily mean the soldiers had to fight again, but were used to perform other labors.

One NVA soldier stated the matter as follows: "It depended on the situation in the area; sometimes we were given ten days of rest after an operation, sometimes we took only five days because we had to conduct countersweep operations or we had to change our station area." (K-12) He went on: "In the last few months before I was captured, we had less rest than we had in the past because we had to go on more operations than in the past." However, this did not seem to affect him adversely. Did he have any complaints about the whole system of rest and recuperation from fatigue and military action? "No. Sometimes I even thought that I didn't need to rest." (K-12)

One of the VC privates making up the group of respondents for this study painted a somewhat less rosy picture. When asked whether the men were given more or less rest as time went on, he replied: "Since the Tet offensive, my unit has had almost no rest." Asked why, he said: "In Long An Province my unit was almost unable to find a secure area for rest." (K-19) This statement shows that the principal hazard to rest and recuperation policies did not necessarily come from enemy plans to use or not use units at certain periods of time, but from the inability of their leaders to find secure rest areas, in other words, areas secure enough to afford the soldiers a real respite from combat. Others, too, indicate that whenever rest and recuperation was inadequate it was not because they were driven too frequently to fight but rather because their rest areas were not secure and subject to artillery and air attack. But as in the case of so many things in connection with the war in Vietnam, evidence on this is also contradictory. An NVA cadre, for example, who stated that "lately we were given three or four days rest only," indicated that the shortened rest period was compensated for by the fact that at least when there were periods of rest the troops could rest. When asked if he felt really secure from attack in rest areas, he said: "Yes, we had good security because we camped deep in the jungles." He added that during the camping he had seen L-19s, helicopters and jets flying over but that the unit had never been bombed. (K-15)

As to how the time in rest and recuperation was actually spent, one cadre reported: "We took a walk, visited friends, chatted, sang and drank." (K-9) The statement on the part of a platoon leader showed that severe losses and an increased tempo in the fighting did not necessarily affect rest and recuperation adversely, partly because it seems to be the habit of the enemy not to fight with units that are very depleted, and because it takes some time to fill up these units again. When asked whether the men were given more or less time for rest lately, this platoon leader said: "Lately, due to successive operations conducted by U.S. and ARVN troops when a great number of troops in the unit were killed, we rarely went on combat and had more time to relax." (K-3) This was confirmed by an NVA private who reported that he spent periods of rest by "doing nothing, just eating and fooling around," and who added that in the last several months, "we were given more rest than in previous times because after one or two battles our unit suffered heavy losses and the number of men left over in the unit was not enough for going on big operations, therefore we had to wait for more men being sent to our unit for replacement." (K-11) Actually, this man was a hothead who was spoiling for combat. Asked whether he had any complaints about the system, he said: "I think that sometimes I was given too much rest. I'd rather like to go on fighting continuously than to take several days of rest after each battle because I didn't feel good when I was doing nothing."

## TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

A VC cadre when asked whether he felt that he was well prepared, properly trained and sufficiently well armed when he went on an operation answered: "Since I joined the Front I did not attend any training course. My senior members of the unit showed me how to use infantry weapons. Little by little after a few battles I knew how to use them fairly well. There was no difficulty at all. As to the attacks at small outposts in the years of 1966 and 1967, we always had enough ammunition. The exception were the two offensives during Tet and during May 1968, we were short of ammunition because we fought in the city and

our supply route was blocked." (K-2) Somewhat exceptionally, an NVA cadre reported that his training had not been all that it should have been: "I think that proper training had not been given me. I should have been trained in the techniques of firing." (K-3) Another NVA cadre reported a change: "While the unit was still in the jungle, good preparations were made for myself and the whole unit before each operation. However such preparations were no longer made after our move to the Delta. The reason was that orders were usually given on short notice. At times we received orders at six o'clock and by twelve o'clock we already had to open fire. We did not have time to make good preparations." And even his training did not satisfy him: "I myself had not received proper training. I was specialized in land survey and intelligence. I had studied the techniques of artillery firing but I had not practiced it. Regarding H-12 rockets which were issued to my unit, I was given training for only three days." (K-4) This man felt, however, that his company was sufficiently well armed.

An NVA cadre and company commander, only recently appointed, stated that while his military training had been adequate, he lacked combat experience when he took over his command. When asked why he was designated to be company commander while he still lacked combat experience, he explained: "Everybody had to engage in combat to learn by experience. Moreover there would be no second battle without a first one. Also, there were platoon leaders who had been engaging in combat for several years, had much experience and always were with my unit. Therefore my assignment to the position of company commander was no problem." (K-5) An NVA private also felt that essentially everything was in good order: "Yes, I was well prepared and well armed when I went on operations. After joining the army in the North I received a three months military training course. After I finished this training course and especially after participating in the first few battles in the South, I felt that I was relatively well trained." (K-11) Another NVA private reported the same: "Yes, I was always well prepared, sufficiently well armed and was ready for operation for any time day or night. I had one year of artillery training in the North after joining the army. Therefore when I arrived in the South I felt that I was

properly trained and was ready for battle right away." (K-12) One VC private, on the other hand, stated that he was well enough armed but not properly trained. (K-19) And another VC private reported precisely the same -- sufficient armament, insufficient training. (K-15) The same private when asked whether the troops in his unit were seasoned replied: "I think that they were not seasoned troops. If they were good combat soldiers, they would not have sustained so many casualties." (K-18) Still one more VC private (K-22) stated that he was well prepared but not properly trained.

On balance, however, the men seemed to feel that they were about as well equipped and trained as was necessary (this always being a relative matter with soldiers of all ranks); that their medical services and R&R policies were all that could be expected under the circumstances, and quite adequate; and that the frequency of combat exposure (always very hard to quantify because of the very stretchable word "battle" in the Vietnamese context), while apparently higher than before, was not straining the soldiers' endurance to the limit. This is but one of the many divergencies between the opponent in Vietnam and the Chinese enemy in Korea after 1950. More about this will be said later in this report.

## II. THE LEADERS

### THE POLITICAL OFFICER

In every army the relationship of the men to their immediate leaders and the relationship of the latter to their higher leaders is, of course, crucial for the performance of any mission that this army may have to fulfill. For that purpose extensive efforts are made in every army to produce an esprit d'corps. War being a dangerous and demanding business for everybody involved in it, a man whether a private or a cadre, can really do his job only by transcending himself and his apprehensions. This in turn is most likely to be achieved if by mutual trust and even admiration men enter into that type of reciprocal relationship that will mobilize all they have in them. Every military leader knows that no amount of soldiers and no quality of equipment will permit him to win battles if the men do not willingly and enthusiastically -- at least up to a point -- follow their leaders. The past RAND study on cohesion therefore paid particular attention to the relationship between the fighters and cadre both in the VC and the NVA,* and this study is doing likewise.

As all observers know, in the enemy forces a distinction is made between political and military leaders. Even though the political leaders, or rather the political officers, also participate in combat, they do not have any direct command function. Their task is not to give orders but to "mobilize the spirit" of the men by word and example. The political officer, in many ways, is the "mother" of the fighters, listening to their troubles, consoling them and rebuilding their morale if it is adversely affected by the death of some comrades, failure in battle, nostalgia for family or other factors. In contrast to the combat leaders, who are on the whole very tough, the political officers are generally described as "gentle, affable, friendly." From past interrogations they emerged as universally liked and respected.

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*Kellen, op. cit., pp. 44ff.

When questioned on the subject of the political officer and his role in the enemy forces, this VC cadre began by saying: "In the unit everybody had to keep in mind the proverb which says 'The political task is the primary task and the morale motivation is the first mission.' This meant that the political task was more important than any other. The political task was composed of different kinds of activities, and the morale motivation was the most important activity in the political task." Why, he was asked, do you think the morale motivation was so important? "Morale motivation was always an important mission. If a man carried a rifle but he didn't know why he was fighting and whom he was fighting for, or what purpose he was following, this wouldn't bring to himself or anybody else any good thing, regardless of how modern his weapon was. He would have to know whom he was fighting for and how great his task was. If all the men in the unit fully understood their obligations and the purposes of the fighting, they would fight the war and carry out their other tasks very enthusiastically. And the revolution, of course, would be served." As to the political officer in his own unit, when asked whether the latter had any faults, he replied: "As a human being of course he had faults. But the only fault I found in the political officer of my unit was that he sometimes got hot-tempered with his subordinate cadres when the result of their assignments were not satisfactory. Generally, he was a very nice and gentle person, especially when everyone in the unit did his work well. Then the cadre used to talk and joke to the men in the unit very cheerfully. But not when the results of the work were not satisfactory. Actually, a political officer must always be gentle and nice to everyone in the unit..." (K-14)

The cadre added: "I understand that our political officer had joined the Vietminh to fight against the French for many years. After the war with the French was over, he regrouped to the North where he attended political training for almost two years. After returning to the South he was assigned to serve as political cadre to several other companies before his assignment to my unit at the end of 1967. He was a South Vietnamese and had a lot of experience in treating South

Vietnamese soldiers. And of course I think he had gained a lot of experience from serving in the North."

The respondent was then asked whether he thought that the political officer was sincere and told the fighters the truth. His answer: "As far as I understand it, the political officer only told the fighters the truth when that truth was good for the morale of the unit. He only informed the men of the unit of victory news which he thought made the men more enthusiastic. Of course, in the war there were times when we won and there were times when we were defeated. But the political officer didn't tell the men about the defeats we suffered because that would have discouraged the fighters." In other words, the political officer in a way was doling out good news the way one might dole out food when it is not too plentiful, but his charges, even though they were aware of it, did not fault him on it. The respondent, asked whether he believed what the political officer said, replied: "I believed what the political officer in my unit said but I knew that he was not 100 percent sincere because he had to motivate the men's morale and if he was sincere and told everything, the victory news together with the defeat news -- the men's morale might deteriorate. In carrying out this task I realized that he must not be completely sincere. For instance, he told us about the good results of the general offensives which had brought about the Paris talks. I believed this because the radio and the newspapers told us all about it. But he told us that we won, both militarily and politically, during the general offensives, which I did not believe very much. The fact that led me not to believe him was that we were not able to take the big cities as we had planned to, and after Tet we were attacked many times in our areas." We see here how this respondent, a cadre himself and a Party member, treats the political education as something that is more than and at the same time less than objective communication of unfolding events; and he for one approves of the system.

The effectiveness of the political officer was attested to by another cadre who reported the following: "Of the number of 18 men in my company, 12 had been killed in a sweep operation by ARVN troops

in August. Among them there was the company commander and the political officer, but the remaining troops still had high morale. None of them seemed to have been discouraged, frightened, or wanted to defect or rally. I think that this was due to the effects of the political indoctrination by the political officer." (K-13)

What did the political officer look like from the perspective of the fighters? "He usually informed the men in the unit about the war situation in other areas. He told us about victory news. All the news he gave us was from the radio, so I think he was sincere." (K-11) So you did believe him? "Yes, I believed what was said by the political officer. For example, he told us that the people in many areas gave our units a great deal of support. And when we came to the people's areas near our station area, the people did give us support. They provided us with food willingly and talked to us in a very friendly way. There were times that people even asked us to remain in their houses, to have meals with them when we came to their area to get supplies." When asked whether he had changed his opinion about the truthfulness of the political officer since Tet, the respondent replied: "No, myself as well as the other men in the unit still had confidence in the cadres. In fact, we even had more confidence in the cadres since Tet."

A VC private had a somewhat more ambivalent attitude: "Sometimes the political officer was sincere and sometimes he was not sincere." When was he sincere and when was he not? "When talking about politics he was sincere. However, when he gave out information he was not sincere." How was he not sincere? "He mostly gave out news on combat operations at different places. Since I had never seen them I did not believe him and I think that he was not sincere." (K-18) Another VC private had this to say: "The political officer was a native of South Vietnam, a man of very high character . . . he was responsible for the political education and motivation of the men . . . his mission was very important. He was responsible for the good morale of the men without which the men's unit would have broken up. . . . He was a nice person, always used correct language. He was gentle and never harsh

to the men . . . he was never rude so everyone liked him . . . he was well qualified . . . he was especially good at political education, that means he knew how to boost the mens' morale. The men did what he told them to do." Was that good for you and the unit? "Thanks to his political education I understood more about the Front policy. That was good for me. The political officer succeeded in boosting the mens' morale. Thanks to his education the mens' spirit was more stable and they were more determined to fight. The number of deserters dropped. That was good for the unit." What were his chief faults? To this question, universally asked of all respondents, the fighter gave the standard answer: "He had no serious defects." (Political officers are rarely accused of any shortcoming except, occasionally, a "hot temper.") To the other standard question asked of all respondents, whether the political officer's behavior, attitude and performance had changed since Tet, the VC private also gave the most prevalent type of response: "No, I did not notice any change." (K-9)

Somewhat less on the positive side: "We all obeyed his orders but I don't think the men liked him very much. He used to talk too much, especially during the night meeting when we were all tired and he kept on talking." What was he talking about? "He said we would go on trying harder and harder. We should go on trying harder and harder, doing this and avoiding that . . . which we all knew about already. Young fighters did not enjoy listening to lengthy speeches." (K-11)

But another NVA private had this to say: "The political officer was a very gentle and very pleasant person. No one ever complained about him. We all liked him and considered him our eldest brother." (K-12) And a VC cadre, when asked about the political officer's principal faults: "I don't know what faults he had but I never heard any complaint from the men about him." Finally, one more VC private's somewhat more skeptical deposition: "The political cadre was not entirely successful in influencing the spirit and behavior of the men. That was because the war became fierce in my area [in the Delta] and many people couldn't refrain from fearing the rigors of war." (K-19)

## THE MILITARY CADRE

As far as the military leaders are concerned, previous investigations found that the relationship between men and cadre and the respect on the part of the men for their cadre was high. Cognizant of the fact that deteriorating relations between officers and men heralded a lowering of fighting efficiency and the eventual disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,* the analyst searched the interviews for indications of any incipient alienation between fighters and cadre in the materials at hand, without however finding any more disharmony there than between the men and their political officers. Seen from the vantage point of a cadre, the situation was as follows: "The cadres in my unit were always fair. They liked the men as if they were their brothers. I would even say that their affection for them was warmer than that between brothers in a family." (K-15) And seen from the vantage point of a private (NVA) interrogated on this subject, the feeling was reciprocal: "The cadres treated the fighters like their brothers, they never used harsh words on them or showed discrimination between the cadres and the fighters." (K-16)

Instead of furnishing the reader additional examples of the close relationship between the fighters and their military leaders both in the NVA and the VC, the author directs the reader's attention to the table in Appendix A which quantifies pro-leader sentiment found in the interviews studied.

## THE CADRE AS ARBITER

The interviews revealed that in the enemy forces, discussions about any and all subjects that agitate the soldiers never end. The questionnaires probed very hard for subjects that might not be so freely discussed, as such suppressed subjects, where they exist, are sometimes harbingers of incipient disintegration of an armed force. In the case of our sample, no such hidden problems were reported.

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*Edward Shils et. al, op. cit., p.409.

What problems there were, were brought up for discussion, and problems the men could not solve among themselves, or disputes between them they could not settle, were "solved" by the cadre. And this role of arbiter seemed to add to the cadre's prestige and power. In any event the role of arbiter that the cadre played seemed to contribute very considerably to the unity of the forces.

Perhaps this section is best ended with a quote from an NVA Master Sergeant: "Generally speaking, the cadres in my battalion were friendly. They always treated other men in the unit kindly and cordially. They had the troops realize their errors and corrected the errors for them. In the unit, if one man does not know something, he will be helped by the others. The cadres would criticize the troops and the latter could do likewise. We understood that we had the mission to fight for the nation and the people, so the first thing we had to do was to unite, understand and coordinate with each other. Most of the cadres in the unit were serious and friendly. Being commanders of the troops and the people, we had to act in such a way as to gain the confidence of every person. If the troops trusted the cadres they would fight zealously, and if the people loved the cadres and the troops they would provide help to us and we could record victories. All the cadres had remembered these things and upheld their conduct." (K-5)

## III. MECHANISM OF CONTROL

Perhaps the most delicate and complicated yet highly effective element on the enemy side is the control mechanism of his forces and the individuals in them. This mechanism is a continuum from actual physical coercion used to draft, and if necessary to redraft, men to instilling into them the means of generating in and by themselves the emotional stamina and political devotion needed to overcome the hardships, dangers and disappointments of their mission. Of the various methods, all of which prodigiously intermesh, psychological measures and methods are much more frequently used to bring and keep men in line than straight coercion which is hardly ever reported. This would not necessarily mean that the latter is less important as a great deal of effective terror can under certain circumstances be exerted with very few cases of actual physical force. However that may be, physical coercion inside the system and its younger brothers, threats and abuse, are conspicuous by their absence in the interviews perused in this exercise.

Essentially, there are three internal means of inducing the men to work and fight at their best. The first is actual direct supervision. This watching of all fighters at all times includes a control over physical activity of which theoretically desertion or malingering might be one, and a watch for signs of low morale, "sadness" or other signs of reduced valor or enthusiasm. The second is the method criticism and self-criticism, a form of group control and group therapy. And the third is the division of the entire fighting force into three-men cells, producing a virtual symbiosis of three soldiers (no cadre) each who live, work and fight together, encourage and supervise each other, and are in duty bound to help each other in combat, help their buddies to the rear when they are wounded or remove their bodies if they are killed.

### WATCHED AT ALL TIMES

A VC private has this to say when asked whether the men in his unit were watched over by the cadres for signs of good or bad morale:

"Yes, the cadres did watch over all the troops." How was the watching organized? "They watched over the way of talking, the behavior and combat spirit of the troops to see if they had good or bad morale." Did the cadres personally watch over the troops or did they instruct the troops to watch over each other? "The cadres did it personally." Did the men in the unit always know they were being watched? "Yes, they all knew they were being watched by the cadres." How did the troops in the unit react to the knowledge that they were being watched? "It did not bother them. They became more friendly with each other because of the knowledge of being watched." (K-18) Another VC private reported that the constant watching was designed primarily because the cadres "were afraid that the men would rally or desert home. They were also afraid that there were GVN spies among the fighters."* This man reported, contrary to the other respondents, that even the cell-leader participated in the watching. He confirmed that "everyone knew that he was being watched" and said that as the effect of the watching "they had to be cautious in their speech. If anyone had any hidden thoughts, for example to desert home, he would have to conceal it until he was able to have a good opportunity to escape." (K-17)

One NVA cadre when asked about the watching of the men, replied: "It is not correct to use the word "watch." The cadre only supervised the daily activities of the troops. Moreover, in the three-men cell, the troops watched over and knew the actions of the other." Did the troops know? "Yes, that is right." Did they have any reactions? "Their reaction was to work more zealously in order to display their high morale." (K-3) And another (K-4) added: "The first thing was to see how the troops followed their orders. The second thing was to observe their relations with the people and women. And the third thing was their health." On the question whether the men knew that they were being watched, this cadre had the following to say: "The watching was

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*This latter statement is very unusual. Generally, the presence of spies in a unit seems to be the furthest thing from the mind of the members.

kept secret from the troops. However, they noticed it."

In all, it can be said that all troops are watched all the time, and that almost all of them are aware of it. It also appears that they submit to this routine without any bitterness or anger. Of course, watching the troops is nothing very unusual per se -- no army provides much room for privacy and the men are always accountable to someone or in view of someone. Still, there is a difference in the never-ending watch that the cadres keep on the men in the enemy forces, not just with regard to performance but also with regard to their moods. This supervision, one might say, is total and the soldier who theoretically is not to be aware of it but who is quite purposely made aware of it in reality, is fully conscious of it and does not seem to resent it. Nor does he seem particularly to fear it. It is just one of the devices to keep him in line for the enormous demands made on him when confronting the combined U.S. Armed Forces and perhaps therefore even a consciously perceived help for him.

KIEM THAO

For quite some time it has been recognized that the so-called criticism/self-criticism sessions are a very effective psychological device to keep the enemy machine going. The sessions are meant and organized to assist the individual as well as the collective group. They are designed ultimately to improve performance by improving relations between men and men, men and cadre, and cadre and cadre, analyzing and thereby correcting past mistakes in battle, and by relieving individual anxieties and hostilities before they can grow and corrode individual or collective morale. The sessions are well suited to nip all possible mental and subsequently physical resistance in the bud by bringing out not only what some men may worry or feel antagonistic about but also by thus allowing the leadership to apply remedial measures from the very beginning. It is therefore not the point of this particular passage to investigate whether or not Kiem Thao is an effective instrument in maintaining cohesion. Rather, the study was trying to determine whether it still is that, there simply being no question that it was that in the past.

The NVA master sergeant who was a company commander had this to say: "I was pleased when the company cadres criticized me for my mistakes because thanks to them I could make corrections and they were not known to the troops who might lose their confidence in me." It might be remembered in this connection that while the fighters and lower-ranking cadres attend the same sessions and criticize each other, men of somewhat higher rank are not criticized by the privates but only by their peers and higher-ups. The master sergeant continued: "I could not see any better method to correct the errors of the troops. At the beginning the person criticized was pretty upset. However, they gradually realized that it was a good method." Asked what influence the criticism sessions had on behavior, fighting spirit and performance "of your units," the sergeant replied: "After each criticism session I noticed that the discipline was improved and personal sentiments were better." Were criticism sessions properly organized? "Yes, the troops elected the chairman and the secretary for the criticism sessions. The sessions were very democratic. . . . They helped the troops to observe discipline strictly, thus correcting their morale and thoughts." Occasionally, according to the respondent, the sessions made the men angry or discouraged, "especially when the criticism sessions failed to solve their problems. At times, one man had a prejudice against someone and tried to exaggerate his faults. Therefore, problems could not [always] be solved in crowded sessions." Such difficulties, which did not seem to occur frequently, were then "solved by the two respective persons themselves." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre, when asked how he felt about the self-criticism in which he had to engage from time to time, replied: "In self-criticism sessions, I promised I would make corrections, and after that I felt relaxed." (K-3) The cadre added: " Criticism is a good method, and it is a token of mutual affection in a unit. If there were any errors we would help each other to correct and avoid them. . . . [Also] criticism is always fair because it is based on the ideas of several people and of the group, not of a single person or a few people." (The group is always right.) Do the criticism sessions make the men

angry or discouraged? "Criticism sessions helped the respective persons to make corrections, thus they were not angry or discouraged." (K-3) What were the specific forms of content of sessions? A VC cadre reports: "After the Tet offensive I was criticized once for being lightly wounded in Cholon while trying to withdraw hurriedly from the battlefield. Upon reaching the unit home base, I had no idea of the actual strength of my platoon and I was not able to help any wounded get away from the battlefield. Therefore, I was criticized by the company for having a passive attitude, being an egoist, fleeing alone and not helping fellow fighters while I was still able to help them." How did you feel about it? "I did not feel depressed, nor discouraged, because I admitted I was too scared and ran away while the wound on my hand was not serious. Upon reaching the home base I felt I was guilty because I was an assistant platoon leader, I was only lightly wounded and turned to flee, leaving behind many seriously wounded soldiers who were close to where I was. Actually, I ran out of ammunition. I was afraid that if I moved deeper I would not be able to find the way out, and then I might be killed or captured." (K-2)

How does the criticism procedure look to the privates? An NVA private stated: "When a person made a mistake or had a shortcoming, whose defects were not criticized, he could never realize his mistake and thus could never correct his defects. So I think the criticism is good." As to the reactions on the part of his comrades to the session, he said: "To be criticized means to receive assistance from the men in the squad. Without criticism one might not know one's shortcomings and consequently make even bigger mistakes. So the persons involved in the criticism never got mad. On the contrary they felt enthusiastic for being helped by their comrades." (K-11)

A VC private had this to say: "Yes, it has a good effect. I would compare criticism sessions to a mirror with which I could look at my face. If my face had a stain, I could see it through the mirror in order to clean it up." You think criticism helped to make your unit a good one? "Yes, I think so." The VC private added that the beneficial consequences of the sessions are not always immediate: "Some

men were angry at first, especially the ones who had too much self-pride. But after a few days he will forget about it and later on, little by little, he will realize that the criticism session is necessary." (K-8)

When asked what he primarily criticized about his men in sessions, a VC cadre said: "I criticized those who did not carry out their orders well or did not finish their work in time." At this point, the interviewer challenged him: "Nobody is perfect, anybody can make mistakes though he does not mean to commit any." The cadre replied: "When a man is resolved to do his work well, and pays great attention to his work, he will seldom commit a mistake. I do not want to tell you that I am perfect, but sincerely speaking, I seldom made mistakes." (K-9)

A VC private, when asked whether he could explain how the criticism sessions corrected and improved bad morale and "incorrect thoughts," answered: "Let me give you an example. For some reason I do not like you and think you are bad. But I keep this to myself and think that I am right. Now, in a meeting, I criticize you and you defend yourself. Other people will listen to us and join in the discussion. This way will help us know each other better, and thus our friendship will be consolidated." (K-22) It is interesting in this connection that the private equates the absence of personal animosities with high morale and absence of "incorrect thoughts." Thus, any transgression, from the most mundane, such as returning late from a mission or losing a weapon during river crossings, to the exclusively psychological, such as hidden personal animosities, were subjects in these sessions, just as they have been in previous years. Responses to the sessions were as positive, too, as they have been in previous investigations: Men and cadres seem to submit to them, not always without some initial resistance or irritation; but they come away from them it seems strengthened and reconciled to that situation. As to the fairness of the proceedings, there are few doubts in the minds of the participants, and the conviction prevails that criticism/self-criticism, as it is a collective endeavor, is likely to be fair.

THREE-MEN CELL

Just as earlier studies have shown that Kiem Thao is an effective means of maintaining and redressing morale before and after, in other words in between combat experiences, the three-men cell takes over in actual fire-fights and is the perfect complement to the criticism/self-criticism sessions with regard to control and correction of troop behavior. It, too, had been found to be highly effective in past investigations, not only of VC and NVA forces, but also of Chinese forces during the Korean War from whom it had actually been adopted.

The three-men cell is an institution practiced only by fighters, not by cadres. But we have the views of fighters who belong to such cells as well as the view of cadres under whose control the men were fighting. "The three-men cell was very helpful to me. For example, during the infiltration to the South, the other man in my cell had given me a lot of assistance such as carrying my gun and ammunition or other items for me when I was tired or sick. That attitude of the other men in the cell was so encouraging that I was even more determined to endure the hardships in order to arrive in the South." (K-16)

We see here that the three-men-cell system was effective even during the march to the South. And it works elsewhere, too. One VC private reports: "The other took good care of me. When I was wounded the first time on an operation, the other two men helped me to get out from the battlefield." (K-12) Another private reports: "Yes, in combat the three men in the cell always kept close to each other. They moved forward together and withdrew together in case they had to . . . but it also helped the men do their work when not in combat. When I had a problem, the other men in the cell helped me to solve it. When I quarreled with someone, the other two men helped me to calm down and explained to me what the problem was. When I got sick, the other two men called the medic and got medicine for me." (K-11)

Another NVA cadre put it this way: "When not in combat, work to be done would be assigned to the cells. I think human beings have the tendency to work with friends rather than working alone. Three heads are better than one, as you know." (K-8) Apparently the three-men cell also was a good antidote to homesickness.

One VC private, though, who had been fighting in the Delta had a different view. He felt that the system did not help the fighting spirit and did not help the men in combat. He did not elaborate. (K-19)

A VC cadre had this to say: "I was a company executive officer. Though I lived among the men, I did not have time to talk with every man in my company in order to know what he thought or how he worked. It was the three-men-cell system that helped me to better understand the men's spirit." (K-2)

Another cadre summed up the matter in these words: "The purpose of the three-men cell was to consolidate the men's morale and fighting spirit. A big unit like a platoon or a company could not hold meetings regularly. Therefore the big unit was divided into cells and the cells held meetings every day regularly and the men in the unit had better opportunities to consolidate the morale of each other and to motivate their fighting spirit." Did it help the men in combat? "Yes . . . the three-men cell helped the men to carry out their assignments properly. It helped the men to go into combat enthusiastically and helped them to carry out noncombat duties." Did it help you in any way? "Yes, it helped me to fulfill my task. My job with my battalion was to keep records on the unit's strength. During combat the squads had to keep me informed of the number of men killed or wounded so I could report to my Commander. Since the cell had only three men, it was easy for them to know whether anyone among them was killed or wounded." (K-6)

It would appear, at least from the depositions of those few whose responses underlie this study, that the multifarious and helpful functions of the three-men cell still exist and the three three-men cell is still a central element in the cohesion of the enemy forces.

## IV. SELF-IMAGE AS A VC/NVA SOLDIER

In assessing the soldier's morale it is important to determine how he sees his own role in the action to which he is being committed. The big question will always be, does he see himself as a victim? Does he see himself as doomed? In many battles soldiers are indeed "cannon fodder" but what is crucial from the point of view of their morale is whether they regard themselves as such or not. Whether a soldier actually regards himself as cannon fodder -- a posture that undoubtedly reflects and causes poor morale -- can depend on a considerable variety of factors, ranging all the way from the physical to the ideological: whether he regards himself as well armed and equipped, whether he regards himself as having a fighting chance, whether he regards his cause worth the possible supreme sacrifice. In the following an effort is made to summarize from the underlying interviews some of the elements of the self-image that NVA/VC soldiers have of themselves.

### FIGHTING EFFICIENCY

On the question of fighting efficiency, it is an almost irresistible temptation for both sides, in the course of a lengthy war, to uncover evidence to the effect that the enemy army's efficacy is declining. As a result of a lengthy war, on one or both sides, experienced and well-trained, low-level leaders tend to become replaced by men with lesser training; ideal age groups tend to be replaced by men either too young or too old for combat; training and preparation tend to become less adequate, and so on. Above all, from the morale point of view, the question arises whether those exposed to combat, and in the case of the Vietnam War rather unequal combat, tend to become battle-hardened or battle-softened. Do you think, the respondents were asked, that it becomes easier or harder for a fighter to fight when he stays in the war for a long time? "That depends on each individual. Some experienced fighters fought harder and better as the war went on; others became frightened and preferred noncombat missions." (K-8)*

*Which, incidentally, the surprisingly lenient and flexible system would then tend to provide for them.

Do you think your chances of surviving became better or poorer the longer you fought? "Many high-ranking cadres whom I know have fought since 1960 and are still alive. Even in my squad some members have participated in the Revolution longer than I. Of course the more violent the war becomes the larger number of men are killed. [It should be noted in this connection that enemy propaganda always stresses that the war, before coming to an end, will become "more violent."] However, we all see that many older friends of us are still alive. This shows that the better experience a man has the better chance of surviving he has." (K-9)

To the question: Did you feel that you became more experienced and less afraid as you gained combat experience, or did you feel that you became more frightened and less willing to fight? An NVA private replied: "I felt that the more battles I went on, the more enthusiastic I felt and the less afraid I was. Speaking sincerely, when I first engaged in battle after arriving in the South, I was a little frightened, but after participating in several more battles, I gradually gained combat experience and was not afraid of fighting any longer. Not only that, I even wanted to go on combat more often. . . . Of course it is easier for a man to fight when he stays in the war for a long time. . . . In the beginning I could hardly find the direction of the unit when it moved forward. But the more operations I went on the easier I felt the fighting was." (K-11)

Another NVA private confirmed this view: "The more operations I went on the more experience I gained and the less afraid I was. At the beginning I was a little frightened when I engaged in battle, but after two or three months going on more battles with the unit I became very brave and fought very enthusiastically." A VC private whom we have quoted several times above and who showed himself as on the lower end of a few morale indicators (K-19) had this to say: "I felt I became more experienced and less afraid as I gained combat experience. But a small number of men in my unit became more frightened as they gained combat experience." One NVA cadre responded: "When we had been in the war for a long period of time we became less afraid of bombs and shells

and learned much from experience. Combat is only an ordinary thing." (K-3) Or: "The longer I fought the more I became experienced. For example, I learned how to take up my position better and to avoid the shelling. However, as fighters, we shouldn't let ourselves be affected by fear even if we really feel fear. We should expect the arrival of the enemy in order to fire at them." (K-15)

A VC private (K-18) described the matter somewhat differently. "The longer you fight the more experience you gain. However, I noticed that bombs and shells were so intensive lately. Therefore, the longer I fought the more fear of bombs and shells I had. Many people engaged in fighting for a long period of time, but they still defected or allied to the GVN due to their fear of bombs and shells." (This man's principal area of operation had been Long An Province.)

A VC private who had been operating in Tay Ninh Province opined: "I noticed that the more the men gained combat experience the less they were afraid of fighting because they knew how high or low the firing line would go and where the bombs would hit . . . those who had fought for a long time would feel that fighting was an easy thing." (K-17)

## VIEW OF DEATH

It is known that among the VC and also in the NVA Army fear of death must be eliminated as a soldier progresses from a novice to a good fighter. In other words, the attitude is somewhat different from our own; we feel that the soldier should perform even if he is plagued by fear of death; the enemy seems to feel that fear of death itself can and must be overcome. In fact, in captured documents we sometimes find enemy soldiers admitting, under the rubric of self-criticism, that "I still experienced a fear of death."

One NVA cadre ruminated this way on the subject: "I was almost killed right in my first battle . . . of course, everybody prefers to stay alive. However, when I went South I knew that I would either be killed or captured. I accepted my fate. Many North Vietnamese were killed by American bombs, and many South Vietnamese were also killed

and disabled by American air and artillery attacks, so how can a soldier like me avoid death? The point is, sometimes one should accept death so that his younger generation will grow. One feels better when he knows about this fact of life." What did the other men say? "The other men did not say anything but I believe they shared my point of view." (K-8)

An NVA private reported: "Well, when I was not in combat, I thought of my people, my family, and of course I hoped that in the future when the War is over I would rejoin them. But when I went on operations, I never thought of my family. All I was thinking of during combat was how to kill many enemies." What did the other men say? "Sometimes we sat down and talked to each other that we all wanted to see our loved ones again but we all knew that the country was being invaded, many people in the South are being dominated by the Americans, so all we could do to rejoin our people sooner was to fight the war. We all agreed that as long as the war still goes on we cannot place the happiness of our own upon our obligation to the country." (K-11)

An NVA private: "Of course, there must be losses in fighting, but I never worried about getting killed. When I volunteered to join the Army, I had already made up my mind very clearly, I understood the problem of the country, and I accepted all kinds of hardships, and if it was necessary for the country to have independence, I would offer my life for the war. I knew that I could get killed when I joined the Army, but I strongly committed myself to the cause of the salvation of the nation which is very sacred." (K-12) The VC private with the slightly shaky morale (K-19) said: "I never thought of my chances of surviving. But I think the chances are the same for everyone." One might say that from the point of view of enemy Army leaders, this is not too bad a posture to assume for one whose morale is not particularly high. One NVA private simply said: "Certainly my chances of surviving would become poorer [the longer I fought]. The longer I fought, the more the shelling and bombing would be a threat to me. So if the war lasted too long the men would have less chance to survive . . . I think all the men thought the same way." (K-16)

Another NVA private: "We had thought about it. But our thought was rather temporary, because after all, everyone must die some day. Yet, to get killed would be inevitable in battles. Without this sacrifice we could never liberate the country." (K-15) Of course, despite all his efforts, at expurgating the fear of death in his men, the enemy, or at least some of them, remains human: "In recent battles, because the actions were so violent, I was afraid of being killed. Therefore, I didn't fight as hard as I should." This is a VC private speaking (K-17). But on the whole it can be said that the enemy soldiers, both cadres and privates, who responded to the questions in the interviews underlying this report, did not seem to feel any particular disharmony between the task assigned to them and the fate that might await them. Therefore, if they were indeed cannon fodder, they did not seem to feel like it.

## "MORALE"

This section is of course not concerned with the morale of the enemy army as we try to see it, as the entire report is devoted to that. It only answers or tries to answer the narrow question on how the captured soldiers describe in their own subjective terms the morale of their comrades. They were asked: How would you describe the morale of the fighters in your unit? Good, average, poor, getting better, or getting poorer, unchanged? "On the whole, during the period of time after the offensive in May 1968, a number of fighters became confused due to the serious losses of the unit. That is why the unit was reorganized and a number of NVA soldiers were introduced as replacements to strengthen the troop's morale." (K-2) The respondent, an NVA cadre, had been operating in Ghia Dinh Province.

Another NVA cadre had a contradictory evaluation: "The morale of all the troops in my unit was high. Especially after the victory at Nha Be in mid-July, the troops were very encouraged. . . . The morale of the troops was always high since the activation of the unit. Even after sustaining heavy casualties in a sweep operation conducted by ARVN troops in mid-August in which a great number of the troops were killed, the morale of the remaining troops was still high." (K-3)

Another NVA cadre: "Generally speaking, all the men in my battalion were Northerners. We followed socialism and we understood our mission in the South. Thus, we fought actively and had high morale. We struggled for the sovereignty of the nation and for our ideals, not for personal interest or money like ARVN troops. Therefore, we did not fear combat nor did we retreat in it." (K-5) It might be added in this connection that a line that had been most prevalent in the past, to the effect that the ARVN soldier was a poor soldier of low morale because he was a mercenary has not been prevalent lately, at least not in the interviews examined here. The reason may well be that the ARVN soldiers gave the enemy too much trouble to justify this line. An NVA fighter said, "Recently I noticed that the morale in my unit had changed. At the time when all of the men in my squad were present, we had a pretty interesting life. But since some of us had been killed or wounded, we were sad and thoughtful. We promised to avenge our comrades and wished to rapidly finish the war so that we could return home." (K-12) Note the various aspects of ambivalence in this statement. Another NVA man gave this laconic description: "The morale of my unit was just average; that means that everyone tried to perform their duties properly." (K-16) Similarly, "the men's morale didn't get poorer nor did it get excessively high." This speaker (K-21) is a fighter and former Party member who was expelled from the Party for having embezzled some money. A VC private took a skeptical view: "The morale of my unit was average. Some of the troops had high morale; some others had low morale. The people who had high morale were small in number." (K-18)

A VC cadre finally had this to say: "The morale in my battalion was still good, although sometimes the men appeared to be less enthusiastic than at previous times because of the intensive war situation. A number of fighters began to have fear in a long and tense war. However, the cadres knew about this and they paid special attention to motivating the morale of the unit." However, he did not view the problem as too serious: "Though the morale of the unit sometimes appeared to be a little bit low, the cadres tried hard to strengthen it. They were then successful in keeping up the good morale in the unit. The fighters were

still enthusiastic to fight, and they still obeyed the orders strictly." (K-14) Here, whether by chance or not, we encounter the word "still." As it is unique in the selection of responses, we cannot attribute any significance to it -- only note it.

An NVA private, questioned on the subject, reported that "the morale in my battalion has been getting better since Tet because men in the unit were told by the cadres that our forces were winning in many battles in the South." (K-11) A VC cadre reported that "the morale of my battalion was getting better. We listened to our radio and heard of several victorious battles that the Front army had fought against the Americans and the GVN. We even attacked the enemy in Saigon. In addition, people all over the world sympathized with us, morally and materially. We could see all this, that's why our morale was getting better and better." He added: "The cadres were more effective than before, strengthening the fighting spirit of the men due to our favorable position in South Vietnam as well as in the world." (K-9) The cadre realized that not every man had high morale. When asked whether the men in his unit fought as hard as they could, he ansered: "Some did, some did not. This depends on each individual. The political officer who led an attack and my three dead friends did. The ones who pretended to be sick did not."

One NVA private, finally, stated: "The morale of my company was average. It was not very good because some men hesitated to attack under heavy fire, while it was not bad because we were able to fight." (K-8) Without anticipating the conclusions of the report, we can say that the findings of this analyst on the whole are somewhat better, and certainly not worse, than the evaluation of this participant observer. The reason for the difference may be that the enemy aims at an extremely high level of morale, and that what this NVA private calls "not very good" may be amply sufficient for the task at hand.

## V. THE SOLDIER'S RELIABILITY

Perhaps somewhat arbitrarily this chapter has been subdivided into the elements of the soldier's attitude to the orders he is receiving and compliance with them; to malingering and desertion, the latter of the two being really only a more serious form of the former; and the soldier's response to psywar which is of course one element in the fabric of his morale.

### COMPLIANCE WITH ORDERS

In the summer of 1944, in World War II, it was observed that captured and defected soldiers from the Wehrmacht quite frequently reported that the orders they had received from their commanders had been entirely unreasonable and could not be followed. For example, some tank unit would be given the mission to attack a certain point or proceed to a certain place without having enough gas, or soldiers would be asked to be in the line too long, or fight without sufficient food, ammunition, or not be given what they considered to be the protection they considered adequate. In short, orders that were regarded as unreasonable and orders that made the leaders appear to those who received them as villains in one form or another for whom they no longer had respect or trust.* In the Chinese forces in Korea, in early 1951, we find the same: fighters and cadre en masse considering orders as unreasonable and impossible to fulfill.**

What about the enemy forces in this area? Were the demands the cadres and the leaders made on the fighters in your unit reasonable? "In my opinion, the cadres never demanded from the fighters anything which was too difficult for them to do. All the orders of movement and digging trenches were aimed at safeguarding the fighters. There was nothing to complain about." The speaker here is, himself, a cadre (K-2), in other words, the giver rather than the receiver of orders,

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*Based on the author's personal experiences as an interrogator in World War II.

**Alexander L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 171ff.

but we shall later also hear from those who are receiving them. Incidentally, it might be noteworthy that without inquiry as to specifics, the cadre here referred to movement and digging of trenches in what appears to be a somewhat defensive manner. One may assume from his deposition that with regard to demands made on the soldiers in those areas a certain critical level may sometimes be reached.

Were there cases where the fighters refused to carry out any orders? "Never. The cadres and the fighters always carried out orders given to them strictly. There were some cases when some fighters were afraid of death, claiming to be sick, but that was all." (K-2)

Another NVA cadre said: "If the troops thought that the orders of the higher commanders were unreasonable they might request further explanation. For example, if they should be ordered to set fire to the houses of the people, they would find that it was an unreasonable order and hurt the prestige of the Armed Forces. They could refuse to carry out the order and request their commanders to explain the purpose. Of course, this was only an example, and no one in my unit ever received such an order." The cadre (K-3) added that there had been no cases in his unit where the troops had refused to carry out any order and that "no matter what rank" he thought that no one would have dared to do so. He explained -- and this has always been the custom in the enemy forces -- that before operations the troops were invited to discuss and criticize operational plans. He added that there were cases when the commanders did not have time to discuss the operational plans with the troops. But compliance was never wanting. (K-3)

Another NVA cadre reported: "Generally speaking, most of the troops were willing to obey the orders of their superiors. I said 'most' because sometimes a few of them followed the orders without enthusiasm." (K-4) In other words, the orders were not always executed "cheerfully," but they were executed. This cadre had a somewhat different report on the rights of troops to protest if they considered orders unreasonable. If the troops felt they were, they immediately protested against them. What kind of protest did they make? "They said that the orders were not virtuous or not suitable to the combat situation, and they refused to implement them." Could he give an

example? "For example, when the political officer or the commander had a relative living in a certain place, he ordered a troop to go there to pick up something for him. The men could refuse to go, for it was a personal business. However, if it was a combat order, the men would certainly have to implement it." In other words, orders were followed. But, there apparently were also some operators among the cadres, sending the men off on some "personal business."

Even though the troops did not refuse to obey orders, not all cadres were convinced that they carried out the orders as willingly as they could have. "My unit was not activated before Tet, therefore I do not know what the situation was before then. But since the activation of my unit, I felt that the troop's willingness to obey orders decreased over time. There was no evidence, but I felt it." (K-4) Why did their willingness decrease? "Probably due to operations in the Delta. We had to move very often there under difficulties and danger, and it was already near the end of the year but the war still had not brought success, thus the troops were somewhat discouraged." Still another NVA cadre, in answer to the question whether the troops tried to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions: "Only combat missions are unpleasant and dangerous ones. I do not know the status of other units, but nobody in my unit produced reasons to avoid combat missions. The soldiers fought zealously." (K-5) The cadre added: "The strength of human beings is limited. Therefore, when making decisions to perform any mission the cadres would have to estimate the strength of their troops. For example, each man could carry 40 kilograms of rice. If they were forced to carry 50 kilograms they would not go."

What do the privates have to say? "If it was a combat order, the men were always willing to obey. For example, my company was ordered to attack an enemy stronghold. First of all, we knew that this kind of order came from higher echelons, so we had to carry it out. Secondly, we did not know this enemy stronghold well, so we could not tell whether the order was unreasonable or not. This is why we always obeyed combat orders. As to internal orders, fetching rice, for example, if we felt that the order was unreasonable, we might talk to the leader right away. The leader used to listen to us and always tried to work out a proper way.

As a matter of fact, sometimes we thought that the order was unreasonable, but we had to obey. We then voiced our opinion later in a criticism session."

Can you give an example? "For example, once we stopped and stayed the night in a jungle. There were plenty of trenches and foxholes around us, but the company commander insisted that each fighter had to dig a new hole. We were very tired due to the march and felt that this order was unreasonable. Actually, some fighters dug their holes without enthusiasm. During the next day, in the criticism session, we criticized the company commander for wasting our labor. He explained that he expected more troops would be coming to our camping site. They might need more holes just in case of enemy attack. We agreed with his explanation, and the ones that did not dig new holes admitted their shortcoming."

But were there cases where the fighters actually refused to carry out an order? "None. Some fighters might carry out an order without enthusiasm, but nobody refused to obey it." Still, there seemed to have been certain exceptions. For: what happened if a certain fighter refused to carry out an order? "His conduct would be noted in his record." Would he be punished? "No. We did not believe in punishment. This man would be corrected by education and indoctrination." (K-8) An NVA private had this to add: "Most of the demands that the cadres and the leaders made on the fighters in my unit were reasonable, but some were unreasonable." Can you give an example? "For example, a person was sick and yet he received the order to carry 40 kilograms of rice from the place to the station area which was about 18 kilometers away. This order was considered unreasonable and he didn't take it." What happened? "The man was criticized by the cell leader and the cell members in the squad. The squad and cell leader told him that if he didn't feel well he should have said so and the cadres could have assigned another person to carry out the work. He shouldn't have ignored the order." (K-1) One cadre added: "Most of the demands the cadres made on the fighters were reasonable because the cadres must always know the ability of the subordinate cadres as well as the fighters before they make these demands." (K-14)

Finally, a VC private: "I didn't know of any demands that were too difficult." Were there cases where the fighter refused to carry out an order? "No." (K-22)

MALINGERING, DESERTION

Did the cadres or the troops try to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions? "Nobody could shirk unpleasant or dangerous missions. In a war, every mission is dangerous and difficult. However, the commanders always tried to avoid dangers for the troops. . . . Commanders only had to avoid dangers for the troops, but not to shirk dangerous missions." (K-3)

An NVA cadre who said that he himself had "fought zealously and gallantly" but could not continue to fight "because I was wounded," was asked whether he thought the other men in his unit fought as hard as they could. "I noticed that other cadres as well as the soldiers fought with zeal. All the troops advanced aggressively . . . they attacked gallantly even though the enemy had artillery and air support." (K-5)

One NVA private, when asked whether he had ever engaged in malingering, replied: "Yes. I could have participated in a particular battle, but I did not. I was sick at that time, but I was not too sick to fight. The cadre said that I just got out of the hospital, I should rest for some time, and I did not insist to go." The analyst would conclude that this soldier is giving evidence of extremely high standards rather than of malingering. The same soldier reported, that "some fighters, two or three, were afraid of being killed in combat, so they pretended to be sick in order to remain in the base." (K-16)

A VC cadre answered the question on whether he had ever engaged in malingering: "Never. Since the day I joined the Front I have always been present in all battles my unit fought. Naturally, everybody wants to remain alive, but the most precious thing to me is freedom and independence for the country. I would rather die for the country than accept foreign domination and see my people suffer." (K-9) The same man, when asked whether he or the fighters ever tried to avoid

unpleasant or dangerous missions, said: "No. We always felt enthusiastic and always wished to accomplish our missions well. Our motto was 'live great, die gloriously.'" (K-9) The VC fighter whose morale was not overly high said -- perhaps significantly -- the following: "I think I always fought with the same eagerness. The successes or failures often resulted from circumstances beyond our control." And he added: "Very few people try to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions." (K-19)

Another VC private, when asked whether he thought he could have fought harder, affirmed this. Why didn't you? "Since I was forced to fight, and seeing so many people killed, I no longer wanted to fight and only wished to return to my wife and children." He also claimed that "very few people" in his unit fought "zealously." But: "I never declared myself sick in order to be excused from going on combat." Perhaps somewhat surprisingly he added that "in my unit only the more seasoned soldiers were malingerers, but no recruit like myself dared to engage in such an action." (K-18) An NVA private put it this way when asked whether he ever engaged in malingering: "Never. The other men in my unit never did either. On the contrary, before a battle I participated in, a man had just recovered from illness. He, however, asked for joining the unit. But the cadres turned down his request because he was still weak." (K-16)

## DESERTION

In all, the soldiers interrogated for the purpose of this report had very little to say on the subject of desertion, either desired by themselves or observed by others, or witnessed in other cases. One NVA cadre with whom the subject was discussed, had this to say: "Since the activation of my unit no one has attempted to desert, rally, or surrender. [If people did] I think there were two reasons. The first reason was they noticed that the last general offensive did not bring any success, the war had lasted too long, and they did not think that they would achieve victory. The second reason was bombs and shells were seen everywhere, U.S.-ARVN troops successively conducted more operations, and they thought that they could hardly avoid death." Of the

two reasons, which one was more important? In other words, which one was more likely to make men desert or rally? "I think that the second reason was more important. I mean they feared bombs, shells and death." (K-4)

RESPONSE TO PSYWAR

As psywar goes, those who have had any experience with it seem to agree that it has been least effective in the Vietnam War, as compared to World War II, the Korean War or certain Cold War operations in peacetime.* Thus, in Vietnam psywar operations have met with the same lack of real success as actual war operations. This can be, of course, attributable, theoretically, to two different causes: bad quality of the effort, or inauspicious situations in which it was made. There probably are some who see some of the general failures our side had to accept in this war as psywar failures. This analyst, who has had extensive experience in psywar, would not be inclined to agree. While he has seen no particularly inspired psywar forays, he believes that on the whole the situation for psywar was inauspicious in the Vietnam War and he regards the product of this motivation and morale study as evidence. Just as the enemy forces in Vietnam were remarkably invulnerable to military destruction, they were remarkably invulnerable to inroads through psywar.

In the following are recorded some conversations with soldiers on the subject. "About one month after the Tet offensive, one fighter in my company was the subject of discussion among his cell members because he had a 'pass' leaflet in his pocket. In the cell meeting his friends asked him for an explanation. He said he did not have any intention to rally to the GVN. He had picked up a leaflet while digging trenches. He wanted to read it sometime during the day, but forgot and left it in his pocket. After this incident, the man did not show any signs of being discouraged or desiring to desert. As time passed, the story was forgotten." (K-2)

*Some would disagree and cite the Chieu Hoi program as evidence.

You have said that nobody in your unit read GVN propaganda leaflets. Were the troops forbidden to pick up GVN leaflets to read? "No. There were no orders forbidding the troops to pick up GVN propaganda leaflets to read. They did it at will." (K-3)

Did you believe the combat news released by the Front Radio? "Yes." Did the troops believe them? "Though they did not speak out, I am sure they also believed them as I did. They only wondered why the radio did not give the Front casualties for each battle." (K-4) It should be noted that this deposition is at variance with what is generally reported, namely that the enemy troops are not allowed to read the leaflets.

One NVA cadre, when asked whether he had seen GVN propaganda during the past six months, said: "Many, many time, I could see it all the time." As to his reaction, "broadcasts and propagands leaflets usually said that if we rallied we would be welcomed by the GVN, issued clothing and money. I doubted that. Frankly, I did not believe this because I have never seen it and I thought that it was only a decoy to demoralize the men. The only type of propaganda that I believed was about the B-52 bombers. This leaflet said that if we did not rally to the GVN we would certainly be killed by B-52s. I already knew of the effectiveness of the B-52s, and thus I believed that I might possibly be killed by them. I noticed that this propaganda was effective." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre, asked to assess GVN propaganda, replied: "I did not believe the propaganda made by the GVN. First I noticed that the GVN review said that the people in the South Vietnam were enjoying a prosperous free life. Even without being told anything about it by the cadres, the troops all realized that this was completely untrue. There was no such a free regime as the propaganda claimed. In reality, the people were living a miserable life, and their homes destroyed by bombs, rice fields and gardens were left uncultivated. The people did not have enough food to eat and had to live in huts. Second, the propaganda said that the people in South Vietnam were given economic aid by the allied nations, had nice homes, motorcycles, television sets, bicycles, etc. However . . . the Vietnamese people were being killed by

bombs and shells and had to earn money for each meal. Due to these things, we did not believe any propaganda made by the GVN. The more we saw the realities, the more logical would be our struggle, and the more encouraged we were." (K-5)

An NVA private, however, seems to have been somewhat more strongly affected. Telling the interviewer that he had heard two GVN broadcasts and seen some GVN leaflets that had urged him to rally, he answered; when asked why he did not comply, after a long pause: "I did not know the way." He went through conflict: "Actually, I do not know how the other fighters felt. As for me, sometimes I was very scared of being killed and was tired of the hardships. But I do not want to betray my side, my family and my country. While in the North I was a worker, but I was not admitted to the Lao Dong because I was often criticized for having love affairs with various girls. I felt very much hurt but I know that I was wrong. I don't want to be a traitor." (K-8) We see that this man was tempted, and at one point ready to give up, but his morale held in the end. He was not specifically discouraged from rallying by his cadre: "I did not hear anybody say anything about rallying. As to desertion, we agreed with one another we would not do that but fight till success no matter what hardships and difficulties we would encounter. By the way, my home is in the North, so I could not desert home and besides my family would lose all privileges reserved for a fighter's family." (K-12) Whether it was wishful thinking or not on the part of the VC cadre asked to evaluate the influence of GVN propaganda on the attitudes of his men, he said: "They all understand that this was a trap laid for them by the enemy. The Americans came to Vietnam and brought death and destruction for our innocent people. They destroyed our houses and orchards and made our people suffer. The Chieu Hoi propaganda is nothing but a demand for surrender. Since we know about this, we do not let ourselves be influenced by it." (K-9)

## VI. CAREER IN THE ENEMY FORCE

### REASONS FOR JOINING*

When asked how he had become a member of the enemy forces, a VC cadre who had been fighting mainly in the Gia Dinh area reported: "At first I was forced to join the Front. Before that I had worked as a gas station attendant in a Saigon suburb. One day in February of 1966 I visited my parents in a nearby village and spent the night there. A group of three or four armed VC soldiers came to my house and asked me to go with them. I did not dare to resist because they were armed. I went with them to a place about two hours' march from my family's home. There I was instructed for three days and right after, I volunteered to join the Front military service. Little by little I understood the Front's policy better and remained with my unit until I was captured." How do you feel about the VC now? If you had the past to live over again, would you joing again? "I still feel that the Front is right. The Front has the right cause to carry out the struggle. If I were released and the war were still going on, I would join the Front again to fight." (K-2) In other words we have here one of those by no means infrequent cases where a person forcibly inducted was turned into a genuine convert. Another VC cadre gave the following reason for joining: "I personally witnessed the American activities in Vietnam, so I decided to fight them." Please tell me what you have witnessed. "I rely on the people and our weapons to fight the Americans." No. You said you personally witnessed the American activities in Vietnam. My question is what have you witnessed. What made you decide to join the Front? "My people suffer. Myself and my family are enslaved by the Americans." How were you enslaved? "We were poor and had a difficult life. The Americans bombed and shelled my village. My house and my orchard were destroyed. My father, my relatives and other countryment were killed." In what circumstances did you join the Front? "My home area was liberated in 1960. I volunteered to join the Front when I was 18 [in 1965]. I was grown up and I realized that the American presence brought death and destruction to the Vietnamese

*This is not a thorough investigation of a subject that has been studied a great deal.

people." Did you ever feel disappointment with the Front? "Never. I love the revolution, that's why I joined the revolution." How do you now feel about the Front? "I am now a prisoner. I know that many other Vietnamese are now fighting for the Front to achieve the same goal. Eventually my country shall be liberated and I shall be liberated, too." (K-9) Another VC cadre stated that: "The unjust death of my uncle bothered me very much. The GVN Rangers killed my uncle and beat me up when I was just 12 years old because they suspected us of being VC. I was very angry with the GVN and when the GVN troops came to the village I always looked away just because I hated them. I had no place to go but I did want to take revenge for my uncle. Therefore I left the village to join the Front. At that time I didn't know what the Front was doing but I did know that the Front was fighting against the GVN." Did you find that the Front came up to your hopes and expectations? "Sincerely speaking, when I joined the Front I just wanted to take revenge. I did not expect anything from the Front. I didn't hope the Front to do anything for my family either. But gradually I felt the Front was going along with the people's aspirations and had won the confidence of the people. The Front troops never beat up innocent people. They never burned the houses of the people and never oppressed them. But the GVN troops did. I am now in jail but I have never thought that I made a mistake in joining the Front." (K-21)

The VC private who had admitted to being scared in combat stated that he had joined of his own free will. Pressed to be more specific, he simply repeated: "I joined of my own free will, that's all." When asked whether the Front had come up to his hopes, he replied: "I didn't have any hopes and expectations." Was he disappointed then? "Quite the contrary, I was satisfied with the VC." Give me the reason for your satisfaction. "I was satisfied because I was able to fight against the Americans." And he added: "My feelings remain unchanged." (K-19)* An old VC cadre who had been fighting since 1953

*The author hopes that on the basis of the past few pages, but also on the basis of earlier passages, the reader is duly impressed with the

explained his motivations in this fashion: "I volunteered to join the Vietminh formally and have been serving in the army for many years. I fought for the ideology of the Vietnamese people. There were many injustices in the society and I hated to see poor people suffer being ill treated and exploited by rich and powerful people. The oppression and exploitation that the poor Vietnamese people had to suffer made me feel very disgusted. Therefore I joined the army in order to realize the revolution, a real revolution, which means to improve the situation." (K-14)

Contrary to such purposeful men, others were merely caught between two grindstones. "The cadres conducted propaganda in my willage. They said that if I did not volunteer the Front forces I would be drafted. On hearing that I had to join their forces, I volunteered. In fact I only wanted to remain at home to make my living and I did not want to fight." But, once in, he did not regret it. (K-18). A cadre said: "I had to choose one of two paths open in South Vietnam to a man in order to improve my living which had been poor and difficult. If I didn't adopt one, I had to take the other." (K-21) But once in, this man accepted the Front whole-heartedly: "I became convinced of the righteousness of Front policy." And he added that his main reason for being in the VC was that it gave him a chance to fight for the people's rights and the liberation of South Vietnam. In any event, he was not disappointed. The gradual induction of a VC private proceeded as follows. "I was forced to join the VC. I lived in an insecure area. I had to go out to work. By moving around I met the VC. One day they began to propagandize me. They told me that as I was grown up I could not stay home to work like that all the time. While I had been still young I had belonged to my parents, but once I was grown up I would be the son of the government and the Front. Therefore I would have to leave my family behind in order to join the revolution and help liberate the people. On the other hand, if I

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quality of the interrogations, carried out by South Vietnamese employed by RAND. Far from mechanically applying the questionnaires, these interviewers really tried to dig out the right answers.

stayed home, I would be drafted by the GVN. Then, being their soldier, I would certainly hurt the people in one way or another." This man was not easily convinced: "Despite what the VC said, I kept on staying home in order to work to support my old mother. In the meantime the villagers were relocated to a new live hamlet in Dah Do district. But in November 1967 the VC overran my hamlet. They propagandized the villagers, and then picked up five or six youths including myself and took us away." However, despite his original reluctance and forcible induction the young VC was not disappointed. When asked whether he had come to feel that he had made a mistake, he said: "Well, when I realized that the VC were doing right I followed them. So I don't think that I made a mistake." Yet, even now he would rather go home: "If I could go home and live freely I would never join the VC again. I would stay with my family and take care of my old mother." But he thought he would go on if he could because "according to the cadres, the Americans want to help the GVN, in the first place. Secondly, they want to take over South Vietnam. And third, from South Vietnam they will initiate war in other places." Do you believe it? "Yes, I do." (K-22)

## REASONS FOR PERSEVERANCE

One of the great mysteries of the Vietnam War has been the perseverance of the enemy in the face of his great material and technological disadvantage, and also in view of the fact that by any rational thinking he could not hope to win the war militarily. What kept his soldiers fighting as long as they did? This study tried to get some insight, by direct questioning on this point, into whether the main reason for the enemy troops' persevereance was coercion, conviction or something else.

A VC cadre had this to say: "I am the son of the people. Our people always want peace and happiness. The American aggressors came here and brought with them death and destruction to our people. It is my duty to fight the aggressors and restore peace and independence to the country." What kept the men in your unit fighting as long and as

well as they did? "We are fighting for a goal. Our goal is to drive the American aggressors out of the country and restore freedom and independence for the country. We are near final victory and we have been repeatedly victorious recently. My friends see and understand this. That's why they keep on fighting for the people." (K-9)

Another VC cadre pointed to the road he had travelled: "Sincerely speaking, while I lived in the GVN controlled area, I did not have the slightest idea of what the war was about. More precisely, I did not know who was fighting whom and for what purpose. After joining the Front [in February 1966] I spent most of my time in the rural area, where rural people lived poorly and miserably and suffered death as a result of the war, day after day. The Vietnamese farmers worked hard in their fields and their gardens. Their lives depended on the crops they grew. Unfortunately, the Americans brought over bombs and shells to destroy their fields and gardens which were their dearest property, and killed their relatives as well. Knowing these heartbreaking facts, I had pity on my fellow countrymen, I hated the Americans who caused the war and I actively took part in the fight, though I had known beforehand that I might be killed or captured before my native land is liberated." How about the other men in his unit? "The majority of fighters came from rural areas. Since they came from rural areas, they all knew the misery of innocent people. Once they knew the suffering of the people -- their family among them -- naturally they fought with enthusiasm in order to liberate the country and to bring back a normal peaceful life to the innocent people." (K-2)

An NVA cadre expressed himself more briefly: "I think that it is my duty to make a contribution to liberating the people and safeguarding the nation, thus I had to fight." And the other men? "I do not know for sure, but I believe they fought for the same reasons." (K-3)

An NVA private took a somewhat simpler view: "I came to the South to fight, so I fought. It was my duty . . . as for the other men, they realized the Front was right, so they supported the Front." (K-8)

Another NVA private: "I fought very enthusiastically for a year because I fully understood the revolutionary line of the party and of

Uncle Ho. I was told about the political situation and about the American aggression in Vietnam; I am strongly determined to take the way the party has planned in order to liberate the country from the American imperialists. I have always believed that the Liberation Front and our army have been fighting for the just cause, and sooner or later the people who fight for the just cause will win the war." And what kept the men in your unit fighting as long and as well as they did? "They have the same idea about the war. They have great confidence in the party and they are hoping that a great victory in the future will bring peace and equality to the people in all parts of Vietnam." A VC private put it very simply: "Since I lived in a VC-controlled area, I had to work for the Front. While serving in the Front forces I didn't have any reason to leave them." And his buddies? "The VC knew very well how to stir up the fighters' pride. They kept them always busy trying to achieve some feat in frequent emulation campaigns." (K-19)

A VC cadre: "We are fighting for a class, the poor people. This is the main reason why we have been fighting that long." (K-21) An NVA private insisted that he had fought "because I wanted our people to be liberated from the American imperialists, and everyone to have land to farm and our country be reunified." (K-16) Another NVA private said: "When I was still in the North I heard about the situation in the South, I heard about the miserable life the Vietnamese people in the South had to suffer, about the American bombardment damaging the country, killing people, and I felt that as a young man of the country which is being invaded by the foreigners, I must do something to give the South Vietnamese people a hand to liberate the country. Therefore I volunteered to join the army. After arriving in the South, I understood more about the miseries of the people there, I hated the enemies more and I became very enthusiastic to fight. Now that I am in jail, of course, I cannot do anything, but if I were still in the army, I would keep on fighting to the end. I would fight until the

war was over, the foreigners all leave Vietnam and the country regains its independence." What about the other men? "I think all of the men in my unit and in other Front and NVA units have the same point of view about the war, and the same ideology, and we were fighting for the same purposes." (K-12)

Finally, another NVA private: "The reason why everyone of us fought this war so hard was our willingness to liberate the country. And war is the only means to accomplish it. If we don't fight the Americans would conquer our country. Moreover, after the Americans dropped bombs on North Vietnam to destroy our economy, to kill the children in the schools and patients in the hospital, our willingness to fight increased considerably." (K-15) One VC fighter should be quoted in the end: "I trusted the VC propaganda. . . ." As to the other men: "I don't know." (K-22)

## CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTURE

In this section, the report investigates the circumstances of the soldiers' capture, in order to uncover some clues as to the men's dedication, but also as to their attitudes in general, as well as to their fighting methods. "On December 26, 1968, I was ordered to come and see the battalion commander. I left my place and arrived at night. He was not there. I decided to stay there to wait for him. The next day, the ARVN and U.S. force conducted a sweep operation in the area. I was not able to escape and was captured." Do you think that you could have escaped? "When I learned about the sweep the hamlet in which I was had been surrounded. I had no way to flee." (K-2) The speaker was a VC cadre. An NVA cadre showed remorse over what he thought was his ineptness. "By the time of my capture, the company had only six men left [!]. On the day I was captured, four of the men were transporting rice. Only one soldier and I remained in the jungle where we bivouacked. One of the local guerrillas who had rallied led ARVN troops to the place. They captured me while we were hiding in the trench . . . I think [capture] was due to my carelessness. First, I had let local guerrillas know about the secret cache. The

second thing was, I had rushed to the cache too early. On hearing the roar of helicopters I should have fled to the jungle instead of hiding in the cache. I could then have avoided capture by ARVN troops." (K-3)

One NVA cadre was captured while reconnoitering a place ten kilometers from Saigon from which to bombard Y bridge. "Well, I had just arrived at Long Tuong village. I ran into an operation conducted by U.S. troops and I was captured. My team had three men: myself, the company executive officer, and one intelligence agent. We were all captured." Could you have avoided capture? "In previous times I felt sure. This time, however, when I received the order I felt I might run into a mishap. The reason was I had to go to a place which was completely strange to me. A second reason was that the place was on the outskirts of the capital where ARVN/U.S. troops frequently operated, and if I came across them I could not avoid being captured." (K-5) An NVA private reported the following: "On the day of my capture we moved for four hours through the jungle to reach our objective. We stopped 300 meters from the barbed wire fence to prepare for an assault. We made the mistake of making a lot of noise, therefore the enemy inside opened fire first. Our cadre then shouted for us to make the assault but not all the fighters did.* I think the majority were afraid of enemy firepower so they kept on lying on the ground. I must say the enemy firepower was very strong. They used all sorts of weapons, machine guns, mortars, air support . . . it was 11 P.M. then. I followed the political cadre and reached the barbed wire fence. The enemy inside fired very fiercely. A friend of mine was hit in his head, he cried out and died. When I looked around I saw three others already dead. I myself was also wounded. I was hit by eight bullets in my legs and my head. I lost contact with my unit and lay there till dawn. At five or six in the morning an American and two GVN soldiers came out and carried me inside." How did he think he had performed in his last battle? "I think I fulfilled the mission entrusted to me." (K-8)

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*Again, evidence that the enemy is no superman. Yet, one wonders how many remained behind, and how many attacked.

A VC cadre was more self-critical. "I was hit by machine guns from the helicopter. I hid in a bush and the next day I was captured." How do you think you performed during this battle? "I am sorry for not having been able to kill any enemy during this battle. I don't think I fulfilled my mission." (K-9) An NVA private: "I participated in the last battle with my unit, when I was wounded and captured . . . As in any other battles of the past, I was very enthusiastic to fight until I was wounded, but the fighting took place at night so my comrades didn't see me and at the same time the enemy's firepower was quite fierce, so they fled and left me behind and I was captured." Had he felt differently than in previous battles? "No, I didn't have any different feelings. I followed my commanders and fought as I used to, without having any fear." Do you think you could have avoided capture? "No, if I could, I wouldn't be here now." (K-11)

In most of the stories of capture the soldiers, whether NVA or VC, whether private or cadre, were captured only after having been wounded, or at least stunned by a blast. Only two or three of the group in question were taken without having been physically incapacitated. Thus, the story they gave on the whole, reflecting high morale, would seem to be corroborated by the fact that they did not simply give in when in contact.

## VII. EXPECTATIONS REGARDING WAR TERMINATION

One may safely assume that a soldier's expectation concerning the outcome of the war will be a powerful indicator and pillar of his morale, or the opposite. Soldiers who do not expect to win their war are particularly prone to low morale, for the obvious reason that they consider the possible ultimate sacrifice they will have to bring as having been brought in vain. But beyond that, i.e, beyond the simple question as to whether the war in the soldier's view will be won or lost, is the other question as to what victory or defeat will do for him, for his family, and for his country. A man who expects a great deal from victory and a great calamity from defeat is likely to be a more ardent fighter than a man who does not feel that way. And soldiers do not always feel that way. For example, toward the end of World War II there were quite a few men in the Wehrmacht on various levels who, no matter how great the urgings on the part of propaganda Minister Goebbels, did not think that an American victory over Germany was the end of the world.* Nor were they any longer as convinced that their own victory under Hitler would bring eternal bliss to all Germans. Thus, next to the question: Will we win this war?, the question: Is this war really necessary?, will play a great role in the psychological makeup and fighting capacity of a man.

### VICTORY? FOR WHOM? BY WHAT MEANS?

An NVA cadre when asked the question what would happen if the Front should lose the war, found this so difficult to imagine that he finally stated: "If it happens that the Front loses the war, the Front troops will concentrate in some safe area, foregathering strength to fight again when they have the opportunity." (K-6) A VC private when asked whether the U.S./GVN could destroy the Front if the war continued, at first demurred: "I am a PFC, not a politician. I do not know much

*Based on the author's personal experiences with German PoWs after D-Day in Normandy.

about this." When pressed: "Do you think the U.S./GVN can win the war?" he answered: "No, the Front will win." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "We shall win on the battlefield, but the war will be solved at the conference table." What do you mean by conference? "I mean the peace talks in Paris." (K-18)

A VC cadre had this to say: "The United States and the GVN can never destroy the Vietnamese armed forces (Front Army) because we come from the people, we are the people. The enemy can never destroy our people." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "The Vietnamese people have the ability to chase the Americans out of Vietnam by military means." (K-9) But when further pressed, the cadre amended his statement: "I mean by combined military-political means." A VC private had this to say on the subject: "The U.S./GVN has more troops and is better armed than the Front. But the VC are armed with high morale and better ideology. I don't think the U.S./GVN can destroy the Front, particularly when a better part of the people side with the Front." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "I am not sure that the Front can drive out the United States by military means." By combined military-political means, then? "In that case, I think the Front can drive out the United States." (K-22) Another VC private was slightly less optimistic: "The United States has all kinds of aircraft and artillery and the Front does not have them. At present, the Front is unable to drive the Americans out. However, if the war is prolonged I cannot predict." He added: "If both military and political means are used, however, it probably can." (K-18)

A VC cadre: "I don't think the U.S./GVN can destroy the Front because Vietnam is our country. In this war everyone should fight. If someone is killed, the other will take his place. So it is impossible to destroy the Front." (K-21) One VC private said: "I cannot tell yet because as far as I can see it, in their fighting neither the United States nor the Front were prevailing." A statement which may be less naive than seems at first glance. (K-22) The NVA private again, when asked: On what did you base your statement that the Front will win this war?" "I do not want to use the term 'Front.' I want to use the term,

'the South Vietnamese people.' The South Vietnamese people are being helped by the great socialist North Vietnam. They are also helped by our friends all over five continents, especially the Soviet Union and China. People all over the world are supporting the Vietnamese people to defeat the American imperialists. This is why I believe we shall win and Vietnam will be reunified." (K-8) An NVA cadre believed that "neither side can destroy the other by force. Only political means can solve the war." (K-4) The same cadre had this to add: "The present situation is unfavorable for the Americans to realize their plans. The Republic of Vietnam is supported by the free world nations, but the Front is supported by the socialist nations. The two parties are still disputing, and the settlement of the war is coming to a deadlock. I think the war will become protracted and very fierce." (K-4) A VC cadre was more optimistic for his side: "If the war is prolonged, sooner or later the Americans will be driven out because the American forces are restricted and the Front is supported by the people. Therefore, finally the Americans will be repelled by both military and political means." (K-14)

Another VC cadre, when asked what effect the growing number of American and other foreign troops were having on the outcome of the war, stated: "Since Tet, the United States has lost a great many troops. Now if the United States should bring fresh troops to Vietnam, the new troops would serve to replenish the loss of the past but could not affect the outcome of the war." (K-9) Here we have the familiar notion, seen in many previous interviews, that the enemy soldier sees the result of additional force to be merely a prolongation and intensification of the war, not a change in its fortunes. An NVA private expressed more or less the same view: "I think that if the United States should send more troops to the South, or the GVN's allies send more troops to the South, the war would become fiercer and a lot more people would be killed. In the meantime, I am afraid the war would go on for much longer." (K-21) These statements are included here even though no increase in troop levels is under consideration, simply to demonstrate what some of the views on the other side are with regard to having to meet an even more unfavorable ratio of forces.

Finally, one more VC cadre: "Everybody in the world, not Vietnamese alone, knows that America is a rich country and has all modern weapons. But modern weapons do not make the United States win this war. The NLF does not fear the American modern weapons and I think the Front was aware of this before it started its anti-American struggle. I think this war will last a long time and the Vietnamese people will certainly win it. The Americans are engaged in an aggressive war which is non-righteous and they will lose it." (K-2)

IMPACT OF OUTCOME

Because the fighting ardor of people is greatly influenced by the images they have of the probable effects of both victory or defeat on themselves and their country, respondents were asked to hypothesize on that. A VC cadre has this to say: "Regardless of how many more years the war will go on, the Vietnamese people will keep on fighting till all the Americans leave. The war has been going on for many years, the United States has been using all kinds of modern weapons, airplanes, jets, tanks, and sent a great number of troops to Vietnam. But it always suffered defeats. There is only one kind of weapon that the United States has not used on the battlefield of Vietnam and that is atomic bombs. But if the United States has to use atomic bombs in order to win the war, I am afraid it would not be considered a powerful country any more. Unless all the Vietnamese people die, the Americans will never win. . . . The big fish can eat up the small fish but the people can not use strong arms to eliminate weak people if they have no just cause. The Americans are fighting an unjust war, and they will never win." (K-4)

On the question of what would happen if the Front should lose the war, some respondents had a difficult time imagining it. An NVA private was asked: If the Front should lose the war, what do you think would happen to those who fight for the Front? He replied: "I don't think the GVN and the United States can win this war." But suppose the GVN would win? "Impossible." Did you ever think the GVN could win this war? "I never thought of it." On the other hand, if the Front should

win the war, "the North and the South would be reunified. The South Vietnamese people would have independence like other independent countries. . . . My family will continue to live in the North under the same socialist government. From then on, North Vietnam will work on developing its country like Russia, Red China and other European countries. . . . Vietnam would be unified. Her people would be independent and free." (K-15)

An NVA cadre had very somber expectations: "If the GVN wins this war, all people who fought for the Front will be killed." What do you think will happen to you? "I would also be killed." (K-3) Another NVA cadre: "If the GVN achieves victory, it will gain the confidence of the people [!]. As for the people who fought for the Front, I do not know what would happen to them. They certainly could not live with the GVN and probably will have to flee to the jungle." What would become of you? "At present, I am a prisoner of war -- I do not know what would be my fate." And what would become of Vietnam? "Vietnam would remain partitioned for a long time." And if the GVN should lose? "If the Front achieves victory, the entire people will have confidence in the Front and will join the Front. Those who have fought for the GVN will be employed and remain in their former positions like the Hanoi Government who used the civil servants who stayed there." What will become of Vietnam? "If victory is gained, the first thing the Front would do would be to form a coalition government. After a period of time, if North and South Vietnam can associate with each other, they will move toward the unification of the nation. This was prescribed in the Front policies that I have studied. I cannot predict the future developments." (K-4)

One more NVA cadre: "I do not believe that the GVN will win this war, therefore I have never thought of this question. But if the GVN wins this war, the people who are fighting for the Front will continue the fight until national sovereignty is recovered. As long as Vietnam is oppressed by foreigners, we will carry on the fight to safeguard the nation; even though we have to sacrifice our lives, we will not be discouraged nor frightened." Here again we have a man who cannot even imagine a complete defeat that would put an end to the Front. (K-5)

An NVA private, asked what he thought would happen if the Front lost the war, began as others of his colleagues: "I firmly believe that the Front will not lose." When pressed, he said: "What would happen? I don't know." But if the Front should win the war? "I would meet my family again and Vietnam would be a prosperous and beautiful country." What do you mean by prosperous and beautiful? "I mean mines, bridges, and industrial centers." (K-8) A VC cadre, in answer to the same question, stated: "Being revolutionaries and liberators, we are resolved to fight until the country is liberated. As long as the country is dominated and the people are enslaved by the Americans, we shall fight till our last man." I said <u>if</u> the Front should lose the war. . . "The Front can never lose because we have the right cause, we have set up our objectives, and we shall go until success." But if by any chance the Front should lose anyway, what would become of Vietnam? "Vietnam would live under the American rule and the people would suffer." What would happen to you and your family? "Myself and my family would be slaves of lackeys of the Americans." But, conversely, if the Front should win the war? "The people would have a happy and prosperous life. They would no longer be slaves . . . myself and my family would have a freer and happier life. And Vietnam would have peace, independence and be a happy country." (K-9)

An NVA private: "I never thought that the Front could lose the war. This war is a war of the Vietnamese people fighting against American imperialists. As long as the Vietnamese people still exist, and as long as the Americans are still in Vietnam dominating the Vietnamese people, the war will go on. Whenever the Front people should get tired or whenever they feel that they are too weak to fight, they would probably withdraw to some area to rest for a period of time, and they will then continue to fight until all Americans leave." What do you think would happen to you and your family? "As long as the war goes on, I don't think of myself or my family. I will keep on fighting as long as I can when the Front still needs me for the liberation of the country." Now, if the Front should win the war, what do you think would happen then? "If the Front should win the win, North and South Vietnam will be reunified. Socialism will be applied to both North and South, and the

Vietnamese people will all enjoy a good life, everyone will have enough to eat and proper clothes to wear." (K-11)

One more NVA private, when asked what would happen if the Front should lose the war, answered: "It could never happen. The war might go on for many more years, but the Front will not lose. With the determination and the hatred toward the American invaders, the Vietnamese people will win the war. The question of losing never entered my mind, because I think the Front is fighting for the just cause, it fights for the freedom and the equality of the people and it will never lose the war. In case the Front becomes weak, that also would not mean that it is going to give up. It would probably withdraw to some secret base for gathering strength and continue to fight until all Americans leave Vietnam." What would happen to you and your family? "If I am still alive and the Front has not won the war, I would never return to North Vietnam. In other words, I would keep on fighting as long as the Front needs me for the liberation of the country. My family in the North is being taken care of by the North government and by the people there in the North, I don't have to worry about my family." What would happen to the country? "I don't believe that the Front will lose the war, but if it should, I think Vietnam would still be divided into two like it was according to the Geneva Agreement." If the Front should win on the other hand? "If the Front wins the war, a coalition government will be established in the South and the people of this coaltion government will sit down together with the North Vietnamese government to discuss the reunification of the country. Vietnam will have no war, North and South Vietnam will have freedom, and only one government and all Vietnamese people will be free to travel from North to South." What would happen to you and your family? "If the Front wins the war, Vietnam will have peace and if I am still alive I will return to the North to rejoin my family and will live happily again. I also believe that as soon as the war is over, the country will be reunified, socialism will be applied all over Vietnam, and all Vietnamese people will enjoy equality, good life and there will be no rich people exploiting the poor."

A VC cadre also insisted that he never thought what would happen in case the Front should lose the war: "Regardless of how many more years the war will go on, we Vietnamese people will never give up. We are very determined to continue the war until all Americans leave Vietnam. I never thought of the Front losing the war, and I will never think of this even now that I am in jail. When I decided to join the Front I thought either one of three things could happen to me, which were: either I get captured, killed, or wounded. One of these things has happened to me, I am now a prisoner and I accept the situation. But I strongly believe that the Front will finally win the war." (K-9)

A VC private, when asked what would happen in case the Front should lose: "The Americans came here to cause death and destruction, wretchedness to all the country. Therefore those who fight for the Front will keep on fighting till the end. If the Front should lose the war, I think the Americans would kill or mistreat all those former enemies." What do you think would happen to you and your family? "I don't know what would happen to my family. As for myself, I only think of fighting until I get killed." If the Front should win? "If the Front should win South Vietnam would have a coalition government and the Vietnamese would be able to govern themselves." And what would happen to you? "I would be serving the Front again." (K-19)

One VC private gave answers that were strikingly different from all the others. He thought that "if the GVN achieves total victory, the people who fought for the Front will have to join the GVN." He added that "I will also join the GVN and my family will enjoy happiness." As to Vietnam, "there would be no more bombs and shells. The people will live a peaceful life." And if the Front should win? "My family and I will be happy." You said that if the GVN wins you and your family will be happy. Now you say that if the Front wins you and your family will also be happy. Why? "I do not care who is going to win this war. Whether the GVN or the Front gains victory, my family will enjoy a peaceful and happy life." If the Front should win the war what do you think would happen to Vietnam? "It would be the same as if the GVN gained total victory. There will be no more war, and peace will be restored to Vietnam." In your opinion what are the objectives of the

Front? "Like those of the GVN, the objectives are to serve the nation and the people." Yet, even this strikingly different respondent finally came around to stating the following: "[The objectives of the Front] are important." Are they important enough to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "If they are designed to serve the nation and the people it is worth it for me to suffer hardships." Do you think that they are important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "If the Americans are still present in this land, it will be worth it for the people to continue to suffer hardships." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "If the Americans are still present, our children must also continue to fight this war. If there were no Americans, we need not have to fight." In other words, this man, while he is indifferent as to whether the GVN or the VC should win the war, also sees his struggle, like most others, devoted exclusively to driving out "the Americans." (K-19)

Another VC private: "According to the cadres, if the Front won the war, South Vietnam would be run by the Socialist Party. Myself, I would be happy then." How did you feel about the importance of the aims of the Front and of achieving them? "I think the Front's aims are worthy to be achieved." Did you think they were important enough for you to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "Yes. I realized they were important and I was even convinced of it." Did you think they were important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "I don't know." Did you think your children would go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "I think it is necessary for the Front to win this war. Therefore my children should go on fighting too." (K-22)

## VIII. PERCEIVED COURSE OF WAR

By "perceived course of the war" we mean something different from "expected outcome" to which the above chapter was devoted. "Perceived course" in the framework of this inquiry is not a respondent's guess as to the end result, but observations on his part on how things are and have been developing in the area subject to his personal observation.

### CHANGES SINCE TET 1968

This section will examine changes that may have occurred in the general view of respondents since the days of Tet, and, in particular, changes of opinion with regard to the course of the war. A cadre was asked: Since Tet, has your feeling about the course of the war changed? "My opinion about the course of the war and the aims of the Front never changes. I always think that the Front is fighting for the right cause, for the interests of the people and its aims must be achieved. . . . As long as the Americans continue to occupy South Vietnam, cause death to Vietnamese people, I shall go on fighting though I may risk being killed. When I was captured I was beaten but I never felt sorry for joining the Front. On the contrary I felt more hatred for the Americans." (K-2) So much by way of introduction; but this cadre reported several other aspects of the Tet episode. "My unit suffered serious losses in the offensive during Tet and in the second phase of May 1968. But I do not think it was a mistake or a shortcoming of the cadres. It was because our strength was less than the enemy force." How did the other men react? "Actually, after the failure of the two offensives [this man used the word "failure" to describe the offensives, which is rare], a number of men became worried and confused. Nevertheless they understood that the combat orders were issued from higher echelon, not from the battalion leaders. Thus, they complained that the higher echelon had not studied and planned carefully before giving the orders." Did you feel the men followed orders as willingly as before Tet? "The men still followed orders. Some became worried and feared combat, but

they never disobeyed orders." What about their fighting competence? "On the whole the majority of the soldiers in my battalion only had fighting experience in the Delta [translator's note: the word "Delta" here means rural area] and did not have experience in combat in the city. Fighting in the city was strange to them. In addition, they did not receive enough ammunition while fighting. This hindered their fighting capability." (K-2)

Another NVA cadre was asked whether he thought that the Tet offensive was the turning point in the war. He answered: "I do not know what you mean by the word 'turning point.' It is correct if you mean the situation has changed. The war situation has changed. The Front has launched attacks on the cities. The offensive has helped us to evaluate the real strength and tactics of the two parties. But I myself did not participate and had no chance to observe that turning point." (K-5) An NVA private, when asked whether he felt the Tet offensive was a success or a failure, replied: "Of course it was a success. We attacked Saigon and several other cities. The radio said that we won." Did you expect or did your friends expect that a general uprising would actually materialize? "People in some areas did revolt to overthrow their local government." How about the second offensive in May 1968 -- are you satisfied with its results? "We learned about this success and everybody felt encouraged a great deal from what we had gained." How about Tet as a turning point? "I haven't heard anybody say that. I don't know." (K-14)

A VC cadre: "My comrades and I felt that the Tet offensive was a success. The United States and the GVN used to label the VC as the destroyers and killers of the people. Actually, when we came to My Tho, the people were very glad to see us. They fed us and showed us U.S./GVN locations to attack." What had you actually expected would be the result of the Tet offensive? "We expected it to end the war." Did you expect a general uprising would actually materialize? "Yes." Were you disappointed with the results? "No. The people did show sympathy with us. The Front army was able to control Ben Tre for five days. We did not have a general uprising in My Tho because the people still lacked

absolute faith in the Front." In your opinion, why did the people lack absolute faith in the Front? "The American force in Vietnam is somehow a mighty force. It will be defeated however, we need more effort to convince and organize the people." Some people have said that the Tet offensive was the turning point of the war. Would you say it was? "Yes, it was. It opened the new stage and will lead to our final victory." (K-9)

And a VC cadre: "Since Tet the Front has gained a great deal militarily, has won more and more of the people's support, therefore the Front shall achieve its aims." (K-9) As to the course of the war itself: "The war has changed a great deal since Tet. We have engaged in combat with the U.S. forces more often and the American losses increased a great deal as compared to previous times." Since Tet, did the cadres talk about the way the war was going? "The cadres said that the war was getting more and more violent. This was a sign of our final victory being near." (K-9) (This statement fits into the general line that the war will get more violent before it will come to an end.) The same cadre added, when asked whether the political officer's behavior had changed over time: "Yes. During the last six months before my capture, due to the great success of the Front army, the political cadre seemed more encouraged with the good news and he more often reminded us to try harder to accomplish our mission."

An NVA private who fought in Saigon during the Tet offensive reported that during the action, two men of his company were killed and six others slightly wounded. He added that he did not remember the number of casualties his unit had suffered in the May offensive in Tay Ninh but that it had not been high. Was Tet a turning point? "Yes. I would say so and it was in the Front's favor. The Tet offensive proved to the Americans and the GVN that our forces were strong enough to attack all the important cities and areas throughout the country at once. The Tet offensive has changed the position of the Front to the initiative." (K-11)

Another NVA private had this opinion: "The Tet offensive was the first step of many waves of attack on the part of the Front. The Tet

offensive woke the enemy up, it let him know that the Front was powerful and had a proper communication system for contacting all the units in order to launch such a large-scale attack all at the same time. It also let the enemy know that they have no control, not only in the rural areas but even in the cities." Did you yourself participate in the Tet offensive? "Yes. During the Tet offensive my company participated in the battle in Tay Ninh. We shelled Tay Ninh town and many outposts outside of Tay Ninh town for our friendly units to move in. This battle resulted in over 10 men killed and several others wounded in my former unit." However, despite these losses the private added: "Yes, the Tet offensive was a success for the Front in both military and political ways. Militarily speaking, the Tet offensive pushed the Americans into the defensive. The Front units had attacked all the big and important cities which the enemy never expected that they could do. The Tet offensive caused death for many thousands of the enemy. Politically speaking, the Tet offensive made the people in the world know that the forces of the revolution side had matured. It made the people in the world know that the more the Vietnamese people fight, the better and stronger they become. It proved to the world that the Vietnamese people are very determined and very united to fight the war against the Americans." How about the general uprising? "When we first attacked Tay Ninh, we were told that the people were going to back us up by a general uprising. But my unit withdrew before the general uprising took place. When we returned to our unit's station area, the cadre said that the people had had a general uprising in many big cities, but they were supressed by enemy airplanes." As to whether Tet was a turning point, "I would say it was as it indicated the power and good development of the revolutionary forces. The Tet offensive turned the revolutionary forces from the defensive to the offensive position." (K-12)

One VC private was more reserved. While he also shared the view that the Tet offensive was a success, he finally concluded: "I only know that the Tet offensive included the biggest battles in the Front's history." (K-19) Another private who had not yet been a member of the VC at the time of Tet and therefore did not participate, struck a very

different note from most of his buddies by sternly disapproving of the Tet offensive: "It was not a success to set fire to the people's houses and to bring death to the people while they were enjoying Tet." (K-18) Another VC private simply stated that since Tet "the Front has become stronger." And he added that "I think the war situation is now more favorable for the Front than before Tet." (K-17)

A VC cadre added: "We hoped that the general uprising would happen. It would be highly welcome so as to help us achieve the liberation and the reunification." Were you disappointed with the results? "No, I wasn't. If we failed this time, we will try the next time." (K-21)

One VC cadre counted the beginning of the Paris talks -- about which he was moderately skeptical -- among the "good results" of the offensive. As to the general uprising, he stated: "Yes, at first I thought we were going to have the people's support by a general uprising. But the general uprising did not take place, as I think the people were still in a confused situation. They did not know which one would win, in the meantime they were afraid of being oppressed by the GVN if the Front forces were not able to liberate their areas; therefore, we did not have the backing up of the people." Were you disappointed with these results? "No, I understood the confused situation of the people. If I had been a civilian I would have acted the same way. The people wanted to be left alone. They proably agreed with what the Front did, but they were afraid of being killed, being oppressed, and therefore they rather kept quiet." As to the other effects of Tet, he thought it had been very costly for both sides: "But it built a good reputation for the Front in world opinion." (K-14) This cadre added that he had been "very optimistic" right after Tet but "then we were counter-attacked. So the cadres knew that we had to suffer more hardships and encounter more difficulties."

An NVA private who had participated in both the Tet and May offensives (in Bin Duong Province in the former) took a positive view of both battles: "They were a success because we were able to bring about some political change in our country and the world. Our people

were given more confidence in our strength." As to his expectations: "Our intention was to speed up the war in order to reunify the country and put an end to the suffering of the people." This man had not expected a general uprising or at least stated that he had not. "It was just a testing period. However if the people had joined us in a general uprising, it would have been ideal. When we launched the offensives, we did not expect a general uprising, we just went on fighting as we previously had." (K-15)

PRESENT TRENDS

One VC private -- a man of firm conviction that the war was absolutely necessary and had to be won -- was pessimistic about the immediate course of the war: "It was easy to notice that in my area, all the conditions for a VC victory were lacking. We were unable to regroup our forces, our communication lines were disrupted, and our armament was out of date." (K-19) (This man had been fighting at Long An Province.)

Against this, a VC cadre: "Recently the war was getting more and more violent. We had victory after victory while the Americans went from bad to worse. Their mechanized equipment, aircraft and artillery could not help them from being defeated." (K-9) (This man's area of operation had been in Kien Tuong Province.)

Rather than quote extensively from the interviews: The majority of the interviewees felt that the war was going reasonably well in their area, with no one else, however, duplicating the brassy description of his observations as given by the above quoted cadre. On the other hand, the above quoted private turned out to be quite unique in his negative evaluation of the immediate situation observed.

## IX. THE ENEMY SOLDIER AS A POLITICAL MAN

There has been much discussion as to what the other side is really fighting for, or thinks it is fighting for. How a soldier sees his role in a war and how he sees his casue is, of course, of considerable importance from the point of view of gauging the strength of his motivation and the cohesion of his fighting morale. In the following we will examine first of all to what extent the enemy soldier considers himself a communist or something else.

Would you describe yourself as a communist, a democrat, a socialist, a revolutionary, or something else? "I do not know anything about communism . . . my educational background is very poor and I don't have any political standpoint at all. However, I know for what I fight. I know that I am fighting for the country's independence and to save the people from death and suffering. If I survive and if the war ends, and the people live a free and happy life as a result, I shall return to my normal life -- a life of a citizen who earns his living by his own labors." And the other men? "I have no idea about the political standpoint of other cadres and fighters and I do not know to what faction they belong. I guess the majority of fighters are fighting for the same goals as mine." (K-2)

An NVA cadre stated simply: "I am a communist. I was admitted to the Party in 1965." Why did you join the Party? "I joined the Party because I believed in communism." In this man's view all his comrades were communists also: "I do not know for sure, but I noticed that they all acted in accordance with the communist ideology in order to liberate the people and build up socialism. Therefore I believe that they were all communist." (K-3)

Another NVA cadre: "I do not have to repeat it because you already think that I am a communist. I was a Party member. From the sentimental point of view, I am a democrat. I want that the people to have their rights." (K-4)

Still another NVA cadre: "I am a citizen of a socialist nation, I am a socialist, and I like socialism. Socialism is a fair regime.

The more you work the more you enjoy and there is no exploitation of manpower. . . . As far as I know, most of the cadres and troops in my unit followed socialism. They all apreciated socialism and did not want to see the exploitation of people, the oppression of the weak, or disdain for the poor." (K-5)

An NVA private, when asked how he would describe himself, replied: "I was a soldier." Would you describe yourself as being a communist? "Your side calls us communists but I call myself an army soldier." Do you call yourself a socialist? "Yes, North Vietnam is a socialist country." How would you describe most of the others in your unit? "They are revolutionaries." (K-8)

A VC cadre also described himself as "a soldier of the liberation army." Do you call yourself a democrat, a socialist or a revolutionary? "I fight for democracy, socialism, and I am also a revolutionary." You are a member of the PRP. Why don't you call yourself a communist? Is it because communism is bad or the PRP is not a communist party? "I do not use the term 'communist' because your side often gives it a badly distorted meaning. Actually, I myself do not know much about communism. I do not need to know about it as long as my country is occupied by the Americans, my people suffer daily from American bombs and shells." (K-9)

An NVA private: "I am not a communist because I haven't been admitted as a Party member yet. I have lived in the North and followed socialism, so I am a socialist . . . I think most of the cadres and fighters in my company were socialists." (K-12)

A VC cadre: "I have not been able to understand much about communism or socialism, but I considered myself one of the Front people who is carrying out the revolution. When I first joined the Front, I really didn't know what the Front was fighting for, but after being with it for a while I understood its aims which were to liberate the country and bring freedom to the people. I therefore remained with it to fight the war." How about the other men in your unit? "Most of the men in my unit followed socialism because they were from the North. They told me that the people in the North all followed socialism. I myself have never lived under socialism, therefore I don't know what

was the difference between socialism and communism, but I knew that these people who were from the North also followed the same objectives." (K-13)

A VC private stated: "I only know that I am a soldier serving in the revolutionary army. And I don't describe myself as being a member of a political party." How would you describe most of the others in your unit? "They are all most the same, except the cadres." (K-19)

Another VC private: "I am a revolutionary." Please elaborate. "By revolutionary I mean that I am fighting for the poor class. This for me is a just cause." How would you describe most of the fighters in your unit? "They were composed of various types of people including uncommitted individuals. These neither wanted to fight nor did they care for the country. They only wanted to have a nice living with plenty of food and clothing." Were there many people of this type? "There were quite a few." (K-17) As to whether this particular admission is to be interpreted as a weakness or a strength is open to question. On the surface it would certainly appear as a weakness, considering that there are "quite a few" of this type in the enemy forces. On the other hand, the system as it operates seems to be perfectly capable of absorbing and using them and, should they turn into defectors, do without them.

One VC private said "I am a democrat. I only like democracy," without elaborating what he meant by this. (K-18) An NVA cadre: "Like most of my fellow soldiers, I consider myself a revolutionary who came here to liberate the country." And a VC cadre: "I am a revolutionary . . . most of the men in the unit were the Front's fighters. That was what they thought of themselves. They didn't claim being anything else." (K-23)

An NVA private who was a student in the North [and therefore a rara avis in this army predominantly composed of villagers] stated: "When I reached draft age, I was drafted and sent to the South for fighting. I am just a socialist follower." (K-16) He added: "I think we all have the same goals, which is fighting the Americans, liberating South Vietnam in order to reunify the country, and to set up a

government in the South like it has been done in the North. Thus, animated by the same ambition, which is to expand socialism, I think we should all be socialists." (K-16)

An NVA private had this to say: "It goes without saying that I am a socialist. I am not a democrat. I am almost 30, and able to distinguish between capitalists and socialists. I am sure that only socialism can bring about a nice living to me. Take an example. In the past there were no brick houses in my village. But since the introduction of the socialist regime, 95 percent of the villagers' houses are now built with bricks. We now have electricity in our homes and tractors to work our land. The poor families who had no rice to eat before now have a decent living." (K-15)

## WHAT SYSTEM FOR VIETNAM?

The respondents were also asked what system they would like to see installed in Vietnam -- at first glance a question that might seem superfluous as long as they had been asked for their own personal, political preference. However, in view of the vagueness of the terms used, the second question was asked in order to find perhaps a somewhat clearer meaning. What do you think, was the question, would be the best political or economic system for South Vietnam? The VC cadre who had declared himself more or less a political agnostic replied: "I don't know what political system Vietnam should have. But first of all, the Americans must understand that they have no rights in Vietnam. They have no right to make war with the Vietnamese people. After the Americans pull out of South Vietnam, the Vietnamese internal affairs will be solved by Vietnamese. In my opinion, there should be a single government for both North and South Vietnam. This government must be elected by the Vietnamese." (K-2)

Perhaps somewhat strangely, the NVA cadre who declared himself a communist and stated that he had been a Party member since 1965, said: "I cannot determine which political system is most suitable for the South Vietnamese people. I only hope that Vietnam will be reunified, independent, and socialism must be built up all over the territory of Vietnam in order to pave the way for communism." (K-3)

Another NV A cadre: "I do not know. I was only a company cadre and I do not know much about politics. I think that this problem should be discussed by the leaders of the two parties." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre opted for socialism: "I believe that socialism will be suitable not only to North Vietnam, but also satisfy the aspirations of the entire Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese do not like war or bloodshed and want independence and a free life. Every citizen in a socialist nation has the same rights . . ." (K-5)

An NVA private said: "First of all the Americans have to leave Vietnam, and after that I think socialism will be the best political system for the whole of the country. I have lived under socialism in the North, I liked it and I think that almost all people in the North like it. Under socialism the people have the same living standards. Socialism is very reasonable, the people who work more enjoy more benefits and the ones who work less enjoy less. In the North workers working in the factories for their living were also owners of the factories. They were not working for anyone but for themselves and for the interest of the country. No one was the owner and no one could exploit the workers. In a word, socialism brought equality, proper clothes, enough food for the people, and it did not allow the rich people to exploit the poor." (K-11) This long quote is given not merely in order to show a northern soldier's personal views, but also to indicate that these northerners, if they talk that way to their southern comrades in those units in which northerners and southerners are all intermingled, are likely to make quite effective propagandists for their cause.

A VC cadre: "I don't know anything about politics but I think first of all Vietnam needs to regain its independence, and it should have democracy." (K-13) A VC private, in answer to the question, what political system the South should have: "I have no idea." (K-19)

Another VC private: "I do not know because I am quite ignorant of politics." (K-18)

One NVA cadre merely insisted on "neutrality." (K-20)

A VC cadre, who had declared himself a revolutionary, answered: "This subject is beyond my understanding." (K-21)

Another private who insisted that "democracy would be the best political system for the South" was pressed to elaborate: What democracy do you mean? Nationalist democracy? Communist democracy? "I don't know about nationalist democracy. I mean the communist democracy in which the people would have complete freedom, be free to work by themselves in a collective organization." (K-17) Others called for socialism because it "perfectly fits the Vietnamese people," and other again said that socialism was the ideologically correct road to take. One added that "South Vietnamese intellectuals were already in the lead in that direction." (K-15)

FIGHTS FOR WHOM?

In a further viariation of the above two questions the respondents were asked whom they felt they were fighting against -- the United States or the GVN -- and whom they felt they were fighting for -- Hanoi? the Front? Vietnam? or what? All regarded this war as a war against the Americans, and almost all stated "I fought for Vietnam."

## X. THE FISH'S WATER

One may assume that Mao is right when he postulates as one of the principal elements in insurgency warfare, that the insurgent army must have the support of "the people." In past investigations, it was found, at least by this analyst, that while there was not ideal harmony at all times between the NVA-VC armies and the people of South Vietnam, there was enough of it to provide the fish with the water he needed. The strains and stresses that had been cuased by the protraction of the war were to some extent caused by measures the enemy had been forced to take that had been, to some extent, against his principles; he had to tax more heavily than he meant to in accordance with his desire to win the friendship of the people, he had to recruit more, and his presence had drawn artillery and air bombardment. Nevertheless, the relationship between the fighting forces and the local population in the past had been identified as one of the pillars in the cohesion which the forces had not only enjoyed, but appeared to be assured of for future operations.*

What is the situation on the basis of the interrogations here examined? The respondents were asked: What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger or weaker? A VC cadre, whose principal area of operation had been Gia Dinh Province, answered: "Due to the bombings a number of villagers in my area left their hamlet for another place. Nevertheless, they sometimes returned and helped us dig trenches and buy foodstuffs. If they did not support us, they would leave their hamlets for good or would never help us in any way." (K-2) The same man continued: "Although my camping area was swept often . . . the villagers still helped us in many ways [when we returned], thus I believe with the villagers' support we shall win." (K-2) He added: "Most of the villagers in our camping area were very kind to us. They were pleased to see us. Very often they helped us cook our meals or buy foodstuffs at the markets for us." Why were they so friendly to you?

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*Kellen, op. cit., pp. 8ff.

"We are Vietnamese like them, we come from the countryside like them and understand their problems, poverty, hardships. We understand their misery, death and destruction due to the war, and we stand up to fight for the liberation of the country and the people. We fight for a better life of poor people and make their life free of fear, thus they support the Front and welcome us. We have passed through many hamlets. The villagers there work hard in the fields for a living. They did not hate anybody. Somehow bombs and shells were dropped on them and they became victims. I believe not we Front soldiers alone, any Vietnamese who has witnessed this kind of death would feel heartbroken and hate the ones who caused it." (K-2)

An NVA cadre took a less emotional view: "[The people] treated us like other civilians and there was nothing special about it. They never organized a reception for us, and they did not seem to be happy. They neither hated us nor protested against us. They sold rice to us if it was available. If they did not have it, we had to find it at some other place. Usually they were willing to let the troops sleep in their houses. At times, some of them did not like it, so we had to go to other houses. In short, as I have said, they treated us in ordinary ways and there was nothing special." (K-4) What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger or weaker? "Through their cordial behavior, we understand that the people sincerely liked us. In addition, they volunteered to do labor for work for us during military operations, they fed us, they furnished us with information on the enemy situation, strength, and direction of movement, so that we could avoid contact or make preparations for defense. If they did not support us, they would have fled and would not have lent us their assistance." (K-5) The man continued: "I lived with some people during the period I received medical treatment for my wounds. Generally speaking, the people living in liberated areas were very happy to see the Front troops. We were cordially welcomed and the people brought all the food available in their houses to feed us. Sometimes we sat down and talked with them. They complained about the behavior of ARVN troops when conducting military operations in the area. They

added that during sweep operations, ARVN troops tortured the people and questioned them, 'Are there any Viet Cong in your house?,' when there were no Front or NVA troops in the village. . . . Thus, the people were ill treated by ARVN troops and could not make protests against them. Therefore, when they noticed that we were fighting for them, protecting their interests and lives, naturally they liked us and helped us. In addition, they noticed that the Front troops loved the people, were friendly with the people, and had never threatened or tortured the people." (K-5)

As to whether support for the NLF was increasing or decreasing, an NVA private said: "Support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger and stronger." Asked to state what he based this observation on, he replied: "The country is divided into two halves, and the people in the South suffer hardships, death and destruction. Bombs and shells destroyed their houses, and killed their children. The war took away their husbands and sons . . . they look forward to the socialist revolution. Thus, they support the NLF." (K-8) Then, somewhat surprisingly, he added that he had no contact with civilians: "Even if there were civilians [in our area] we would not be allowed to contact them. Only the cadres would." Why? "Meeting the people is not the soldier's job. Each man has his own job."

A VC cadre stated: "We depend on the people's support to fight the enemy. We know this and the people also know this. They were glad to see us and tried to meet us so they could ask us about the battles we fought, the victory the Front has won . . . they got to like the liberation army and trust the Front more and more. They know we won several famous battles," and he added that the performance at Tet had greatly increased the villagers' confidence in the Front. Yet, he also stated that one of the frequent subjects in criticism sessions were mistakes committed in dealing with the villagers. "For example, one fighter might borrow this thing from the villagers but he forgot to return it in time or he might forget to put it in its old place. Or the man would be criticized if he did anything which made the villagers feel badly about him." These, however, appear to be harmless transgressions, as compared to what villagers are reported to complain about in ARVN.

One NVA private, asked to support his rhapsodic statement about constant increase of popular support for the NLF, stated: "They gave us foodstuffs more willingly and they did not leave their area even when the GVN appealed to them many times to do so." (K-11) Also: "They spoke angrily about some VC cadres who had been cowardly enough to rally to the GVN."

Another NVA cadre also seems to have had positive experiences: "The villagers were very glad to see us. They understood the hardships we had to endure and they appeared to have deep sympathy toward us. They treated us like members of their families. . . . They helped us a great deal. They helped us to buy foodstuffs from other areas. They even cooked meals for us. . . . Their attitudes never changed during our stay here." How do you think the people liked you? "They liked us because they know we are fighting for the country and their interests. They knew that the GVN and the Americans did nothing for them, but cause miseries to them. They complained that the GVN troops conducted sweep operations, arresting many innocent villagers and torturing them badly, although they did nothing to deserve torturing. They complained that the Americans bombed the area, destroying their houses, gardens and killing their people." (K-12)

As to the damage incurred by the people, one cadre had this to say: "Bombing and artillery attacks only caused losses to the people. The victims were the villagers. We never lived in one place but we moved around all the time. The villagers had to live in their houses, they didn't move around like we used to, therefore they were the ones to get hit." (K-13) A VC private said that the villagers were always glad to see his unit and explained it in this fashion: "In places where the Front units used to establish camp, most of the families had children serving in the Front forces. So they enjoyed being able to entertain the soldiers, even if the latter were not their sons. They did so in the hope that their own sons would be treated the same way in other places." Were there any villagers who were afraid of the Front troops when they saw them coming? "There must have been some villagers who feared that the presence of Front troops would cause their villages to be bombed or shelled by the ARVN. But they were not

afraid of the Front troops themselves." As for recent changes in villager attitudes: "I did not notice any changes in the villagers' attitude toward my unit during all the period of my serving in the Front forces." (K-19) This man, it might be added, had served only since March 1968 and was captured in December of 1968.

One VC private said that since Tet "Contacts with villagers had been increased because the Front had carried out more propaganda among the villagers." Were the villagers glad to see your unit? "The villagers were nice to us. They gave us food to eat. Some, however, did not seem to like us very much because they were not able to give food to every troop that passed through the village." Did you notice any changes? "No. There were no changes in the villager's attitudes since Tet. Some of the villagers' support was found even greater and more sincere than before." Why? "To the villagers, the Tet offensive was a general uprising to liberate the nation. Everyone wanted to be liberated. The villagers said they wanted to support the Front troops fighting the war." Many people think the Tet offensive failed. Why did the villagers continue to provide more support for the Front? "The Front told the villagers that the men did not cease to fight after Tet, that they had to fight three battles in order to win two. Therefore the villagers had to continue to support the men." (K-17)

A VC cadre said: "In the areas where I had been the people gave us a great deal of material support. The people seemed to understand our situation. They knew that we troops had a very hard life and they gave us food to eat. The number of the people in the Front-controlled area where we were had sons and husgands serving in the Vietminh who had regrouped to the North in 1954. These people have not returned to their families. When their families met us it reminded them of their relatives and they showed warm sympathy toward us. I guess these villagers understood that we are siding with their people." But this cadre, for one, did not think that support for the Liberation Front was increasing: "Sincerely speaking, recently the Front received less support from the people as compared with previous times. In 1965 and 1966 when I first returned to the South, in many areas the people gave a great deal of support to the Front. Many people still remained in

the liberated areas because the war was not so intense, the liberated areas were not attacked by bombs or artillery as frequently as recently. Beginning early 1968 the people got tired of the war. Most of them left the liberated areas for fear of being killed by bombs. Those who stayed behind appeared to have some change in their attitude toward us Front troops. They still think that our task is reasonable, but they wanted to stay away from trouble. They don't want to support either side. As a matter of fact, due to the bombing attacks the people couldn't cultivate their land, and they couldn't give us material support." What effect did this change in the attitude of the people have on the morale of your unit? "The change in the attitude of the people did not really affect the morale of my unit. It did cause us supply shortage problems, but we understood that the people left the areas for other places just because they were afraid of being bombed. They left for other areas to take refuge just for temporary reasons, and I believe that their sympathy toward us did not change." (K-14) This statement tends to confirm what was found also in earlier investigations -- a general leniency, a live-and-let-live attitude on the enemy's side which is in stark contrast to the vicious and vindictive methods he uses on other occasions.

But even though none of the respondents reported that the villagers had become actually disaffected, once VC private reported: "The NVA is losing the support of the people." On what did he base these comments? "The GVN has more aircraft and artillery. The population in Front-controlled areas could not stand it. Moreover, it will be better to fight for the GVN than for the Front. Life with the Front was so miserable." (K-18) This statement is rather on the unusual side. So, were the villagers glad to welcome the troops? "I think that the people worried every time we came to the hamlets. They feared sweep operations conducted by the American troops or ARVN forces. If there were any engagements in the hamlets, the people would suffer casualties and death. So, certainly they were sad rather than happy. Though they did not speak out, I just guessed so because I noticed that the villagers seemed to be frightened." Yet, the man did not notice any basic changes: "Their attitudes remained the same at all times. They

always treated us kindly, however they seemed to be frightened every time we came to their hamlet."

An NVA cadre reported that: "The GVN always made every effort to separate the people from us, by forcing them to leave their home area and settle in strategic hamlets. That caused us some difficulties but we were always able to overcome them. In some strategic hamlets we were able to stay for a few days without being detected by the ARVN. This means that the people most of the time were on our side." (K-20)

Another NVA cadre: "While I was with the Front, I often had contacts with villagers. The people in my unit did not cause them any trouble nor did they to us. I often saw old women from the Soldiers' Foster Mother Association, who showed us great sympathy, particularly when they knew that we were NVA soldiers who had endured so many hardships to get down here and were courageously fighting for the liberation of this country. There were many of these mothers who just cried when looking at us. In so doing they showed their sympathy and also they would have thought of their sons in the Front forces as well." Where did you recently have contact with the villagers? "In Vinh Long Province." Were the villagers glad to see you? "Anywhere my unit came, the villagers were glad to see us, even the children. They came to give us food. Sometimes we were given each a package of cigarettes." Were there any people who feared that your presence might cause the village to be attacked by heavy artillery? "Only the wealthy people who had big houses, automobiles or Honda motorcycles feared that. The majority of the population, I think, willingly accepted sacrifices." Were you ever asked to leave the area by the villagers? "That did not happen to my unit." (K-20) (One cannot quite imagine villagers with "big houses and automobiles." The respondent may have included a few larger places in his generalizations.)

A VC private reported, when asked whether the people were afraid of an eventual attack by the GVN: "We used to pass through the villages at night. Some people were afraid of us because they thought we were GVN soldiers, for we were wearing the GVN soldier's uniform [?]. But their fear vanished as soon as they realized that were the Front

troops. As for the fear of an eventual attack by the GVN, I just don't know." (K-22)

To an NVA cadre things look pretty good. Recently, did you have more, the same, or less contact with villagers? "Recently, because we operated in the Plain, we have had more contact with the villagers." Did your unit live with the villagers? "No. We met them from time to time at night. We went away in the daytime." Were the villagers glad to see your unit or other Front and NVA units? "The villagers from the children to the aged persons were glad to meet us. In welcoming us they shouted and clapped their hands." Do you think the villagers were sincere? Or did they welcome the men because they had weapons? "I don't think the villagers were afraid of the Front troops. It was commonly understood that the Liberation Front was a people's organization and the fighters were considered the sons of the people." Did you notice any change in the villagers' attitude since Tet? "I noticed that the villager's attitude has changed a great deal since Tet. Just take an example. The villagers mostly live on their crops and land products. However since Tet the Americans have dropped bombs that destroyed everything. This made the villagers extremely resentful against the Americans." (K-15) This man, it seems, when asked about a change of attitude, did not even consider that what was meant was a change of attitude toward the Front. The man added: "The people's support for the Front is increasing day after day because its final victory is very near. Although the final phase is the most difficult, the people were very confident that they would certainly be liberated." What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger? "I noticed that everywhere our troops passed the people gave us a cheerful welcoming. They helped carry the wounded fighters and provided us with food."

The investigation into enemy-villager relations was not conducted in order to determine whether there is an adequate (from the enemy's point of view) working relationship between the two; the enemy's strength, mobility and relative security in the field proves beyond doubt that the working relationship is in fact adequate. The study here was trying to

find clues as to whether, compared to the 1967 Cohesion Study,* there were indications that the system was being subjected to increasing physical or emotional strains, or was perhaps even reaching a critical point. Comparing individual statements on the subject contained in the interviews then and now, there was no evidence of that. Rather it seemed to emerge that while the relationship was not without stresses and strains (just as no element in the NVA/VC system appears to function without stresses and strains), they had not increased on the basis of the reports available here.

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*Kellen, op. cit., Chapter II.

## XI: IMAGE OF THE AMERICANS

### U.S. ROLE IN GENESIS OF WAR

What did the cadres say about who started and is responsible for the war? "Before we went South, we had to undergo a political education course. As I was told, the Americans started this war and are responsible for it." What is your own opinion on this? "There would be no war if the Americans did not send their troops to Vietnam, thus I think they must be responsible for it." Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "The war would be ended if American troops were withdrawn. Therefore, the Americans must be responsible for the prolongation of the war." This NVA cadre was then asked whether he thought the North was right in sending NVA soldiers to fight in South Vietnam. "During the nine years of resistance against the French, all the people without distinction of Northerners or Southerners participated in it. The present war is against the Americans. The North Vietnamese government was right in sending troops to South Vietnam to fight." (K-4) To the same question another NVA cadre replied: "The present war in Vietnam was initiated by the Americans and the United States will be held fully responsible for it. According to the 1954 Geneva Agreement, Vietnam was to be reunified two years after. However, the Americans employed the rotten Ngo Dinh Diem government to prevent the application of the provision in the agreement in order to wage another war in Vietnam. Every Vietnamese knows that Diem was a cruel and corrupt man. He decreed Law No. 10-59 to massacre innocent Vietnamese people who wanted to have an independent and free life. Law 10-59 has brought about death and separation to many Vietnamese people. However, Diem has paid for his crimes. He was overthrown and killed miserably. The failure of Diem resulted from his acts and the crimes committed by his family. At present, South Vietnam has [again] such a government, the Thieu-Ky government which is also established and master-minded by the Americans. They surely were not elected by the Vietnamese people to head the government, because they have not done anything good for the nation." (K-5) One thing at least one can say about this deposition: The political

officer who graduated this cadre has every reason to be proud of his disciple.

A VC cadre: "The Americans came to our country and brought death and destruction to our people. They are aggressors and we Vietnamese are fighting the aggressors. We shall fight till final victory." Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "The American imperialists are responsible for this. Vietnam is a peace-loving country. We did not invade or bomb any country. It is the American presence in Vietnam that started the war and made the war continue so long." Do you think the North was right in sending regroupees to South Vietnam to fight? "The regroupees are South Vietnamese. They have the duty to liberate their native land from American aggressors." But do you think the North was right in sending NVA soldiers to fight in South Vietnam? "Yes. North Vietnam and South Vietnam are but one country. North Vietnam certainly has the right to help his brothers in the South and fight the aggressors." Do you think the United States had the right to send its troops to South Vietnam? "The United States had no right at all. Vietnam belongs to the Vietnamese. The United States has nothing to do with our country." (K-9)

A VC private reported that the cadres had told him that the Americans had started the war but his own opinion was more restricted: "I think that because of the influx of Americans to South Vietnam the war has become larger." He also felt that "both sides are responsible for this long war. As long as the North and the South are not unified this war will last forever." He felt that the North was right in sending the regroupees down South. As to regular NVA soldiers coming down, he felt that they had come in response to U.S. aid to the GVN, and rightly so: "How could North Vietnam stay quiet in the face of America's aggression in South Vietnam which, together with North Vietnam, is the same country?" (Curiously enough, some respondents do not condemn U.S./GVN shelling of villages, even if they insist that the United States started the war and is responsible for it. They somehow claim to accept that under the rules of war this is inevitable.)

An NVA private stated: "I agreed with the cadres [about America having started the war]. North Vietnam is a socialist country, we North Vietnamese people never did anything to hurt the Americans in their country, we never dropped bombs on America, why would the Americans bomb our country, killing our people and damaging our factories?" Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "Of course, the Americans." (K-11)

A VC cadre on the start and responsibility for the war: "At the beginning the war had the nature of an internal war. According to the Geneva Agreement of 1954, the North and South were to be reunified in 1956 by general election. The South Vietnamese government, however, ignored the agreement and it intended to maintain the division of the country. The South Vietnamese then formed the Liberation Front, standing up to request the government to reunify the country. This request was disregarded, therefore the Front had to start fighting against the government in the South in order to reunify the country. At the beginning the war was only fought between the Front with the support of the North Vietnamese troops and the South Vietnamese troops. But the South Vietnamese government sided with the free-world bloc, therefore the United States sent troops to South Vietnam to fight us . . ." Through this rather conventional VC reasoning the sergeant reached the unusual conclusion that "The important thing is not who started the war, but who made the war become violent, and I think the American government caused the war to become fiercer day after day, and is [now] responsible for the war in Vietnam." Also somewhat unorthodox was the sergeant's answer to the question as to who was responsible for the war continuing so long. He said: "It is hard to tell, because I think no wants the war to drag on. The longer the war goes on the more casualties and material losses those involved have to suffer. I believe that the United States wants to end this war, as we Vietnamese people do. However, the problem is that if the war is over, there must be a loser and a winner. And who wants to be the loser? Both sides wants to be winners, they want to be the winner, therefore the war is still going on." What did the cadres say about who started and is responsible for the war? "Not only the cadres but we, the fighters,

realized that it was the Americans and the puppet government of the South who started and are responsible for the war." (K-17) Thus, in one way or another, all the respondents, cadres and privates, NVA soldiers and VC fighters, are of the opinion that the war was caused by the Americans and is being kept going by the Americans. And despite the slight variation in the theme that we find, on occasion, as in the case of the above-quoted cadre, there is no one among the respondents who does not ultimately place the blame on the Americans. And there is no one among the respondents who does not see the war in defensive terms, from their own vantage point. From the standpoint of morale and cohesion, this is of course of very great importance. For he who considers himself unjustly attacked will of course go to any effort and sacrifice to defend himself. In fact, he will feel that he has absolutely no alternative. This then seems to be the feeling of those interviewed.

This conclusion is further consolidated by answers to a series of questions probing the respondents' attitudes on the rights of the NVA to fight in the South and the rights of the United States to fight in South Vietnam and bomb North Vietnam. Uniformly, from Northerners and Southerners alike, come the answers that the NVA was justified, in fact obligated, to enter the hostilities in South Vietnam, while, conversely, not one of the respondents could see any justification for U.S. action either North or South. While it is well known, that the official line of the Hanoi government and the Front in the South takes these positions, it is another thing to uncover that all respondents in this group fully subscribe to them, and very much in their own terms, and with considerable emotion, rather than by just rattling off the official line.

Only one man, a tough NVA cadre, when asked whether he thought the United States had the right to bomb North Vietnam, replied: "I do not know whether this bombing was legitimate or not. According to the cadres in North Vietnam, it violated the sovereignty of North Vietnam. However, I think that the United States bombed North Vietnam because the North Vietnamese government sent its troops to the South.

It was only a retaliatory action." (K-4) But this man too, like the rest, stated that "there would be no war if the Americans did not send their troops to Vietnam, thus I think they are responsible for the war." And he added: "The war could be ended if the American troops were withdrawn. Therefore the Americans are responsible for the prolongation of the war."

What, then, is it that the Americans want in Vietnam? "I think the Americans want to take over South Vietnam and use it as a stepping stone to attack the North and other countries in Southeast Asia, and if they are successful in doing this, they will try to attack China and make this war a modern international war." (K-11) Do you think that the Ameircans are different from the French in their aims? Or in their methods? A VC private replied: "I was still a child when the French were in Vietnam, so I really don't know much about our country under French domination. According to what I have learned in school, Vietnam was dominated by the French for many years, and yet the Vietnamese finally drove them out after almost ten years of fighting. In some way I think the Americans are like the French, the Americans also want to dominate the Vietnamese people like the French formerly did. But the dream of the Americans now is even greater than the French plan because the Americans want to take over Vietnam in order to set up more military installations in Vietnam for attacking other countries in Southeast Asia." (K-11)

A VC cadre had this to say: "According to the radio and the cadres, the United States wants to expand capitalism in Southeast Asia. I don't know much about politics but I think Americans want to take over Vietnam and dominate the Vietnamese people. The Front and the North Vietnamese government are planning to apply socialism in the whole of Vietnam, and the United States wants to expand capitalism. Socialism is opposed to capitalism and the United States therefore used its powerful forces to fight the Front and the North Vietnamese troops." How does he evaluate U.S. efforts? "The Americans did nothing good for the Vietnamese people but they bombed people's areas, killing innocent people and damaged houses." (K-13)

A VC private was asked whether in his opinion the Americans do anything beneficial for the South Vietnamese people. He answered: "The Americans did not do anything beneficial, but only bad things to the people. Bombs and shells have caused the death of the people, and the land was left uncultivated." (K-18)

An NVA private, on what the Americans really want in Vietnam: "I think the Americans want to invade and occupy Vietnam. They want to conquer South Vietnam in order to use it as a springboard to attack the North." Are the Americans different from the French? "Yes, the Americans are different from the French. They are more powerful, wealthier, and more clever than the French." Are the Americans aims different from those of the French? "The aims of the French and the Americans are identical -- that is, the invasion of Vietnam." (K-16) Did he regret having come to the South? "No." Why? "When I was in North Vietnam I saw U.S. aircraft attack my country. My intention is in coming to the South was to revenge our people." In your opinion, did the Americans help the South Vietnamese people in anything at all? "No."

A VC private, on America's real aims in Vietnam: ""I think the Americans want to conquer South Vietnam to make it their territory and to use the South Vietnamese people as slaves, like the Negroes in the United States." What do you personally think of the American people? "Personally, I think the Americans are the number one enemy of the Vietnamese people." Is there anything the Americans are doing you would approve? "Absolutely nothing." (K-17)

A VC cadre, on America's real aims: "The Americans want to occupy South Vietnam and use it as a base to attack the North." Why are they fighting the VC/NVA? "In order to occupy South Vietnam, they have got to fight the VC because the VC will not let them occupy Vietnam." Do you approve of any single thing the Americans are doing at all? "I do not approve anything the Americans are doing at all." Do you approve of anything the Americans are trying to do, though they have not been able to accomplish it yet? "I don't know what they are trying to do. But I do know what they are doing. They are bombing, shelling, spraying

killing the people, the animals and the crops as well." (K-9) Do you think that the Americans will be able to do in Vietnam what they have come to do? "The war has lasted so long. Many people were killed and suffered. The people hate the Americans more and more. They decided to fight the Americans and chase them out." Do you think the Americans are different from the French? "The Americans are not different from the French." How not? "The French enslaved our people. So do the Americans today. The French were defeated by the Vietnamese people. The Americans will not be able to avoid the French fate, being defeated by our people." But, the man was asked, the French called Vietnam a colony -- the Americans do not call Vietnam an American colony, do they? "Like the French, the Americans are using violence to oppress our people." (K-9)

An NVA cadre has a somewhat simpler view: "I do not know what they [the Americans] really want. I only know that they came here, live here, and occupy the South." Why do you think they are fighting the VC/NVA? "In order to occupy South Vietnam, they have to fight us." Do you approve of anything the Americans are doing? "Whether I approve or not, the Americans keep on doing what they want. My opinion means nothing." (K-8)

A VC private, to the question whether he saw this war as a war against the United States: "I think this war was against the Americans because the latter had started it. It was not against the GVN." Do you see yourself as fighting for Hanoi, the Front, or what? "I primarily fought for my family." Why? "Because my house has been destroyed by American bombs. I fought in order to keep the land first and second, to save my country." (K-17)

One VC private, though roundly condemning the Americans, was one of the few willing to give the GVN the benefit of the doubt. Are they mere lackeys of the United States? "In my opinion, the GVN efforts are also aimed at securing the country." In that case, why didn't you side with the GVN? "I was young. But the GVN did not make itself known to me. How could I join it?" Though at first glance this distinction in the private's responses between his complete condemnation of the Americans and his semi-acceptance of the GVN appears somewhat

bizarre, it is in various ways also reflected in other depositions. While quite a few of the respondents dismiss the GVN and the ARVN as lackeys and mercenaries, the thrust of their negative emotions is directed against the United States and the Americans, not against the GVN.

ASSUMED STANCE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

One of the much stressed lines in enemy propaganda is that America is divided, not into hawks and doves, but into "the American people" and "the American government." The American people, according to the VC/NVA line, are opposed to this war. How well does this line go over with the soldiers and in what form is it repeated by them?

How do you think the American people feel about the war? "The American people do not like this war, they hate the war. That was what I had learned through the newspapers in North Vietnam. I myself do not know it." This is an NVA cadre speaking. (K-4) A VC cadre had this to say: "The American people support our liberation war. They refuse to be drafted and they do not support the American imperialists' actions in Vietnam." (K-9) Another VC cadre: "According to the radio, the people of the United States have many times asked their government to stop the war in Vietnam. Many people who have sons and husbands fighting in Vietnam demonstrated against the United States Government and requested the government to send their people home. The radio also said that the people of the United States admired the Vietnamese people who have been fighting for the independence of their country." (K-13)

An NVA private on the subject: "I think most of the American people are resenting this war. And the same goes for the people in all other countries. They are all critical of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam." (K-12). A VC private, asked how he thought the American people felt about the war: "According to what I have learned from the radio, the American people were protesting against this war. They requested that their husbands and children be repatriated, and let the Vietnamese fight with each other." (K-30)

## XII. THE STRUGGLE IN RETROSPECT, FROM THE POW CAGE

A VC cadre, when asked whether he thought the aims he had been fighting for were important enough to be "worth the suffering of the people in a long war," answered: "The Vietnamese people have endured a lot of hardships but they are prepared to accept them to oppose aggression so that their children may live in freedom." (K-2)

An NVA cadre was asked whether he thought the aims he pursued were important enough for him to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "The objective of the Front is the common objective of almost all Vietnamese people, which is to liberate the nation from U.S. domination. To those who are fighting for the Front and the Vietnamese as well, it is an extremely important objective which determines the existence of a population and a nation. Therefore, we know that we will have to sacrifice our lives, and we will continue our fight with zeal. We want to show the world that we are fighting to protect our people, to safeguard our land, and to preserve the sovereignty of our nation; we do not fight the Americans on the continent of the United States and we do not bomb the United States of America, thus our fight against foreign aggressors in Vietnam is entirely logical." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "Yes. If this war is prolonged and I am killed or captured, my children and the next generation must continue the fight in order to restore independence and sovereignty to the nation. As for me, I would rather die in the struggle for independence than live under the domination of foreigners. As instructed by Uncle Ho, we will still have to fight even if the war is prolonged for five more years, ten more years, or twenty more years. If fathers cannot achieve victories, sons will succeed them." (K-5) What seems noteworthy in this man's statement who, incidentally was a draftee and not a volunteer, is the clarity and simplicity with which he enunciates the line as laid down by his side. Anyone who has ever listened to the aimless ramblings of captured Nazi soldiers in World War II cannot but be struck by the difference. Aside from permitting us an insight into the unified and stable thought

structure of such a cadre, the two passages also permit us a guess as to the efficacy of such a cadre as a teacher. One has reason to assume that men of this type are not only able to stand hardships and disappointments in large number, but also to instill a great deal of fighting ardor and resilience into the younger and less experienced men.

How about a simple VC fighter on the subject? Since Tet, how have you been thinking about the importance of the Front's aims and achieving them? "I always think the Front's aims are very important and have to be achieved." Did you think they were important enough for you to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "I thought they were important [enough] to sacrifice myself for the Front's cause." Did you think they were important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "I thought all the people should make the same sacrifice in order to drive the Americans out of this country." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "I think another generation should pursue this war if this is necessary for the Front to win." (K-22)

A VC cadre: "I have whole-heartedly supported the Front's aims. I am proud to be a prisoner today because I am worthy of the people." Did you think the aims were important enough to be worth the suffering? "Yes, they were." Do you think your children . . . ? "Yes, no matter how long it is we shall fight until the Americans pull out of our country. It could be five years, ten years, or longer. My children and grandchildren would continue to fight until final victory." (K-9)

It would serve little purpose to go on quoting directly. Of those interviewed, NVA and VC, private and cadre, all said that the sacrifices had been worthwhile and all said that in one way or another the war would have to continue through future generations if they themselves should not be able to achieve their aims.

## CONCLUSION

As said in the introduction, the purpose of this piece of military sociology, from designing the questionnaires to summarizing the replies and quoting from them so extensively, has been to arrive at some estimate of the enemy's morale, i.e., the non-material strength of his fighting forces, their resilience, their "reliability," their emotional vigor. To anyone who has accumulated any experience in interviewing soldiers in war, the results are -- as were the results of similar investigations into the VC/NVA before -- extraordinary: Enemy morale seems very high indeed, particularly in view of the enormous disproportion in power and resources of the two contenders.

What we mainly set out to do was to examine whether on the enemy side the cohesion and fighting spirit springing from it, is still as formidable as we concluded it was in our study of two years ago.* As we said in the introduction, for various reasons it was not possible to make a trend study in the technical sense, and direct comparisons cannot be made in a formal way. But what can be said is that morale, as it emerges from the above, is certainly not lower than it was then. If anything it is higher: The positions which the respondents take on all issues that we considered as critical for morale, have if anything been streamlined, adjusted, simplified, clarified, so that a high degree of sameness and simplicity of views and reactions on the part of the soldiers with regard to basic questions has been achieved. Apparently the soldiers, cadre and privates, think alike and feel very much alike on most important issues. What is perhaps still more important, their views, feelings, attitudes and responses tend to represent an intrinsically cohesive, logical whole; and the men emerge as the opposite of certain totalitarian types who "parrot" one half of a "line" but either do not buy, or cannot remember, or yield under pressure, the other half. Of course, not all of the respondents buy all of the line all of the time; particularly the privates express a few -- a very few -- doubts and disagreements on individual points. But if

*Kellen, op. cit.

adequate morale is defined -- and the author thinks it can so be defined -- as bringing it about that enough of the men buy enough of the line enough of the time, one might say that the enemy leadership has a tremendous margin of safety; even a substantial dip in morale would still not be likely to seriously impair the enemy's fighting efficiency.

One thing that the analyst found particularly striking -- and he has pointed to it a few times in the text -- is the degree to which the men not just "mouth" what they have been told, but seem to have fully absorbed and assimilated it, rendering it in their own terms, illustrating it with their own examples and experiences. Thus, what may or may not have started as indoctrination from without has become real conviction, real opinion, real emotion, and may therefore be regarded as virtually impossible to dislodge. To the extent that people are unmovable at all, these men -- all 22 except one -- are very unlikely of ever changing their views, or losing the willingness to sacrifice that springs from those views. They can perhaps be killed, but not dissuaded either by words or hardships. As in the previous analysis, it was found that all the elements of strength and cohesion, impressive by themselves, further tended to reinforce each other. The enemy soldier* trusts his leaders, likes his political officer, gains strength from criticism/self-criticism and the three-men cell, draws pride from his military successes, is encouraged by what he sees as the unalterable support and sympathy of the people, and relies heavily on what he swears is the righteousness of his cause. That is what some RAND studies indicated in 1965, 1966, 1967, and again what this study shows in 1969.

It is therefore not so much a question whether this report is "up-to-date" -- a question that was raised in connection with the previous study. True, the interviews on which this paper is based were all conducted with men who were captured in January 1969 at the latest. Is there any reason to say now, yes, but perhaps all this has changed, after they have been exposed to the additional hardships,

*Both the private and the low-level cadre.

losses and disappointments of 1969? Of course, it is theoretically possible that such a change has taken place. But there is just no reason to assume that the men who expressed themselves the way they did in 1968 would, after having been exposed to the additional combat and hardships of 1969, have had their spirit broken or their minds changed. And as, in addition, there continues to be the most visible and obstinate of all indicators of high enemy morale -- effective performance in the field -- there seems to be no reason to dismiss the findings on the ground that they may be obsolete because they are dated by six months.

These findings are hard to accept for many reason, perhaps particularly because the VC or NVA soldier, once captured, is -- as long as one does not take the trouble to speak to him seriously -- a very unimpressive little man, weak, short, emaciated. To think that this man, who besides lacks all the modern engines of war, at least the big ones, cannot be broken in his morale and motivation seems strange, because few probably would have carried on the war under circumstances comparable to his. At the very least, others would probably have resented having to fight an enemy who had B-52s, sensors and napalm, if they didn't have any. But it is precisely that resentment -- one of the most corrosive agents to morale -- that seems entirely absent in the enemy forces. One of the most effective leaflets in World War II was a leaflet entitled "Human Hands vs. Steel." It told the Nazi soldiers that, after all, men could not fight with their bare hands against steel; that their air force, equipment and supplies were inferior to ours; and that it was therefore not dishonorable but only logical for them to give up the fight and surrender.* To Hitler's supermen this was an eminently sensible way of thinking, and they responded in large numbers. But the enemy in Vietnam thinks differently.

However, the reader will probably find comparisons with other forces in another war more significant. In his excellent study based on PoW interrogations of the Chinese Army in Korea, Alexander L. George describes the disintegration of the PLA after General Matthew Ridgeway

*Lerner, op. cit., p. 192.

had taken command of the U.S. Eighth Army in early 1951.* Chapter 9 (The Erosion of Morale) says int. al.: " . . . combat morale was often so low that it required the immediate presence and active leadership of higher leaders at the front line to control the troops and obtain performance of military duties . . . many of the prisoners flatly stated . . . that PLA training and preparations had been totally inadequate . . . the disparity in weapons had exercised a profound effect on these prisoners . . . not only ordinary soldiers but many PLA combat cadres [our underlining], at least on company level [i.e., at the level of NVA and VC cadres this study has paid particular attentionto -- Ed.] also shared this belief . . ."** George adds that beyond that, "PLA military doctrine was discredited in the eyes of the Chinese soldiers by what they had experienced in Korea. It is of particular importance to note that disillusionment with Mao Tse-Tung's doctrine extended to combat cadres [our underlining]. . . . Under these conditions Chinese combat morale was not able to stand up. . . ."*** Chapter 10 (The Erosion of Organizational Controls) then shows how the "hard-core cadre" began to complain about "the unreasonable demands made upon them," demands that were "grossly unrealistic" under the prevailing conditions. The cadres also complained about "lack of personal freedom." This, say George, was "a major gripe." Beyond that, " . . . the politicization of the military cadre structure even in the best of PLA armies . . . remained incomplete and uneven, particularly at platoon and squad levels."**** In a word, the contrast between what George found in the PLA, based on interviews with PoWs, and what the above report has to say about NVA and VC soldiers, particularly the political reliability of the cadre, is stark indeed.

Of similar relevance is a memorandum, presented on 29 July 1951 by RAND staff member Herbert Goldhamer to the Commanding General,

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*The Chinese Communist Army in Action, Alexander L. George, Columbia University Press, 1967.

**George, op. cit., p. 167ff.

***George, op. cit., pp. 171, 189.

****George, op. cit., pp. 190-194.

Headquarters, FEAF, classified SECRET at the time.* Goldhamer states, int. al.: "It is my considered judgment that the cease-fire bid [by the enemy] was an imperative necessity for the CCF. This necessity arose not because CCF power had in the ordinary sense been destroyed . . . A more dangerous development had taken place. The CCF has increasingly lost its capacity to control its troops. It is a matter of the greatest importance to realize that . . . the loss of its military-political grip over its troops . . . reached a point in June that for the communist command cannot be estimated to be less than critical." Goldhamer reached these conclusions "on the basis of interrogations originally undertaken to provide a basic study of the social and military structure and the psychological characteristics of the CCF and PA." However, the collapse of morale at that particular time was so striking in Goldhamer's opinion that he felt it incumbent upon himself immediately to advise those in command of his findings.**

It may become clearer to the reader at this point why the author devoted so much attention to quotations from individual soldiers, and particularly low level cadre; it would appear to be most significant then that they "always say the same" and are -- in the terminology which this author rejects -- "well indoctrinated." It was precisely when these low-level cadre in the CCF and PA ceased "saying always the same" or being sufficiently "indoctrinated," that a simultaneous erosion of morale and organizational controls began to paralyze the enemy forces. None of the indications for such a breakdown which led Goldhamer to detect, and subsequently enabled George to trace, the course and the causes of the disintegration, have emerged in interrogations of PoWs were interrogated on whose statements this report is based.

But are there not many defectors, and is this not significant? Does it not show that the enemy soldier can break, after all? There

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*"Information Bearing on Cease-Fire Talks," Herbert Goldhamer, Project RAND, USAF, 29 July 1951, AUFERG, 2d Log Command, APO 59. (Declassified September 22, 1966.)

**Goldhamer, in personal conversation with the author.

are indeed many defectors, but this cannot be regarded as significant.* It would be so if the majority of the PoW respondents were revealing themselves as borderline cases, ready to defect if they could circumvent surveillance, or at least clearly deficient in at least one of the central elements of morale. But as long as the enemy soldiers and cadres -- or perhaps better than 90 percent of them -- are clearly not potential defectors, because they are not tempted to defect, defectors are of very minor significance in this war. Nor is psywar or an inadequate Chieu Hoi program to blame in this connection. Such efforts can only shake the tree and bring down the fruit if it is ripe. But the fruit seems neither ripe nor ripening, and there is no reason to assume that as long as the enemy can fight, he will cease fighting. As W. Averell Harriman said: "How can we expect the enemy to end their fighting if we don't?"** We only could expect that if he were physically, or on the grounds of morale, incapacitated. As he is not, he is likely to continue fighting as long as we do, and fighting of course includes Accelerated Pacification and Phoenix.

During the balance of this war and the negotiations that may end it, but also during the after-war period when we will have to live with Ho Chi Minh's subjects on whatever terms, the full cognizance of the enemy's morale and motivation in the pursuit of his "Revolution" could be a useful guide for us, especially if these 22 soldiers should really represent, as they well might, the quintessence of what millions -- and perhaps a majority -- of Vietnamese both North and South tend to feel after their own fashion. In this connection what may be most grating to our ears -- the intense anger against us, and the full responsibility that respondents attribute to us for the war in its present form -- may ultimately be a boon for all concerned. For very rare in the interviews are violent words on the part of the respondents against their Vietnamese opponents. Does that not indicate a high potential for reconciliation among them? But of course, interpersonal reconciliation and organizational compromise are not the same.

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*Also see p. 59 above.

**Los Angeles Times, June 11, 1969.

APPENDIX A - PRELIMINARY* TABLE OF RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

In the following a rough table of prisoner responses in highly condensed form is presented. The answers are divided into Positive (P) and Negative (N). Where totals fall short of the total number of interviewees (22) the difference is accounted for by the fact that respondents either did not answer the question in useable form, or had no opinion.

| | NVA | | | | VC | | | | ALL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cadre (6) | | Fighters (4) | | Cadre (7) | | Fighters (5) | | | |
| | P | N | P | N | P | N | P | N | P | N |
| Medical Care | 5 | -- | 4 | -- | 7 | -- | 2 | 2 | 18 | 2 |
| "Hardships" bearable | 5 | -- | 2 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 5 |
| Confidence in Leaders | 5 | -- | 4 | -- | 7 | -- | 3 | 1 | 19 | 1 |
| Attitude to Pol. Off. | 5 | 1 | 4 | -- | 7 | -- | 4 | -- | 20 | 1 |
| Food adequate? | 6 | -- | 2 | 2** | 6 | 1 | 5 | -- | 19 | 3 |
| Kiem Thao effective? | 6 | -- | 4 | -- | 7 | -- | 4 | -- | 21 | -- |
| 3 Men Cell effective? | 6 | -- | 4 | -- | 7 | -- | 2 | 2 | 19 | 2 |
| Village Response | 4 | -- | 4 | -- | 6 | 1 | 3 | -- | 17 | 1 |
| Expected Outcome | 5 | -- | 4 | -- | 4 | -- | 1 | -- | 14 | -- |
| Changes since Tet | 3 | -- | 3 | -- | 6 | -- | 1 | 2*** | 13 | 2 |
| Att. to Americans | -- | 6 | -- | 4 | -- | 7 | 1**** | 2 | 1 | 19 |

*A more complete table will be presented in the RM version of this D.

**Those who felt that food was not adequate did not complain that it was insufficient for any period of time but that (1 man) there was not enough variety, and (1 man) it had occasionally run short in combat.

***The two soldiers who felt things had changed for the worse since Tet did not mean that expectations of a win outcome had deteriorated, but that the war had become "more violent in their area."

****He blamed everyone, including Americans.

A look at the above figures would seem to confirm, by the descending order of morale (remaining, however, well above adequate in all categories with all four types of soldiers), from NVA cadre to VC private, that the interviews - despite the "tiny" sample - may well be representative, in view of the fact that this same slightly descending order from NVA cadre to VC private has been emerging as the general pattern in all studies known to this author.

## Appendix B

## PERSONNEL DATA ON RESPONDENTS

This appendix contains the basic data on the 22 interviewees whose statements form the basis of the above report. The reader will note that there is no No. 10, but instead a No. 23.

K-01

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Hiu Van Cuong |
| Rank: | Platoon Leader |
| Unit: | 1st Platoon, 2nd Company (District Main Force Unit) |
| Date of birth: | 1942 |
| Place of birth: | Tan Loi Village, Thoi Binh District, An Xuyen Province |
| Years of education: | 3 years |
| Marital status: | Married, 1 child |
| Social class: | Poor class farmer before joining the Front; middle-class farmer after joining the Front |
| Residence area status: | VC controlled |
| Date of joining the Front: | 1962 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | Party member |
| Date of admittance: | 1964 |
| Operational area: | Thoi Binh District, An Xuyen Province |
| Date of capture: | July 31, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | December 17, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | National Interrogation Center, Saigon |

K-02

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Vo Van Hung |
| Rank: | Company Executive Officer |
| Unit: | 3rd Company, 6th Battalion (Independent Battalion) |
| Date of birth: | 1945 |
| Place of birth: | Tan Son Nhi Village, Tan Binh District, Gia Dinh Province |
| Place of living prior to joining the Front: | Son Ky Hamlet, Tan Son Nhi Village, Tan Binh District, Gia Dinh Province |
| State of control of the living area at the time of joining the Front: | GVN controlled |
| Years of education: | 3 years |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Mother: | Living |
| Father: | Living |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | Two brothers and three sisters |
| Profession prior to joining the Front: | Gas station attendant |
| Social class: | Poor |
| Date of joining the Front: | February 27, 1966 |
| Party member or regroupee: | Party member |
| Date of admittance: | June 1967 |
| Operational area: | Tan Loi Village, Binh Chanh District, Gia Dinh Province |
| Date of capture: | September 27, 1968 |

K-03

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Xuan Truong |
| Rank: | Aspirant |
| Unit: | 6th Artillery Company, 3rd Subregion |
| Date of birth: | 1942 |
| Place of birth: | Quoc Oai District, Son Tay Province-North Vietnam |
| Years of education: | 7th grade |
| Date of joining the NVA: | April 1962 |
| Membership: | Party member |
| Date of joining the Party: | September 1965 |
| Date of infiltration: | July 1967 |
| Operational area: | Long An Province |
| Date of capture: | September 12, 1968 at Can Giuoc, Long An |
| Date of interview: | December 19, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | National Interrogation Center, Saigon |

K-04

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Pham Bang Cu |
| Rank: | Master Sergeant, Company Commander |
| Unit: | C7 Artillery Company, Subregion 3 |
| Date of birth: | 1940 |
| Place of birth: | Non Khe Village, Ninh Binh Province |
| Years of education: | 10th grade |
| Date of joining the NVA: | December 1962 |
| Party member: | Since December 1966 |
| Date of infiltration: | April 1966 |
| Date of departure: | October 29, 1965 |
| Unit area of operation: | Long An Province |
| Date of capture: | November 11, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | December 30, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | National Interrogation Center, Saigon |

K-05

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Ha Tam |
| Rank: | First Lieutenant, Company Commander |
| Unit: | 3rd Company, 14th Battalion |
| Place of birth: | Long Ma Hamlet, Duc Lap Village, Duc Tho District, Ha Tinh Province |
| Years of education: | Completed 6th grade |
| Marital status: | Married |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | One older sister |
| Profession prior to joining the army: | Farming |
| Date of joining the NVA: | April 1963 |
| Party member or regroupee: | Party member |
| Date of admittance: | December 1967 |
| Operational area in the South: | Quang Tri Province |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | May 4, 1968 |
| Date of capture: | October 5, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Trieu Phong District, Quang Tri Province |

K-06

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Tran Xuan Nhut |
| Rank: | Sergeant |
| Unit: | 34th Battalion |
| Date of birth: | October 1946 |
| Place of birth: | Minh Tien village, Phu Cu District, Hung Yen Province |
| Years of education: | 8th grade |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | One younger sister |
| Profession prior to joining the army: | Student |
| Draftee or volunteer: | Draftee |
| Date of joining the NVA: | September 15, 1965 |
| Party Member or regroupee: | Party member |
| Date of admittance: | February 1967 |
| Operational area in the South: | Darlac province |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | December 15, 1967 |
| Date of capture: | October 23, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Dakdam area, Daklac province |

K-07

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Le Van Gioi |
| Rank: | Company Executive Officer |
| Unit: | 402th Company, 265th Battalion |
| Date of birth: | 1941 |
| Place of birth: | Tan Thuy Village - Ba Tri District, Kien Hoa Province |
| Years of education: | 5 years |
| Marital status: | Married, 2 children |
| Social status: | Poor |
| Residence area status: | VC controlled |
| Date of joining the Front: | 1963 |
| Party membership: | Party member |
| Date of admittance: | May 1967 |
| Operational area: | Can Ginoc, Nha Be |
| Date of capture: | August 19, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | December 31, 1968 |

K-08

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Xuan Dai |
| Rank: | Private First Class |
| Unit: | 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment, 250th Infantry Division |
| Age: | 28 |
| Place of birth: | Quyet Thang Hamlet, Thanh Ha District, Hai Duong Province, North Vietnam |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Date of Joining the NVA: | July 30, 1967 |
| Date of infiltrating into the South: | May 1968 |
| Date of capture: | November 13, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 8, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-09

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van Binh |
| Rank: | Assistant Platoon Leader |
| Function: | Squad Leader |
| Unit: | Reconnaissance Squad, 261st B Battalion, 1st Regiment, Region II |
| Age: | 21 |
| Place of birth: | Nong Kinh Hamlet, Vinh Thanh Village, Mo Cay District, Kien Hoa Province |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Social class: | Poor farmer |
| Date of joining the VC: | December 9, 1965 |
| Date of party admittance: | December 1966 |
| Date of capture: | October 5, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 9, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-11

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Ngoc Dung |
| Rank: | Private First Class |
| Unit: | 2nd Sq., 1st Platoon, 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 16th Regiment |
| Date of birth: | March 1950 |
| Place of birth: | Van Luong village, Thanh Son district, Phu Tho province |
| Years of education: | 5th grade |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Mother and father: | Still living |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | One older sister, 4 younger sisters and 3 younger brothers |
| Profession prior to joining the NVA: | Student |
| Date of joining the NVA: | March 1967 |
| Party member or regroupee: | Member of Youth Group |
| Date of admittance: | March 1967 |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | October 2, 1967 |
| Operational area in the South: | Tay Ninh province |
| Date of capture: | October 8, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Ap Chanh hamlet, Trang Bang district, Tay Ninh province |
| Date of interview: | January 8, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | POW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa province |

K-12

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Chu Van Cham |
| Rank: | Private First Class |
| Unit: | 3rd Squad, 2nd Platoon, 7th Company (Independent Company) |
| Date of birth: | 1945 |
| Place of birth: | Tan Linh village, Tung Thien district, Ha Tay province |
| Years of education: | 7th grade |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | Two younger sisters |
| Mother: | Dead |
| Father: | Living |
| Profession prior to joining the NVA: | Student |
| Date of joining the NVA: | September 1965 (Volunteer) |
| Party member or regroupee: | Member of Youth Group |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | May 1967 |
| Operational area in the South: | Long An and Tay Ninh provinces |
| Date of capture: | September 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Can Duoc district, Long An province |
| Date of interview: | January 9, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | POW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa province |

K-13

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van An |
| Rank: | Deputy Squad Leader |
| Unit: | 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment |
| Date of birth: | 1947 |
| Place of birth: | My Qui Tay village, Duc Hue district, Long An province |
| Years of education: | Can read and write |
| Marital status: | Single |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | One younger sister |
| Mother: | Living |
| Father: | Dead |
| Profession prior to joining the Front: | Hired laborer |
| Date of joining the Front: | April 1966 (Volunteer) |
| Party member or regroupee: | Non-Party |
| Operational area: | Trang Bang district, Tay Ninh Province |
| Date of capture: | August 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Loc Hung village, Trang Bang district, Tay Ninh province |
| Date of interview: | January 9, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | POW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa |

K-14

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Phan Van Chanh |
| Rank: | First Lieutenant, Deputy Battalion Commander |
| Unit: | 5th Battalion (Mechanized Vehicle Battalion) - 4th Sub-Region |
| Date of birth: | 1931 |
| Place of birth: | Long My district town, Can Tho province |
| Years of education: | 7th grade |
| Marital status: | Married with one child |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | Two younger brothers and two younger sisters |
| Profession prior to joining the army: | Farming |
| Date of joining the army: | 1953 |
| Party member or regroupee: | Party member - Regroupee |
| Date of admittance: | 1961 |
| Date of return to the South: | November 1965 |
| Operational area in the South: | Tay Ninh and Gia Dinh provinces |
| Date of capture: | September 31, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Long Binh village, Thu Duc district, Gia Dinh province |
| Date of interview: | January 10, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | POW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa province |

K-15

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Tran Van Le |
| Rank: | Sergeant |
| Unit: | 3rd Platoon, 8th Company, 15th Battalion, 2nd Regiment, 9th Division |
| Date of birth: | August 1942 |
| Place of birth: | Huong Gia hamlet, Phu Cuong village, Kim Anh district, Phuc Yen province |
| Years of education: | 7th grade |
| Marital status: | Married and two children |
| Father: | Dead |
| Mother: | Living |
| Number of brothers and sisters: | One younger sister |
| Profession prior to joining the NVA: | Student |
| Date of joining the NVA: | March 1963 - Draftee |
| Party member or regroupee: | Non-party - North Vietnamese infiltrator |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | September 1967 |
| Operational area in the South: | Tay Ninh Province |
| Date of capture: | September 14, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Thanh Dien area, Tay Ninh Province |
| Date of interview: | January 14, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | National Interrogation Center, Saigon |

K-16

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Dinh Van But |
| Rank: | Private First Class |
| Unit: | 5th Battalion of the 5th Work site |
| Date of birth: | 1946 |
| Place of birth: | Yen Binh village, Yen Bay province |
| Years of education: | 5th grade |
| Date of joining NVA: | July 22, 1967 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | No |
| Date of infiltration in South Vietnam: | July 1968 |
| Operational area: | Tay Ninh province |
| Date of capture: | August 22, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Near Ba Den Mountain, Tay Ninh |
| Date of interview: | December 8, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW |

K-17

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Phan Van Nhanh |
| Rank: | Fighter |
| Unit: | C511th Company, 1st Battalion, Tra Vinh province |
| Date of birth: | 1939 |
| Place of birth: | Can Tru village, Long Ta district, Tra Vinh |
| Education: | 2nd grade, primary school |
| Party membership or Labor Youth member: | Labor Youth member |
| Date of joining the Front: | September 14, 1967 |
| Date of joining Labor Youth: | February 14, 1968 |
| Operational area: | Tra Ving province |
| Date of capture: | July 17, 1968 (DucMy village, Cau Ke district, Tra Vinh province |
| Date of interview: | December 9, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW |

K-18

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van Sau |
| Rank: | Combat soldier |
| Unit: | 265th Battalion, SubRegion 3 |
| Date of birth: | 1948 |
| Place of birth: | Can Giuoc, Long An Province |
| Education: | Illiterate |
| Date of joining the Front: | February 1968 |
| Party or Group member: | No |
| Unit area of operation: | Long An Province |
| Date of capture: | August 29, 1968 |
| Place of capture: | Long An Province |
| Date of interview: | December 10, 1968 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-19

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van An |
| Rank: | Fighter |
| Unit: | 2nd Sq., 2nd Platoon, 2nd Company, 520th Battalion, 3rd Southern Subregion |
| Date of birth: | 1941 |
| Place of birth: | Phu Tuc Village, Ham Long District, Kien Hoa Province |
| Years of education: | Read and write Vietnamese |
| Date of joining the VC: | March 1968 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | No |
| Operational area: | 3rd Southern Subregion - MR 4, Long An Province |
| Date of capture: | December 2, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 8, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-20

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van Phong |
| Rank: | Squad Leader |
| Unit: | 2nd Sq., 1st Platoon, 6th Company, 2nd Battalion, 17th Rgt., 7th Div. |
| Date of birth: | 1939 |
| Years of education: | 7 years |
| Date of joining the NVA: | 1967 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | No |
| Date of infiltration into the South: | December 1967 |
| Operational area: | Binh Long and Loc Ninh |
| Date of capture: | September 14, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 9, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-21

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van Co |
| Rank: | Assistant Platoon Leader - Adjutant |
| Unit: | 21st Co. (Rear Service company) under direct command of 1st Rgt. - 9th Div. |
| Date of birth: | 1931 |
| Place of birth: | Tan Trung Nien village, Hoa Lac district, Go Cong province |
| Years of education: | 4 years |
| Date of joining the VC: | Early 1965 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | Party member, 1966 (but expelled from Party in 1967 for having embezzled 7,000.00 piasters) |
| Date of admittance: | 1966 |
| Operational area: | Tay Ninh province |
| Date of capture: | May 17, 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 10, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-22

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Nguyen Van Mung |
| Rank: | Fighter |
| Unit: | 3rd Sq., 3rd Pl., District Main Forces unit |
| Date of birth: | 1947 |
| Place of birth: | Long Tan village, Dat Do district, Phuoc Tuy province |
| Years of education: | Rdad and write Vietnamese |
| Date of joining the Front: | November 1967 |
| Party member or Youth Group member: | No |
| Date of admittance: | No |
| Operational area: | Duc Thanh district, Phuoc Tuy province |
| Date of capture: | September 1968 |
| Date of interview: | January 12, 1969 |
| Place of interview: | Bien Hoa POW Camp |

K-23

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of subject: | Tran Van Khiem |
| Rank: | Squad Leader |
| Unit: | 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, 4th Company, 261 B Battalion |
| Date of capture: | October 5, 1968 |

(No other personnel data available.)