VIET CONG RECRUITMENT: WHY AND HOW MEN JOIN

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PREFACE

This memorandum is one of a series of reports in the continuing Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study being carried out by The RAND Corporation. Professor Joseph J. Zasloff of the Political Science Department of the University of Pittsburgh and a RAND consultant, started the interviews of VC POWs and defectors in July, 1964, assisted by a staff of Vietnamese. In September 1964, Professor John C. Donnell, the writer of the present report, now with the Political Science Department of Temple University and also a RAND consultant, joined the research team in Saigon. Professors Donnell and Zasloff returned to the United States in December 1964 ending the first phase of the field research. Dr. Leon Gouré and other RAND personnel in Saigon and Santa Monica have continued the project up to the present and conducted some 600 additional interviews. The analyses of the interviews and captured VC documents have dealt with a range of problems in the area of VC motivation and morale, including the effects on morale of various tactics and weapons systems and the reactions of Vietnamese refugees from VC-controlled areas to the VC and the war.

(Editor: Should we list here all the RMs produced in the project to date?)
The author would like to express his appreciation to a number of people for assistance and stimulus in this study, notably Dr. Guy J. Pauker, original team project leader, Dr. Joseph Zasloff, a close collaborator for many months, and Dr. Charles A. H. Thomson, for a particularly careful and helpful critique of an early draft of this study.
SUMMARY

This study is based mainly on an examination of interviews of VC POWs and defectors and also on captured VC documents. The writer participated in the first phase of the RAND field interview project in 1964 but also has analyzed much subsequent interview material here.

Men tend to join the VC for clusters of motives, although interviews with them often stress capture or defection. The most common motives are dealt with here in individual chapters, beginning with those reflecting the greatest degree of willingness, such as patriotism and personal interest, followed by a range combining willingness and VC coercion (the most common type), and, finally, VC recruitment carried out by the use of ruses, outright coercion and abduction.

The VC relied on persuasion, "sweet talk," and the manipulated, gradual involvement of the youth in its activities in the earlier period, but from 1961 to 1963 on (the date varies between areas), it has relied increasingly on more direct forms of coercion and more routine forms of conscription.

It is important to understand the range of persuasive methods featured in the earlier period (and still used when time and local conditions permit), for these tell much about the heart of the movement today. They provide insights into how it was first able to build a mass support base and how it infused a revolutionary elan into its cadres and into the rank-and-file fighters recruited in that period, many of whom form the steel framework of the organization today.
Specific forms of this trend toward harsher recruiting have varied considerably from place to place, but the widening of the war has pressed the VC to recruit younger men (there are more early teen-age youth performing noncombatant, paramilitary and even straight military functions than ever before) and to assign new recruits along with hamlet and village guerrillas directly to the regional and the Main Forces. Similarly, the earlier practice of telling peasants in many areas that their VC service would last only three years has given way to a general understanding that service is for the duration of the war.

In its recruiting appeals, the VC has attempted wherever possible to draw a parallel between the earlier war against the French and the present one against the "American imperialists and their GVN lackeys" and to revive the groundswell of nationalist,
anti-colonialist and "anti-imperialist" sentiment and support that it achieved in many parts of the country in the early post-World War II years following the French return to Vietnam. However, it appears that the VC has not been entirely successful in this because many peasants and other Vietnamese came to perceive that in the period from 1954 to about 1959—the "years of peace" as they sometimes refer to them, the American reconstruction advisory role in Vietnam differed significantly from that of the French. Thus many peasants evidently believed that South Vietnam had thrown off colonial domination and did not accept readily the VC charge of American imperialist domination. However, the Diem regime's spotty record of local administration was exploited by the VC line that local government was oppressive because GVN machinery, from the top down, was run by corrupt, self-serving lackeys of the US imperialists. The limited credibility of this theme among the peasants is indicated by the VC blending of it with a wide range of appeals to the recruit's own personal interest.

VC agitation has aroused many peasants' resentment against their previous style of life when this was drab and promised little hope of improvement but still did not involve painful deprivations. This is, they have stimulated new awareness of somewhat latent dissatisfaction and then taught the peasants a language of discontent and drilled them in the use of it.
The range of personal gratifications held out by the VC as rewards for revolutionary participation, especially in the earlier years, have included the winning of glory or just respect in the community, the "victory bandwagon" appeal stressing the advisability of being on the winning side, and educational and career opportunity both during the present war and in the new society to follow it. Here the VC has appealed to the peasants' land hunger with telling results, but VC failures to deliver on promises of land have resulted in sharp disillusionment in a number of sources. A smaller number of persons reported they had joined simply to escape personal responsibilities and difficulties at home.

VC recruiters have profited from peasant dissatisfaction with GVN local officials and the behavior of local militia units during the Diem period, much of it generated by heavy-handed management of "community development" labor on the agrovilles, strategic hamlets, and other projects. A small percentage of men in the sample who got into trouble with the GVN over such problems in the early years (i.e., the late 1950's) fled to isolated areas and stayed in the VC for longer periods and eventually became higher rankers, although some of them, too, later defected.

Adventurousness appears among the motives for joining, but interviewees almost invariably play this down as unbecoming a Liberation Front fighter with a mature political perspective. Admiration for the guerrillas, and the desire to handle weapons and to see "liberated" areas under VC control were some specific factors mentioned here.

GVN/US military operations which hit\\n\\n\\ndeceptively\\n\\n\\ndeliberately or accidentally are more generally said by VC cadres (as opposed to the rank-and-file) to have aroused anti-GVN sentiment and \( \text{stimulated} \) VC recruitment; and interviewee reports indicate that a second factor weighing heavily in the imputing of blame for such attacks is the political milieu of the particular community hit; i.e., hamlets largely
under VC control tend to blame the GVN/US for the ensuing casualties and damage and those mainly under GVN control tend to blame the VC. Peasants are inclined to blame the VC for such attacks when guerrilla activities are clearly provocative (e.g., firing on low-flying aircraft) or even when it is known that VC elements are in the hamlet, because their very presence is known to draw GVN/US fire. Still others evidently blame both sides or neither, expressing grim resignation to the hazards of war and they, along with many others, tend to take a "pox on both your houses' attitude toward the VC as well as the GVN.

Appeals to dodge the GVN draft have been very successful, particularly when coordinated with VC intelligence on the status of village youth scheduled for imminent GVN induction. Recruiting appeals stress the impossibility of not serving one side or the other as the war has spread, the individual's duty to serve the Front rather than the imperialist invaders, and the possibility that the long VM-VC experience in guerrilla warfare will raise the individual's chances for survival on the VC side rather than on the enemy's.

Among special VC recruiting target groups have been ex-Resistance (VM) members who stayed in the South instead of being regrouped North in 1954. Many of these men evidently lost contact with the shrunken VM cadre network in the next few years and were primarily interested in returning to peaceable lives with their neglected families. However, they inevitably were located by VC cadres and in many cases, harrassment and blackmail by Diem government security organs tended to reinforce the VC cadres' argument that these men would be safe only if they returned to the revolutionary cause.

Former GVN local officials have constituted another special recruitment target. Their switching of loyalty was valued by the VC for its power to dramatize the VC "inevitable victory" theme and its vaunted policy of leniency toward former enemies. These ex-officials also have been drawn to VC commitments by their need to maintain contact with relatives and properties in VC zones.
GVN military forces are another special recruitment target, and military proselytizing is a major recruitment effort because it can "strike into the enemy ranks with less cost in blood." Special appeals and techniques used here feature lenient treatment for captured GVN personnel including early release after some indoctrination by which the VC "adds friends and subtracts enemies"; pressure on rural families to get their city-dwelling sons to visit home so VC recruiters can contact them; invitations to GVN forces to enjoy VC entertainment troupe performances during the New Year cease-fire periods (observed only by the VC before 1966), and medical care and longer-term political indoctrination of captured GVN personnel when VC facilities are adequate for this.

Among specialized recruiting techniques used more widely during the earlier period but still in prominent use are the large propaganda and recruitment meeting in VC and contested villages and also those under fairly from GVN control, when the VC can break into such an area, usually at night, summon the inhabitants, harass them and collect "contributions" and recruits. Night attacks on strategic hamlets also employ this sequence plus the additional dimension of a display of military power. The VC often plants agents in these crowds to pick out onlookers responding enthusiastically to the message and reporting them to cadres who follow up these leads with personal visits. Such face-to-face appeals usually involve careful advance collection of information on the target individual with particular attention to personal problems that might make him particularly susceptible to certain appeals.

The gradualness of involvement in the VC and the transition from part-time to full-time commitment and becoming what is described as an "illegal person" was typical particularly of
the earlier period in which the VC had more time to play out such gradualist approaches. A frequent pattern of such activities included initially distributing leaflets, occasionally standing watch for the hamlet guerrillas, helping to recruit friends for sabotage and military service, and so on, and then finally leaving home and becoming a full-time guerrilla at levels ranging from the village through the regional and up to the Main Forces. Wellindoctrinated interviewees report the departure as a proud and glorious occasion.

Further along on the scale toward coercive recruitment is found a whole range of ingenious ruses by which VC agents have entrapped persons into service, or, more frequently, into a situation in which one is obliged to submit to political indoctrination for a period and then finds himself under pressure to signify the ultimate commitment through volunteering for military or other service.

This study reveals limited information on the effective use of women as propaganda and recruiting agents and political instructors. As recruiters, they employ their feminine charms but the puritanism of the movement does not condone the use of sexual intimacies, though this apparently occurs in isolated instances. Women play important roles in helping build psychological pressures for recruitment including direct enthusiasm for joining and more motives to conform socially by joining.

Forcible recruitment and conscription have been more widely used in the VC, as noted earlier, but even when outright coercion is used, e.g., initial abduction by VC agents, it often is only the first of a three-stage experience which leads subsequently to a period of days to months of political indoctrination, and finally, strong pressure on the individual to volunteer for military service. In numerous cases, alleged abduction appeared
to constitute a form of conscription in the sense that the men had been given some advance notice of their impending induction and there was some general understanding among at least the VC elements in the area that all young men had to perform VC military service. A significant number of interviews alleging abduction, especially in the pre-1963 period, turn out on close study to reveal a considerable amount of original enthusiasm for the VC.

The three-stage process of conscription, indoctrination, and pressuring to volunteer has been very effective in deepening the revolutionary commitment of large numbers of men who previously were politically unaware. But much of its importance lies in its probably more common function of tightening organizational bonds around the individual who still may not undergo a deep-seated political "awakening" but is by now much more tightly enmeshed by not only political but also psychological and social ties.

The post-abduction "volunteering" process is significant also in its function of dramatizing the power of the organization over the will of the individual. Gradually, as a man's combat and other VC experience, the camaraderie, and the political controls such as the three-man cells and the frequent or daily criticism sessions become integrated in his way of life, his initial resentment over forcible conscription and perhaps forcible volunteering often tends to fade. However, even in the case of a man who stays in the VC for several years and fights well, an initial experience of forcible induction often followed by the "manipulated voluntarism" of
leave a psychological residue of hostility that can add weight to subsequent disappointments in the movement and contribute toward an eventual desertion or defection.

The VC tries to replace the sources of emotial succour and social and political authority in the recruit's old life (i.e., family, friends and locally prestigious figures) with VC cadres and commanders and peasant communities visited by his unit, but it is only partially successful in this because distress over separation from family and possible hardships of the family caused by the man's joining continue to plague many men in VC service and to bulk large in motives to desert. Whatever transference is achieved by the VC is not irreversible, a point which underscores the need of these men for adequate political and social reorientation when they leave the VC.

A related problem is the long-range political impact of the legacy of hate generated by the war in many of its aspects including military operations causing peasant casualties and property damage. The VC strives diligently to use the various effects of the war on peasant life to maintain an emotionally charged atmosphere in which VC "love-hate" propaganda damn...
Among the factors determining whether residual hostility among the population will be dissipated or transformed into support for the GVN will be the nature of the ongoing conduct of the war and rural reconstruction campaigns. Such considerations as the extent of humiliation experienced incidentally through unintended side-effects of the war also will influence this outcome.

Anti-American propaganda in recruitment appeals and indoctrination appears to play a rather mechanical role, particularly among the rank-and-file, but it is more significant in cadre motivation, for it defines the most powerful of the of the malevolent forces in the Communists' devil theory of politics. Here, though, the VC creates a vulnerability on its own part, for in conditioning its men to anticipate cruel treatment at the hands of Americans after capture or defection, it lays them open to disillusionment with at least parts of the cadres' political line if these men's own direct experience with Americans turns out to be humane and honorable. The positive results of genuine and sympathetic concern for these people can be increased by a kind of "multiplier" residing in the high level of affect normally found in Vietnamese interpersonal relations.
Substantive political education is required to reorient ex-VC and also many of the refugees coming out of VC zones, but it must take into account the fact that considerable numbers of these people have been intensely politicized and trained to new levels of articulateness and social analysis. Superficial training based on anti-Communist slogans will not suffice to engage their interest. Such political equation should stress such themes as a refutation of the VC claim that this war is but a continuation of the earlier struggle against the French for independence and point out its destructive class struggle character. But political achievements by the GVN including increased stability in the countryside will be essential ingredients of any efforts to supply deeds along with the words requisite to win the support of these people.

The gradual diffusion through Vietnamese society of elements of Marxist-Leninism thought has been underway for over a generation and will tend to complicate this task. The South Vietnamese have been agitated and incited to demand social change by hordes of cadres representing both sides in this war; but given the essentially conservative aspirations of the peasants (for land and the protection of family and private ownership institutions), they should not be very difficult to persuade that non-Communist leadership represents their strongest hope for constructive change, given a modicum of GVN coercion and political dynamism demonstrating its capability to defend the countryside and satisfy these aspirations.
I. INTRODUCTION: SOME PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY

This memorandum deals with the motivational aspect of VC recruitment—why and how men have gone into the movement. It gives only local and episodic information on the related subjects of the size of recruit classes or groups for various regions or the entire country through time and the flow of internal recruitment, e.g., the channeling upward of manpower from hamlet militia to village guerrilla units to local (regional) forces to main forces and, during the past three years, the tendency to bypass this recruitment ladder and assign raw recruits directly to local and main force units. Information on these aspects of the problem is distributed periodically in MACV reports, one of which is cited below.

Most of the information used in this report was obtained in interviews of VC POWs and defectors, and a smaller amount has come from captured VC documents.

Professor Joseph J. Zasloff and a team of Vietnamese associates launched the first phase (July-December 1964) of the current RAND interview project on Viet Cong Motivation and Morale. The present writer joined the project in Vietnam that September and in the next three months the team members interviewed POWs and defectors in military and civil detention centers in all the four ARVN Corps areas. But in addition to the 145 interviews recorded in the Phase I sample, the present study is based also on an examination of many interviews in the subsequent sample—and particularly the first 200—plus captured VC documents.
There are caveats to be observed in attempting to assess the reliability of information obtained in interviews with POWs and defectors, particularly in regard to such sensitive questions as their political loyalties and attitudes at the time of entering the VC organization. But just as certainly, much can be learned from these statements about these men's motives for joining. One method by which the interviewers attempted to maximize reliability was repeated questioning on motives for joining, and repeated interviews of many of the ex-VC with especially interesting backgrounds. In the first phase, for example, a considerable number of interviews ran up to twelve or more hours and the longest interview in Phase I ran to 25 hours. These usually were divided into three-hour sessions.
In discussing the motivation of a Vietnamese who joins the VC, it is important to consider a range of clusters of motives rather than a single one. A man usually does not join the VC voluntarily for just one reason, although one (or more) may appear so conspicuous during an interview as to obscure others. Although there has not been an attempt here to count and sort them rigorously in a quantified way, some of these clusters will become evident to the reader in the following chapters.

*Such an approach has been used by C.A.H. Thomson in dealing with motives for defection from the VC in [Editor - cite Thomson and Carrier RM on Chieu Hoi]. This study describes the following clusters of motives for defections, as occurring in the following order: "personal hardships of active service," "concern over the economic situation of the subject's family, or concern over his own economic status and future," "criticism by peers or superiors," along with punishment, "fear of death in combat and loss of faith in a Viet Cong final victory," "disillusionment with Viet Cong aims of liberating South Vietnam." This study sets forth sixteen major reasons for defections (Table 3, p. 35) and then shows how these tend to cluster, as follows (pp. 42-43): [Typist: copy 4 paragraphs marked on these 2 pages, indent and single space].
Moreover, factors of time and experience often complicate the task of unraveling the strand of motives for an individual's joining. As to time, if a period of years or perhaps only months has elapsed since joining, he may well have some difficulty in recalling accurately his personal situation and the various pressures he was under at the time of recruitment.

As to experience, many factors come into play. In some cases and these include not only many POWs but some defectors who have experienced protracted and harsh GVN interrogations, another type of distortion of the picture of original attitudes may result from the interviewee's deliberate or unconscious dissembling for self-serving purposes. Ex-VC in GVN detention tend to give responses shaped in part by their new environment which includes some GVN political re-indoctrination for at least the defectors. GVN interrogations, even when conducted without great duress, tend to result in a selective recall of aspects of a man's VC experiences, sometimes expressed in idealized and sentimentalized terms due to various pressures such as the need to justify past sacrifices in one's own view, the natural tendency to forget the most painful aspects of some experiences, and so on.
Systematic VC political indoctrination after recruitment causes other distortions as the individual accepts the propaganda line and integrates it into his own thinking. An attempt will be made here to describe how such themes as dissatisfaction with village life and antagonism toward the "American imperialists" may bulk large in the interviewee's statements following capture or defection, but actually have been acquired or at least sharpened to a significant degree through VC indoctrination received before and particularly after joining the movement. So these originally might not have been motivating forces factors until after VC agents had dramatized and often exaggerated the peasants' difficulties with local authorities and the alleged hopelessness of trying to secure justice and responsive government at the local and national levels. Aggravating circumstances exploitable by VC propagandists appear to have varied considerably between areas, but the most remarkable fact is not that they existed; rather, it is in the VC cadre's ingenious and patient use of them in his political agitation mission.

Thus, the VC, in effect, supply the peasant with a language of discontent and train and prod him in the use of it. Beyond this, the VC itself can be seen as an organizational vehicle for aggravating, articulating, amplifying and disseminating discontent—along with a blend of Communist-nationalist idealism—then channeling the resulting hostility into insurgent activities and operations and controlling the whole by infinitely varied applications of combined coercion and persuasion.
The interplay of motives and the deliberate or unconscious obfuscation of original motives is vividly illustrated in the cases of men claiming to have been forced into the VC by abduction (these are dealt with specifically in Chapter XVII). Frequently there are internal contradictions in the statements of such persons, indicating that the original act of joining was attended by some or even much enthusiasm and willingness, contrasting sharply with the raw coercion which they may claim early in the interview was solely responsible.

It is also clear, however, that many men who were forcibly recruited still performed well as VC combat troops before capture or defection. In many cases they were given initially a period of political indoctrination and perhaps assigned to a stint at food production in an isolated area under close political surveillance. Usually men in this situation periodically were asked to volunteer for transfer to combat units and many did so but some, at least, were motivated to sign the roster of volunteers merely as a gesture of compliance with this system of "manipulated voluntarism." It might be noted here that men of any nationality often fight well even when
they are plagued by a certain amount of skepticism and indifference concerning military and political goals laid down by their leaders, and even the capabilities of those leaders, as long as deficiencies in leadership are of a relatively theoretical or doctrinal type and not immediately related to the soldier's prospects for satisfaction of such basic needs as decent subsistence, consistency in standards of discipline and survival in combat.
In the next chapter, a summary analysis is presented of recruiting trends and the VC's increasing tendency from particularly 1963 on to increase the element of coercion entailed in recruiting. Individual chapters are devoted to various recruiting themes and appeals and also to specialized methods used with specific target groups. The next to last chapter, No. 17, describes in detail the most coercive forms of recruitment and a now common and most significant practice of pressuring men forcibly inducted and indoctrinated to volunteer for combat service.

Because many VC cadres, particularly, see this revolutionary struggle as a continuation of the earlier Indochina War against the French, comparisons are provided frequently in this report between the older cadres' attitudes toward certain parallel issues in the two wars, e.g., the element of nationalism and anti-French and anti-American sentiment.

The interviews are sometimes quoted at length to give the reader a feel for the style of expression used by the interviewees, along with something of the nuances of their widely varying degrees of political understanding and political indoctrination, as well as contradictory elements in their loyalties and general attitudes toward the VC and the war in general. In many cases a thumbnail sketch is provided, tracing the origins and VC career line of an individual interviewee as a more specific context for the evaluation of his statements on any given subject.

Supporting interview material is presented in the nine appendices.
II. THE TREND TOWARD CONSCRIPTION AND FORCIBLE RECRUITMENT: AN OVERVIEW

VC recruiting methods and results have varied a good deal over time and different areas of Vietnam. As an insurgent movement, the VC has had to tailor its appeals and its blend of persuasion and coercion to local situations which vary all the way from long-time revolutionary districts to areas which have long remained under relatively firm control by the French and later, the GVN. Similarly, the original elements of social protest which the VC often successfully exploited vary in strength between areas which have enjoyed relatively good local administration and others which have experienced some or much maladministration and corruption. Economic standards are another variable, but this does not mean that only poor areas are hotbeds of insurgency. Provinces of Central Vietnam such as Quang Tri which are not only poor but have a long tradition of revolutionary activity do fit into this category, but so do such relatively wealthy areas as the Mekong Delta Province of Kien Hoa, upon which the VC have concentrated a good deal of organizational effort precisely because it does afford such wealth to whoever controls it, and also, of course, because of its terrain which includes myriad waterways and large stretches of marsh land.

The ratio of central revolutionary control to local autonomy enjoyed by insurgent leaders varies also. One of the subjects on which very little is known is the extent of clique or factional rivalry and local "empire-building"
VC recruitment has shown a trend from relatively selective and voluntaristic methods in the early years to more forcible methods including abduction and forced indoctrination. This trend became progressively stronger from 1961 on, although it did not affect many areas until 1963 or after. It resulted from the widening of the war and the consequent VC assignment of heavier recruitment quotas to the villages to replace casualties and maintain the desired momentum toward an ever-larger Main Force.

Although most recruitment today is based on conscription, often followed by indoctrination, it is essential to an understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the VC movement to examine closely the earlier recruitment methods and techniques which included strong ingredients of willingness or voluntarism along with elements of coercion. For a study of the political appeals and strategems of the earlier stages of the movement's expansion and consolidation reveals much about its capabilities then for building a mass support base and infusing a revolutionary elan into not only its cadres but also many rank-and-file fighters who eventually went on to become cadres themselves. It discloses much about the political expectations and attitudes of these men who now form the steel framework of the organization and how their attitudes tend to be diffused among their comrades in the struggle. And, finally, such a study also provides insights into how the VC subsequently
has been able to use heavier-handed recruiting methods and still give them some tinge of the willingness that characterized the earlier, more spontaneous type of recruitment.

A MACV document of 196* describes recruiting standards for 1962 as comparatively stringent in fixing the preferred age bracket from seventeen to thirty and excluding persons who have many children as well as persons with chronic and contagious diseases, and the disabled and ailing. Furthermore, only volunteers were to be recruited.

Political criteria were similarly rigorous:

People who are political suspects, or who have served the GVN as draftees or members of the SDC, Civil Guard, Republican Youth, etc., are not to be recruited. The same applies to people who surrendered to or were arrested by [the GVN] and caused damage to the VC by
furnishing [the GVN] with information. People who have relatives working for [the GVN] or [belonging to] the [GVN's] National Revolutionary Movement or Can Lao (Labor) Party, etc., are not to be recruited.

Eligibility for recruitment was supposed to extend only to individuals cleared by VC security organs; to "people who have no hatred of the VC even though their relatives [have been] arrested by the VC"; to deserters from the SDC, Civil Guard, and Republican Youth, and to "religious people who are not fanatic."

In 1963, according to this document, these criteria were eased considerably. The age bracket of seventeen to thirty was retained but "women were also to be recruited for logistic agencies." Health requirements were now simply "[adequate] health and no contagious diseases." And the VC was "to recruit not only volunteers but to force all youths in the draft age to enlist." Not only deserters from the SDC, CG and the Republican Youth became acceptable, but ordinary non-deserting former members as well, and "city dwellers." The only category still rigidly excluded was that of youths suspected of having worked for the GVN as spies. Even the youths of disputed and sect-controlled areas, previously rated by the VC as "elements lacking a clean background," could now be taken in, by force if necessary. Moreover, the VC "in Central Vietnam" used ambushes and attacks on strategic hamlets to abduct youths as recruits, according to this document, but actually these practices were not limited to that region. And sometime thereafter, the
document indicates, the upward end of the recruiting age bracket was pushed upward from thirty to forty.*

Ex-VC interviewees tend to give fragmentary and sometimes conflicting evidence on the development of these recruiting trends because of the considerable local variations in recruiting employed by the VC. Generally, hard-core cadres tend to put a relatively voluntaristic face on recruiting while defectors and rank-and-file sources who were in the movement for shorter periods and received correspondingly less political indoctrination tend to stress the coercive aspects of recruitment.

A district recruiting chief (D1-2[1]) operating in a village of Cai Lay District, Dinh Tuong, said August 1963 had marked the change to compulsory conscription in his area, which had been under VC control since 1962. Large propaganda meetings were held as a principal recruiting method before that date and continued in use afterward; but more coercion was applied to the youth to "volunteer" in the meetings of the later period (this is described more fully in a later section of this paper dealing with such propaganda meetings).

*It may be noted in passing that even this document includes some of the contradictory interpretations often encountered in reports of the VC's application of elements of voluntarism and coercion to recruiting situations. At one point the document notes that "since guerrilla level forces are a basic organization [sic], all men [and] women, including youths above seventeen years old, are forced to join." On the next page, however, it makes the following comment about farmers, considered the "major element" by the VC in its recruiting: "Although farmers play the most important role in Vietnam's economy, they have been exploited, [so that] the VC experience no difficulty in persuading them to oppose the RVN."
A Main Force assistant platoon leader (AG-174) who had served in the Mekong Delta from 1961 to 1964 was one of those who discussed another dimension of this problem: the difference in methods employed in contested and liberated areas -- but here again this is a difference which has tended to disappear as the VC's recruiting needs have swelled:

The Front never forces people to join its combat forces. In liberated areas, whoever does not volunteer is considered to be a pacifist and the Front will send him word to do his bit for three years. At the end of the required time, he will be demobilized.

In contested areas, young men are called together to attend [indoctrination] courses. Those who volunteer join the Front. Those who do not are dismissed because it will not be much good to force them.

This is an oversimplified and somewhat idealized description stemming from a cadre bias, so some clarification is in order; but before proceeding to that, it should be noted that another cadre (AG-50) stated that in Long My District of Phong Dinh Province, where he operated from 1962 to early 1965, the contested area youths who did not volunteer after indoctrination were not simply dismissed, as the above source indicated, but were required "to sign a statement, committing themselves not to fight for the enemy and to move and live in liberated areas."

He also said that the assignment given the youths in "liberated" areas depended on the extent of their
enthusiasm for signing up during the recruitment meetings: those who joined eagerly "were allowed to work in their home villages and those who did not do so were frequently sent far away from home for training."

A statement corroborating the description of conscription in VC-controlled areas given by the first cadre, above, and of the tightening of the system in 1964, was provided by a seventeen-year-old conscript (Z022-SN) far down the scale of "hard-coreness" from the previous two sources. He reported that the VC took over his hamlet in Hoa Loc District, Dinh Tuong in 1960. As a boy of twelve, he joined the VC children's organization and the VC "tried to persuade people from the ages of twenty to twenty-five to enlist in their army." Many volunteered and those who stayed home "had to guard the hamlets." But in 1964, the conscription system was introduced in that area, which is described as follows:

...every young man in the village was forced to perform "youth duties"...the VC told us...that we had to fulfill our obligations toward the revolution.... Adults had to serve for three years, younger people for one year. After that meeting, we went home to get ready and three days later, we left, just like those who had enlisted in the government [CVN] army....

This youth was assigned to a Main Force unit as an ammunition carrier.

*These recruitment and propaganda meetings will be dealt with more fully in the chapter on "The Large Propa
ganda and Recruitment Meeting."
To clarify the cadre's statement quoted earlier (AG-174), it must be pointed out that the person who is told he should serve three years is usually given political indoctrination and then asked to volunteer; but even if he is not, he probably will end up with a regular military assignment anyway. It appears that such men often were assigned earlier to farm production or low-level military units such as village guerrilla squads, but that since about early 1964 many have been sent to Main Force units if young and in good health. A boy of fifteen or sixteen may be allowed to perform "youth duties" by serving in the hamlet militia. But even though such youths in some areas are told their service will be of a certain fixed duration, the more recent trend seems to have been for recruiters to stress the necessity of remaining in the service until victory is won. Furthermore, men told originally that they need serve only three years in the part-time functions of the hamlet militia often are given gradual doses of indoctrination and pressured or persuaded eventually to join a military unit which may be at any level, from the village guerrillas up to the Main Forces.

Some youths in special circumstances, e.g., being the only son in a family, which is a status afforded exemption on the GVN side also, by the way, may perhaps be allowed to remain in such hamlet forces indefinitely. But the rising level of conflict has brought about the increased participation of such youths in village all over Vietnam and the only situations in which they truly can leave the ranks altogether fall into two categories which will be only mentioned here: persons who have broken regulations
and been returned to their villages in disgrace (only a few instances of this have been noted); and, in some instances, persons who have not accepted the indoctrination calculated to make them volunteer for service and, also in this category, even more seasoned troops and cadres whose morale has deteriorated so much that they appear incapable of political resuscitation through additional indoctrination for a time, at least, and so are allowed to return to their villages. In the words of a captured cadre who came to regret that he had not taken this action himself (ZHO-49-SN), such persons have had to tolerate the ridicule of the populace, but perhaps only for a limited period. Again, as the war is widened, however, such persons probably are called back into active service, in at least hamlet guard duty, in a matter of time.

On the problem of determining numbers of recruits obtained in given areas at particular times, the MACV document cited earlier notes that local recruiting variations pose serious difficulties:

Accordingly, an analysis of the number of recruits and training courses accomplished by the VC in 1962 and 1963 as well as the estimate of their future capabilities is a difficult task which can hardly be accomplished with accuracy....

The RAND interviews throw only occasional light on this problem. A rather rare item of detailed but localized information is supplied by a source (source) who had been assistant to a district military committee in the Cu District, Vinh Binh Province, and had served also as a company commander before his capture. He described obstacles his district had encountered in its recruiting after 1963:
He said the provincial party committee had required, and obtained through the village cadres, 40-45 new recruits every month from 1960 to 1962. But in 1963 recruitment became more difficult and only about 20 men per month could be obtained. If this number dropped as low as ten, he said, men were taken from village guerrilla and district regional forces and assigned to the Main Forces. This became a common practice in 1963. Since 1964, he said, only about 30 per cent of the recruitment quotas assigned by the province committee could be obtained and he blamed this dodging of the VC draft on fear of risks, family reasons, including poor families' need of the farm labor of their men, and the fact that "many had been drafted by the GVN."*

On the declining standards of selection and training he said the following:

*He also gave the following detailed information on recruitment in his district:

... by the end of 1963, a whole platoon of regional forces at Cau Ngang was used in [reconstituting] the Cuu-Long Regiment.

The 503rd Company, a district regional force, was operating in the nine villages of Tra-Cu District. It gave little help to the Cuu Long Regiment, but it helped to make the village guerrillas the backbone of the regional forces. Its full strength (120 men) was still insufficient for becoming a battalion as required by a decision of the Province Chapter Committee. In contrast, the Cuu-Long Battalion, set up in 1961, has become the Cuu-Long Regiment.
Formerly, the selection of new recruits or fighters was very careful, based on the social class of each individual. They had to undergo a resting period, and elements were rejected. They received military training before being assigned to a combat unit. Now, the screening of new recruits is careless, and their training is given in proportion as they are assigned to combat units as replacements. The new fighters joining my unit in the last six months before my capture had very little combat experience and therefore their fighting is weak.

A trend toward taking younger recruits has developed, although some boys of only fifteen and sixteen have been recruited for several years for combat, but especially for special non-combat tasks such as entertainment and propaganda troops and jobs in the service units (e.g., munitions plants, quartermaster services, etc.). A former VC acting company commander who had fought in Dai Loc District, Quang Nam (G-28) commented that "In 1960, the new recruits were older, over thirty. Now, the new recruits are between eighteen and twenty; the oldest was twenty-five." The reason which he gave for this was the following: "Our forces are using now the youths who had been drafted and trained by the GVN. They either have deserted or have been discharged from military service." Such men, he said, "constituted about one-third of the total number of men in my company."*

*Incidentally, when questioned about their morale this source gave a reply which seems to reflect what due to his cadre bias: "The only thing one can say is that they were enthusiastic... The morale is much
This statement is typical of a number in the sample which appear to be only partially true. For one thing, the VC deliberately has widened its recruiting dragnet to take in younger men. For another, not all the EX-GVN personnel described here as replenishing the VC ranks are men who have "deserted or... been discharged" from the GVN side. Many have been forcibly indoctrinated, some after capture, and then been induced to "volunteer" for VC service under duress. Furthermore, this percentage is so unusually high as to suggest that he may actually have been including ex-GVN paramilitary youth formations such as the Combat Youth.

better now because all the men joined the Front forces of their own free will. No one was forced to join."
He said that another reason for improved morale was the following: "In 1961 the fighters were in smaller numbers and had to live in privation in the jungle. Morale was poor. But now they can live with the population fifteen days out of the month and they feel much better."

It should be noted that this type of morale boost seems to have followed a pattern among VC units which originally were formed in the Central Vietnam uplands and were able to flesh out with new recruits and gradually fight their way to the lowlands where they have access to better food and regular contacts with village life. This is a situation less characteristic of the evolution of units in the South which have been based on or near populated areas with regular food supplies for a longer period. It has been quite evident that many young recruits who were captured or who defected in the Delta after only a few months service after the large recruiting drives of 1964 claimed that morale among the youths so inducted was low. The deterioration of morale among these younger men with relatively short VC service...
The wide range of recruiting techniques designed to obtain volunteers and the increasingly stronger emphasis on force as VC conscription is carried out not only in VC-controlled areas but also increasingly in contested areas will be described later. But a general discussion of recruiting appeals will be in order first, for it is requisite to an understanding of a most distinctive and salient characteristic of this movement, its combined use of the seemingly contradictory elements of persuasion and coercion.
III. NATIONALISM AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM IN THE VIET MINH AND VIET CONG

Practically all VC appeals are suffused to some extent with patriotism, but there appears to be an important difference in the people's reaction to these in the Viet Minh and Viet Cong periods. The Viet Minh achieved great success with nationalist themes based on the struggle for independence against the French colonialists who had ruled the country directly for some eighty years through a French presence that was visible to peasants traveling to the district town and even to many who seldom left their own villages. Many of the interviews indicate that joining the Resistance in the earlier period (1945-1954) was a more spontaneously patriotic act in various parts of Vietnam than joining the VC later, since it followed upon the Japanese occupation, with its anti-French dénouement, and then the widely feared French attempt to reimpose the pre-war status quo.

The VC always has sought to trace parallels in the character and outcomes of the "first Indochina war" against the French and the present struggle against the United States and its GVN "lackeys." The people's direct experience with French colonialism and the long Communist-led struggle for independence has served to suffuse Vietnamese society with a variety of vulgarized Marxist-Leninist ideas and particularly elements of the Leninist argument on imperialism holding that any Western power that showed an interest in such a country as Vietnam inevitably concealed imperialist motives that would surface in due time.

However, it appears that while the anti-French nationalism of the VM accorded clearly with directly felt resentment of the colonial regime in many areas, the anti-imperialist propaganda of the VC has been imposed on the rank-and-file by the Communist leadership of the VC in a more manipulative fashion. The closest analogies that can be found in the present conflict to the older anti-colonialist sentiments appear to be (1) hostilities toward the Ngo Dinh Diem government and by extension, its American
American backers (and thus for a certain time after its demise in November 1963, VC formations in some areas evidently experienced a crisis in morale); (2) allegations of imperialism based upon the presence of U.S. advisors with ARVN units and then wholly American military units committed here since the spring of 1965.

But actually by the time the VC efforts came to a climax which it calls the people's "uprising" of 1960, the American role in Vietnam had been of a very different character from that of the French at the outbreak of hostilities in 1946, for example. Not only were the Americans much less in evidence in Vietnamese politics and business (and in the latter field they were mostly advisory advisers rather than competing entrepreneurs) but since 1954 there had been a period of five or six years of relative calm in many areas. Many or perhaps most Vietnamese peasants evidently believed the country had truly thrown off colonial domination, even if it did lack economic development and administrative responsiveness in ways that VC agitators later were to tell them were the attributes of a bogus independence.

So before the rising intensity of the war made the American role in it increasingly obvious, systematic and vigorous indoctrination by the VC appears to have been necessary to spread acceptance in rural areas of the charge that the U.S. had intended all along to replace the departed French. A former VC company commander (AG-70) who joined in Vinh Binh province in late 1959, for example, said that at that time the anti-American theme was not yet dominant: "Before and when I joined the Front, I had not yet heard about it, but the anti-American movement [sic] has been developing since then."

The VC nationalist themes of "expel the American invaders" and "reunify the national territory" feature prominently in the regular post-induction political training. However, a significant number of sources said that the anti-American theme had been stressed well before that stage, but the subject's degree of comprehension or
Footnote on p. 23/

The extent to which American combat units in Vietnam was not determined in this study because only a small number of the interviews under analysis were with men who had defected or been captured after the American role in the war was thus enlarged.
acceptance of the theme at that point evidently as assumed to require deepening in later indoctrination. In many cases, indoctrination on this subject was stressed during the VC agents' early recruiting approaches leading to voluntary enlistment. With numerous sources inducted more or less forcibly, this theme was stressed during their first systematic political indoctrination, before they were asked to "volunteer" for combat, following a widely used three stage recruitment pattern of abduction, indoctrination, and volunteering, which will be described in detail in Chapter XVII. And many reported that these themes had affected their decision to "volunteer" in this situation of manipulated consent staged so shrewdly by the VC, but this whole process and the anti-American propaganda element in it appears to have a rather mechanical quality, that will be discussed further in the final chapter.

VC nationalist and patriotic appeals described in the interviews usually are combined with appeals to the individual's personal interest in the desire to win glory and honor or merely respect in his community, the desire for personal advancement through the acquisition of land, schooling, and career opportunities, and the desire to avoid conscription in the GVN's armed forces for a variety of reasons. All of these will be examined in detail later.

Before examining these in detail, though,
let us look at the responses expressing what can be truly described as patriotic fervor, those dealing with the nationalist sentiment in VM areas during the earlier anti-French war.

THE VIET MINH

The statements cited in this section are by men who were affected by the widespread absorption of youths into the VM between 1946 and 1954 in areas which were VM controlled, at least for a time. Then, just as in the present war, there were areas in which universal participation in the movement was expected and refusal was regarded as something akin to treason. As the VM and VC consolidated their power in wider areas, the populace was and is obliged to regard it as not only the going political authority, but also one of increasing political legitimacy. Political and military participation becomes increasingly automatic and today, as in the earlier war, VC organs become, in the words of the interviewees, "the army" and "the government," and the VC collects "the taxes."

The revolutionary movement calculatedly and effectively utilizes a wide range of pressures, including that of social conformity, to induce in the youth a real anxiety about participation. In many VM zones, earlier and in numerous VC zones today, a sense of urgency was and is generated so that a young person feels that it is impossible to remain on the sidelines of the struggle. Many recount that when they were pressured to join the French army in the earlier period, or received a GVN draft
notice more recently and the alternative of VM or VC service appeared to them to represent the only honorable commitment. Eventually, of course, such patriotic élan may decay under certain circumstances as is seen in some VC areas now. (This also will be discussed later.)

Most of the returnees and other ex-VM in our sample described vividly the mass character and excitement of the nationalist upsurge of the earlier period:

I was 24 at that time. The Japanese had seized control of the country from the hands of the French; and in August 1945, the Vietnamese people rose up to take over from the
Japanese. The revolution of August 1945 had the participation of all the Vietnamese people. (ZH120-SN)

In 1949 I was 19 years old. Like other youths of my age, the call to the Resistance against the French excited my patriotism and I volunteered for the [VM] Army. (Z010-)

The combination of patriotism and social pressure is illustrated clearly in the following statements:

Everybody in the country rose up against the French. I had to participate. I could not remain a bystander. (ZH121--)

I joined the VM Front and the Communist Party because of the influence of my friends who advised me to work with the VM to protect my family's fortune. (Z024--)

I had always lived in regions held by the VM.... At age 18, everyone entered the Vietnam Youth (a VM organization). (Z034--)

I was young at that time; therefore, I had to join those [VM] organizations. Had I not, I would have found myself left behind, because all my friends joined them. (Z054--)
One man (Z030-) said he joined the VM in 1949 because by that time the war had spread to his region "and my friends asked me to come along. My wife also urged me, and the conditions of the times favored my joining." This kind of encouragement by wives, by the way, appears to have been more frequent in the earlier war than in the present one.

The role of the family was important, and particularly so when there were older revolutionaries or a tradition of revolutionary activity in the family: "I lived with my paternal grandparents and my uncle. After my grandparents died in 1948, my uncle left for the Resistance and took me with him." (ZHO-R)

Another source (Z020-R) had been the son of one of the earlier Vietnamese Communists, a locally prestigious practitioner of Oriental medicine who had died in Poulo Condore prison in 1943. This source said he had worked for the VM as a liaison agent in the rear areas at the age of 13. At 15, he was given a six-months course in radio telegraphy at a VM base in the Plain of Reeds; and by the age of 17 he was serving on a provincial liaison organ for
the Lien Viet Front and frequenting the company of Party elders in the region "who recalled the name of my father when they talked to me."

As we shall see later, the VC have skillfully used special arguments and techniques to get these former VM back into the revolutionary ranks.

THE VIET CONG

During and even after the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, much VC patriotic propaganda was directed against the Ngo family. As already noted, a major theme has called for "safeguarding the country" by fighting the American imperialists, the alleged manipulators of Diem and his successors, and, according to the VC, the political reincarnation of the departed French imperialists. The resemblance of the patriotic slogans of the VC period to those of the VM is seen, for example, in the following statement by a young peasant from Long An (Mekong Delta) who described the recruiter's message which attracted him in 1962 as follows:

He told me that the Front brings liberty and social equality to the village people. The duty of the citizens is to participate in the Front to liberate South Vietnam from the foreign invasion.

A squad leader who stayed in the movement for two years before defecting in early 1964 (AG-73) had been moved by a similar sentiment. A former SDC, he had been wounded and captured by the VC and then indoctrinated carefully during his convalescence in a VC hospital. He described his principal motives for joining as the following:
I wanted most to save my country and to be a hero. Secondly, I wanted to change the present society. Everybody longed for justice and liberty. Nobody wanted to be oppressed. That was the purpose of the revolution.

The youths in VC-controlled areas and also many contested areas have come increasingly to feel the same type of ubiquitous pressure to join the movement as was found in VM zones earlier. The forces stemming from appeals to patriotism and self-interest, and from the organizational activities of Front political groups such as the Liberation Youth or Labor Youth and the associations for farmers, women, combatants' mothers and elders, and the cultural groups, became so strong in many areas that a young man finds social sanctions against non-joiners becoming uncomfortable.

One youth (ZH1041) said:

...people of my age had to do something. We were very much under the influence of VC propaganda. We either joined the VC regional force or the provincial main force. We had to do something. We couldn't just do nothing. I could not work with the government. I had to join [the VC].

A former assistant squad leader (G-19) in the regional forces in Ben Cat, Binh Duong (close to War Zone D) commented that in his liberated village: "Everyone had to join the Front, because they lived in a liberated area. If you do not enlist in the ARVN, you join the Front."

Another (ZH110-SN) feared the VC and wanted to move away from his village, but his mother was unwilling to
leave the family farm where she could raise chickens and pigs. He said, "I had to work for them or else I couldn't have stayed in the village with my mother... I was still looking for a place in town."

A Mekong Delta peasant (Z032-SN) who had begun to serve the VC in Cao Lanh District, Kien Phong in 1959, described the recruiting techniques used on him. Two cadres came to talk to him when he was 16 years old and living with brothers. The first was an acquaintance who compared the danger of being drafted into the ARVN with the advantage of struggling for reunification and of following the North Vietnamese model of freedom and independence. The second cadre emphasized the oppressive behavior of the village chief and militia unit to convince the young peasant that local dissatisfaction was traceable to bad administrators from President Diem on down. Speaking of the political environment at this early date, this source said:

Well, you should know that almost all of the youth of the village were clandestine VC already. If I had not followed them, I would have been interrogated and investigated—and terrorized. Moreover, I thought it would be worthwhile to fight against the government, and especially the local government of the village....

A peasant youth (Z024-D) from a Meking Delta village in Binh Phuoc District, Long An, described his impression into the VC in 1963 at the age of 16: "If I had not
joined the Front, I would have had to leave my village
to go to work elsewhere, because the young women of the
village would have ridiculed me and I wouldn't have been
able to stand their contempt."

Another (ZHO93-SN) said, "My friends would have
despised me if I hadn't joined. I couldn't have stayed
home...[and] certainly I would have been killed if I had
been drafted into the ARVN."

Thus it appears that the VC has not revived the same
time of nationalist fervor which the EVM generated
earlier to sweep over large areas of the country and
create local conditions favorable to the automatic
recruitment of youths and even elders into the movement.
The VC evidently was able to arouse much patriotic
sentiment in certain areas, particularly in 1960 and 1961,
while the movement was expanding rapidly and before the
increased U.S. political and military commitment turned
the tide of the war temporarily against it in 1962.
Then, with the widening of the conflict, the application
by the VC of more directly authoritarian methods of
population control and the resulting disillusionment
with the VC among segments of the populace, the powerful
impact of a fervently pro-VC political milieu on recruit-
ment has been less visible in at least some of these
areas.
Let us pass now to the VC's propensity to stress more prominently than the VM a range of combined themes of patriotism and personal interest.
IV. VC COMBINED APPEALS TO PATRIOTISM AND PERSONAL INTEREST

A basic and usually explicit theme of VC propaganda is condemnation of the present social order, with much harping on the drabness, the hardship and the dearth of job and career opportunities in the peasant's life, along with the more vividly exploitable factors, when they are present, such as unjust local administration and so on. As noted earlier, the VC brings to the peasants a new awareness of discontent along with new language to articulate it, and much of the political instruction consists of drill in the use of this language. Here, as with the Chinese and other Communists, persons being indoctrinated are taught the practice of incessant analysis and discussion.* This analysis deals with everything in the life of a person, from abstract political issues to intimate personal problems. The discussion has a Marxist slant, and as Franz Schurmann points out, the principal task of political indoctrination here is to make a person talk and act like a Communist, by long practice. The role of talk and particularly persuasive talk is enormously important, as is attested by the plethora of references in the interviews, often grudgingly admiring, concerning the oral fluency of the VC agents and their

skill in what is called literally "sweet talk" but connotes marked verbal aptness in various types of expression, from the diplomatic to the more personally affectionate.

On the same phenomenon in China, Schumann says:

In this respect, let us indicate two impressions gained from years of interviewing refugees from Communist China in Hong Kong. First, these refugees, both intellectual and nonintellectual, are articulate; and second, they have the habit of analyzing (fenhsi) everything. Even peasants, dirty and clad in rags, will talk with eloquence about their experiences.*

The interviewer working with ex-VC similarly is often impressed with the articulateness of many peasants experienced in the movement even when they have had very little formal schooling; but the shorter number of years in which such systematic Marxist politicization has been going on in South Vietnam accounts for a less frequent eloquence among the non-cadres of the movement than Schurmann reports in reference to mainland China.

The concept of ideology in the VC is often focused on issues of equitable local administration by good persons. Elliott and Thomson have suggested that this outlook has been "shaped by the

*Ibid., p. 48
Confucian insistence on good personal conduct of the official, rather than institutional devices," and this undoubtedly is so. They continue, "Because of this personal orientation, ideology to the VC cadre means much more in terms of style and methods of work than in grandiose politico-economic perspectives."

The latter statement contains much that is true, particularly concerning domestic problems, and yet, as Ithiel de Sola Pool has commented, "To a surprising degree, the Party cadres have become interested in, and aware of, the world. They are more likely to talk about world problems than Vietnamese problems. Needless to say, their knowledge is extremely sketchy, but it is there and it is meaningful to them." Pool goes on to say that this is so because the cadres have been taught to believe that world political developments and the strength of the Communist bloc are powerful forces aiding them in their own struggle.*** To cite an example of this, the writer has interviewed some ex-VC cadres, especially among the regroupees, who could recite easily the names of the Communist bloc nations and were quick to point out that their number had increased dramatically following World War II, illustrating a trend

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which these people were convinced would engulf the non-Communist world in a matter of time.

To return now to domestic Vietnamese factors, a key function of political appeals and indoctrination in this revolutionary movement is the sharpening and exacerbating of latent as well as manifest antagonisms toward GVN authorities and also a channeling of other antagonisms toward these same targets, e.g., by attributing even personal, non-political problems to a society allegedly corrupted by imperialism and its native GVN lackeys. Even when natural grievances are of the lower order associated mainly with the fullness of peasant life, the currents of social change and heightened expectations already have reached the rural backwaters, often carried there by transistor radios and the cadres of both the VC and GVN, and have created sufficient impact to provide at least some interest in the message of the revolutionary agitator. And the VC agent's task is to stir new expectations and aspirations—or make old ones sound newly practicable—as the fruits of revolution.

As might be predicted, though, persons trained to perceptiveness while in such a movement also tend to focus these capabilities on their own daily life situations. Some of them
come to perceive very clearly some of the contradictions between their hopes and the promises the movement made to them earlier on one hand, and the concrete disappointments in their own lives as VC fighters, on the other. Although the VC political control system is capable of coping with a good deal of this kind of tension by such means as the daily work and morale critiques and particularly the fatherly, psychological boosting supplied by the cadres in informal relationships with their men, it appears that there is a certain boomerang potential in this system of training men for higher levels of social awareness and articulateness when programs and promises do not match the men's own perceptions of the movement's achievements, at least for long periods. This will be discussed in the political reorientation of VC POWs and defectors through careful and substantive political training, as discussed in the Conclusion.

Let us move on now to the VC's very frequent combining of appeals to nationalist sentiment and personal interest.
Many interviewees who had been recruited before 1964 said they had been induced to volunteer, either straightforwardly or after forced recruitment and indoctrination, by appeals to do their duty in helping rid the country of the foreign imperialists and their lackeys, and, simultaneously, to improve their own personal situations. In the mix of motives for supporting the VC, personal circumstances play a very important role and the VC's shrewd exploitation of the desire for a better life is extremely effective, particularly among the poor and ignorant. Some VC propaganda appeals recall the earlier VM motto of "freedom, food and clothing, happiness": e.g., one source (ZH028-D) who cited the revolutionary aims as a "struggle for national freedom" and for "food and clothing for the villagers...(and if I died, my children would receive these benefits)."

An unusually insightful statement was made by a 33-year-old barber (AG-138) arrested on suspicion of VC activity in Central Vietnam when asked why some acquaintances in his native village had joined the VC:

I don't know....Those who follow the VC out of faith in Communism are extremely rare, I think. Special circumstances may induce some people to join the VC. A man who commits an offense may become a VC to avoid being prosecuted by the GVN authorities. Or a victim of some injustice on the part of a GVN functionary may be resentful and join the VC to get revenge. Or a man who has VC brothers or parents may be influenced by them.

Poor, credulous and uneducated people are the main victims of VC propaganda: they enlist in the VC ranks in the hope of a better future.
Another source, a VC company commander (AG-70) who had fought for five years and claimed he had become disillusioned with the VC though he did not defect, described more cynically the peasants' response to VC appeals combining patriotism and personal interest: "Because of their poor situation, the majority of these people have been seduced by the revolutionary movement, which they joined out of sheer opportunism." Then he pointed up a factor which as we will see, is of the greatest significance; "Once they have joined it, they get entangled in the VC organization." [Italics added.]

Personal benefits and advancement typically are held out as the fruits of eventual revolutionary victory and usually they are presented as having secondary priority to that greater, more patriotic good which will serve as a panacea for national problems and many personal ones also. One man recalled the following:

I was dissatisfied with my lot but I did not think of my personal interests. I thought that if the revolution succeeded, everyone would be happy, I along with the rest. That is what the agent told me and I believed him.

The more thoroughly a source had been indoctrinated, the more likely he was to express repugnance to questions implying he might have joined merely for motives of personal gain, although some disillusioned sources would discuss their earlier opportunistic expectations in a rueful tone.

A wide range of gratifications has been held out by the VC, especially in the earlier years, from the winning of respect or glory in the community to adventure, education, career opportunities, land reform, and the elimination of
corruption and maladministration at local and national levels. Some men had gotten into trouble with the GVN local authorities over their obligation to furnish corvée labor for the agrovilles and strategic hamlets, due in part at least, to harsh official methods of organizing such labor. Other persons were persuaded to leave home for the VC after encountering other frustration in their family or community relationships. Many subjects cited the VC's appeal to climb on the victory bandwagon or be left in an unfavorable position after the revolutionary forces had come to power. As we shall see in a later chapter, another very prominent combined appeal to patriotism and personal interest calls to the youth to perform military service in a VC unit close to home instead of being drafted by the ARVN and sent farther away--a VC promise which often is broken.

We will turn now to specific promises of personal betterment, beginning with the theme of honor and glory.

A 23 year-old man who had been a squad leader in the regional forces in Tay Ninh (AG-67) before his defection in December 1964 said the following promises of "glory":

I knew nothing about life with the VC when I was living with my family. After I was abducted by the VC [it appears that he actually may have joined voluntarily] they told me that I would have to bear many hardships like the poor food, but later I would have a great deal of glory.

-- What kind of glory?

I did not know. This was only a way to lure me into joining them...
Similarly, a propaganda and training cadre (AG-192) who had joined the VC at the unusually early date of January 1957 in Long My District, Chuong Thien, and who defected in 1965, said that he had been brought to regard revolutionary participation as glorious:

I was still young [18] and very enthusiastic. I studied documents concerning the youth's duty, the performance of which would cover them with glory when the country was unified.
A Main Force assistant platoon leader (ZHO-93) from the Mekong Delta described proudly the "revolutionary virtue and behavior" of a Front fighter and was one of a number of interviewees to cite with conviction the slogan that in the Front, one "lives splendidly and dies gloriously" (song vi-dai, chet vinh-quang).

Very often appeals to patriotism and personal interest are couched in terms of inevitable success and urge individuals to climb onto the victory bandwagon. The forms of this appeal have not varied much between the VM and VC periods. For example, a former VC propaganda cadre (AG-153), who had been with the VM earlier, described their appeal as follows:

At that time, since we did not have enough arms, we had to make propaganda to the effect that our force lay in the strength of our unity. As evidence, we pointed out that in 1945, we had overthrown the French imperialists' regime with nothing but bamboo spikes. Even though the French possessed heavy weapons, such as tanks and warships, they had to surrender in the face of our people's overwhelming strength and determination to struggle.

A farmer in Bac Lieu who joined the VC in late 1957 (AG-48) said that working from the basis of credibility which VC cadres already had established in his view because he had been in the same land before earlier, they had stressed the "Front is getting stronger" theme directly:

Some cadres from the district and other regions came and gave me accounts of the various phases of the struggle since the time of the victory over the French until the creation of
the Front. They told me that although the Front was very weak at the start, it had grown stronger and stronger, and so forth.

And finally, a former VC prison guard from Kien Luong District, Kien Giang Province (AG-170) described how the bandwagon appeal had been presented to him in early 1964 in his hamlet which was under formal GVN control but easily penetrated by VC agents at night:

He told me that Front forces were becoming more and more powerful, and that they would soon be able to drive the Americans out of the country and achieve national reunification. He added that it was time for me to set out on the right path, do something for the good cause, work for the people's happiness and at the same time to secure for myself a better future...

Let us examine now some common types of combined appeals to patriotism and specific types of personal interest.
One peasant "have not" whose wants were played upon skillfully by VC recruiters was a man (G-37) who joined the VC in Kien Hoa Province in 1959 at the age of 20 and rose to the post of assistant party secretary and chief of the village military affairs committee (roughly equivalent to the rank of guerrilla platoon leader) before defecting in January 1964. He described his personal situation before recruitment as follows:

My family was very poor. We did not have enough to eat.... life was full of hardships. We had to rent our mau of land and to borrow the rice seed at sowing time....

I was a healthy young man at that time [NB: the source was only 26 when interviewed]. I tilled the land.... It was very hard. Of course I would have liked to have many things--more land to farm, more money to spend, more clothes and a comfortable house. I wanted most of all to have a bicycle. My family was too poor to send me to school and I wanted to go to school.... I attended the [village] school for six months but then my family was too poor to let me continue. (I am better at reading and writing now because during my time in the Front my comrades taught me more about it.)

He was handled roughly by a GVN militiaman for sitting down to rest while working on an agrovile project (corvée labor will be discussed more fully in the next chapter), adding to his existing dissatisfaction.
After I joined I found that I was no better off; life was dull, and there was nothing to be happy about; nights without sleep, the rain and the cold, the mosquito bites. Of course, I got more respect, nobody hurt me or insulted me. But my family was still had not received any land....

There was nothing to be happy about except the fact that the beating and the cursing had ceased, but in return I found out that there was no democracy in the Front....their orders had to be carried out without discussion; my advice was never sought.

A former VC village tax collector (AG-160) in Kim Nanh District, Tay Ninh, who joined the Front in late 1960, said the following:

I heard that once you lived in the Front, you would enjoy freedom of speech. There would be no discrimination against high and low ranking officials in eating together; people would enjoy complete equality.
He described the VC recruiter's approach to him as follows:

The Front cadre talked to me for a full month and explained to me that life out here with the GVN was not worth living: I was despised and insulted, and my family was too poor to own the land they worked. On their side, if I joined the Front, I would have all the food and clothes I needed and I would be rewarded with land. He also emphasized that it was the duty of the young people of this generation to help their country and our names would be remembered in history....

It was very sweet to listen to him, I thought first of all about my family emerging from poverty, having its own land to farm. After I had made up my mind, I went to see the local cadre in the ricefield and he led me far into the jungle....

He learned in due course that the life was not what he had expected, but he still valued the respect accorded him.
A classic example of the impact of VC propaganda in making a poor, very young peasant resentful of his poverty and willing to volunteer is afforded by the history of a former VC regional force soldier from Phuoc Ninh District, Tay Ninh (AG-159). He had to quit school at the age to 13 to look after the family's buffaloes. He described his family's status as having been "poor and miserable" when interviewed after his eventual defection from the VC, but when asked how he had felt about it at the time, he replied, "I was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied." Later that year, he met some VC agents at the edge of the forest and they persuaded him to take a political indoctrination course and then to volunteer for service.
After participating in one combat action, this boy was assigned as a VC prison guard and after about a year and a half in the movement, defected at the age of fifteen.
Appendix A presents excerpts from ten more case histories of recruitment combining appeals to patriotism and improvement of an individual's personal situation. These often appear to have been directed toward peasants and others having a vague yearning for a better personal life, although, as noted earlier, this yearning frequently is aggravated or even awakened by the VC cadres themselves. These cases include one young man who went to a VC area because only there could he, with his limited credentials, find a teaching position. Another is a farmer who wanted something better than just "polishing the earth" for life; still another is an orphan who had to work so hard as a servant that he ran off to a VC jungle munitions factory job which he hoped would bring an easier life; and other cases describe personal difficulties which influenced individuals to flee from their homes to the VC. One man merely wanted to gain access to VC areas to sell fruit there. In some instances, the VC was able to gain recruits mainly because of the individual's desire to escape personal responsibilities and difficulties; but even here, the VC's correlative use of patriotic and altruistic appeals to help these persons mask their own largely selfish motives is noteworthy.
The peasant's land hunger has been exploited with telling results by the VC, but a significant number of cases also reported disillusionment over broken promises of land. We will examine first the initial appeal of land reform propaganda in the movement.

These appeals are particularly strong to the Central Vietnamese, who generally are much more land poor than most Southerners. One Central Vietnamese described his reaction to VC goals as he understood them by saying simply, "The Revolution is all about land." Another Central Vietnamese (AG-99) who had been abducted into the movement said the recruiting appeals he heard most frequently were "The purpose of the Front is to bring material welfare to the people, and to distribute land to the poor."

*VC propaganda on land reform is generally consonant with a Le Monde news item of July 6, 1965 which cites a Pravda story quoting one of its correspondents in an area of South Vietnam under VC control since 1960. It says that two million hectares of land have been confiscated and redistributed by the VC (one and a half million of them in South, as compared to Central Vietnam). These are described as lands formerly belonging to "traitors and collaborators." The article says that South Vietnamese landowners not belonging to the "traitor and collaborator" categories have not had their lands appropriated but the maximum land rent they can charge is 25% of the harvest (the same percentage used by the GVN in its earlier land reform program). The article also claims that more than 20,000 "mutual assistance labor groups" composed of about 500,000 peasants in VC areas have been created "to pass from individual to collective labor." It notes that in the village being visited by the Soviet correspondent, the VC village committee was discussing the question of
In many areas under VC control, land redistribution is effected by pressuring families with more land than they need for their subsistence to share it with poor families, so that the latter have about one cong per family member. (A cong is a thousand square meters or one-tenth of a hectare, and it is the amount of land that one person under average conditions is

lands belonging "to French planters who do not actively collaborate with the puppet regime." The Soviet correspondent emphasizes, as his final point, that "the principal force of the NFL is the laboring peasantry, and that "one of the immediate objectives of the NFL is 'a radical solution of the agrarian question.'"
supposed to be able to cultivate in one day. The ubiquitous farmers associations in these areas provide mutual aid for their members and labor exchange arrangements to aid such members of the community as the elderly and dependents of members who have gone off to fight.

A defector who had joined the VC village guerrillas in January 1961 and eventually became chief of the district recruiting office in Cai-Lay, Dinh Tuong (DT-2[1]) described the VC land policy there. This man had four children but owned only three cong before the land was redistributed:

The land reform was carried out at the beginning of 1963. All the villagers including the landowners were convened in a meeting. The cadres openly asked those who owned many rice-fields to give one part of their property to the poor countrymen. None of them dared refuse. Some bargained but at last all had to accept the share suggested by the cadres. [To obtain land] one had only to be landless or to own less than five cong.... The share varied from two to five cong, according to the economic status of each one. I obtained five cong for myself.
A Main Force assistance company commander who operated in Tra On District, Vinh Binh, before his defection (AG-100) described land distribution there:

The VC took the land from the rich landowners and distributed it to those who worked for them, so that everyone would have some land to work on. The VC mobilized the poor class and restricted the rich landowners. The land that belonged to the rich landowners was given to each family according to the size of each household. The VC left just enough for the landowners. Those landowners who protested this VC policy were beheaded.

(When questioned further about such executions he said he thought some had been carried out but did not seem to know anything specific about this.) He noted also that the VC in that area had brought the average land rent down from two to one gia of rice per cong of land.

One source (AG-160) imputed very direct credibility to the VC message because of his gratitude for the earlier VM land program in Kim Hanh District, Tay Ninh. He was told that those who had received land under the VM must join the VC to safeguard the land. He joined in late 1960 and eventually became a village tax collector.
He commented as follows on the land appeal:

During the Resistance period, we were all poor people. We had no land to farm, to live on, or to rear our cattle, but the French people had an immense tract of land which they used for a rubber plantation. If you ever dared to touch or violate their land, you were fined and arrested. When the Viet Minh rose up in 1948, we were given land to build our houses and to raise our cattle. When the Liberation Front was first organized in our area, the people of the Front recalled the past achievements of the Viet Minh. I believed in the Front because the above-mentioned story was a practical one in which I was a beneficiary.

A VC cadre who eventually came to recruit him told him that "everybody should join the Revolution to safeguard and protect our land."

When asked if he had ever benefited from the GVN land program earlier, he answered:

I was given a hoe and spade to farm the unoccupied land, but there was no unoccupied land in that area. The land was already fully used.

There was a significant number of complaints against VC land programs in the sample, however. Some of them reflected discrimination against certain families, possibly because they were suspected of uncertain political loyalties, as appears to be the case in the first example cited above below. But more generally, the VC land program appears to have varied considerably between various areas of the
country in its application and a more general complaint against it by men in the sample focuses on what appears to have been a failure by the village cadres to carry out promises of land and to look after the dependents of men they had persuaded or drafted into military service.

However, the major criticism of the land program among the interviewees attacked not the original redistribution aspect, which had been attractive, but the greatly increased taxes assessed by the VC on the yield of redistributed land along with all other landholdings within the reach of VC tax collectors. To determine the extent of this dissatisfaction and disillusionment, however, further research would be necessary, including a careful sifting of these statements with regard to the interviewee's reliability and his family's political standing in the community--i.e., whether or not the VC seemed to have regarded it as unenthusiastic or uncooperative toward the movement.

One example of a poor family's particular but rather unusual frustration with this policy in a general context of community dissatisfaction with it appears to have been due to the family's being regarded as pro-GVN because it lived in that part of the village near a GVN military post. This story was recounted...

*This point is further treated in [Editor, cite Carrier and Thomson study on the Chieu Hoi]
by a former squad leader in the district regional forces in Hieu Thien District, Tay Ninh Province (AG-196). Concerning the VC land program, he said, "The poor people liked it very much, because it had been the habit of the rich to oppress the poor." But his own family, which had rented six cong, lost it in the VC land exchange scheme:

The VC didn't take the land from us, [but] they did the following things: they told villagers tilling land far from their homes that if they agreed, the Front would exchange their land in return for some land close to their houses so that they would not have to go far. The Front took the land of these villagers and gave it to others. In the case of my family, it was the same thing. The Front took away our land but never gave us any land in return. My family lived about 800 meters from the GVN post; therefore we didn't dare to say anything. If we did, we would be killed. Anyway, our land was away back in the village where the Front was strong. If we kept the land and went there to work, we would be in trouble. After the Front seized our land, my parents had to work as hired laborers and sell coconuts for a living.
One of the cases of initial attraction and eventual disillusionment with a more general type of weakness in the land program was that of a Bac Lieu farmer (AG-48) who had joined the Resistance at 24 in the early year of 1957 after having received land earlier from the VM:

At first the VC cadres started their propaganda operation, telling me that thanks to the Resistance I had 1.7 hectares of rice-field to work. It was true and it made me believe everything they subsequently told me.

... The Front has settled the question of lands and ricefields for farmers. It has protected the interest of farmers and small traders. It also has settled very rapidly all litigation.

However, his eventual disenchantment with the VC involved a lack of promotions and admission to Party membership, resentment of the cadres, deteriorating personal health and again, and importantly, the ultimate disposition of his land:
The Front had deceived me up and down. The VC cadres had enticed me into this hard life of the Front by promising me that the Front would take care of my family. When I visited my family I found my wife and kids living in misery. Moreover, during my absence they [VC cadres] had confiscated one hectare of ricefield which belonged to us and left my wife only 0.7 hectares to work on. The taxes they forced my wife to pay for that much land were not even diminished commensurately....

Other interviewees also expressed dissatisfaction with the VC land program, but it appears generally to have developed after their induction into the movement, so that the land reform theme still appears to have influenced them in favor of the movement at the time that they joined. However, it is obvious that inconsistencies and inequities in the local implementation of VC land policy dimmed the luster of this VC recruiting theme.

* It appears that the 1.7 hectares/tract of land which this man received from the VM earlier was not considered unusually large by redistribution standards of that period, but came to be so considered during the later VC program because it exceeded the one cong per family member allocation mentioned earlier.
Appendix B presents four more statements about VC land programs in various localities, the first two approving and the second two disapproving.
VI. DISSATISFACTIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS AND THE MILITIA

A history of tensions and clashes with local SVN authorities and militia personnel is a significant factor in the background of some VC and one tending to be associated ultimately with longer service and higher rank in the organization. Here it should be noted that local administration has varied widely in quality over time during and after the Diem regime: there was relatively good government in some areas, at least during certain periods, but there also was not only outright maladministration and corruption in others, but a good deal of neglect and lack of visibility of the SVN presence, which left a political vacuum easily exploitable by the VC. The latter phenomenon was found in old VM base areas and adjacent regions and even in the more remote districts of certain other provinces which on the whole were better looked after.

A few men in our sample with long service had been in such serious trouble earlier that they had become outlaws and taken refuge in isolated areas where they had become inured to isolation and hardship before recruitment into the VC. This group tended to be more deeply committed to the VC, at least originally, than many other recruits, for the obvious reason that they had nowhere else to go. In this category are found men who had fallen afoul of the "voluntary" labor or corvée of the Diem regime's agroville and strategic hamlet programs. The most common type of
discontent, however, was that voiced against the local militiamen of the Self Defense Corps or SDC, subsequently renamed the Popular Forces. Allegations of SDC misbehavior appear to have become particularly significant from the late 1950s on as VC attacks and pressures made life for the SDCs more difficult and dangerous and many SDC men evidently took some of their frustration out on villagers who were afraid to furnish information on the VC for fear of reprisals. As might be expected, there were fewer complaints about the better trained and paid regular army (ARVN) troops but there were some. Significantly, the interviews indicate that the ARVN, particularly, but even some of the local militia units have come to be held in higher regard by the villagers as they have shown more concern for the property and rights of villagers during military operations in rural areas.

Since many VC and particularly the cadres and older men tend to see the present war as a continuation of the earlier struggle against the French, it is relevant to begin here again by going back to one of the ex-VM's allegations of local government abuses and see how it resembles some younger VC soldiers' perceptions of injustice in their villages. A 33-year old returnee from North Vietnam described his Central Vietnam village in 1948 as follows:

There was injustice in the village. The village chief dominated the people by threats and blows.... The district authorities mistreated the village chief and the village chief mistreated the people.
The people had to work without pay on projects of so-called "public interest," go on patrols, etc. Generally, the village chief remained six or seven years in the position which was handed down from father to son, and between family members.

My uncle was a fighter in the Resistance. He explained to me things about the French and their colonialism. The duty of the youths was to chase out the invaders and bring independence to the country. When he was killed by the French Foreign Legion, I hated the French.

I saw Frenchmen in Hue...and I saw there were injustices; the French had a good time and a good life while the Vietnamese were afraid of them....

The second story was told by a member of the younger generation, a 25-year-old assistant platoon leader (ZH093-SN) in the Main Forces operating in the Mekong Delta who had joined in 1959:

An ex-Viet Minh who later worked as a GVN hamlet ward chief in his An Xuyen (Camau) village (ZH0126) indicated the behavior of local authorities during the second Indochina conflict as follows:*
These [village] authorities acted like great personages. When they spoke, they threatened and warned that they were ready to arrest you . . .

All these fellows, these 'village fathers,' got fat; they became rich and after some years built [good] houses. The populace hated them but didn't dare say anything. If anybody did he would be arrested because the authorities would claim he was pro-VC. Any spirit of opposition could furnish the motive for one's arrest.

*Some other histories in this vein were recounted by the following sources, among others: a defector (2035) who alleged his village elders in Cu-Chi District had been authoritarian, corrupt and inefficient when he joined the VC in 1958; a teen-age boy (ZH014) who claimed there had been corruption and oppression in his village so he ran off to the Plain of Reeds 20 kilometers away to search for a VC unit to join; (a very unusual action if true, for this man appears to be one of only a very few of the sources to report having sought out VC recruiters in a distant location); and a Main Force assistant platoon leader (ZH093) who described the situation in his Dinh Tuong village before he joined in 1959 as follows:

I disliked the GVN's administrative control over the population . . . People resented the lack of freedom. One day they had to do corvée labor, the next day that had to do other things. Diem said he brought rights to the people, but the people never experienced them. Only the rich or those familiar with the village council could borrow farm credit money, the simple people could not . . . . The government always made promises but never kept them. The district administrators knew this but didn't bring it to light . . . . People couldn't do any business because the village council levied a tax on anything you brought to sell along the national road. I felt miserable.

It is worth noting that in taking his time to put this statement together, this man gave the impression that he possibly was injecting elements of his VC indoctrination sessions into the story along with his own personal recollections. This blanket condemnation of the village officials appeared to have centered originally on his hostility to the compulsory labor program, as revealed in another part of the interview. Still another interview session revealed that he was probably the most vivid case in our sample of a youth attracted by the adventurousness of the guerrilla life, but he also was among the most firmly convinced of the justness and purity of the NLF cause.
A major complaint in the interviews was voiced against the
"community development" labor program introduced by the Diem
government for the construction of the agrovilles in 1959 and the
strategic hamlets in 1962 and also for militia post earthworks and
other such projects at other times. Such forced labor is an old
tradition in Vietnam. The Vietnamese emperors and their local
officials required that it be furnished on public works projects
such as canals and peasant labor gangs worked for long periods on
the construction of the imperial palaces and tombs at Hue, for
example. However, the system is more readily recalled by contemporary
Vietnamese in connection with the French colonial period. The Diem
government tried to give such community labor a voluntary guise at
the outset but in the hands of province and district chiefs eager
to score impressive results on "favorite" programs such as the agrovilles, "community development" came to be regarded
widely as a euphemism for exploitation. It often was flawed by overlong and arduous
labor assignments. Some peasants were required to furnish labor
in distant districts on projects of no value to themselves except
that a principle of eventual reciprocity was tentatively implied in
the programs: if the agrovilles proved successful, they were to be eventually extended throughout the nation and those villages which
had furnished such labor to others would receive roughly equivalent
amounts of labor from other villages in compensation. However, the agrovilles did not succeed and the same kind of tenative
and implicit promise of reciprocity was made and often broken again
in the strategic hamlet program. In some instances, peasants worked
as long as thirty and forty days on such projects, although the
central government eventually informed local officials that there
was supposed to be a maximum of ten.

Other negative features of these programs included the
promise by local officials to peasants of lunch allowances on days
they worked away from their own hamlets and sometimes also of truck or other transporration to distant worksites. Some of the interviewees also claim that hamlet militiamen overseeing the construction of defensive earthworks around militia posts, and of agroville and strategic hamlets sometimes handled the peasants roughly if they did not work hard enough. On some of these projects, and particularly those of long duration, the peasants did not always work vigorously, of course, as the present writer can testify from direct observation in 1962, so some militiamen evidently felt justified in dealing firmly with what they conceived as loafing on the job.

Some specific allegations of inconsistent and unfair treatment in the labor assignments were the following. One man (DT-2[1]) claimed he had to work more days than some of the others on distant projects and when he complained to his village officials they "cursed and threatened" him, making him "furious and unhappy" to the point of volunteering to join the VC village guerrilla unit. Another source (ZH0126) claimed that if "the husband was gone, the wife had to pay" a substitute to perform such labor. And "if you didn't pay, you would be locked up in the communal house for one or two days." Another (ZH093-SW) reported that although the village council in 1957 and 1958 would "negotiate" with the peasants to "get people to construct a military post," by 1959 they relied on force to obtain such labor and anyone refusing to cooperate would be beaten. He claimed that even if a man sought to excuse himself from such labor on such legitimate grounds as the illness of his wife, he would be insulted and beaten.
Allegations of harsh and unfair treatment by the militia and other local GVN forces were one of the most frequent complaints against the GVN personnel found in the interviews. As noted earlier, the SDC appears to have treated villagers with greater hostility in areas where insecurity had become marked (e.g., contested areas and those in which the GVN forces controlled only one or two hamlets in the cluster making up the village). And here, deteriorating troop-civilian relations tended to increase antagonisms between the two groups in a circular fashion. The following are some specific examples.
One man (Z0-35), for example, listed his reasons for joining the VC as his "hatred of the SDC, difficulties with the police, and VC propaganda," and he returned repeatedly to the alleged villainy of the SDC:

The SDC were violent and arrogant [and] disliked by the villagers. When they called for free labor they had no regard for anyone, not even the elderly. They caught and beat youngsters who strolled around in the evening. If someone looked at an SDC intently in public places such as restaurants or theaters, he would be called out and beaten.

He said later that he had found VC propaganda easy to accept because "out of hatred for the SDC I hated everything on this [GVN] side."

A Main Force soldier who defected to the GVN (Z041- ) said the following:

After the SDC had been stationed there for a while, they did things to hurt the people. For instance, when young people went into the forest to cut wood, the SDC would shoot at them, saying that they were VC. Some of these people were killed.... When the others returned, they were very angry. They told their experiences to other villagers and the people began to hate the SDC. Then those who had not been killed would join the VC.
Another source (AG-196) alleged that a local "special forces" platoon (a type created in some districts by providing some extra training and prerequisites to local militia units) had robbed the inhabitants of his hamlet in Binh Phuoc District, Long An:

[They] oppressed the people a great deal. I couldn't stand life in the village and had to leave. Whenever they went on an operation, these special forces soldiers entered the people's houses and stole everything they found. The people could not protest, because if they did, the soldiers would beat them up or bear a grudge against them and shoot them. When the soldiers wanted some chickens, for example, they asked for the people's permission. But while they asked for the permission, they shot the chickens. So how could we refuse? Sometimes when I returned from fishing, I met the soldiers and they took away my basket full of fish and ate them; but I couldn't say anything to them.

The interviewees include a few men who claimed they had gotten into trouble with the GVN over mainly land and the labor requirements of the agroville program and had fled their villages to live outlaw but apparently peaceable existences in isolated locations until found and recruited by the VC. Or, in some cases, they fled to VC-controlled areas. As noted previously, these men tended to become higher rankers in the VC, which must have been unusually attractive to these men in their isolated and lonely situations.

Three of the most striking cases are reported in Appendix A. One, for example, who recounted a personal background of exceptional poverty and hardship, further deprivation involved in paying off a gambling debt and a disfavored position in his own family, finally took to the forest to avoid what
he described as discriminatory village labor policies during the agroville program. He was recruited by the VC at the age of 27 and rose to become a company commander. The two other sources described in that Appendix attained comparable ranks.
VI. ADVENTUROUSNESS

The better indoctrinated men were very reluctant to admit that such a non-political, "bourgeois individualist" motive as the thirst for adventure had been significant in their joining. A Main Force cadre (ZH093-SN) said, "Individualistic heroism is criticized because it can bring harm to many others." (He referred specifically in this instance to VC who shot at aircraft under such circumstances that their fire was likely to be ineffective but bring about an air attack on a nearby settlement or VC unit.)

When these men recalled the appeal of adventure, it usually had been only one of a combination of factors that had attracted them, such as patriotism and the chance to find new opportunities of various kinds. A 19-year-old youth (ZH011) was invited by a school friend to see a "liberated zone" across a river several kilometers away. He accepted "out of curiosity" and "the appeal of adventure," but two other factors were also present: his desire to receive an educational allowance from the VC and to get news of his father who had disappeared seven years earlier and was thought possibly to be with the VC.

A man (ZH054) who had joined the VM when he was 28, had supported himself earlier and his two younger brothers by guarding buffaloes after being orphaned at the age of 10. He said the following:

I was attracted by the Viet Minh soldiers. They were well organized. They had enough to eat. They were well clothed. I wanted to get
some knowledge, to attend school. Had I not joined the Viet Minh I would have remained in the same village and my life would have been much less comfortable... I did not want to stay in the family. I did not want to work that hard. I wanted to go and see other places.

A youth (ZH105-D) who had deserted the SDC and returned to his family's farm said the accounts the VC guerrillas told of their experiences were exciting. "I found their stories appealing and enthralling, but [at first] I was afraid that if I went with them I might get killed."

The thrill of seeing and handling firearms and the authority associated with possession of them was mentioned by a few sources. One of these was a youth (ZH051- ) whose family had received two hectares of land in the VM land reform but lost it when the GVN settled Catholic refugees from the North on that land. He became a liaison agent at the age of 14 and served as such for three years. He was impressed by the stories of the VC fighters: "I wanted to handle firearms. I saw friends carrying guns and I wanted to do the same." Eventually he was called up by the Front and the recruiter, a close [friend], told him, "You can have a gun and kill the enemy."

Even the Main Force assistant platoon leader from the Delta (ZH093) described above who disparaged individual heroics betrayed the thrill of adventure he had experienced in the VC by the way his face lit up when he described some of his military experiences.

For example, he said that he had been
criticized in his unit twice for daredevil stunts against enemy aircraft. When only one or two planes had attacked his area and the troops already had prepared a series of alternate foxholes, he claimed he had teased the pilots by waving a white handkerchief at them during one pass and then running over to another foxhole while the plane was pulling out of its dive.

A forthright statement of the "mix" of various motives including adventurousness which probably brings many Vietnamese youths to consider joining the VC was made by a youth from a Cao Dai family in Long An Province village which was taken over by the VC in early 1962. He described his entry into the VC as follows:

In 1962, the Front occupied our village. During a meeting, it appealed to the youth to join in the defense of the populace. Those who wished to went forward and signed the paper. Sometimes men of the Front went into the houses and in some cases they spent the night with the occupants.

I joined because I had the hot blood of youth. My family didn't know about it. Some others had already joined before me. About ten others signed up when I did. I didn't ask anybody for advice on this. A friend of mine from my hamlet joined up also, and he is still with the Front.

I joined not because I was afraid of doing my military service for the Nationalists (GVN), because I wasn't yet old enough for that. I had heard the propaganda: "liberate the South, struggle against Diem and the Americans." Then, too, I thought the life would be more interesting and more fun. (I didn't know the
hardships that awaited us—they didn't talk about that.) I have to mention here also that my parents were scolding me because I liked to fool around and I wasn't doing my family work. I was having a good time: all kinds of things, liquor, cards, women. The young people were like that, they liked to have fun and find new things....

A few months later the ARVN regained control of this source's village and in 1964 when he left his VC unit to visit his family, he was persuaded to defect to the GVN.
VII. ATTACKS ON VILLAGES

GVN/US ground and air operations which are conducted against the VC and deliberately or accidentally hit villages* obviously affect the attitudes of peasants toward both sides in the war. However, because more systematic study of this problem is presently underway, only tentative statements on this subject will be made here, with particular reference to the influence of such military operations on the VC recruiting effort.

Although the Phase I interviews routinely asked for some information on damage and casualties in the subjects' villages resulting from military actions between the VC and the GVN/US (or, earlier, the French), they did not always pursue the question of the villagers' attitudes toward such conflict, as perceived by the ex-VC source. However, in 34 cases such reactions were described in more than desultory fashion. Most of these sources claimed that such attacks aroused resentment and hatred among the peasants and tended to simplify the VC (or, earlier, the VM) recruiters' task of depicting the war to the villagers as a patriotic defense against callous and inhumane outsiders; the French, originally,

*The actions referred to here usually are not directed against villages as such but against VC units suspected or known to be in the vicinity. In some cases, artillery or aerial bombardments are reported by the interviewees and other sources to have hit such populated areas as a consequence of error in the original intelligence data or in the procedures by which the bombardment was carried out.
In the Phase II interviews, in which this subject usually was pursued systematically, there was a wider variety of reactions. Some placed strong blame on either the GVN (and more recently the GVN/U.S.) or the VC; some interviewed blamed both sides and, in a smaller number of cases, expressed a resigned acceptance of such incidents as inevitable in time of war and did not impute any particular blame to either side.

In both samples, though, it appeared that three factors had an important impact on whether the peasants blamed the GVN or VC for such attacks. The three factors were the degree of "hard-coreness" of the source (e.g., whether he was only a low-level guerrilla or a cadre, especially in the Main Forces); whether the hamlet populace said to have blamed one side or the other was itself under VC or GVN control, or both, and whether the hamlet residents believed there truly had been VC provocative actions or even VC units present in the hamlet beforehand which could have furnished the GVN with justification for the attack.

Very generally, hard-core cadres tended to describe the attacks as helpful in dramatizing the war to the peasants as an immediate, rather than remote, conflict which required their support of the VC in defense of their own families and villages. The attacks described in these interviews seldom were followed up by GVN Civic Action or other such activity capable of explaining the GVN's purpose in the attack, consoling and indemnifying the victims and organizing GVN reconstruction and self-defense programs, and thus they had a kind of hit-and-run quality in the peasants' eyes. According to numerous VC cadres, such incidents assisted VC recruiters in spreading
among the peasants their own propaganda stereotype of the war as one of "we the exploited peasants" against the outsiders, the "they," comprising the American imperialists with their ultramodern engines of death and their henchmen, the urban-based Vietnamese bourgeoisie who staff the ARVN officer corps and the GVN administrative structure down to the district level.

A senior captain returnee in charge of military proselyting in and near War Zone D (ZHO-133) claimed, for example, that for every innocent villager killed, ten would "rise in his place" to fight the GVN. Another, who had served as a district-level cadre in two provinces and most recently as a propaganda expert (AG-54), described at length how the VC "sowed hatred against the GVN among the peasants" by "analyzing the evil effects of the GVN bombings." Although this unusual source had defected to the GVN, he still believed that this "VC propaganda is always realistic, based on facts, and can be supported by facts;" and that in such propaganda work, the VC "always give specific examples and figures of casualties or damages, and names of villages where the GVN has dropped bombs or conducted operations."

Along with these cadres, some rank-and-file sources expressed similar sentiments. For example, an 18-year-old former Main Force private (AG-72) said the following:

The ARVN arrested the villagers, beat them up, and shelled the hamlet. Profiting from this situation, the VC propagandized the villagers. The latter tended to be sympathetic with them and to join them.

This hamlet, in Phuoc Thanh Province near War Zone D, evidently was in a contested area periodically under fairly strong VC influence. This situation points up the second major factor influencing a given hamlet's probable attitude
toward GVN/U.S. attacks on populated areas, namely, whether or not the locality is under GVN or VC control on the other hand, or is in the largest category of the contested area periodically fought
over by the two sides. The interviews indicate clearly that areas under relatively firm VC control are more likely than GVN areas to blame such attacks on the GVN, and vice versa. With regard to contested areas, the often murky criteria involved in characterizing a given area as such must be sharpened by additional specific information on past and present political sympathies before it is possible to tell much about its probable reactions to these attacks for the same principle holds here, too: contested area communities in which there are important numbers of VC militants and sympathizers tend to articulate a certain amount of blame against the GVN/U.S.

The precise extent to which such incidents aid VC recruiters cannot be stated here. None of the interviewees claimed that he or she personally had joined primarily because of such attacks. However, a few of them cited the attacks as one of the reasons for their joining* and still others claimed that they knew of others outside our sample whose primary motivation in joining had been such attacks. These cases were said to constitute a small minority of men in the movement but usually they were described as being among the most highly motivated, militant and self-sacrificing soldiers the sources had encountered. One such interviewee was a 23 year-old assistant platoon leader and political officer who

*One of these sources was a youth in the Phase I sample who joined in the 1950's in Central Vietnam. He reported that his fiancee had been killed in a French air bombardment, but he did not call her death his primary reason for joining. A similar case (AG-54) in the Phase II sample said that one of the reasons for his joining was that "someone in my family was killed in an air raid."
served for over five years in Chuong Thien Province before defecting in October 1964 (AG-89). He claimed that the few volunteers in his unit had been men from families who had lost members in ARVN artillery or air bombardments or ground operations. He said, "The volunteers thought they would fight for the Front to their last drop of blood, until the Front achieves final victory."

At the other end of the spectrum was a significant group of interviewees who said that these village attacks were coming to be perceived by the peasants with increasing clarity as caused by provocative VC actions such as sniping at ARVN outposts or firing at overflying aircraft. These sources maintained that the resulting ARVN attacks tended generally to arouse antagonism against the village guerrillas who were more apt than the regional or main forces to use such provocative tactics either deliberately or because of loose discipline in the ranks.* Incidentally, this type of hostility toward the guerrillas is reported not only as coming from the villagers but sometimes also from Main Force elements who regard such tactics as counter-productive. Occasionally a POW formerly in the Main Force would even make some such comment about the local guerrillas in this context as "I hate the guerrillas!"

Significantly it appears that the peasants have come increasingly to associate the mere presence of VC elements in the immediate area with the likelihood of an ARVN/U.S. attack. Thus, many villagers in contested areas have come to dread the approach of VC units because this event so often

*[Editor - we need footnote citing a relevant Gouré RM here.]
foreshadows bombardment and military operations potentially fatal to area residents. By the same token, these peasants tend to focus their resentment on the GVN in cases where VC targets actually have not been present in the area and faculty intelligence has brought in bombardment on the assumption that they were.

These sources noted that when fighting in a populated area became frequent or intense, it generally caused the people to evacuate the villages. And they claimed that the great preponderance of such refugees fled to GVN rather than to VC areas, as has been borne out by the total of about one million refugees coming into GVN zones.
villagers' reactions to attacks over the entire period. Specifically, the earlier sample included more POWs as opposed to defectors, more hard-core cadres and more rank- and-file soldiers with relatively long periods of service; in short, the men in this sample exhibited generally firmer political motivation and morale.

Standing between the two groups of sources who clearly blamed the GVN/US or the VC for the attacks were still others who claimed that the peasants blamed both sides in the fighting, "whoever does the damage," or, less frequently, blamed neither side, expressing only a grim resignation to the sufferings of war. Many peasants doubtless were war-weariness, and would prefer to see the war protracted to improve the chances of victory for one side or the other; but it cannot be assumed that this is necessarily the view held by the majority of the peasants today.

Nevertheless, interviewee statements about the attitudes of peasants caught between the two fighting forces frequently reflected an element of helplessness. An example of this was a statement of an ex-guerrilla (AG-84) describing an unsuccessful VC attack on a GVN outpost which had provoked retaliatory GVN fire on the village area:

I heard the people say, 'If they [the VC guerrillas unit] were not capable of taking the [GVN] outpost, why did they attack it [futilely]? The fight between the ox and the bull kills the flies and mosquitoes.'
Some additional comments on the political and psychological impact of GVN/US attacks in or near populous areas are offered in the conclusion of this Memorandum.
VIII: APPEALS TO DODGE THE DRAFT

Numerous sources said that their decision to join the Front had been affected by the imminent or even remote prospect of being conscripted into the ARVN (and earlier, the French army). Thus, VC cadres often have been able to deflect youth receiving GVN draft notices into their own ranks. Here, they frequently hold out the attractive promise that a man's service in the VC will not take him away from his home hamlet or village, although in fact it often does.

The VM earlier and the VC more recently have been able to play on widespread nationalist suspicions of the French and American roles in the war to arouse latent or overt fear of exploitation by foreigners. Closely entwined with this is the propaganda claim that death may well attend military service but it is more glorious if suffered for the right cause; and moreover, it is more certain to come to a man who fights on the side of exploitative, blundering foreign imperialists against a revolutionary cause led by cadres with long guerrilla warfare experience which already includes victory over one powerful imperialist enemy.

The identification of government military service insert on p. 79

However, this has tended to be modified since the introduction of large numbers of U.S. combat troops in 1965.
Army. I did not want to go because if I did, I would be protecting the French who were occupying our country. My friend told me that to go into the French Army or the revolutionary (VM) army might lead to the same end--death--but to die for the Revolution and to die for the French were two different things. To die for the revolution was a great thing because it was to die for independence and freedom.... (ZH009-R)

As the Indochina war developed in intensity, many youth felt then as many do today in areas under VC influence that they had to serve either the VM or the French, because they could not remain uninvolved in the struggle. As one returnee (ZH010- ) put it, "If I don't join the VM I would have been obliged to become a soldier for the French who occupied by village in 1954...."

At the time of the regroupment in 1954, the pressures to follow the VM North were strong for the same reasons:

I wanted to work to unite the country. My friends told me that if I stayed in the South, under the Bao Dai regime, I would be forced to join the army and I would surely die. On the other hand, if I joined the VM in the North, I would have a better life in the army, would be able to see what life in the North was like, and then come back to my village after the two years.

Concerning the present war, similar reactions were expressed in the following quotations:

Even if you flee mobilization-in the Front, you can't on any account avoid GVN conscription, (ZH058-SN, an ex-low-level guerrilla). [Most interviewees probably would have reversed the order of the authorities cited here.]

I joined the Front in 1963. I got the draft order from the village authorities. One of my cousins advised me not to go into the ARVN. He
said that to be a government soldier would be the end of my life but it would be good to be a combatant of the Front. Joining the Front might save my life. [Editor: Source Number has been lost]

One youth (ZH028-SN) was told by VC friends that "Vietnamese youth was insulted. If I didn't follow the VC, I would have to perform military service for the GVN and I would die merely for the Americans."

A 25 year-old-man (Z032-D) told how he was recruited by an old friend and classmate who was in the village guerrilla unit:

He told me about the government draft. He explained that to be conscripted was a death sentence, because the government would send you to the plateaus and mountains of Central Vietnam.... Once our country was reunified we would have plenty of opportunities for education. Now the people were suffering and miserable--why should I continue my school studies?

The VC is particularly alert to direct its recruitment pressures toward youth who have received their GVN draft notices just as it is to head off peasants on their way to pay taxes to the GVN. It thus exploits the youth's perplexity or, in the case of a youth who is willing to go, it tries to replace the GVN as the recipient of the intended service.

An 18 year-old former production worker (AG-72) in a VC Main Force unit described how the VC conducted such recruiting in his hamlet in Phuoc Thanh Province:

Before the VC gained control most of the young men of the hamlet, were drafted by the ARVN. A few feared the draft and joined the
VC. Then the VC forced all young men of draft age to join their ranks. The mothers of the men who were to be drafted went to see their friends and complained, "My son will be drafted soon!" so everybody learned about it, and the VC came to take these men away.

Another youth (Z035-D) said:

When the GVN draft notice came I had to make up my mind. I advised my friend, the bread peddler [a VC agent]. He sent for higher cadres to come down and have a talk with me. They told me that if I went in to the ARVN, I would be shooting at my compatriots. They suggested I should help them by enlisting as reconnaissance troops in Binh-Duong and acting as inside workers [fifth columnists]. With four others [all working for the VC] I applied... [and got the assignment].

A former squad leader (described in files Nos. G-2 and G-25) who fought in the main forces in An Xuyen for over three years beginning in 1960 described a three-pronged recruiting appeal to youth of draft age:

The Front cadres have political training, know how to talk to people, and show patience in "bewitching" the population.

First, they brief the villagers on their goal, which is to free them from GVN dictatorship, etc.... Then on subsequent occasions, they keep up the same tune until the moment when they feel that their listeners are "ripe" for the following argument: "You can't sit on the fence forever. The GVN doesn't trust you anyway, nor do we. Either you're for the Front or for the GVN."

Later on, they will send other cadres to ask any waverer why he doesn't want to join the Front. If he says he doesn't want to leave his family and his ricefields and so on, they'll urge him not to worry about it and tell him that he will be given an on-the-spot job as a village-level informant or as a
"producer." At that moment, he can't refuse, and thus snaps at the bait. Once in the job, he can't get out of it because he's afraid of the GVN. And when his hamlet is attacked by the GVN, the Front will ask him to join its guerrillas or Regional Forces, and so gradually he will become a real Front fighter.

Another argument to attract youths consists of telling them that they will run much less risk of being killed by fighting for the Front than for the GVN because the Front leaders are capable of sparing them useless risks, the Front mottoes being, "The Front won't swap one of its fighters for 20 of the GVN's," and "GVN soldiers are mercenaries whereas the Front fighters struggle for their ideal." Such propaganda wins over the youth.

Appendix D gives excerpts from three case histories tracing in detail the impact of the VC recruiting theme of "serve the righteous cause while performing your military service near home" and showing the contrast drawn by a number of ex-VC interviewees between what they described as the predominance of coercion in ARVN conscription as opposed to persuasion and propaganda in VC conscription. The last one (AG-155), a transportation cell leader from Tay Ninh, who served for four years before defecting in 1965, relates how a close friend who had received his ARVN draft notice "lectured" him "day and night" to persuade him to accompany him in joining the VC.
IX. EX-RESISTANCE (VIET MINH) MEMBERS

Special recruitment techniques often have been applied to former Resistance members who became inactive politically for as long as several years in the period before or even after what the VC call their "uprising" in 1960. After many had regrouped to the North, some of the ex-VM in our sample who remained in the South continued to conduct low-key propaganda activities in preparation for the scheduled 1956 reunification elections and urging normalization of North-South trade relations (one of these is described below). But an evidently greater proportion of these men tried after 1954 to return to a quiet, non-political life of farming their land and resuming their roles as head of their neglected families. Others probably intended to continue supporting the movement but its agent network failed to communicate with them and keep them mobilized. Depending on location and the attitudes of the GVN police and military units toward them on one hand and the amount of VC pressure on them on the other, some were able to remain simple citizens.

But the interviews indicate that many ex-VM were caught between increasingly intense pressures by both sides as time went on. The GVN's decision after the election postponement of 1956 to root out ex-VM agents accounted for a great deal of police pressure on these men and their families. These policies appear to have been particularly harsh in such ex-VM zones of Central Vietnam as Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh, but they evidently were very tough in areas of the Mekong Delta as well. The interviews indicate that the GVN police agents were not averse to accepting bribes from ex-Resistants and that such blackmailing sometimes grew progressively less tolerable until some of our interviewees came to believe that flight to the VC represented the only feasible means of survival.
The VC recruiters, for their part, tended to see the ex-VM personnel and particularly the ex-cadres as a real challenge, for these men possessed histories of past revolutionary commitment and experience which they hoped to reawaken and channel once again into the movement. And, of course, success in persuading ex-cadres to rejoin tended often to bring an additional propaganda value helping to make more popularly credible the VC-claimed inevitability of revolutionary triumph.

In many cases, it appears, the VC recruiters' missions were hampered by the ex-VM's preference for returning to the quiet life, but several factors assisted the recruiters. One was the fact that the gradual spread of VC influence in the countryside forced some men to temporize politically to avoid the loss of their property and also a loss of intimate contact with family members in VC-controlled areas.

Another strong factor in simplifying the VC recruiters' job in the 1956-59 period, especially, was harassment by GVN security organs. Even in individual cases where such harassment had not occurred, it was so prevalent generally that it tended to lend credibility to VC agents' advice to ex-Resistants that it inevitably would happen to them. The recruiting line then stressed that if these men and women were going to return to the revolution, they should rejoin early rather than late, lest the onrush of the movement's successes should suddenly find them on the wrong side.

The first case here is that of...
49 year-old Delia man (Z M0087-SN) recounted with quiet dignity how he had served the Resistance off and on between 1945 and 1954, and then tried unsuccessfully to return to a quiet private life:

"During the resistance, I was fighting the invading colonialists. When peace came (1954), I felt I had already completed my duty and it was time for me to take care of my family again. I presented myself to local government officials to ask for permission to work on the land to feed my family. But the Diem government would not leave me alone!"

He did receive permission to rebuild, and he spent a large amount of money on a house and gardens, but he found his former comrades in the Resistance were being arrested one by one and there was "blackmailing by the SDC's and others. If you gave them money -- twenty or thirty thousand piastras -- you were left alone, but otherwise you were called a VC and arrested."

Receiving word while on a trip away from home that he was about to be arrested, he left his wife and children and fled to Saigon where he was relatively safe, because there, "arrests were different...there had to be evidence, papers, charges. When I came..."
to Saigon... I did not want to participate in the second struggle, a class struggle. I am a bourgeois." A friend gave him a job in his drug store in a distant town but after two years the business collapsed.

... my financial status worsened. My [holdings] were all in liberated zones. When I came back to my properties [in 1960], I was invited to join a Front Committee as a representative of the bourgeois intellectuals ....
To me, participating in Front activities was only of secondary importance; I considered that the happiness of my family came first. To save my interests that were located in an insecure zone, I had to participate more or less in Front activities. ... [Thus] it was because of conditions under the Diem government that I had to stand on the other side until the day I was captured.

The second case is that of a man who lived in fear of arrest and re-arrest so long that he was relieved when VC agents contacted him and asked him to return. He had joined the VM in 1948 and worked as a village cadre but said the organization became practically inactive after 1954 when VM military units and higher ranking political cadres were regrouped to the North. He continued to make propaganda for the general elections. But by 1955 and 1956 he had lost contact with all the upper level cadres and evidently had very little contact with anyone at all in the organization because the GVN had arrested "quite a few" and the others dared not return to that area where they were known and could be denounced to the police.

When the elections were cancelled in 1956, he felt himself in great danger, so he went to Saigon where he could live in relative anonymity. He worked as a carpenter, apparently without reestablishing any contact with the VC until he was arrested in 1960. Although the GVN authorities became convinced that he had not resumed activity for the movement, they kept him in jail for 11 months until 1961. After his release he still was afraid to return to his village and rejoin his wife and children:
I feared the village authorities would put me in jail again, or worse, even though I had just been released. Authorities in the village think differently and can imprison a man without abiding by even the legal processes used in Saigon.

He did not meet any VC agents in prison but did encounter one on the street shortly after his release. Still anxious about his imprisonment and his prospects, he did not quarrel with the man's advice: "You have just been released but if you don't watch out, you are going to be arrested again." The friend invited him to join him in a trip to a VC "secret zone" and after they arrived there, both decided to stay. When asked if he had been disappointed at that turn of events, he replied, "No. There was nothing to be displeased about. My 'brothers' invited me to remain with them and I accepted gladly." For this man, renewed contact with the movement evidently came as such a welcome respite from the years of anxiety over his status that his reasons for waiting so long to rejoin are not clear.

Another former VM (Z024-R) told a similar story of being caught in the political crossfire after the VC gained strength in Long An province in 1961:

... Bon came back to me and said, "You are a former Resistant and Communist cadre. You are sought even now by the police of Long-An. You must rejoin our ranks to escape arrest. Moreover, our party has regained control of almost all of the South. If you renounce the struggle, your family will have trouble, and your lands will be confiscated.

Incidentally, he had become a Communist Party member in 1950 at the instigation of the same cadre friend, partly because the latter liked him and wanted him along with him in Party activities,
and partly because, as the cadre pointed out, "You belong to the rich farmer class; you will have trouble if you don't join the Party."

He continued the story of his re-entry into revolutionary activity:

What he [Bon] said was not a threat, but the truth. I really had been sought several times by the Civil Guard . . . and I couldn't leave the village to go to town without an identity card and authorization from the village officials. The Civil Guard had even interrogated my brother and his wife about my whereabouts to try to lay hands on me. I decided after further reflection that it would be better to go over to the Liberation Front than to lead a life

*This is an illustrative of the softer party line towards class elements in the economically well-off categories who have been wooed in the early stages of revolution in Vietnam for tactical reasons and still are in the South; but in the North, the DRV's leniency toward them declined as the revolution was consolidated in the harsh land reform program of the later mid-1950's.
full of anxiety in my village. Thus, I had to leave my wife and children, despite their opposition, to resume my political activities.

In that situation, I couldn't do anything else. I was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.... My only chance to avoid arrest was to accept the risks of the anti-Government struggle.

I believe that [may former VN cadres] submit to the Party's orders against their own wishes. Undoubtedly they do not want to plunge back into a life full of danger after the earlier years of political activity. But they don't dare show hostility for fear of being liquidated by the VC.
Four other ex-VM interviewees' experiences describing forces impelling them back into revolutionary activity after 1954 are presented in Appendix F. They allege that GVN officials were guilty of corruption and terrorism in dealing with these people. Three of the histories describe events in Central Vietnam provinces in which VM influence had been strong and there were sizeable communities of relatives of regroupees who had gone North. GVN policies toward these elements were often exceptionally harsh. The last story in the series concerns an ex-VM who finally crossed over into VC territory in 1963 at the unusually advanced age of 53.
X. EX-GVN OFFICIALS

Anyone who had previously served the French or the GVN came under pressure to join the VM and later the VC. This change of commitment is required partly as an open acknowledgment of past error in working for the wrong side and also to signify one's intent to atone for past mistakes and "crimes" by contributing to the revolution. When the VC can induce local officials to switch loyalties, it derives a considerable propaganda benefit because even if such cases do not always represent deep-seated political conversions, the political realignment of such officials, who often are well known locally and enjoy some degree of prestige, dramatizes the power of the movement over the individual's will. Such cases also are useful in publicizing the VC's vaunted policy of leniency and generosity to former enemies who come over to the revolution though the term leniency may be changing somewhat as a result of the recent period of escalation and the increasingly bitter nature of the political as well as the military conflict.

As in the case of the ex-VM cadres also subjected to special recruitment pressures, these ex-GVN people were affected drastically by the deterioration of GVN control in the countryside and the intimidation and the assassination of GVN representatives. This resulted in many of these men's working out expedient solutions to avoid losing their property and contact with family members in areas going under VC domination.

In many cases, these ex-GVN officials tried to straddle the issue of political loyalty. Some of them have functioned as double agents but more commonly they have tended to give lip service to one side while still hoping and perhaps believing in the ultimate victory of the other.

*The VC's use of this psychological approach will be discussed further in Chapters XVII and XVIII particularly as it concerns the VC's use of pressure on men originally recruited by force to "volunteer" after subsequent indoctrination.
The first case here is that of an older source (Z024-R) who told how he had been advised by a friend in 1945 that because his father had been a village chief under the colonial regime, he had better support the VM actively if he hoped to avoid VC arrest.
and perhaps assassination, in addition to the confiscation of the family's relatively plentiful land holdings.

A younger man (ZH089-SN) said, "The VC would have caused my family trouble, too. They told me that I had worked for the GVN and if I didn't follow them now it was because I wanted to spy on them and turn them over to the GVN."

Another XXX (ZH102-SN) told a story of curiously mixed elements of coercion and voluntarism. His strategic hamlet had been peaceful until April 1962 when the VC attacked and killed the village chief. Thenceforth, most of the inhabitants were very leery of serving on the village committee. In 1963, this source had become the chief of a combined-family unit with the status of an acting village committeeman. One day a VC unit entered the village, and arrested him and another acting committeeman and took them away for being too authoritarian and not "behaving properly toward the people." He was put in a farm production unit, but he became bored with this work after three months and joined a military unit.

A former GVN ward (sub-hamlet) chief (ZH065-SN) fled an area gradually going under VC control and decided later to return to his village after it had been "pacified" by the VC with the result that he was pressured into serving as a supply cadre for a VC company. This man's story was further complicated by the fact of previous service in the VM army before the 1954 armistice. In his village in Bac Lieu Province, Diem government officials were relatively tolerant of former Resistants, apparently, and two others, for example, were named
to hamlet headships. After he was named ward chief, the VC arrested him in late 1959, blindfolded him, and led him off to an isolated place. They said to him:

"Now we warn you. We fight for peace and we have returned to dissolve the dictatorial power of Diem here. You are working for this power. We forbid you to do it. If you continue in it, you will be committing a crime." There were three or four of them, one of them off to the side with a gun and another talking to me for two hours. I made promises to them and they released me.

On my return, I reported the incident to the hamlet chief, who answered, "They say that, but they will not kill you. I will not authorize you to quit your functions; if you don't continue in the post, you will go to prison." I did continue, but I didn't return to my home to sleep. Instead I hid in another section of the hamlet.

Later, they returned and surrounded my house. I wasn't there so they told my wife that I had better stop working for the GVN, for if I didn't and they caught me, they would cut off my head. They gave my wife a handwritten letter for me along with some tracts.

I took these to the hamlet chief and told him what had happened. I was paralyzed with fear. I pleaded with him to authorize me to go to Nam Can (two days trip by road) to work as a woodcutter and to remain there for a month to let the situation simmer down. In the neighboring hamlet, the men of the Front had written several letters to the hamlet chief condemning him for having insulted them and calling them VC, and he was beheaded.

He stayed away for over two years. Finally, VC activity in the forests where he was working as a woodcutter made that area difficult also. Meanwhile, he had left his two eldest children in his village with his parents and now, upon hearing that the area had been "pacified" he let his wife return to assess the situation. The VC told her that if he had ceased to work for the GVN he could return to the village. He did, but eight months later they pressed him to demonstrate his political good faith by serving as a supply cadre, as described above.
XI. PROSLEYTING OF GVN MILITARY FORCES

Military proselyting (binh van) is a specialized form of recruiting which the VC emphasize heavily in their training because it can "strike into the enemy ranks with less cost in blood" than regular military operations, and it can be used against GVN military forces by VC sympathizers of all ages and within GVN-controlled zones as well as combat areas. This type of recruiting differs in numerous ways from civilian proselyting (dan van).** The military proselyter's mission is to win over to the VC cause members of the GVN's armed force by direct means, such as talking to them, or by indirect means, such as inducing their families in the village to send them compatible with the VC propaganda line. Such men may be asked to defect to the VC or to serve it while remaining in the government ranks. Or, failing this, the VC attempts at least to lower the morale of GVN forces by sowing discouragement and confusion among them.

Military and civilian proselyting converge in some ways, e.g., in the combined military and civilian proselyting missions performed by VC military units staying in a village. The strict code of behavior, particularly the main forces in their relations with civilians often is a powerful means of generating sympathy for the cause. A former assistant squad leader (G-19) who served in the regional forces from late 1960 until his defection in mid-1964 described the villagers' attitude toward the regional forces in VC-controlled Ben Cat, Binh Duong Province:

The villagers were happy to have them. The soldiers considered the families they visited as their own. It was a mass proselyting mission. The soldiers were told to do everything to please the villagers and never to antagonize them.


"Enemy proselyting" including both of these types is dich van.
Some of the interviewees have given comprehensive descriptions of the principles of military proselyting and others have described specific cases of these principles at work. One such source was a 29 year-old man from Kien Tan District, Kien Giang, who served only four months in the VC before defecting in September 1964 but who remembered well the training he had received before being assigned as chief of the military proselyting team in his village (AG-172).

This man had received his discharge from the ARVN and returned home to his village to resume farming. The VC then asked him to work for them but gave him the option of going to a main VC base in the U Minh jungle for training or serving as a proselyter in his own village. He opted for the latter and was given a ten-day course in the subject. He said there had been three principal types of missions:

1) I had to make a list of people who wanted to join the Popular Forces, or the ARVN. Then I was supposed to talk to them and inform them of all the hardships involved.

2) I had to talk to those already in the Popular Forces or Regional Forces and try to persuade them not to go on local operations.

3) I had to talk to relatives of government troops and try to persuade them to send letters asking their sons and brothers to return home or they themselves become victims of VC terrorism.

To further his work, he was supposed to use the following principles taught him in the training course:

There were three main subjects:
1) How to pick out potential underground cadres from among the village population;
2) How to train them, and
3) How to get these underground cadres into the GVN units, especially those in the outposts.

This training lasted ten days.

In the first phase, there were three lesson plans... The first was concerned with how to proselyte people in the GVN areas; the second, how to force people to quit working for the GVN; and the third consisted of how to sense the reaction to this propaganda. I was to wait for a week and then decide which people had been most impressed by the propaganda and select these people as potential underground cadres.
The second phase was supposed to be flexible. The program was to be determined by local conditions. There would be different training programs for different kind of cadres. For example, if a person showed that he was particularly anti-American, we would train him in spreading propaganda against the Americans.

In the third phase, we were told to try all means such as helping the GVN soldier or his family with labor or money if we could spare it. Whenever we gained the confidence of these soldiers we were to begin telling them of Communist victories in nearby areas and of the death of particular GVN soldiers such as Mr. X, Mr. Y, or Mr. Z. We were to keep this up until we convinced the soldier of ultimate VC victory. Then we would go further and try to get him to provide information which I was supposed to collect and report.

He remarked that another VC in the village was responsible for regular (civilian) recruiting and that he had little contact with him and his work.

(This source claimed that he did not like the VC, that he did not follow his instructions to use these methods and that he did not consider them effective anyway. However, it is difficult to judge the reliability of these remarks because he also claimed early in the interview that he had been "forced" to join the VC, but he acknowledged later that "at first, I believed in communism".)

Another source who spoke knowledgeably of VC military proselyting methods as they affected the villagers was a former squad leader who had served in Tay Ninh from 1964 until he defected in March 1965 (AG-196). He remarked that the youth feared the ARVN draft partly because it affected their families in the following ways:

They are afraid of the draft, because if they joined the ARVN, the people would take their parents and families to a far away place to attend an education session. The Front was afraid lest their son or husband would contact them and ask them to go to the GVN controlled areas. Because of this, the young villagers don't dare leave the village. Besides, if they joined the ARVN, the ARVN would never allow them to go home for visits, since their families live in a liberated area.
These villagers were indoctrinated on the policy and line of the Front. In addition, they had to pay higher taxes or do forced labor twice as often as other families. If they let the Front oppress them, nothing drastic would happen to them, but if they opposed the Front, they would be accused of violating the political discipline. In this case, they would be forced to do dangerous and difficult work, such as building roadblocks, destroying roads and bridges, etc., the Front would make them do until they came to their deaths.

—What happened to their property? Was it seized by the Front?

No. The best thing for these families to do was to "cheat" the Front by saying: "My son (or husband) has been stupid enough to join the ARVN. Please allow us some time, and we will call him back home." The Front just wanted to "torture" these families, so to speak, as much as possible to relieve their anger. When they had taken their revenge, they would stop pestering them.

—Did these families succeed in calling their sons home?

The families which were oppressed by the Front called their sons home. But how could they deliver their sons to the tigers? They called their sons home as a matter of form. If they recalled their sons to the village, they could not go to GVN-controlled areas later on.

If one man in a family joined the Front while his younger brother joined the ARVN, he would write a letter to ask him to come home. He would use emotional appeals or political arguments, according to his own talent. If his brother liked arguments or admired his talent for political discussion, he would return home. Or if his parents or grandparents got sick, the younger brother would also go home.

—What happened to those who had joined the ARVN when they came back?

When they returned, the Front took them away for an indoctrination session. Then they were allowed to stay at home for a while. After that the Front would force them to join its forces. If they refused, they would be accused of being GVN spies.
He noted also that one reason the villagers in that area feared being taken away to such a VC indoctrination session was that the training was given in a remote area and attacked by GVN aircraft. For although that particular hamlet was in a liberated area, it was sufficiently close to a GVN outpost and also to the Cambodian border (which he believed GVN forces did not wish to violate) to ensure relative freedom from air attack.

A 33 year-old cadre who had worked as a district committee administrative chief in Binh Dinh and as a district propaganda chief in Pleiku (AG-54) described VC proselytizing methods as follows:

During an attack, we call on the ARVN to surrender, using loudspeakers. We tell them if they lay down their arms, they will be forgiven by the VC; if not, they will be exterminated. We also tell them that they should not sacrifice themselves for the feudalists and the imperialists, and that they should return to the people's side.

We distribute leaflets saying, for example, "Officers and soldiers, return to the Front. You should not make useless sacrifices." Or, "Soldiers, Stand up against the orders of your cruel leaders and American advisors! Refuse to go on sweep operations! Demand to return home, to live with your families!"

Or we make up verses like these;
"You are a soldier of the nation. How could you have the heart to steal the people's property and burn down their houses!"

Or,
"The same blood flows in our veins. If you still think of your country and join the Front, your country will not forget you!"

We ask the families with members in the ARVN to write to them, asking them to come home.

We aim at demoralizing and confusing the ARVN. Our purpose is to make them discouraged, and to make them lose all confidence in the GVN. We want to disrupt the ARVN ranks and cause the units to fight between themselves. We call on the ARVN soldiers to defect. We tell that they are forced to march at the head of the column in mopping up operations or to advance in battles, because the officers want to use them.
as cannon fodder. Now they should turn around and kill their leaders and advisors....

In the case of the montagnard units, we use their own dialects to communicate with them. I worked among the Bahnar tribe. To be successful with them, I had to learn their dialect and their customs.... This is very important, because the VC consider the ethnic minorities in the South as an extremely important factor in the struggle. The montagnards contribute a great deal to the Front. All the corridors going from North Vietnam to South Vietnam pass through regions inhabited by the montagnards, and even our camps are all within their regions. For this reason, any maltreatment of the montagnard, any discriminatory acts, would be severely punished.

To win their support, we use the bait of "autonomy." In addition, we promise to achieve equality of all ethnic groups in the South, and to respect their customs and traditions. To prove this point to them, we set up autonomous administrative councils, and select from the notables in the tribe the Chairman of the Council and Council members. This gives the Council set up by the Front a lot of prestige among the montagnards. The VC cadres simply act as advisors.

The VC cadres who work among the montagnards must employ demagogic tactics to win these people's support. We should show our respect for their customs. The cadres must dress, live, and eat like the montagnards....

A VC document listing a number of "propaganda and indoctrination" activities and captured in Vinh Binh Province in October 1964 is presented in translation in Appendix F. It is a general listing of ordinary VC

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"Demagogic" may not be an accurate translation of the original Vietnamese term used here.
propaganda techniques from the writing of public and private letters and leaflets to the use of "peace boats" or small floating objects carrying propaganda messages down watercourses to GVN posts and communities. A second captured document provided in Appendix F.
comments in depth on VC military proselyting propaganda themes set forth for use in Thua Thien Province. The document was captured in January 1965. It specifies differentiated approaches to be followed vis-à-vis the various types of GVN military forces, all the way from the part-time, hamlet-level Combat Youth up to the ARVN regular troops. Some themes and techniques are varied periodically to conform to local conditions, but some of these are basic and used indefinitely.
One of the key aspects of military proselytizing is the policy of very careful treatment for GVN POWs, referred to in the first VC document cited above as "training and liberating" of POWs. Several VC interviewees in our sample cited a slogan they had been taught, summarizing the goal of this policy: "Add friends, subtract enemies (them ban, dot dich)." These sources were in agreement in stating that VC POW policy is implemented in a highly disciplined manner and thereby achieves great political effectiveness. POWs do not receive corporal punishment and they are not beaten during interrogation.

VC POW policy as described in one captured document is worth quoting here, as it provides an authentic if somewhat abbreviated statement of this policy:

POLICY REGARDING POWS AND SURRENDER:

*This lack of brutality toward POWs contrasts sharply with Japanese practices in World War II, for example, and resembles Chinese Communist POW policy in the Korean War. Severe physical and psychological duress are of course often present in the POW regimen, but the physical duress here generally takes the form of the deprivations suffered by the VC unit holding the POWs, e.g., skimpy and monotonous diet, exposure to insects, wild animals and snakes, protracted marches in some cases, etc. On the psychological side, uncertainty and anxiety are experienced by these POWs although there appears to be somewhat less of this in the case of captured GVN enlisted men who frequently are given to understand early in their detention that they will be released on very shortly after they have heard VC propaganda lectures on the movement's policies and goals. (They also are encouraged to remain with the VC.) The writer bases these comments on ARVN interrogation reports on ARVN personnel released from VC detention, as well as the interviews of ex-VC and a study of captured VC documents.
... To determine the management of re-education principles, prisoners captured on the battlefield by regional units are first interrogated [for tactical information] and disarmed. It is forbidden to confiscate their personal belongings (clothes, money, etc.). Upon arrival at POW camps, the responsible "comrade" is to make a list of their personal belongings (mentioning whether they are all present or lacking). These items are kept temporarily and fully returned when the POW is released. The exchange, buying, or selling of POWs' belongings if forbidden.

Food for POWs en route to POW camps is assured by the regional forces and factories which will settle with rear bases all matters concerning reimbursement. Their rations at the camps are supplied in accordance with POW policy.

It is necessary to have a policy regarding enemy soldiers who willingly join our side. We need to try to overcome difficulties, give them a warm welcome, and teach them the main points of our policies.

The document says also that POW camps should be set up at the province level "for indoctrination" of "enemy troops (officers and men) who need long-term re-education."

The ex-VC interviewees reported that many enlisted POWs held by the VC are released after a few days of indoctrination or sometimes within a matter of hours after capture, if the military situation in the area does not permit longer detention nearby or the movement of POWs to another site is not feasible at the time. Officers are kept anywhere from a few months or indefinitely. POWs accused of "cruel" treatment of the people or of espionage for the GVN are detained for prolonged periods of indoctrination and labor or they may be executed. POWs released by the VC often are asked not to collaborate with the GVN again, as by serving in its armed forces, but some ex-VC interviewees claimed that such men were told upon release that the VC understood that they would return to GVN military service as the only way
they could make a living but it expected them to show a favorable attitude toward VC forces when they encountered them again. One source recounted how an SDC man was shown such an attitude and released after being captured by the VC three times.*

To dramatize the regular functioning of its policy of "Peniency" toward POWs, a VC unit sometimes presents a man being released by them a special certificate. A sample of such a document, one captured in Vinh Binh Province in April 1964, is the third item presented in Appendix E. It declares that the bearer has received clemency from the NLF after being forced to join the ARVN, as the "majority of enlisted men and officers" have been. It states that "After a period of indoctrination, brother ______ has realized that the Americans and Diem are the enemy and that joining their army is a crime. He has displayed repentance and promised he will never do anything that betrays the people and the country."

The VC has ordered a cease-fire among its forces on the occasion of the Vietnamese New Year (Tet) as a political warfare gambit and, in a narrower sense, as a military proselyting tactic. Earlier, this was limited to a three-day period but in 1964 it was extended to seven. The VC called upon the GVN to observe the cease-fire also and in 1966 the GVN/US forces did so. In earlier years, according to VC documents, the VC was able to exploit tensions resulting from the GVN refusal to go along with the idea. For example, one

*It is not known whether the VC, under increasing pressure for additional manpower, has continued these practices after the spring of 1965.
document, captured in Vinh Binh in April 1964, describes the alleged antagonism created among ARVN enlisted men not permitted by their officers to profit from the VC cease-fire to visit their homes in rural areas. It claims the following:

Most of the ARVN troops did not heed the order of confinement to barracks. At TC one soldier protested bluntly to the District Chief, "Last year, nobody caught me when I went home for the Tet Holidays."

The document claims also that this district chief had warned his troops that if they dared return home during the holidays, they would be captured by the VC and their property would be confiscated by them. It alleges further that SVN civil servants and officers had been favorably impressed by the prolongation of the cease-fire to seven days that year and had commented, "It is a great pleasure to enjoy the Tet Holidays in peace!"

One regular feature of this VC cease-fire is an invitation to ARVN forces during this period to visit VC areas to enjoy performances by their entertainment troupes. This tactic has produced numbers of defectors to the VC side and on other occasions has been used to 'recruit' soldiers for political indoctrination programs leading to their later "volunteering" or being conscripted for VC military service.

Some former ARVN soldiers in our sample described how VC military proselyting had functioned to put them into the VC ranks. One had been in the SDC for nine years and risen to the rank of assistant platoon leader in a village in Tuy Hoa, Phu Yen (AG-120). He decided to desert to the VC for two reasons, evidently: first, his discouragement after his platoon had suffered heavy losses in two engagements with the VC and subsequently was devoted to private; and second, the VC's pressure on his family:

I was very concerned about this that the VC had forced my family to persuade me to return home and defect from the SDC. My family was told that if I

*Document captured in the Hiep Thanh sector on 1 April 1964, received from IA/IV Corps, MACV-J2 Log No. 9-324, 27 November 1964.*
did not comply, they would be terrorized...

He remained at home for a month and then joined the VC youth group. Shortly afterward, he was made a hamlet guerrilla squad leader by the VC.

Other former ARVN soldiers were recruited by more conventional recruiting methods after falling into the hands of the VC. One of these was a 27 year-old man from An Loc District, Binh Long, who had been an SDC private for only two months when he was wounded and taken by the VC in early 1962 (AG-73). Because his wound was serious, he was carried by the VC soldiers for several hours and then attended by the VC district medical aid man for several days. He was very favorably impressed by this treatment:

I could not find anything to complain about the attitude and behavior of the VC during that period. No one could be nicer to me than the Front cadres. Their only purpose in capturing me was to find out if I were a spy or had done harm to the population. If not, I would be released after a period of re-education. I told them the only reason I had joined the militia was that I had wanted to avoid the ARVN draft. I also told them that I was a new recruit with no training at all; therefore I could not do them any harm.

After a few days, his wound became infected and he was sent to the VC provincial hospital:

The trip lasted for five or six hours. At the hospital they were even nicer. I was the only prisoner in a room of twenty patients. At first, when my condition was very bad, I was given chicken soup with beef sauce. Later when my condition improved I was given rice soup with beef sauce.

Every day the propaganda and indoctrination cadres would come to lecture to me in particular and to my roommates in general about the meaning of the present war of liberation. They said the North Vietnamese people were trying to help their South Vietnamese brothers chase away the American imperialists and win back their independence. They showed me how rotten the Diem regime was; Diem and Le Xuan Mme. Huu were dictatorial and were
selling the South Vietnamese people to the
Americans for their own family’s profit. The
Americans were false friends; they did not
come to Vietnam to help the people but rather
to take over the country. Then they talked
about the aims of the People’s Liberation Front
which were to liberate South Vietnam from the
domination of American imperialism and from the
Ngo family, and to lead the South Vietnamese to
socialism as in North Vietnam, where no one was
exploited and where everybody was free and every-
body was master of his tools and his land.

Then the cadres asked me to choose between the
two paths before me. They asked me to fulfill
my duty toward the people and they let me know that
the Front was in critical need of young men like me.
After I had agreed to join the Liberation Front they
lectured me on the hardships endured by their comrades
and asked me if my decision still stood. I said yes,
and was sent back to the district the next day.

Besides the lectures of the propaganda and in-
doctrination cadres, I was visited by the Province
Committee Chief. I talked with my roommates and with
the female nurses. I read their information bulletin,
and listened to Radio Hanoi on a Philips battery-
operated radio.

The lectures lasted about twenty minutes each
day and I remained at the hospital for about one month
and eight or nine days. At the end of this period I
could have returned to my family, but I did not. The
cadres asked me whether I wanted to return to my family
or stay with my comrades and join the Revolution.
I wanted me not to work for the GVN again in case I
chose to leave, and he told me how grateful my country
would be to me when the day of liberation came. I did
not want to return home because I would certainly be
imprisoned for having lost my position to the enemy and
besides, I was won over by the aims of the Revolution.
Therefore I decided to join the Front.

--Which reason was more important?

The aims of the Front were more important in my
decision than fear of prison. The cadres had succeeded
in arousing my noblest feelings. I thought that my
family would be proud of having a son who had contrib-
uted to the liberation and would benefit from my
accomplishments.

(Although I remained with the VC for three years and became
a squad leader and party member, I eventually defected.)
XII. THE LARGE PROPAGANDA AND RECRUITMENT MEETING

Among the more gradual and less coercive techniques, the large propaganda meeting has played a key role. As noted earlier, the widening of the war and the VC's consequently enlarged recruitment goals have brought generally rougher and quicker recruiting methods. They thus have brought correspondingly less reliance on the gradual and more time-consuming -- but politically and psychologically more effective -- specialized recruitment approaches such as the public meeting staged with an air of spontaneity, and its sequel, the highly personalized follow-up meetings with individuals which will be discussed in the next chapter. But public meetings and manipulated mass emotion remain important political tools of the VC, and if the meetings and series of meetings probably have dropped something of the facade of spontaneity which tended to characterize them earlier, they certainly still are used for a range of indoctrination and political control purposes even now.

In VC-controlled areas, they have long been used for periodic recruiting drives, and even though recruiting in these areas has become more mechanical, such trappings as the public meeting appear even in the recent period to have remain an integral part of the show of public support associated with recruiting there. Let us first examine the large hamlet or village meeting as it was used by the VC in the late 1950's.

In contested areas, these meetings usually are held in a series, at intervals varying from days to weeks. VC guerrilla bands often have intruded into GVN-controlled areas also for such purposes but here the risk is greater so they may hold only one hit-and-run type propaganda, recruitment and tax-collection meeting before departing. In the days before the hamlet defense systems were organized according to the strategic (more recently the "New Life") hamlet model, less than half a dozen guerrillas, not
all of whom necessarily had firearms, were sufficient to cow and lecture a hamlet audience.

These guerrilla visits, usually made at night, have followed a pattern. The guerrillas require hamlet residents to sound gongs and other noisemakers to signal their presence (in areas in which such special noises are not part of a pre-arranged set of signals to summon GVN intervention forces). The meeting is announced and as many people as possible are urged to attend or, in some cases, each family is asked to send at least one member.

VC units often have combined demonstrations of their military power with such propaganda sessions. From 1962 and particularly 1963 on, when they were systematically focusing their effort on the destruction of strategic hamlet fortifications, they frequently launched an attack to breach a hamlet's defenses (often by blasting a section of wall with recoilless weapons) and then, after the local militia unit had been overcome, gathered the inhabitants together for a lecture and recruitment session. This dramatic and fearful sequence of events in the night built up an atmosphere of anxiety and apprehension in the peasants which eroded what will to resist recruitment the peasants might have had beforehand. Very often the people also would be organized in work gangs to destroy what remained of the hamlet fortifications such as bamboo fences and earthen ramparts and many individuals who might have been basically opposed to the VC were thrust by the pressures of the situation into cooperating in the ensuing sabotage.

The large meetings are skillfully stage-managed to exert a maximum of pressure on the youth to join, so VC agents or
sympathizers are planted in the crowd to whip up enthusiasm and even to set the pace by being the first to volunteer. VC agents also are charged with observing the reactions of the spectators and noting persons responding enthusiastically for follow-up visits by the cadres. In the earlier period, it seems that young people showing marked eagerness to join were favored for assignments in their home villages while many of the others were sent to training and assignments far from home (see, e.g., AG-50, a cadre from Phong Dinh Province). This option, always of limited availability, certainly is not a common one now.

The preservation of an air of spontaneity in the proceedings is important to the VC, even though the individual peasant attending often actually has not been allowed a free choice of joining or staying home. This relates to an extremely important aspect of VC recruitment (which will be dealt with further in Chapter XIII), namely the recently more common three-stage recruitment process, in which the VC dramatizes its power over the will of the individual by abducting rather than persuading many men to join, and then indoctrinating them and asking them to volunteer, despite their earlier resentment over being taken from home against their wishes. They invariably do volunteer, as a result of various pressures including the message of the indoctrination sessions; but the impact of this forced volunteering is a complex question that will be discussed in later chapters.
The interviewees in our sample have described some of these meetings and their effectiveness in some detail. A district recruiting chief (DT-2 [I]) from Cai Lay District, Dinh Tuong who spent over four years in the VC before defecting in 1965 described propaganda and recruitment meetings which stressed the "victory bandwagon" theme:

Compulsory military service has been in effect only since August 1963. Before this date, recruiting was performed by propaganda. (This village had been controlled by the VC since the end of 1962.) Some youths convened a meeting where the cadres lectured about the Front. They told the youths the Front forces were a negligible quantity at first but were increasing little by little. Meanwhile, GVN forces were withdrawing everywhere, abandoning hamlets, villages and posts. Liberated areas grew larger and larger; the countrymen who could free themselves from Diem's yoke were more and more numerous. It was inadmissible that a youth fold his arms and profit from the sacrifices and endeavors of
others. They should join the Front to make their contribution to the liberation and the reunification of the country. After this lecture, a register was presented to the youths and those who volunteered had only to sign. Ordinarily eighty per cent of the youths signed.

Since compulsory military service was abolished, the same process is still being used, but the difference is that all the youths attending the lecture must sign.*

A 16 year-old guerrilla who defected in March 1964 (2036) described a typical VC enlistment campaign in his home area in Long An Province which had gone under VC control in 1962:

Few young people remain outside the Front because the VC periodically organize very attractive recruitment (drives). The volunteers must fill out 'enlistment forms' and submit them to VC leaders in the village. When the number of volunteers is already big enough, i.e., about 30 or 40, the VC organize a solemn departure ceremony attended by almost everyone in the village. The volunteers, one by one, mount the platform to express their feelings, to promise to fight 'to the last drop of blood,' and to encourage others who have not yet signed up. The villagers applaud and cheer and the young women offer flowers and handkerchiefs to the young combatants.

A cadre from Phong Binh Province (AG-50) noted that those whose names were talked about when joining in the ceremonies were allowed to stay at home to work in their home villages and the others frequently were sent far from home for training.

One source who had worked for some months as a member of a civilian recruiting team operating in An Loc District, Binh Long (AG-73), described the well-oiled routine used to harass and solicit contributions and eventually recruits from the rubber plantation workers in the area:

Most of the work was done by the local agents. My duty was to assist them in the persuasion. This was called armed

* This recruiting cadre claimed that some 400 people from his own village had joined the VC military forces as compared with about 70 who had joined the ARVN. Of the 400, he said that about 300 had volunteered between 1961 and 1963 and more than 100 had been conscripted since August 1963. He said most of the volunteers had been dissatisfied with GVN coercion in connection with the agrovill program and "a number of them just followed the VC thought they were the stronger side."
propaganda. About twice a month, my team, which numbered one squad, would gather the plantation workers in the middle of the rubber plantation for a meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to create a good image of the Front, to make propaganda and to let the population know that the Front forces were everywhere.

We would introduce ourselves as the forces of the People's Liberation Front, telling the people about the aims of the Front, the defeats inflicted by the Front forces on the ARVN, and calling for the participation of the people in the popular struggle. We would let the people know in detail all the defects of the GVN: Diem was a dictator, he worked only for the interests of his family, he oppressed the Buddhists, and he set up all kinds of organizations with forced membership so as to control the population more closely. Le Xuan (Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu) forced our women to wear the blue, military-style (Republican youth) uniforms that made them the laughingstock of the village. Diem was helped by the American troops. The people were informed about every arrival of new American troops. In brief, every shortcoming of the GVN was analyzed and explained to the population.

We also incited the people to struggle for more pay and more rice from the plantation owner. This was called the "Mass Struggle."

During the talk, it was very easy to notice those who listened intently. The village secret agents, who mixed with the population, would follow these persons and would make contact with them. They would visit the civilians in their homes and would tell them the Revolution was very hard to achieve without their help. They would say that the Revolution was at its beginning and needed everything, material as well as moral support from every class in society. Those who left to join the Front contributed moral support and those who stayed at home should contribute material support in order to sustain the Front fighters. Once the civilians were contacted by our secret agents, whom we called "foundation agents," it was impossible for them to refuse the contribution (of fifty piasters, about US $.50) because they were afraid of reprisals.

A similar type of meeting was described by a former village guerrilla (AG-84) from Cho Gao District, Dinh Tuong. Meetings had been held there about once a month in 1961 and 1962 and only about every three or four months since 1963 (it was not clear from his statement just when the area went under relatively firm VC control):

The cadres came into every house and asked the people to go and attend the meeting. At least one family representative must be present there. The meeting always took place at the village soccer field at about 7:00 o'clock in the evening.
At first, a cadre talked to the villagers for 10 or 15 minutes. Then there was a theatrical performance, songs, and dances performed by little girls. All these things took place under the light of a gas lamp.

(The popularity of such theatrical performances will be discussed further below.)

The more systematic series of meetings held in a village already under VC control for not only its inhabitants but also those of nearly contested areas and even a GVN strategic hamlet was described by a former VC squad leader from Tay Ninh (AG-196):

First, the VC invited the men in the village and the strategic hamlet to attend their study sessions. Each session lasted for seven or eight days, during which each person took part in the discussion.

At the end of the session, the Front cadres asked the following question: "Who is your friend? and who is your enemy?" Since we were living in a VC-controlled area, everybody would say that the GVN was our enemy and that the persons around us were our friends. Then the cadres would say that when we met our enemy, we would either have to fight or run away.

The cadres asked the people attending the session: "Would you run away and let others fight the enemy for you?" This made many men mad, so they ran up and signed their names to volunteer for the Front forces. But when they got home, their wives and parents scolded them or complained about their actions, so they decided not to join the Front. But if they signed for voluntary service and then refused to join, the VC would come to their houses and take them away by force.

Many sources refer to the above-described type of decision in terms of being politically "awakened" or "enlightened" by VC indoctrination to a consciousness of responsibility for supporting the revolution. A former civilian youth recruiter (AG-114, who had been a truck driver in the GVN Marines before the VC caught him on a bus) described this "enlightenment" further: "You reached enlightenment when you had deep hatred in your heart, when you were able to distinguish your enemy from your friend."

One young recruiting agent who joined the VC (Z-001) in 1959 noted that while the VC "ask for volunteers at meetings," the choice was not
a free one for the individual villager: "If they decide that a certain person should go, that person has to go regardless of whether or not he has volunteered."

If such an individual did not volunteer, he might get the kind of treatment given a youth from Hoai Nhon District, Binh Dinh (AG-107). He refused to attend even the initial propaganda meeting of about a thousand people in/village after the VC took control in November 1964, and so the cadres came to his house three times in the next two days:

At first they used honeyed words to try to convince me, but I turned down their request right away. Next day, they came again and this time they used coarse talk to pique my pride, such as: 'You are a youth living in a country in danger, and you must defend it. You should not stay inactive at home, hiding your face in a woman's skirt! A youth like you does not deserve to live! You lie there waiting for a piece of dung to go down your throat, and you will never succeed!'

At that moment, I was so excited that I lost my temper and my good sense as well, and I agreed to go. They said, 'We will take you along with us for 15 days, only. Rest assured we won't keep you any longer.' They asked me to pack my clothes and to request my parents to give me money. I didn't comply with their last proposal, but I brought 600 piasters which I have saved for a long time.

He was marched off to a distant training school and subsequently assigned to transporting rice, but he defected soon afterward.
The VC frequently includes in its propaganda meetings troupes of youthful dancers and singers. One 17-year-old ex-guerilla (AG-187) from Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long Province, said the VC cadre operating around his own strategic hamlet had invited him to another place to watch a program of such dances and then had no difficulty in getting him to go elsewhere the next day to see another one, and so on for about six days.

After being absent from his village overnight, the youth feared arrest as a VC suspect by the village militia if he returned home. The danger of going home was contrasted with the advantages of staying with the VC as follows:
The VC did not promise me anything. (The cadre) only said that I would have a happy and glorious life (after the war). I would not have to work on the land. I could go visit places by car. All these sounded exciting and I asked to join the VC.

Another 17-year old (AG-188) also from Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long Province, reported that he had gone to a similar dance performance held by the VC in his own hamlet (the eight-man GVN hamlet militia stationed there stayed out of sight because the intruding VC force was larger). Although his own parents had been afraid to attend, about 100 persons did go. He was enthralled with the dancing and said he joined the VC because they offered him a place in the entertainment group. However, they put him directly into the village guerrilla unit, and the hardship of that life brought him to defect three months later.

*An additional story of the recruiting effectiveness of such entertainment troupes will be recounted in Chapter XVI on "The Role of Women."
XIII. HIGHLY PERSONALIZED RECRUITING TECHNIQUES

Complementary to the large propaganda meeting and serving to follow up leads supplied by such meetings is the highly individualized recruiting approach by one or more VC agents. The shrewdness of VC recruiters' exploitation of local and personal circumstances and grievances is perceived with some clarity and even rueful admiration by many of our sources. (Here, again though, it must be observed that the earlier emphasis on such persuasive techniques has tended to give way to more mechanical forms of outright conscription as the bigger war has swollen VC recruitment quotas.) One man (ZH105-) told how a VC cadre of his own age and from his village had visited him for casual talks in which he harped on the defects of the Diem government and urged VC support as the solution to the problem:

He called at my house frequently and talked very convincingly (literally: "sweet-talked," an expression encountered frequently in the interviews) about how the VC dealt with the GVN's oppression of the people.

An attractive young woman in her twenties (ZH105-) cited earlier said she had felt oppressed by her 19-hour work-day as a servant in a Vietnamese family. She had met a VC cadre on a visit to a distant relative and told this man about "the suffering and injustice in my life" and was "sweet talked" into acting as a courier:

He consoled me, spoke to me of resignation. . . . Finally, he asked if I wanted to help the Revolution. I asked him 'What is the Revolution?' and he explained, 'It is to chase out the imperialists. If we are victorious, we will expel them and will no longer be the slaves of anyone.' I was full of bitterness against my employer and I agreed with this man. He told me that it is due to the Americans that the war is raging, there is unemployment, and people have to leave their families and villages. I thought that what he said was right, that life was truly hard. He told me that to work for the Revolution is to work for society and at the same time to work for myself because I am in society.

That man is a mechanic, I think. From time to time he gave me a letter to deliver to someone else.
A variant on the personal touch employed by VC recruiters was described by an older handyman (ZH074-SN) with a traveling theatrical troupe. He said a friend working for the same unit "lent me money often and helped me when I was in need. He made propaganda for the Front. . . ."
A perceptive description of the VC cadre's role in magnifying and inflaming local resentments into hatred was given by a young Main Force assistant platoon leader (ZH093-SN) from the Mekong Delta. He said:

A member of the village Party chapter worked on the people's dissatisfaction until you felt resentful. Then you were ready to join or do anything, including leaving your family. That is the first step...

A number of sources described the careful collection of background information on target individuals before the approach was made. One youth (Z0041-D) commented:

When they (the VC) told you to do something for them, they had studied it well ahead. They knew you well, knew your family, knew all of your relations. When you saw that they knew you so well, you trusted them and would do whatever they told you to. I can't remember everything about their policies, but many of the things they said were true. They talked to a point where you became so well penetrated that you began to feel like them. If you did not believe the things they believe, it would be very difficult to work for them. If you did not believe, you would have no energy... you would feel very tired.

This last source, a 24-year-old defector from a Main Force battalion, told an astonishing story of the persuasiveness of Front recruiters. His father had been killed by VC agents in 1959 for serving the GVN as a hamlet chief, and his mother had died not long afterward. But even before her death, the village Party secretary visited the boy to explain the killing, "to dissipate any personal hatred that I might retain..." He described his reaction as follows:

In the beginning I was very hurt and angry with them for killing my father. I quarreled with them. Then they told me that because my father had done wrong (in serving as hamlet chief and thereby 'working against his own class interests, against the poor classes'), he had to be punished. But he also said that the faults of the father should not be visited upon the son. They talked to me and to people like me whose relatives were killed in order to eradicate all their hatred of the VC. They talked to a point where I felt that they were right. I no longer felt hurt...I came to hate my father even though I didn't know (exactly) what he had done.
A youth recruiter who had operated near the city of Cantho (AC-114) described another phase of this work, VC attack groups to get the youth in distant towns and cities to return to villages under VC control:

I was with a youth proselyting group. We made propaganda among the young from 18 to 25 years old and their families. As for the young people, we would arouse their hatred for the enemy and urge them to join the Revolution. With regard to their families, we would make propaganda and then urge them to call their sons in the cities back to the village to join the Revolution. We investigated very efficiently; we knew exactly which family had a son in the cities. When we succeeded in making the young man join the Front we would turn him over to the local men, i.e. the guerrillas.

I had no rank. I was not a fighter. I was just a member of the Labor Youth Group. In the Group I held the rank of cell leader.

My group was composed of nine persons and a few sacrificed themselves during ARVN operations. Their mission was like mine but we did not live in the same village. Our Group operated on the outskirts of Cantho (Phong Dinh province capital) in several villages... Each village had 2 or 3 members of the Group... Most of the members were highly educated, at about baccalaureate level.
XIV. THE GRADUALNESS OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE VC

Many ex-VC report that when they volunteered for small tasks at the beginning, they had no clear idea of the progressively increased involvement they would be drawn into. "When we joined we started at a very low level, but we 'worked up,'" as one (2041-D) put it. Again, though, this is a pattern that has tended to give way to more direct forms of military conscription.

A typical first step was described by a man (ZH-124-5) who had not yet "joined" but who had agreed to help the two covert VC agents in his village by warning whenever ARVN troops came into the area. He recalled in retrospect that "Thus, although not yet a member of the Front, I was already participating in a way in Front activities in my village."

As such an individual becomes more active for the VC and becomes identified in his community as pro-VC or as an active VC, he becomes an "illegal person" in the eyes of the GVN. When he realizes this, if not before, he generally takes the big step of leaving home and becoming a full-time guerrilla at the level of village or above and after that watershed experience, this commitment truly becomes dominant in his life. The interviewees tend to use a term (thoat ly) for this step which does not mean simply leave-taking but to be emancipated, to liberate oneself.

The first source cited above followed a pattern seen in the history of many VC, beginning with minor assignments such
as standing guard for the guerrillas, carrying rice, participating in the sabotage of roads and bridges, and then assembling the peasants for VC projects. "Later, they had me using a [megaphone] to appeal to the people to close the market and go on strike." He became a village guerrilla when he was twenty and later was assigned to the regional and finally the Main Forces before he ultimately defected to the GVN.

A 27-year old boy (Z035-D) from a poor peasant background who had worked as a truck driver's helper on the road from Tay-Ninh to Saigon, was asked how he had begun his VC activity and said, "They did not threaten me, but they moved step by step, gradually, through stages." He lived in a Cao Dai village which had never been controlled by the VC, but he met VC agents in a remote area of his hamlet and later made further contacts with the VC on the highway. From 1958 to 1960, he "received various assignments such as distributing tracts, putting up VC flags and slogans, telling young acquaintances to resist ("RVN) conscription, and not to furnish labor (for GVN public works programs)." When he received his ARVN draft notice in 1960, his experience already had disposed him favorably toward the Front, so he then accepted an assignment as a fifth column agent in an ARVN local unit; and when he was threatened with exposure in that role, he ran off and joined the VC Main Force.

The transition from what the VC call "legal" to "illegal" status was described clearly by several young men. One (Z041-D) was a 24-year old Main Force defector (described in the
previous chapter) who joined even though the VC had killed his father for serving as a GVN hamlet chief. He said:

I went to work for them just a few months after my father's death. They talked a great deal to me. When I was 'well penetrated' I worked for them. It didn't take much time. Everybody of my age worked for them. In no time, because of my illegal actions, I became an illegal man. Though I had begun to work for them...in the winter of 1959, I really became an illegal man (later) when I had to leave home.
...on 20 July 1960, they celebrated some big (event and) I became illegal. ...I don't remember that the celebration was for. (Author's note: It was the anniversary of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.) Something very big. They organized everyone to destroy the roads. I had to organize people to dig trenches across the roads....I also organized people to go to a big meeting.

Another source (ZH093-SN) describing the sensation of crossing the political bound was a young Mekong Delta main forces assistant platoon leader (ZH093-SN, also quoted earlier), used lyrical language in pointing up the significance of his transition to the fully committed status:

...You started to serve and have missions and study sessions, according to your ability. You tried to do your missions underground, but you were still a legal person. So you worked until people found out about your activities, and then you became illegal and had to leave home to become a full-time guerrilla.

When you left your home, there was a celebration, and the village was invited to send you off for your national duty. That was glorious! Having a fighting son brought glory to the family!

Not all the histories of VC involvement move so briskly as this man's story suggests, however. A contrast of long-deferred joining is furnished by the case of a 24-year-old, illiterate, less intelligent source (AG-81) from Ca Lay District, Dinh Tuong. He said that although he had been approached by recruiters two or three times a year since 1960, he had consented only in June 1964 to serve as a hamlet road guard, warning of the approach of GVN forces and helping to build combat hamlets and obstruct canals. When he was told in September to prepare to leave home to join the armed forces, he ignored the advice and moved closer to the physical protection of the GVN militia post in his village. However, he finally joined in October out of a mixture of motives stemming from VC persuasion and coercion (his case is discussed further in Chapter 16) and became a low-level propaganda agent.
XV. THE USE OF RUSES BY VC RECRUITERS

VC recruiters often use ruses, particularly to trap a person into a situation in which he cannot refuse systematic political indoctrination. These run the gamut from a "limited service pitch" to an infinite variety of tricks to trap a person into an initial involvement with the VC or a political indoctrination course which compromises him politically and often represents the beginning of a progressively increasing pressure to deepen his commitment to the movement.

The experience of being tricked into such involvement may strain the subject's original affection for the recruiter or whatever budding interest he has in the movement, but the question of the longer-range political implications of such experiences of personal exploitation on VC morale is a complex one which is discussed further in the final chapter. Such experiences, no doubt, can add to later disappointments in VC service and when added to later disappointing experiences in the movement, tend to weigh in the direction of an ultimate defection, as noted there.

But it must be observed also that in Vietnamese peasant culture, as in Vietnamese society generally, there is a certain admiration, not always grudging, for the person who is shrewd and artful (khôn, khôn-kheo, often translated by the Vietnamese into the French malin) and can "get away with something." The wide range of ruses used by VC agents as described in the interviews suggests that many of these recruiting problems must have appealed to the agents' sense of the artfully clever for some of these stories surely indicate that more deviousness was employed than would seem to have been necessary, at least to a Western analyst. And it appears from the interviews that the recruiter's targets, once entrapped, and then subjected to systematic indoctrination supplying a political rationale for such a sequence of events,
tended to go along with the business as if they too shared to some extent the others' appreciation of the "shrewd" aspects of this game. Of course the roles of the regular political control mechanisms and the continuous indoctrination in small, brotherly groups is even more important in mitigating any such original resentment and hostility when this system works satisfactorily, as will be discussed further in the last two chapters.

One of the most prominent ruses is what might be called the "limited service pitch", one variant of which is that a person is assured that he will be allowed to serve for only a limited period. Many VN fighters who were regrouped to North VN in 1954-55 had serious misgivings about the departure, particularly when this meant leaving their families behind. Many of these men in the sample said they were reassured by the cadres that they would return home in a peaceful South VN after the revolutionary forces won the July 1956 elections projected by the Geneva Accords. So many of them said so, in fact, that one is left with the impression that a sizeable number might not have gone North if they could have foreseen the actual outcome of events. However, the political indoctrination system of the VM was up to its task of coping with the postponement of the elections and the need for belt-hitching and new determination to pursue a long preparation in the North for the delayed return to the South.

One of the apparently numerous men recruited by the VM even after the cease-fire had gone into effect (2009) said the VM had infiltrated his village and held effective propaganda meetings making the following arguments:
...'Now,' they said, 'the French have been chased out of the country and we have accepted temporary partition of the country...In two years there will be general elections. Therefore, go now to the North to reinforce our position and you will come back here at the end of two years....

I wanted to work to unite the country. My friends told me that if I stayed in the South under the Bao Dai regime, I would be forced to join the Army and would surely die. On the other hand, if I joined the VM in the North, I would have a better life in the Army and be able to go back to my village after two years. I intended to go North to see what it was like, then come back...after two years...I did not know what Communism was.
One regroupee (Z029, a man of obviously low intelligence) reported he had gone North as the result of a more obvious ruse. He had wished to remain at home because he was worried about his mother's livelihood. However, the following events transpired:

Mr. --- of the (VM) village administrative committee came to tell me to go to work with him. But when we arrived in Bong-son he told me flatly that we were going to be regrouped in the North. (I had to go along because) I knew it was useless to resist. Sooner or later they would get me back...

The few ethnic Northerners in sample were conscripts performing their regular three-year military service in the North Vietnamese army (PAVN) before being asked if they would like to "volunteer" for combat in the South—the "volunteering" usually consisting simply of a show of hands or signing a list under circumstances making it difficult to refuse to go along with the group. But when they "volunteered," they understood that their military service might be prolonged indefinitely, until the war had been won.

However, Southern youth sometimes were told by VC recruiters that they will serve only for a limited period. A young VC ammunition bearer in a Main Forces battalion (Z022-SN) was told upon recruitment in 1960 in the Mekong Delta that "adults had to serve (the revolution) for three years, younger people for one." A main forces assistant platoon leader (AG-174) who also had served in the Delta from 1961 to 1964 described this in more detail. He said that in liberated areas, those who did not volunteer were conscripted for three years. In contested areas, on the other hand, young men were subjected to political indoctrination and then asked to volunteer, but those who did not were allowed to return home. (His full statement on this is included in Chapter 17.)

While this type of outright conscription in VC-controlled areas appears to have been extended into contested areas also, particularly from 1964 on, the more typical VC line in contested areas has claimed that the war itself would not last very long—a claim which periodically has been dropped when the course of the war has not appeared to offer substantial...
The 19-year-old defector mentioned earlier (Z008-D) who had joined the VC in 1962 in Long An said, for example:

The VC propaganda said that we wouldn't stay longer than one or two years in the front before the struggle was ended. (Meanwhile) we would be able to go visit our families. It was enticing and I believed it. If I had known that I would have to stay for a long time far from my family, I wouldn't have joined.

Some men said more obvious tricks were used to recruit them. A young Central Vietnamese (ZH064-SN) was working in a strategic hamlet which was visited by the VC one night in March 1963. They destroyed the hamlet defense system and held a propaganda meeting, during which they told the youth to follow them. They said "it would not be for long."

But, as the lad recalled it, "They took all the youth toward the mountains, making us march for a month to a training school. They gave us four months of instruction and then sent us to different places to transport rice."

A 26-year-old (Z007-D) from An-Xuyen (labeled) said he had been one of a dozen VC militiamen who were told they were going away for awhile to receive additional military training, not to perform regular military service. He found this all the more plausible because a year earlier (late 1959) he had been arrested by the VC for previous service in the GVN's Rural Defense Youth, taken to the U Minh jungle, and then allowed to return home after a month. This time, though, he was given military training and then with a group of 240 trainees was sent on a four-month march to Tay Minh where he was integrated into a Main Force battalion. His reaction to the assignment to "military training" had been as follows:

My slight indecision was due to the thought of death, of dying far from home without anyone knowing about it. Also, (I worried about) leaving my girl friend behind... (But) I did not hesitate much because I thought I was going away just for some military training, after which I would be allowed to return home.
A civilian proselyting cadre infiltrated back to South Vietnam (ZH135-R) told a story of how a naive country boy of nineteen had been hoodwinked into joining the VC. The youth had grown dissatisfied with village life in Central Vietnam and told his friends he wanted to seek his fortune in a city like Saigon where such things as bicycles, watches and good clothes were available. A fellow villager and friend, a man in his thirties, told the boy that he too was ready to leave the village and invited him to come along with him. But instead of taking him to a city, he took him to a VC camp in the hills. The older man had been planning to join the VC anyway, so he took advantage of this opportunity along a prospective recruit. The boy was disappointed at first, but after a short while the VC unit members persuaded him that he belonged with them rather than in a strange and decadent city, and in time he became a fighting man.

A similar ruse was once employed by the youth propaganda cadre mentioned earlier (Z11-D). On a trip to his home village, he said,

...by chance I met a Civil Guard soldier who was a friend of my uncle. He had just lost all his money gambling. Taking advantage of this situation I told him to come along with me and we would arrange for him to borrow some money. Actually, it was a lie. I led him into the VC zone. After we got there, I told him the truth and asked him to join us. He accepted because it was too dangerous for him to go back.

One factor which undoubtedly helps the VC to give its prospective and new adherents the impression that their future assignments may not necessarily be hazardous or threatening is its emphasis on recruiting even the very young and the handicapped. As one defector said, "All those who wished to go were accepted, the weak as well as the strong." Another man told of seeing a hunchback among one group of new recruits, one of our sources (Z08-D) who had joined in a group of youths at a village meeting was afraid to reveal that he was an epileptic until his military training had already started in a distant place; and still another source could not run because he suffered from a physical condition which may have been elephantiasis and, therefore, served only in a minor capacity or conflict was given a country job which did not demand strenuous exertion.
Another recruiting tactic is based on the appeal, "Come see how people live in a Front-liberated area." One case (described in Chapter 16) is that of a 15-year-old boy (2006-P) who while visiting his sister's hamlet was taken forcibly as a suspect to the forest, interrogated, and then allowed to move about freely in a nearby "liberated zone." He found the experience exciting and when he was asked if he would like to join the guerrillas there, he assented. A similar case failed to yield the VC a recruit but resulted in the subject being a VC suspect. A 33-year-old barber (60-138) in the town of Tuy Hoa, Central Vietnam, was approached in his shop by an old childhood friend who had been with VC in the mountains and then rallied under the Chieu Hoi program in 1963. Although the barber discerned in a few conversations with the defector that the latter still was a VC sympathizer, he did succumb, under the man's urging, to the curiosity to see his own native village again after it had gone under VC control. Circumstances made the visit seem convenient and safe: The village was located only a short distance from his parents-in-law's village which he was going to during the New Year season anyway; and his friend the defector assured him that the VC in his own nearby village "made it a point not to trouble anyone during the Tet holiday."

However, once arrived in the village, the barber was arrested and subjected to an intimidating five-hour series of political harangues and threats, which convinced him that if he were not to be detained and sent to a "political indoctrination camp," he had better agree to do a small chore they requested of him, namely, to purchase a small packet of oriental medicine.

After returning home, he did not buy the medicine, even though he was pressured by the false defector. But he got into trouble with the GVN police anyway because he did not report the incident to the police, although he did suggest to a police official in his shop one day that his defector friend seemed to be making propaganda for the VC. When the policeman said he should not make such statements without being sure of his facts lest he harm the innocent, the
barber held back from telling the truth for fear that his mother, living in a VC zone, might suffer VC reprisals. Shortly afterward, he was arrested and, he claimed subsequently, made a full statement which resulted in the arrest, torture and confession of the VC agent. Meanwhile, however, the barber himself was being held indefinitely on suspicion. (His statement to our interviewer did not blame the GVN for his predicament, but the VC, for its use of such unscrupulous tactics.)

A young tailor (Z036-D) from Long An Province (Mekong Delta) was recruited by a ruse in an area already so strongly VC-controlled that a more forthright type of conscription might just as well have been employed. But it appears that the VC probably used such a trick in his case because he was only 16 years old and his mother was very apprehensive about his departure (he defected six months later).

The boy had been forced by poverty to drop out of school and he went to work as a tailor in a distant district town. His home village was increasingly under VC control in 1962 and when he returned there to visit his mother the following year, VC cadres called on him and insisted that he accompany them to furnish one night of sewing labor. They promised to release him the next morning. However, they led him off to a VC regional company headquarters and assigned him the job of making and mending clothing for the troops. (He noted that only one other village youth was inducted along with him, because he said that was not the time for one of the VC's periodic enlistment drives.)

One young peasant (A6-106) was literally caught up in a tree by VC recruiters. This man, living in an insecure hamlet in Binh Dinh, was invited by his 17-year-old friend, a secret agent, to go fruit-picking with him in a nearby hamlet. The consequences were as follows:

I agreed to go. While I was climbing a tamarind tree, my friend disappeared, and six VC men appeared at the foot of the tree. They lived in the same village as mine but in different hamlets. Le Van Manh, a squad leader,
was armed with a MAT-49 submachine gun and the other boys were armed with a carbine and four MAT-36 rifles. They persuaded me to go along with them to Ho-Ruong Hill to see a photograph of one of my uncles who had been in the North since 1954. I arrived at 6:00 p.m. at the foot of the hill. I had to sleep with them and only the next day at 2:00 p.m. did I receive food. They told me, 'The youth of today must go to fight for the party, for the people, in order to defend the country.' I was not shown my uncle's photograph. I knew that I had been fooled by them. I cried a lot, but they did not release me and they took me to the mountains...

This man later defected to the CVN.
XVI. THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The VC has skillfully used girls and women, particularly in recruiting and also indoctrination tasks. Women fighters also have been reported in some hamlet and village guerrilla units and some newspaper reports also have mentioned that women sometimes accompany VC local forces on combat operations. While these females do not hesitate to use their feminine charms or, by contrast, to compete with men when they pique the men's pride by challenging them to match their own revolutionary commitment. However, the puritanism of the movement does not permit the exploitation of intimate sexual relations as a recruitment policy, although this apparently occurs in rare instances.

Women have always played an important role in Vietnamese society, which shows definite matriarchal influences believed to stem from the old pre-Chinese cultural configuration. Known to every school child are the feats of the Trung sisters who led Vietnamese forces and died in battle against the Chinese in the first century A.D. Women very often have assumed the financial responsibility in the Vietnamese family -- a fact which enabled the Confucian scholars to devote full time to their intellectual pursuits -- and they are, of course, responsible for the rearing of the children.

Thus, a boy (AG-159) from Phuoc Ninh District, Tay Ninh, who went into the VC regional forces at the age of thirteen and served two years before defecting, told of a neighbor woman's compelling influence on his decision to join at such an early age:

Chi Nam Boi persuaded me to join ... she had lived in our hamlet for a long time; she had three husbands who were VC and all died. She became active in the Front in 1961 ... She was persuaded by her husbands. I believed her since she was older than I, and besides she was more educated and was our family's neighbor.

A nineteen-year-old (AG-119) who had joined the VC the year before in Tuy Hoa District of Phu Yen said he had been abducted
by the VC and been given forcible political indoctrination for a week before being asked to volunteer, (a regular recruiting method which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 12). He described as follows the role of the village girls in getting him to change his mind:

At first, I refused to join. I was almost ready to go home after being educated; but finally, I had to give up this idea since many girls came to me and persuaded me to stay and to join the village force in order to assist the villagers. One of the girls held my hand and promised me that she would send me a hammock and parachute risers [cord] to hang the hammock on once I was in the forest.

A young peasant in Long An Province (AG-110) claimed he had been induced to join when only sixteen by a girl agent's use of sexual intimacy but in this he was one of the few men in the sample to recount such a story. Notably, too, these stories seem to be told by sources whose interviews reflect an unusual interest in sex and claim unusual prowess, so their reliability is somewhat questionable. This man said "In April 1961 while making love with a girl in the entertainment group of the village, I was persuaded by her to join the entertainment group." She also promised to marry him, he claimed. As soon as it became clear that this source had no singing or dancing ability, however, he was trained and assigned as a first aid man to the village guerrillas.

While instances have been reported in the interviews of girl agents' use of flirting and coquetry, this description of the use of sexual gratification as an inducement is unique in the series. However, this story would appear to be confirmed by the fact that the source, a defector later, was criticized and expelled from the Labor Youth for such dalliance.

He claimed that the girl agent had approached him a half dozen times about joining before he did so and he also commented that, as a youth who "loved to fool around," his prospects for pleasure with the girls or even for marrying and starting a family were affected by the fact of VC political control.
... the liberation movement was at its peak in my village. Most of the girls were intimidated by the VC. If I wanted to make love with any girl, I would have to join the Front first.

Later, this man deserted to return home, and his subsequent return to duty as ordered also was influenced by the value he placed on his amorous adventures in the village:
I thought that I should comply with what the Chapter member said; otherwise, I would lose face with the girls...

In my hamlet, there were two or three girls with whom I made love. If my hands were tied and I were taken away, these girls and my family would make me feel ashamed.

Eventually he was arrested and expelled from the VCN Youth for such conduct.

A twenty-two-year-old Main Force squad leader from Tay Ninh (AG-67) described a range of VC activities in which girls had participated in Phu Khuong District of that province. First, girls evidently played the role of "shills" in leading the men to volunteer. The following passage is typical of many recruitment situations in which both coercion and persuasion are present, a situation which the source claims as

having been mainly coercive but which, on close examination, appears to have been tinged with considerable willingness. The source was willing to

admit to the interviewer:

Seven of us joined the Front. We were forced to go. Besides, they talked very sweet and fluently. I would like to assure you that I was forced to go with them. They came to my house on the 7th day of Tet, my 9th day of leave. There were four men, armed with guns. If I had resisted them, I would have been blindfolded, tied up, and taken away. That was why I had to go with them. When they came to pick us up, there were some girls who volunteered to join at the same time; that was another reason why I could not refuse to go, although I did not want to...The girls probably attracted me some; they were the first lot to join...

After this man joined, he was taken to another village and given a week of political indoctrination which also made good use of woman cadre's persuasiveness and wiles:

One man and one woman came to talk to us for three hours, twice a day, for three or four days. The man said that we were young people and the Front needed us to fight the enemy who was being defeated. Once the Front won this war we would enjoy many benefits. He said he himself had to leave his family to serve the Front. How could we live at peace with ourselves if we did not follow his example?

The woman cadre was even better at propaganda than the man. She said that as a woman she had joined the Front to fight against the enemy, thus we as young men should do something instead of staying home with our families. The Front had more guns than it could use and we should use those guns against the enemy, otherwise our country could never win its independence and peace.
I am a man and I could not be less than a woman. The pride of every man in our group was hurt. Consequently all of us agreed to remain with the Front. The next day we were taken to Bao Cho by the same guerrilla unit which had abducted us.

This source when asked, "What did you like best about the Front and your life in it?" responded as follows:

People were nice. When we got sick or were wounded, girls came to comfort us. Generally speaking, people in the VC have a real talent for talking politics...

A number of other sources mentioned women nurses and medical assistants (e.g., A6-119).

Concerning the use of women as guerrillas, a VC village militia platoon leader who served in Phuoc Thanh Village, Tuy Phuoc District, Binh Dinh, until March 1965 (AG-108) reported briefly on one unit:

There was a squad of armed women guerrillas in Nhơn An hamlet that moved every day from hamlet to hamlet to hold propaganda meetings for the VC and to attract compatriots. I haven't seen them fighting yet.

Some interesting comments on the evolution of a women's platoon were made by a man who had been a regional force and company commander (AG-70) in Tra Cu District, Vinh Binh until November 1964:

...A platoon of women fighters was assigned to the 503rd Company. This platoon, four squads strong, was called the District Women's Regional Force (Nu Phuong Quan Huyen).

...They received military training, and some of them accompanied our men in the siege of outposts. They were equipped with K-44 rifles and carbines. They had one submachine gun. At first, they were forty women, mostly unmarried and widows, but their fighting spirit was low, because some were not physically fit for military duty and others became frightened at the sight of the dead and wounded (so that) the size of this force decreased to 17-20 women who now act as commo-liaison and propaganda agents in the liberated areas.

These sources (except for the youth who claimed to have made love to the girl entertainment troupe member) indicated that these women VC scrupulously observed the VC code prohibiting sexual relations between the unmarried. One source who had described a women's unit and was
asked where and whether there had been any, said the women slept in one place and "the boys (in the military unit) were practically locked up at night. They couldn't do anything (about the women)."
XVII. FORCIBLE RECRUITMENT AND CONSCRIPTION

"I was forced to do with them." was a statement made by many interviewees. Some of them described baldly coercive recruitment tactics, such as visits by small groups of armed VC who simply told the subject and his family that the time had come for him to perform the military service required of all youth. Some of the subjects were abducted from their homes or from a bus or train which had been stopped by a VC band. Sometimes they were tied or blindfolded until they reached the VC unit at which they were to receive political indoctrination for a few days or weeks or longer. In many cases of this type, VC agents had contacted the subject and his parents earlier, perhaps repeatedly, to ask him to volunteer or in any case to be ready to go. Quite frequently, the interviewees report such incidents in matter-of-fact terms as instances of conscription (i.e., "I had to go.") but in the case of the younger men it is evident that a certain amount of fear and anxiety was often present in the situation. If the youth attempted to resist the recruiter's blandishments, these sometimes turned to cold threats and preemptory commands in short order.

There is a fairly large category of interview reports which speaks of forcible induction but is found on close reading to contain suggestions of voluntarism and, sometimes, to indicate quite clearly that while the subject may have felt forced or constrained to join in a general sense, he was sympathetic to some elements of the recruiter's appeals and in some cases probably is dissembling them when he denies that he actually volunteered. We will start here with some cases of relatively clear-cut coercion and then later examine some others in which volunteering played a more important, if sometimes uncertain, role.
Conscription by Abduction

One interviewee (AG-85), a 28 year-old who served as a VC private in Cu-Chi District, Binh Duong (now Mau Nghia) from mid-1964 to early 1965, told how his unit periodically had rounded up peasant recruits forcibly. He said that every month or two his platoon (evidently a village guerrilla unit) had accompanied district cadres carrying out recruiting missions "on a forced basis," and that "if the person concerned objected stubbornly to this method he would be tied up and taken away anyway." This unit brought in "from ten to seventy" young men at one time, that maximum figure having been taken "in October 1964, when the VC launched a recruitment [drive] in the whole village."

A former squad leader (AG-196) in Hieu Thien District, Tay Ninh who defected in March 1965 claimed that forcible recruitment in his area was restricted to certain circumstances (at least before this technique became so widely used later. He said that when men were asked to join the VC following the propaganda meetings and study sessions, some who signed later reneged and "only those who had signed the list and then refused to join would be taken away forcibly." (Interestingly, he claimed that the well-off were able to continue attending propaganda sessions and thereby resist further involvement indefinitely, but this situation, even if generally true in his area at that time, certainly is not generally true today.)*

*When asked "Did many of the villagers volunteer to join the Front?" he replied as follows:
The villagers who were well-off said they would go on attending study sessions as much as the Front asked them to but they refused to sign their names to the list. They were well-off, so it didn't matter to them if they lost seven or eight days' work or not (this was the duration of each study session). Only the poor joined the Front. But, sometimes the villagers who were taken away by the lower-ranking cadres for military service were considered by higher-ranking authorities to be devoid of fighting spirit and allowed to go home. The high-ranking cadres said that the people should not be forced
into joining the Front, because if they were, they
would take their weapons with them and defect to the
GVN side or return home. Therefore the people should
be persuaded to join the Front in a voluntary manner.

It will be instructive at this point to examine the stories
of three men who claimed to have been abducted, two of whom
had been members of GVN hamlet paramilitary organizations
such as the Rural Defense Youth. Many of the abducted men
in our sample later defected or were captured after relatively
brief periods of VC service but the present study cannot support any general conclusions on the specific
frequency of this pattern of events.

Typical of cases in the abduction category is one of a man
(G-26) who had been led off in 1964 at the age of 18 in Que Son
District, Quang Nam. He had stayed in different hamlets of the
village to try to keep out of the VC's hands, and he described
the recruiting incident as follows:

I was on my way to my (Rural Defense Youth) guard
post and I stopped at an inn in my hamlet. It was
between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. About ten armed VC soldiers
rounded me up along with five others. Two of the others
later escaped. I was assigned alone to a unit of the
district (regional) force.

He was sent to a farm production unit and received military
training one morning per week for three weeks. He never
received systematic political training except for the daily
work evaluation sessions in the late afternoon. He defected
after six months.
A man of 26 (AG-150) told how he had been taken away by the VC in Song Cau District, Phu Yen, in June 1962:

At that time I was a strategic hamlet cadre of Song Cau. The day after my marriage, my wife and I went back to my parents-in-law's house. About 8:00 p.m. the VC came to destroy the defense system of the remote neighborhoods of Long Phuoc hamlet.

The VC (they were natives of my village) broke into the house and obliged the seven members of my wife's family to assemble in the open yard. Then they searched all the rooms. I hid in my wife's room, and when my wife went out, I hid under a bed, but a VC searching all the corners of the room discovered my hideout.

He pushed me out and forced me to sit down and to listen to his propaganda. He read newspapers and leaflets. He (tried to make) me organize a fifth column in the village for proselyting youths. I refused, saying that I...
was the only son of my family, but at that moment, another VC, kicking the door open, rushed into the room and tied me up. They carried me away. I marched all night long in the mountains and next morning they turned me over to another VC who took me to a comrade liaison station at noon. We stayed there for one night and then continued to march until we reached the VC reeducation camp.

I saw five people there: two old men, one woman and two youths (Civil Guardsmen). I remained idle for six days. I cooked the rice which I had been allowed to carry with me. On the seventh day, I made my assignment report, and after that I was obliged to be a production worker in Lo Dieu Valley in Xuan Lanh Village.

After six months, he was given a three-day political training course and then was transferred to other production sites and also assumed part-time typing tasks on the district propaganda section's news bulletin. After seven months' service, he surrendered to a GVN force mopping up a nearby area.

A 23-year-old peasant (ZI044-SN) from Vinh Binh Province in the Mekong Delta said that in December 1963 he had been one of 24 youths in his village to be rounded up by the VC and forced to follow them into a nearby forest where they were given two weeks' military training. He said he had been too fearful to tell the VC about his epilepsy, but when he evidently had a seizure, they were taken on a two-month march to the Ta Bang Forest in Tay Ninh Province. Others in his group were assigned to combat units but because of his condition, he was kept in a farm production unit for four months until his capture in June 1964.

He was not even given political training beyond the routine criticism sessions dealing with work assignments, although he was given an hour a day of training in literacy, arithmetic and basic geometry, which he enjoyed, having been illiterate before his induction. He evidently did not come to accept VC propaganda and seemingly would have defected if an opportunity had presented itself before his capture.
Some, or perhaps even most, of the cases discussed up to this point undoubtedly involved prior signalling to the subjects that they were due for VC military service. Other subjects obviously were notified that they would be called up soon, so their situations resemble more closely conventional conscription routines. Even so, the latter tend to use the same terms as those who had been abducted with little or no advance notice, such as "forced to go," taken against my will," "arrested," and so on. Some cases of conscription following previous notification are given below.

One was a 17-year-old guerrilla (ZH-119-SN) from Chuong-Thien Province in the Mekong Delta, who recounted how three VC soldiers had visited his house in September 1964 and "invited (him) to join the army." His father and mother wept, but he felt he had to go.

Another young guerrilla (ZH-118-SN) from the same province said a VC cadre with whom he was acquainted simply told him he had to "go into the army" and he did so three days later.

A 31-year-old farmer (AG-111) told how VC in his hamlet in Can Ruoc District, Long An, had conscripted him in October 1964. After two VC cadres came to see him and unsuccessfully tried to get him to join them, they "kidnapped
his wife and mother and took them to an abandoned house in the same hamlet to put more pressure on him to join them:

They asked my mother and my wife to persuade me to go and serve my military duty. My mother begged them to spare me, because I had a wife and five little children and I had to stay home and work to feed them. They replied that people of my age could not stay in the hamlet, because sooner or later the GVN would come to take me away. They said they could not afford to have me enlist in the ARVN and fight their comrades. A few days later, I received a paper warning me to be ready to do my military duty. Six days after that Mr. Sen and Mr. Khai came to my house with three or four guerrillas and took me away together with seven other hamlet inhabitants. They came at about 5 pm. My mother would not let me go, but they loaded their guns in front of me and I was forced to agree to go with them.

This man defected after four months in the VC.

A former squad leader in the regional forces in Phuoc Ninh District, Tay Ninh (AG-162) who had been demoted to private before his defection at the age of 18, said that he and several other men transporting lumber by oxcart had been "invited" by a VC Main Force squad they encountered in the forest to participate in a "re-education program" and promised they could return home in a month. After the course, however, they were warned that their absence from their villages had compromised them in the eyes of the GVN village officials who, they were told, would kill them if they returned, so they "dared not go back home." Only later did the VC tell these men that all of the youth of that area
had to serve for 2 years in the Main Forces or the village or hamlet guerrillas or at least join the lowest level militia for road and strategic hamlet sabotage work as well as transportation of ammunition and the VC wounded.
Additional case histories of abduction are presented in Appendix A. (Two of them describe men who later were assigned to Main Force units, and both were captured before participating in any military action.)

A rather unusual point dealt with in some of these vignettes is the VC's use of the practice of blindfolding some abductees before leading them off to base camps, and the terror this tends to induce in the peasants generally. The blindfold evidently is left on long enough in some cases to impair vision, at least for a while, but what one would suppose to be the evidently temporary organic nature of this disability may be prolonged by the complicating factors of trauma. The VC is widely known to blindfold persons marked for very harsh treatment including public denunciations, "people's trials" and summary execution and the common knowledge of this practice undoubtedly adds to the confusion and anxiety of the person blindfolded.

The Three-Stage Process: Conscription, Indoctrination and Volunteering

A major part of the VC's success as a revolutionary organization lies in its effective use of what might best be described as "manipulated voluntarism." Thus, one of the most important recruiting techniques to come to light in this study, in terms of demonstrated potency in pushing large numbers of politically unaware and uncommitted men into the organization and getting them to function satisfactorily as revolutionary fighters, is the widespread use of a three-stage process. In this process such persons are conscripted, often by abduction, taken to a distant, often remote, location for indoctrination and finally asked to volunteer for combat or other service. This process is significant also because the coercion used in this type of recruitment inevitably arouses reactions of shock and resentment; and while this antagonism
often seems to be neutralized by subsequent VC indoctrination, political controls, camaraderie and a whole range of other experiences of the fighter in the movement, it nevertheless probably adds a rather unpredictable element of potential instability to a person's commitment to the VC. This would seem to be substantiated by the number of defectors among men originally inducted coercively in the sample, but the present state of the data and analysis does not permit any but the most general conclusions on this point. The only safe statement that can be made on this is that the fact of forcible induction does not necessarily mean that the inductee will have low morale or not fight well.

Thus, numbers of these men whose introduction to the VC occurred in a threatening, anxiety-provoking situation stay with the movement and apparently perform satisfactorily in combat. Many of them appear simply to have attempted to make the best of a trying situation, and claim after capture or defection that they never became enthusiastic about the VC cause. For those who fought well and showed sufficient leadership ability to move up to cadre rank, however, it would seem that disclaimers of original enthusiasm for the VC cause cannot be simply ignored but must be interpreted carefully in terms of the impact of such initially threatening experience on subsequent behavior. While this important area of apparent VC vulnerability cannot be delineated with certainty, some speculative comment on it is offered in the final chapter.)
The VC usually pressure an abductee to "volunteer" after his indoctrination has been completed, or, if he was still unenthusiastic about soldiering, they might assign him to a farm production unit, give him some (usually less intensive) political indoctrination and periodically thereafter invite him while on that often dreary and isolated duty to volunteer for transfer to a combat unit. The men in some of these farming units appear to have received almost no indoctrination beyond the small amount originally given in the work assignment and critique sessions, usually held daily or less frequently in the late afternoon; doubtless these were among the least promising of the recruits.
Such transfers were less frequent in the early nineteen sixties when many VC units were producing their own food in isolated areas while continuing to train and wait for supplies of weapons and of recruits from the villages to flesh out their tables of organization and equipment. In that earlier period, a large percentage of the returnee cadres infiltrated from the North had to remain at training and food production assignments for months or more than a year before their new units were built up to strength. But as the movement has expanded in terms of population and territory under its control, a higher percentage of new recruits has been sent directly to combat assignments.

Numbers of men do volunteer out of conviction at the end of the first indoctrination, "awakened" as they now are by intense exposure to VC propaganda in a politically closed environment. Many others sign the lists of volunteers simply because they are trapped and even if not convinced they should risk their lives for the VC cause, wish to salvage a bit more respect and regard from the cadres and the other men by putting the best face possible on a threatening situation. Some of them when interviewed after capture, or defection, indicate that their "volunteering" was such a routine pro-forma proposition that they seldom bother to mention it unless asked.

Still others report that they never did volunteer. Some of these men are sent to service assignments such as food production units, but the widening of the war has tended to send more of them into battle along with those who did volunteer. They may, however, be watched more carefully and not be allowed much hope for promotion or party membership, unless they change their appearance in the cadre's eyes by increased enthusiasm and more military performance.

Then there are men who do not volunteer themselves but are "volunteered" by their cadres in a merely clerical role. These still
tend to be classified as volunteers of a sort because the VC has such a strong preference for voluntarism, even if only of a manipulated kind.

Those among these various types of "volunteers" who become enthusiastic and demonstrate leadership ability seem to receive promotions and access to membership in the Liberation Youth and later the People's Revolutionary Party with nearly the same frequency as youths who joined the movement originally by spontaneous volunteering.

The present sample of VC POWs and defectors, men recruited by abduction later were assigned to a wide range of unit types, from hamlet and village sabotage guerrilla units all the way up to the Main Forces. Since compulsory conscription was introduced in VC zones and even many contested areas (as described in Chapter 43, the eventual assignments of men brought in coercively have tended to resemble those of recruits generally. In other words, regardless of whether or not a man is forced to join, he may well end up carrying a rifle. As a general principle, however, the VC draftees have tended to be assigned to the lower level forces and the volunteers have more frequently been put in the Main Forces. ("Volunteers" here does include in lower echelon forces numbers of men who were allowed, or sometimes pressured, to transfer to the Main Force.)*

*For further data on this point and some comparisons of morale in lower level and Main Forces after exposure to various intensity levels of combat experience, see Frank Denton, [Editor: Can we cite F. Denton's Draft RM-4966, May 1966, "Some Relationships Between the Attitude of Viet Cong Soldiers and Their Exposure to US-RVN Military Operations" (D), and then cite or not cite in my final draft, depending on whether Denton's draft is approved for publication? This has been cleared for publication, hasn't it?]
Let us now examine some examples of this three-stage process of abduction, indoctrination, and volunteering. One is that of a former acting GVN village committee man (ZH102-SN) who was led off in March 1964 with another low level official. His description of his reaction to the ensuing two weeks of VC political indoctrination is instructive:

I realized that they were on the right path and that I had been wrong. After one week of study, self-criticism and food production, I felt better. I felt calmer, though sad because of my family (back in the village). My errors were corrected and I accepted the discipline. I was on the right track morally and politically.

After this experience he was asked if he wished to return home and he claimed he declined out of fear that the Civil Guard in his village would kill him.

He spent the next three months in food production work and described that and his next assignment as follows:

It was all right but when I realized [after the indoctrination period or possibly additional study sessions] that the country had been invaded by the U.S., I volunteered for a fighting unit, along with the ten other young men in the camp of 30 men.

The interviewer had the impression that the source's boredom with the production job had influenced strongly his decision to volunteer for the transfer. He was captured three months later after having participated in two brief skirmishes, and he told the interviewer later that he had never considered trying to defect.

A straightforward! account of abduction followed by volunteering was given by a young defector from Vinh Binh Province (2006-D) who had been inducted by VC agents in November 1963 while visiting his sister in Ba Xuyen Province (his story was mentioned briefly in Chapter 13). He was only 15 years old and he had come to help the family during the impending harvest, but during the first night of his stay was taken away by cadres who accused him of being a GVN spy. (Local VC organizations are extremely alert to the presence of outside visitors and tend to assume that anyone able to travel into the villages from GVN-controlled
areas is politically suspect and worth interrogating.) They blindfolded
the boy, led him into the forest and questioned and threatened him for
two days. Finally they accepted his story and allowed him to move about
freely in a nearby "liberated zone" completely controlled by the VC.
He described his reactions as follows:

They showed me rifles and weapons and presented me to
the guerrillas. They allowed me to watch training exercises
in simulated combat. Finally they asked if I would like to
join to go fight. I accepted, believing that the life would
be fun and interesting. I didn't think at all about
the future nor about the consequences of my accepting.

He was sent to a Main Force battalion and he enjoyed the military
training but not the political, a failing for which he was frequently
criticized. He remained in the VC for only three months, participating
in two brief combat actions. He attributed his detention to the physical
hardship and separation from home. (He subsequently assisted the GVN
by recording a Chieu hoi appeal for broadcasting to VC areas and also
by furnishing intelligence on the location of VC encampments.)

A 20-year-old illiterate farmer from Hoai Nhon District, Dinh Dinh
(AG-106) who was recruited forcibly, led off and then given a week's
political indoctrination in January 1964, said that despite his
resentment over the recruitment experience he had been impressed by
the cadres' talk of glory:

...I do not remember all that they said, but the general
theme of their lecture was that 'to follow the revolution
means to obtain glory in the future.' They spoke so well that
I believed them.

Thus, as best as can be judged from their very short interview, he
probably volunteered and was then assigned to a sapper squad. However,
he still harbored resentment against his original abductors and rejoiced
when he learned they had drowned in the Central Vietnam winter floods.
Later, he came under suspicion for picking up a GVN Chieu Hoi leaflet
and in order to deflect, took the unusually violent course of action one
night while on guard duty of firing a submachine gun burst into the
hut where his company commander was sleeping, presumably wounding or
killing him. (Such pictures form an accurate account of VC
emotional trauma in the south.
A 28-year-old peasant (AG-99) who had become an assistant squad leader in a main force company in Quang Tin used somewhat ambivalent language to describe the enforced indoctrination and volunteering stage he went through after being abducted. A VC agent had infiltrated his hamlet one night from a nearby one under their control and taken him along with two other "old men." The older men wept and begged to be released so the VC let them go. They took this fearful subject deep into the jungle for indoctrination which he described as follows:

They reformed me for three months and then mobilized me to join their army. They mobilized our spirit, though actually it was tantamount to forcing us to join. If we refused they would kill us. So all of us had to 'volunteer' to join their army.

This source claimed later that he never became sufficiently enthusiastic about the VC cause to compensate for his dissatisfaction with the hardships of a VC soldier's life, but he served for a year and a half before defecting.

One of the most dramatic cases of abduction and subsequent political conversion by the VC is that of a former auto mechanic (AG-114) who had joined the GVN Marines. He did this to forestall being drafted as an ordinary foot soldier in the ARVN and, as he said frankly, to avoid being sent into combat, since he believed correctly that his mechanic's experience would get him an assignment to a transportation unit. He served in the Marines from 1961 until July 1962 and then, while AWOL one weekend from his post in Saigon to visit his family in Chau Thanh (Con Tho), Phong Dinh, he was traveling on a bus which was stopped on the highway
by a VC band. All of the four passengers including himself who were carrying GVN military identification papers were detained. This source admitted that he had dreaded returning to the Marine camp because he believed his lieutenant would give him a beating for AWOL.

He was blindfolded and marched away to a VC area. From there he was taken some days' additional walk to a more remote VC zone and given two-weeks' systematic indoctrination. He still refused to fight for the VC, so he was classified as a "stubborn element" and sent to a VC-liberated area nearer Cantho where he worked in the fields by day and assisted in "collective struggle" by night, the sabotage of strategic hamlets. All the while, he was subjected to further indoctrination for three months (he said eight months in the initial interview) in the form of visits by cadres and various people "down to the ordinary villager" who talked to him for periods ranging from five minutes an up to an hour. "The VC mobilized the entire population to propagandize us." Every two or three days, a meeting was held for more systematic instruction and a discussion of "the ideological changes they found in me during my stay there with them."

Then he was asked to make a stand against the GVN:

When I came to understand the line and policy of the Front, I was asked whether I would like to participate in the Front. I thought to myself that if I returned to the GVN I would surely be thrown into prison. Therefore, I asked to be accepted into the Front.

He requested an assignment near his home in Cantho and later because he could be more effective there. He then was given a three-month training course in youth proselytizing.
He worked for the VC from late 1962 until March 1965 as a youth recruiter in An Binh Village and probably also in an armed propaganda and sabotage unit. Then he defected, apparently because he was fearful of the increased ARVN military operations in the Cantho area. He asked to be transferred to a quieter zone and claimed his leader granted him permission to go to Tay Ninh with a commo-liaison group. Enroute there, he met his aunt in Cu-Chi and she persuaded him to defect, he claimed. (It appears that contributing factors to his defection were his deteriorating physical condition and his town background, which was considered "bourgeois" by the VC and therefore generated occasional tensions in such forms as VC criticism of his preferences for dacron shirts and relatively expensive Vietnamese cigarettes.) But this man remained "imbued with VC policy," as he put it. Half-way through the interview, he lowered his voice and began to pour out his old anti-American, pro-VC recruiting arguments in an obvious attempt to persuade the interviewer of the rightness of the VC cause.

This source's description of his recruiting appeals to the youth are of interest here because they retained so much of his earlier VC ardor, militancy, and credulity. An excerpt from his interview (AC-114) embodying his recruiting appeals will be found in Appendix H.
Among the subjects indicating that when they were pressured to volunteer they did so only with great reluctance or even refused was a 19-year-old from Tuy Hoa District, Phu Yen (AG-119) (whose story has been sketched briefly earlier). He was taken away by the VC in October 1964, given a week of political indoctrination, and then asked to join.
He refused at first, and was "almost ready to go home with VC permission" but some girls went to work on him to persuade him "to join the village force to help the villagers." One of them held his hand and spoke sweetly to him and he gave up the idea of going home. He became an assistant squad leader in the village force but defected five months later.

One story emphasizing the importance placed by the VC on even a very mechanical form of volunteering was told by a 20-year-old (AG-101) who originally was abducted by the VC (in Thanh Danh District, Binh Dinh in April 1964), but later, when he was instructed by his platoon leader to apply for membership in the Labor Youth organization, was told to revise his personal history statement to say that he had volunteered.

He had been forcibly abducted from his strategic hamlet following a VC night attack against it.
He and six other youths were tied together and taken to an upland area far from his village. They worked in a farm production unit for two weeks and then were taken to another camp where they and about 170 other youths were given a one-month training course on political and military subjects. He had the impression that almost all of them had been "arrested" as he had and that only three or four were volunteers. He made one unsuccessful attempt to escape from this camp but was apprehended and returned by a montagnard VC. Then he was assigned to a provincial regional battalion.

Just before his capture, which ended his six months in the VC, he was told by his platoon leader to apply for membership in the Labor Youth and to say that he had been a volunteer.

He showed me how to make my application. He asked me to write up the story of my life and attach it to my request. He took pains to advise me to write down all of my activities since my childhood. But when he reviewed it he asked me why I had mentioned I had been arrested and forced to fight in the VC ranks. I said it was the truth.
He tore up my document and asked me to make another one in which I should say I had been a "volunteer."

-- Why did you agree to affiliate yourself with this group?

I had no special reason for doing so. I simply did what my other comrades had to do. Besides, it was my platoon leader's orders.

-- What were the purposes, statutes, and regulations of the Labor Youth Group?

I do not know anything about them.

[Signature]

Cases Alleging Coercion But Indicating Original Emigration Intending to have

There are numerous other cases of men in this category of joining under duress who indicate, sooner or later in their interviews, that they really had favorable attitudes toward the VC or very hostile attitudes toward the GVN at the time of joining.

One of these was an 18-year-old from Phuoc Thanh Province, who was recruited in 1964, evidently served for a short period as a farm production worker in a main force company and eventually deserted to the rear before being captured by the ARVN (AG-72). He initially described his joining as coercive:

I was forced to join....Because of my acquaintance with the village council representative and my frequent trips to the district, the VC guerrillas in the hamlet suspected that I was a spy for the GVN.

I was also taken away by the guerrillas. They came to my house during the day. My mother was at home when they came. They said they wanted to talk to me for a while.
and asked me to accompany them outside. They arrested me and took me to the forest to investigate my case. After two weeks, I asked them to let me go home. But they refused, saying they would release me at Tet /The Vietnamese New Year/. However, they took me into the forest and kept me there for good.

However, further questioning revealed that he had been furious with an ARVN ranger who had beaten him for returning home to the strategic hamlet after the regular evening gate-closing hour and that VC agents had visited him to exploit the incident in an attempt to get him to join them. He characterized the VC propagandists as extremely persuasive; and in discussing the half dozen visits per year of VC cultural troops to the hamlet, he said the following:

The group came to the hamlet once in a while, 5 to 7 times in a year. They came from the district or the province. They staged operas (ca luong). Each time the group and the cadres came, the villagers welcomed them. It was great fun. Before the show began the cadres talked to the villagers. The cadres talked very well. They were very persuasive. Anybody who listens to them wants to join the VC. If they talked to you (subject pointed at the interviewer) you would feel like joining the VC, too.

-- Did you want to join them when you heard them talk?

Yes, but who would take care of my family if I joined them?...

Furthermore, he described the peasants' attitudes -- and presumably his own -- as generally pro-VC for a variety of reasons:
The ARVN arrested the villagers, beat them up, and shelled the hamlet. Profiting from this situation, the VC propagandized the villagers. The latter tended to be sympathetic with them and to join them.

Furthermore, the interviewer noted that several of this man's statements appeared to be false and that he probably had joined the VC voluntarily for the reasons described above and also out of fear of impending GVN conscription.

A civilian cadre (AG-83) told a story of being forced to join, allegedly by a ruse. This man, a peasant in Dinh Tuong, claimed he had been persuaded by an acquaintance to play his mandolin in accompaniment of some little girls who wanted to practice dancing. Thereafter he did it three or four times a week and then the acquaintance asked him to participate in a little show during a VC public meeting in the hamlet. He said, "I accepted without thinking of the possible consequences of my actions." Later, he said, the acquaintance, a VC agent, impressed on him the fact that many villagers had attended the show and would thereafter identify him with the VC, so he had better join the organization for his own
protection. He claimed he had been angry at first but "later on as I was taken in by the cadre's," he found comfort in the fact that in this status he could help his brothers who were in financial difficulties with the cadres concerning their tax payments.

The fact that he joined as early as late 1961 and became a party member as well as a member of the village party chapter charged with propaganda all tend to lessen the credibility of his story. It is more likely that he was persuaded to join before he participated in the village meeting.

A Vietnamese of Cambodian ancestry (AG-60) reported that he had been abducted in March 1964 by the VC while working as an itinerant portrait painted in Long-Phu District. far from his home in Vinh Binh. He claimed that he knew nothing about the VC at that time but that they accused him of spying for the GVN and forced him to accompany them on a four-day hike to a VC zone where he was assigned to a district regional force. He also was "responsible for mobilizing the cooperation of the monks (the majority of them in the province being of Cambodian descent) and for transmitting orders to them."

However, toward the end of the interview, after having claimed repeatedly that he had been forced to join, he said he had joined "because I was on the wrong path. The VC came and induced me." He also said that "there must be some dissatisfaction" underlying the motives of the people in the village who had joined the VC and that in his own view, "inducement was more frequent" than abduction as a VC recruiting method.
case may be cited here as a prime example of ambivalence about \textit{its} recruitment. A 15-year-old former regional force soldier (AG-153) said in one and the same statement that he had been coerced and persuaded to take the early steps toward commitment to the VC because:

While I was tending the family's water buffaloes I met the cadres at the edge of the forest. They \textit{coaxed} me into joining the Front. They talked over and over again about joining the Front and they \textit{forced} me to abandon the water buffaloes to attend the political training courses. I joined in December 1963. (Italics added.)

This source served in Tay Ninh for over a year and then defected.

Some of the men who claim they were abducted remained in the movement and moved up through the ranks. Many or most of these men probably went through some form of volunteering process. One of these was a man who claimed to have been abducted at the age of 24 (G-7) and became an instructor with the rank of squad (or perhaps platoon) leader in the regional forces of Tay Ninh before he defected after 31 months of service. He had worked as a laborer in a suburb of Saigon and was "captured," he said, during the first night of a visit to his home village in Cu Chi, Hau Nghia.

However, it appears very possible that he volunteered originally or at least after being indoctrinated, for judging from his political attitudes before recruitment, he already was sympathetic to certain aims:

\begin{center}
\textit{--- What did you think about the Front before you were captured?}
\end{center}

Before I was in the Front, I thought a country should not have two kings. People should unite to liberate the country.
-- Liberate them from what?
The Diem government oppressed and mistreated the people. Everything was in the hands of a privileged few. Not it is much better.

-- Did you sympathize with the Front before your capture?
The Diem government oppressed and mistreated people. The Front says its aim is to liberate the people.

In answer to a question as to how he earned such rapid promotions (to a final rank which he claimed had been platoon leader, although this appeared dubious), he said the following, again revealing earlier enthusiasm for the movement: "That was because of my combat ability, good behavior, and level of self-awakening."

Appendix I presents excerpts from the case histories of three more such men who eventually were promoted to cadre ranks up to assistant company commander and thus fit into this category whose claimed antagonism to joining actually appears to have been tinged with considerable willingness. The first one admitted to marked pro-VC sentiments at the time of his alleged coercive induction; the second appears to have been motivated to join by youthful adventurousness and also a fear of VC reprisals if he did not join; and the third said he had been dragooned into the VC and resented it but he became a platoon political officer, indicating that he must have been rated as politically reliable by the VC.
XVIII. CONCLUSION

A. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE VC'S HEAVIER RELIANCE ON COERCIVE RECRUITING

The trend toward a bigger war and vastly increased recruitment demands have tended to make some of the VC's earlier appeals described here—those based on persuasion, "sweet talk," and gradual involvement—less common. At present, recruitment is more typically a matter of routine conscription and frequently is based on abduction, followed by indoctrination and also by pressure to volunteer.

However, it is important to understand the low-pressure category of recruitment techniques because they are the preferred ones and have been overshadowed in the past two years by more coercive recruiting only because the VC has been under heavy military pressure and unable to afford the time to use persuasion as widely as it would like. A familiarity with the well-developed earlier emphasis on softer forms of persuasion, indoctrination, and political control is essential to an understanding of how the movement was able to build an impressive popular base in the earlier years.

The VC's preference for voluntary support based on political motivation and zeal accords of course with the precepts of the Communist doctrinal emphasis on the psychological and social remolding of the inner man. The new "revolutionary fighter" and the ultimate citizen of the new socialist society of the future are models based on the recasting of internal value systems and the development of a new "revolutionary consciousness."
But the political training for recruits under conditions of guerrilla warfare seldom can be so systematic, orderly and patient as to ensure that any considerable percentage of persons picked out of the "old society" will be imbued with a new revolutionary consciousness during some rough equivalent of basic training. In any good military organization, training of one kind or another never really ends and this is all the more true of the VC because of the unusual political requirements it makes of its men, and particularly unusual in the case of men recruited by force.

When a man is inducted into the VC, his anxieties and whatever resentment may also be present tend to be dampened by a whole new system of political, social, and psychological incentives and constraints, along with the formal and informal political instruction. Continuous indoctrination in small groups, the cadres' function of providing encouragement and fatherly advice to fighters who become discouraged, close camaraderie in the ranks, a gradual process of toughening to the rigorous guerilla life and its hardships—all of these play some role in maintaining satisfactory levels of morale and combat performance.

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VC organizational stimulus and constraints in the form of political control mechanisms are discussed in Donnell, J.C., Pauker, G. J. and Zasloff, J. J., Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: A Preliminary Study, RM-4507, dated March 1965, Confidential. These include the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam, the political cadres in the military units, the toxtam-tam or three-man cells into which the ten-man squad is divided, and the various types of kiem-thao or criticism and self-criticism sessions held as often as daily in many units for purposes of evaluation of the performance of the unit and its individual members. See also the forthcoming RAND study on VC political controls by Nathan Leites.
But even though these incentives and controls are known to be efficacious in many cases, present research has not yet dealt systematically with the limits of their effectiveness. Clearly, the VC cannot ensure that even if the combined indoctrination and various types of shared experiences tending to heighten cohesion proceed over months or even years, that all of its men will be imbued with a high degree of political consciousness or loyalty. (A very loose generalization might be hazarded here: if a man stays in the VC for six months to a year, his chances of staying in for a considerably longer period are enhanced. Many of the defectors come out in less than that time, although, as noted elsewhere, some serve long and well and ultimately still defect.)

Political loyalty is only one factor in this complex amalgam of motivation and morale. For example, it is not clear just how much political loyalty to the cause a man needs to fight passably well for the VC because the political controls in the movement reinforce or at times even appear to replace loyalty, at least for considerable periods. It was in this vein that the former company commander (AG-70) quoted earlier in Chapter I IV commented concerning those men who went into the movement out of sheer opportunism, "Once they have joined it, they get entangled in the VC organization."

Substantive political training and persuasion thus are preferred first to recruits when time and local conditions permit. But when they do not, or when a recruit fails to develop the desired thoroughgoing change in political attitudes after exposure to such treatment, the VC often brings its manipulated voluntarism into play, and one of its most important functions is to demonstrate the movement's power over the will of the
individual recruit, or at least over his outward behavior.
This is dramatized when whole classes of recently indoctrinated trainees stand together and signify their volunteering in a common act. Here again, though, such manipulation can be counterproductive in the long run, for significant numbers of VC defectors have indicated that this and other kinds of manipulation contributed to their eventual decision to break with the movement.*

But the point must not be overlooked that the VC often attempts to make its coercive recruitment more attractive by giving it an anti-imperialist and idealistic gloss. It tries to convey the message that an inductee responds in his finer, more patriotic self to the appeals for self-sacrifice for the fatherland. Thus in putting down the baser man concerned with short-range personal interests and creature comforts, he still is acting in his own best interests, but in a long-range perspective, he is told. It is particularly in this sense that men report being "awakened" by the indoctrination: they are given a larger view of their role as revolutionary fighters which strikes many of them as decent and patriotic. This whole process is thus intended to create in their view an image of the movement as authoritative and even omniscient in knowing what is good for the nation and, indeed, knowing better what is good for them, it seems, than they do themselves.

But even if the indoctrination takes and the individual's thinking does undergo radical change, this is still no firm insurance that his commitment will not eventually weaken under the stress of physical hardship and the vicissitudes of war, as indicated by the statistics on defection (plus the doubtless even more widespread phenomenon of desertion home). And if significant numbers of VC who originally volunteered out of zeal for the cause are found to defect, how does forcible recruitment affect a VC soldier's behavior?

As noted in Chapter VII, the present levels of data collection and analysis do not allow a definitive statement here. But the interviews do indicate certainly that even when an abducted conscript is indoctrinated and brought to the point of going through an act which he is told is volunteering—and often accepts as such—and even if he fights well and remains in the VC for several years, this initial threatening experience appears to leave a psychological residue that can add weight to negative or hostile reactions to subsequent disappointments in the movement. Thus, it ultimately can provide at least a marginal stimulus to defection later when an individual's perturbations accumulate and he becomes aware of a striking deterioration in his personal situation.

Here it is noteworthy that one of the factors which has tended in varying degrees to sustain VC morale has been diminishing in some areas. This is the esteem and affection of the rural populace for the idealized revolutionary fighter. As military and economic pressures have driven the VC to harsher population controls and the
increased hazards of war in the countryside have been blamed on the VC (although the extent of this is not clear), some of this peasant esteem has certainly decreased.

Men who are abducted, indoctrinated, and then "volunteer" are not "brainwashed" in the classic sense of being forced to reject their original political and social values and accept others through subjection to various physical and psychological techniques including serious deprivations experienced within a completely closed political situation. But VC propaganda techniques do, of course, use elements of brainwashing. These include closing off the political milieu to contrary messages and intensive political indoctrination in isolated places under conditions of at least partial physical and mental deprivation. The closest thing to true brainwashing appears to be the type of indoctrination given some raw recruits in special training camps in remote areas such as the highlands. The trainees also experience the stresses of sudden rupture of family and other social relations and of their accustomed daily routine, arduous physical exertion required by military training, intensive and painfully personal indoctrination and inadequate or at least monotonous diet.

Here the political instructors, who sometimes include women, clearly make some attempt to displace temporarily the former authority figures as well as sources of emotional succour in the recruit's life; and later, when the recruit is assigned to a unit, another transference is attempted so that his cadres and comrades will then be perceived as the sources of authoritative interpretations and emotional support required in the new life.
Such reconstruction of authority figures is made by the VC with widely varying results. Some still enthusiastic sources indicated that their "brothers" in arms had become extremely important in this role, often along with the factor of esteem from the peasantry in their area. But there are strong indications in the interviews that distress over separation from the family and the unknown and possibly difficult straits of wife, children, and parents continues to plague a great many men in the VC, military; and that hopes of being able to return to and care for the family bulk very large in motives to desert. Supporting evidence is offered by the patriotic fanfare attached to the original definitive break with family and home community when a man leaves home, "liberates himself" (theat ly), and becomes a full-time fighter. Similarly, the daily criticism and self-criticism sessions in many units appear to include as one routine item the matter of "internal unity" and this deals not only with relations among three-man cell and squad members but also with whether the soldiers retain unseemly vestiges of homesickness and nostalgia for the old life.

Whatever transference of authority roles is successfully made to VC cadres and comrades clearly is not irreversible. Many ralliers, for example, seek out the assurance of their old village officials before taking this crucial action, instead of turning themselves in directly to Chieu Hoi centers.

Here, though, their motives probably vary, in relation to the varying degrees of esteem that they may
may hold for these village officials. Probably there is respect for many of them, but in some cases, the rallier may be seeking out these officials primarily because they are the most clearly identifiable sources of GVN authority known to himself; and sometimes this factor may even override basically indifferent, critical or even hostile sentiments on the part of the rallier toward the official. So the act of seeking out such an official to whom to rally may not indicate potential transferability in terms of authority roles so much as a strong desire to be certain one is turning himself in to a GVN official, perhaps even a less than estimable one, but at least one who will not turn out in a deadly sequel to be an implanted VC agent.

B. SOME REMARKS ON VC AGITATION AND HATE PROPAGANDA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF POLITICS IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

Chapter VII examined the impact on VC recruiting of GVN/US military operations which result in peasant casualties and property damage. Beyond the direct impact of such operations on recruiting, there are less immediate effects of considerable importance, though difficult to assess precisely. As shown in other parts of this study, the VC in the earlier years, particularly, based much of its recruitment on patient, long-range political agitation and the gradual involvement of village youth in progressively more active and overt forms of participation in the movement. This process of exacerbating and then channeling
peasant sentiments and political attitudes into revolutionary participation has utilized a wide range of methods and appeals--of which the exploitation of peasant casualties and property damage from military attacks is one--which attempt to heighten emotional intensity surrounding VC propaganda and organizational missions in the villages. Seen in this light, such attacks, among other things, provide fuel for the flames these agents attempt to keep burning to maintain a kind of emotionally superheated atmosphere in which their particular style of violent "love-hate" propaganda has a ring of greater credibility.

This "love-hate" dichotomy, so prominent in VC political statements and in the interviews, prescribes love "for the people," the revolutionary cause and the fighters who sacrifice themselves for it, and hatred for the enemy and his collaborators; and the link between emotion and action is expressed by the VC and North Vietnamese slogans exhorting the people to "turn hatred into deeds."

Any interpretation of the short- or long-range political significance of such phenomena as hatred generated by the present conflict among the peasants can only be speculative at this point. It may be relevant here to note that many segments of the Vietnamese peasantry have been subjected to war and immediate threats of war for a very long

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*This pattern seems to be expressed more frequently and vehemently in Communist societies under heavy internal and/or external stress such as war, and various difficult problems encountered in the consolidation of power, a stage which may last for years. It is not limited to Communist political systems as *viz.* the case of Sukarno's Indonesia before the 1965 coup; but the influence of the militant, strident qualities of Marxism-Leninism on the political styles of other such revolutionary, quasi-revolutionary, or pseudo-revolutionary movements is obvious.
time and that they seem to be able to endure prolonged periods of deprivation and trauma which frequently strike Western observers as well-nigh incredible. However, it should be remarked also that many VC POWs and defectors do not view the whole period running from the outbreak of Franco-Viet Minh hostilities after World War II to the present as one long period of conflict. As noted above, many regard the period from 1954 to about 1959 or 1960, depending on conditions in their own local areas, as one of relative peace and quiet.

It appears that the escalation of the war and the rising frequency of combat operations in and near the villages over wide areas, when matched with corresponding increase in firepower on each side and notably the commitment of larger quantities of GVN/US aircraft and artillery to the campaigns, can hardly help but continue to hit or affect considerable numbers of peasants. The continuing improvement of fire control and local target and intelligence-gathering methods is of the utmost relevance here, but they can never eliminate non-combatant casualties in a war of this type.

One may ask then if the prolonged duration of the conflict and the destruction of peasant lives and property might ultimately produce important but as yet unpredictable political repercussions in terms of sentiments of hostility and modes of expressing and repressing these, particularly as these are learned from the VC cadres. One might also ask the following: if the continuous political incitement
of the VC against the GVN/US were gradually eliminated, would there remain an important precipitate of hostility to hamper the participation of many of these people in post-conflict reconstruction and political education programs offered by the GVN/US? And if there should be, what could the GVN/US do about it?

The DRV's Chinese-style emphasis on hate propaganda directed at "foreign aggressors" and internal counter-revolutionary elements provides the pattern followed by the VC. In this connection, it will be useful to look at Lucian Pye's analysis of this complex problem in its Chinese Communist context in a monograph, *The Dynamics of Hostility and Hate in Chinese Political Culture.* Pye describes the tendency of the Chinese Communist system to recruit persons with a "deep and essentially blind capacity for prolonged hatred." He attributes this to factors including the Chinese male youth's rejection of the excessive demands placed by the Confucian system upon the son for behavior conforming to the concept of filial piety and forbidding expressions of hostility and resentment. Another factor cited is the traditional Chinese sense of cultural superiority which, in the context of the Manchu dynastic decline and the impact of impressive models of Western technological development, painfully undermined Chinese self-confidence by dramatizing the Chinese failure (in the pre-Communist period) to provide two things they valued most highly: "the art of governance and the ability to maintain a superior material civilization."

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*Cambridge; MIT, 1964.*
The Chinese Communists have stressed the concept of "liberation" in Chinese political history as the time "at which suppressed hatreds could be exposed and given glorious legitimacy," particularly as they are focused on foreign powers. Political awakening in this system is described as a fit of anger, the awareness of "humiliation" at the hands of foreigners. (This concept is very similar to that taught by the VC. As one interviewee cited earlier in this memorandum described it, political awakening amounted to a realization of who the enemy was and a feeling of hatred toward that enemy.)

However, Pye's analysis ends by making an important distinction between the roles of passion and the rational faculties in Chinese decision making. He says that the traditional cultural imperative to act with "sincerity" but nonetheless "according to correct manners and the established proprieties" rather than spontaneously, taught the Chinese to guard against spontaneity and to make their decisions rationally. Then, "once the decision has been taken, the expression of emotion becomes appropriate as a means of proclaiming where one has chosen to stand and where one's loyalties now lie." People must constantly express this loyalty "and hatred of the other to prove that they have maintained a consistent position." The inference here seems to be that although this political culture produces much verbalization of hostility and hatred, as through the official propaganda line and the related campaigns involving direct participation of the people, such expressions are not to be taken as direct indicators of Chinese intentions to act in correspondingly militant ways.
This analysis may be relevant to the VC's propaganda exploitation of themes involving hatred. But as Pye acknowledges, differences in national political history and culture are extremely important and his analysis appears to be more applicable to the DRV than to the VC in South Vietnam, for the following reasons. The Confucian system never became as firmly established in the South as in the North (and Center). (Similarly, Vietnamese permissiveness in child rearing appears to be greater in the South.) Furthermore, the Vietnamese people did not have such a strong sense of the superiority of their native culture over that of the West as did the Chinese, even though the Chinese-influenced Vietnamese mandarins, of course, did borrow more heavily from such nations.

There seems to be a similarity in the Vietnamese situation to the observed satisfaction of deep psychological needs among the Communist Chinese provided by hate propaganda and the apparent fact that the hatred can be turned on and off, as it were, by the political leadership when it has served its psychological purposes, so that it will not obstruct rational policy making. For there is a good deal of evidence in VC propaganda and the interview reports that while the leadership deems it useful to stress themes of hatred, here, too, this emotive aspect of policy is manipulated and mechanical in important respects and is not allowed to interfere unduly with more pragmatic and rational considerations. To the extent that this is true, it will be of obvious significance in the eventual political re-orientation of ex-VC, as discussed below.
The cases of the approximately one million refugees who have come from VC into GVN zones and particularly of the several hundred thousand who have been resettled or returned to their own villages in greater safety should afford further insights into this problem. (Incidentally, many of these refugees apparently have been absorbed successfully into the large labor forces hired on U.S. military construction projects.)

The extent to which the GVN (with U.S. assistance) is able to satisfy some of the basic needs of the peasants in such a situation obviously will have a direct bearing on any residual hostility in these people, but whether the anger will be just dissipated or be transformed into positive support and affection for the GVN will depend on a whole range of factors mentioned earlier, including the future conduct of the war by the GVN/U.S. with specific reference to the problem of damage to peasant communities.

The extent to which the American effort is seen as supportive of and successful in stimulating Vietnamese political cohesion and the emergence of a new and more dynamic indigenous leadership bringing reconstruction and good government down from national to local levels, and so on.

The evidence of past wars suggests that humiliation of important segments of a people by such developments as serious economic inflation which reduces intellectuals and professional men to menial jobs to make ends meet, the enticement of large numbers of women into prostitution, the
uprooting of communities by forced resettlement, and so on, may also have a very important influence in determining whether hatred and anger persist for long and whether these destructive psychological phenomena can be overcome so that popular support can be developed for a government of reconstruction.

A related factor, to go back a few years into contemporary Vietnamese history and the GVN's problems in making its local government organs responsive to local needs, may be that of contempt, which Professor Everett Hagan of Harvard has suggested may be an important element in a general understanding of the proneness to revolutionary movements of the peasant sectors of the emerging nations. The impact on rural sensitivities of assigning essentially urban-oriented officials of both the civil and military administrations from the district level on up has been notable in Vietnam. This has created a gap between peasant and official perceptions with obvious implications for maladministration and even oppression, but Professor Hagan emphasizes that simply the attitude of indifference and particularly of contempt for the "backward peasant" on the part of officials coming in from the outside tends over time to generate a powerful accumulation of resentment and antagonism toward such authority, eventually facilitating the task of political agitators seeking to arouse hostility and channel it toward revolutionary activity.

*Professor Hagan discussed this very briefly at a conference in Washington D.C. in January 1966 of the Southeast Asia Development Advisory Group co-sponsored by the Agency for International Development and the Asia Society of New York. He evidently is attempting now to develop this analysis more systematically in his current research.

**On some further qualifications and implications of this urban-rural gap, see the present writer's "The War, the Gap, and the Cadre" in Asia. No. 4 (Winter 1966).
Another factor which probably will be important here will be the extent to which the Vietnamese feel they have been "used" as innocent pawns in a war to further somebody else's policy objectives, i.e., a national Vietnamese government with which they may still fail to identify sufficiently and/or the United States. As a number of interviews have shown, many Vietnamese feel that they, as individuals, are small, weak and insignificant in comparison with the powerful, impersonal forces of politics and war which sweep around them in unpredictable, often capricious ways; and many of them seem to accept this with grim resignation as peasants traditionally have tended to do. But the extent to which this traditional fatalism persists or, on the contrary, is transformed into hatred and insurgent activism by VC agitation is difficult to estimate at this point.

*An example of this was provided by the interview with an ex-GVN Marine (AG-114) described earlier who became a VC youth proselytizer and later defected to the GVN though he still retained pro-VC and anti-American attitudes. When asked if his rally did not help the Americans, he said in part, "I knew when I rallied I would be guilty toward the people... however, I thought to myself that Vietnam is a small country and the United States is a big country. I am like a tiny particle living in this immensity..." (Emphasis added).
The case of the refugees from VC zones indicates that if these people are removed from continued VC political agitation and given new possibilities for security and livelihood, they will accept these with thankfulness, but of course much of this reaction stems from their sense of relief at escaping the hazards of war in their home hamlets and not all of it could be expected to endure after a cessation of combat. Much will depend on the outcome of the war: if those who have lost family members and property in the fighting subsequently live under GVN control and are given new political, social and economic opportunities, their memories of past deprivations will tend to fade.

But in the event of a VC victory or continued control over some or all of South Vietnam, recollections of such sufferings probably would be needed and revived regularly for calculated political purposes. This supposition would seem to be strengthened by an examination of the range of hate literature published in the DRV on the earlier war against the French. Much of this literature seems to have been designed to further the cause of
reunification by keeping alive a sense of outrage and frustration over the fact that what the DRV calls the heroic feats of the people in that war have not yet resulted in reunification and peace. If a Communist-led government were to achieve these goals, possibly it would harp less on themes of hate, but given the penchant of new Communist states to press very hard for consolidation of power and to use their political controls forcefully to achieve "socialist reconstruction," it is likely that themes of glorious victory would feature a considerable continuing emphasis on the alleged inhumanity of the late enemy.
C. THE ALLEGATION OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM AS A POSSIBLE VC VULNERABILITY

Anti-American themes, which are so prominent in VC propaganda, actually appear to play less than a major role in the motivation of the rank-and-file but a more significant one for the cadre, although this can be gauged only loosely at this time, given the present state of the data and the analysis. (The concept of motivation as used here is a broad one, embracing a man's service record in the movement, his expressed hostilities, his evident degree of commitment to the VC cause, and other factors.)

Many of the men in this sample who seem to have accepted the anti-American argument with alacrity said that they had never seen an American before joining. For many, this anti-Americanism appeared to be a rather mechanical component of the indoctrination and, later, of the attitudinal residues of such indoctrination in their interviews after capture or defection. Many ex-VC report in the interviews that they joined the movement to "save the country from the American imperialists," but this obviously is a stereotyped response which, for many of them, appears to have been learned after, rather than before, joining, especially in the cases of men recruited some years before the U.S. troop commitment was enlarged greatly.

The VC has attempted all along to depict this war as a continuation of the war against Western which had to be resumed against the Americans after the French withdrew. So the VC constantly has sought to dramatize what parallels
it can between the two wars and here it has not scrupled
to force some of the comparisons a good deal. The major
point the VC has tried to make in this analysis is that
although the U.S. is a powerful antagonist with vast
quantities of aircraft and new weapons produced by
advanced technology, ultimately the U.S. must suffer an
ignominious fate in Vietnam as did the French, and for
the same reason: it is opposing the just struggle of the
aroused Vietnamese people for the defense of their father-
land. This political line is not disseminated in a glib
or cynical way, for there is good evidence to suggest that
the cadres and the leadership of the VC and DRV up to the
very highest levels accept it as doctrinal truth or must
make strenuous efforts to try to accept it, and that any
visible weakening of an individual leader's belief in
this tenet is regarded as the most serious type of
political heresy. (More recent interviews indicate
that numbers of captured or defected VC cadres, along with
larger numbers of the rank-and-file, are losing their
erlier hope of a military victory against the GVN/U.S.
forces, but if the DRV/VC leadership allows doctrinal
leeway on this point in interpreting the "inevitable
victory" theme in terms of an eventual triumph which may
take a generation or longer to win.)

Thus it appears that for the cadre, with his more
extensive political indoctrination, anti-Americanism
performs important functions in solidifying ideological
conviction and political cohesion. In a more immediate
sense than for the rank-and-file, the cadre finds the anti-
American themes supportive of his motivation to continue the
struggle. For him, the anti-American themes renew the goading of the doctrinal irritant in a palpable form; they furnish the target for the political venom by identifying the bête noire, the currently most powerful enemy of the Communists' devil theory of politics.

Such a target or evil is essential to this type of political culture which, to a Westerner, puts such a chilling emphasis on "love-hate" perceptions in politics, and formulates these in strident terms. The revolutionary fighters and their supporters, the DRV, the socialist camp, and so on, are the proper objects of unabashed love; while the U.S. and its allies and the "counter-revolutionaries" in Vietnamese society are excoriated as the fitting objects of hatred, and patriotic sons and daughters are exhorted to "turn hatred into deeds" of a revolutionary character, as noted above. Thus, anti-Americanism is supposed to provide not only a political interpretation of extremely wide applicability, but also a catalyst for political solidarity among divergent groups and social forces. (This matter will be discussed further below.)

But there are signs that the VC does not have clear sailing in getting across this alleged parallelism in French and American motives and in the imperialist nature of the war's continuation. For one thing, while some cadre's have commented in the interviews that this type of appeal helped in recruiting the "older people" (people over 30 or 35), who have some personal memory of French colonialism, they have indicated that it helped less in approaching younger elements. In consideration of this
and also the fact that VC recruiters so commonly have used a combination of appeals to nationalist sentiments and personal interest, one is tempted to conclude that important VC motivational weaknesses ought to stem from approaches employing more "bribery" of individual recruits to get them to join as compared with the war against the French which seemingly generated such comparatively unselfish, patriotic fervor. Many of the quotations in Chapter III do indeed suggest that nationalist sentiment played a greater role in motives for joining the VM.

However, a caveat is in order. It must be borne in mind that many of the sources cited there were cadres with long experience in the movement and that many of the men and women who joined at the same time but later dropped out would, if they could be interviewed now, give personal accounts reflecting much less heroic devotion to the cause and would reveal that much more pragmatic and expedient considerations had moved them to join, considerations of the type found in so many of the recruitment experiences recounted by the younger generation in the present war. Not only have these sources been highly selected by various attrition factors over the years, but at least some of them inevitably respond to such interviews by a kind of selective recollection which tends to repress the memory of unpleasant experiences and to oversimplify their earlier reactions to various psychological and personal pressures related to the clusters of motives seen in the history of VC recruits more recently and undoubtedly not uncommon then either.

Still, it is probably safe to say that although there probably is less of a contrast in the degree of nationalist
fervor among the rank-and-file, at least, involved in these two wars than the highly selected older sources' statements initially suggest, the spontaneous voluntary factors in VC recruitment in many areas, even as late as 1963, appears to have fallen considerably short of that manifested in the war against the French.

Perhaps the point should be noted here that given the unstable condition of Vietnamese society for so many years--and the instability is more and of a more desperate kind for many now than it was during the VM period--self-interest plays an extraordinarily prominent factor in private political calculations in Vietnam today and it would be surprising if the VC did not appeal to many recruits at least partially on the basis of self-interest. But even so, VC political training stresses a nationalist identification and in those who remain in the movement for a considerable period and do not become disillusioned, it inculcates a value scale which makes one ashamed to discuss his desire for personal gratification on the same level with his respect for the nationalist goals of the movement.

Another factor complicating the VC's task of convincing people of the parallelism between the two wars is reflected in the fact that some of the peasants in the interview sample indicated that they regarded the years after 1954 when Vietnam became independent to about 1959-1960, depending on conditions in their own local areas, as one of relative peace and quiet and a significant number of them appeared to show nostalgia for the stability of that era. In this vein, some of the sources spoke of the five or so
"years of peace" in their areas.* It is possible that their interviews following capture or defection reflected a selective remembering of the rosiest aspects of that period before the insurgency spread, but nevertheless it does appear that there was a feeling on the part of significant numbers of peasants in that period that their country had become independent and that the Americans were much less visible on the scene than the French had been and when they were, their roles as advisors were not as sinister as those of the departed French colonialists. As noted in Chapter III, there evidently were many peasants who believed that the country truly had thrown off colonial domination, or at least had some feeling that the situation either had changed somewhat for the better with the departure of the French or was likely to in the next few years. When the VC cadres came along later to try to convince them otherwise, they evidently were not willing to accept this blindly, and the cadres usually had to take some time to establish a degree of credibility by interpreting other phenomena more immediately related to peasant concerns, e.g., neglectful or abusive local government, and then go on to use this credibility to heighten the acceptability of other elements of their message, including the anti-American theme.

One key contrast between the earlier war against the French and the present one which was clearly perceived by a considerable number of sources and described with unusual

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*One of these men was an ex-VM and ex-GVN representa-
tive in An Xuyen who became a VC company supply officer before his capture (ZHO-65), whose story is recounted in Chapter X).
articulateness by, for example, a former bourgeois intellectual in his fifties (ZHO- ), was that while the earlier war was fought for independence, the present war is one of "class struggle," i.e., has a regular Communist doctrinal motive. This fact seems to be understood with varying degrees of clarity by a considerable number of defectors and also POWs, but the realization that the war is not simply a "liberation struggle" is not necessarily sufficiently significant or disillusioning to affect very strongly a person's commitment to the movement. This was the case with the former bourgeois intellectual mentioned above, for example. This points up the problem of the lack of systematic and substantive political reorientation for POWs and defectors, a subject which will be treated below.

These days, the anti-American political message undoubtedly tends to be accepted more strongly when it is reinforced by personal observation of Americans participating in military operations and evidently also the mere witnessing of air operations because these are so widely described by the VC and many peasants to be conducted exclusively or mainly by Americans. * This subject has become increasingly relevant to U.S. military operations in Vietnam in the past months as the American role is widened there. But here, it is not completely clear whether the VC already may have derived such a propaganda payoff from its anti-American themes that further increases in U.S. strength in the countryside would yield relatively small, if any,

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*On this point, see Gouré, (Editor--please cite an appropriate Gouré-and Thomson RM).
additional increments of propaganda advantage to the VC.

Many factors will shape the answer to this question, such as whether the American forces carry out military operations in such ways as to minimize damage to the peasant communities, whether or not there is a considerable amount of civic action and systematic pacification effort to follow up military operations with permanent reorganization and protection of these communities from the VC and the dreaded prospect of periodic military conflict in given areas, and the conduct of American troops in their on-duty and off-duty relationships with the people, the extent to which the American effort is able to encourage an indigenous leadership to emerge and show visible capabilities in governing at the central and lower levels, and in bringing a secure and decent life to the villagers, and so on.

Aside from these questions, the VC's insistence on a rather rigid stereotype of the collectively malevolent Americans tends to open up an area of vulnerability on its side. If increased political and social stability should be achieved as one direct consequence of the heavy American participation in the war, the VC obviously will find it increasingly difficult to keep its fighters and those peasant communities under its influence convinced of the baleful influence of the Americans. Such stability, however, will be long and difficult in attainment. But in the short run, there is another aspect of the problem worth noting: namely, the possibility of giving the lie in forthright fashion to VC propaganda which claims that the American and
GVN forces will mistreat, torture and kill VC captives and defectors. There probably is more political leverage here than in any other aspect of the conflict at the present time as concerns possible means of discrediting the VC anti-American political line in the eyes of not only the rank-and-file, but also the cadres.

We have noted earlier that the cadres often are able to establish initial credibility with a person recruited into the movement by convincing him of the drabness or the injustice in his own life and by supplying him with new conceptions of the efficacy of revolutionary struggle and new language with which to analyze and propagate such ideas. Discontent over concrete local issues such as poverty and maladministration furnish the cadres with grist for agitation on a primary level, and also enable the VC to achieve a transferance of credibility to a secondary level of more abstract propaganda themes outside the person's immediate experience including the anti-American themes.

While the state of our present research does not indicate systematically much disillusionment with the cadres a VC fighter can take before his motivation as a combatant is seriously impaired, it is obvious that such disillusionment should be encouraged wherever possible, and that when a man's trust in the cadres' reliability on one point is shaken, the rest of the cadres' messages tend to become a little more suspect also (unless of course they have been corroborated by an individual's
own first-hand experience or other still believable sources). The interview data indicates that many VC fighters do not regard the cadres as omniscient and there is a good deal of skepticism and reserved judgment as to their reliability on at least some questions. Therefore, eventual disillusionment over the one factor of an unexpectedly decent and honorable treatment after capture and defection seldom is sufficiently powerful in itself to destroy a man's faith in the entire movement but it can, when combined with other discouragements, add some weight toward a decision to defect on the part of men still fighting and, in the case of men already captured or defected, contribute to a higher state of receptivity to an available political reorientation.

Consequently, it is very important that GVN and U.S. personnel taking prisoners and receiving fighters and also operating in Chieu Hoi centers, initial POW receiving points and POW camps be sensitive to the probable confusion and disorientation of these men, their susceptibility to new political stimuli and their need for adequate reorientation when they depart from the VC ranks. The Vietnamese display a great deal of affect in their personal relations—they often describe themselves as "a very sentimental people." Genuine and sympathetic concern about their situation and concrete steps toward offering these men new political understanding and, where possible, new livelihood opportunities can do much to give the lie to earlier anti-GVN/U.S. indoctrination and weaken residual respect for it and the VC cadres associated with it.
This unexpectedly humane treatment in POW and defector camps may have a limited impact. A reasonably well-indoctrinated POW might express surprise and gratitude, but he probably will reserve judgment concerning the Americans' longer-range intentions; and although he may not articulate this readily, he probably will continue to believe the VC allegation that the U.S. purpose in Vietnam is not only to contain Communism but to pick up the mantle of the departed French colonialists and exploit the country economically. Again, adequate political education is urgently needed.

Elliott and Thomson have discussed the willingness of many cadres who have become disillusioned with the VC and/or its prospects for victory to defect and then make a "clean break" with the VC. They then demonstrate the sincerity of their new allegiance to the GVN by deeds, not just verbal assurances, including distasteful jobs such as furnishing intelligence on their old VC units.* They describe the guerrilla's original departure from home and full-time commitment to the VC as the first "clean break," and the above-described break with the VC and willingness to collaborate with the GVN as the second. But

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it is quite clear that this second "clean break" initially at least is motivated less by political attraction to the GVN than repulsion against the VC, very often based on personal, non-ideological grounds. This is an essentially negative type of commitment and likely to be a shaky one, which again points up the need for adequate political education of persons coming out of the VC.

D. SOME PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL REORIENTATION OF VC AND EX-VC

Political education for VC POWs, defectors is needed to help these people achieve a satisfactory political reorientation to life in non-Communist communities and to help them cope with the confusion often resulting from the residual effects of their VC indoctrination. Political education is needed also by many of the refugees coming into GVN zones.

Some political education is given now to at least the defectors, but such programs have tended to be inconsistent and superficial in implementation. Such programs must have substantive content, and not be based mainly on anti-Communist slogans, as has often been the case in the past. They must give due acknowledgement to the fact that a considerable number of persons in the VC, and particularly the
cadres, have been highly politicized and, as described in Chapter IV, trained to a high degree of articulateness in analyzing everything around them, with the aim of giving personal as well as other problems a political slant. In the political reeducation of these people, incompetent teachers and superficial course content are worse than none at all.

A theme that deserves major attention is that the earlier war against the French truly was a war to end colonialism and win independent, but that it was a tragedy in many ways, notably in crushing much of the non-Communist political leadership of the country between French security agents and VN Communist political liquidators; but while this loss of non-Communist leadership is one significant factor in the political turbulence of the present, it can and is being replaced gradually by the rise of young political leaders and here the ex-VC can play an important role.

Another important theme is that the present war against the GVN/U.S. is not for independence, but one of class struggle and aimed to assert the final hegemony of the Communists, Northern and Southern, over Vietnamese society. Here it is relevant to note that some of the interviewees said that some aspects of the VC land reform programs, for example, struck them as unfair because they were slanted toward class struggle objectives.

A major problem complicating the discussion of this theme at present is the as yet unsatisfied demands in large
segments of Vietnamese society for political, social and economic reform and stability. When these have been achieved to a significant degree, the GVN obviously will be able to speak with greater authority and credibility in this area.

These political education programs not only will have to criticize Communism but will also have to acknowledge past policy errors and miscalculations on the part of the GVN and also the U.S. if it is to strike these ex-VC as a genuine effort and is to engage their interest and enthusiastic participation. Here it will have to say something about the mistakes of the Diem regime (which is very common practice by officials in Saigon these days anyway), and probably will also have to deal with the over-simplified American view of Vietnamese politics in the days of relatively uncritical support of the Diem regime. These subjects will be essential in an application to the Vietnam situation of discussions on the problems of nation building in the newly dependent former colonies.

As noted in Chapter III, the long history of Communist-influenced revolutionary activity in Vietnam has suffused Vietnamese society with elements of Marxist-Leninist thought, notably vulgarized aspects of Lenin's thesis on imperialism, and this probably will render more difficult this training (as well as complicate U.S. relations with Vietnam for years to come, as they have affected U.S. relations with other areas of the developing world). But the somewhat spotty acceptance by many non-Communist Vietnamese of certain
elements of Marxism-Leninism* does not doom in advance the results of political education programs that will be needed to help Vietnamese ex-POWs, defectors and refugees from VC zones to achieve a more objective perception of their nation's problems and their role in its reconstruction.

*Communist influence on GVN politics has been significant in the areas of ideology and political organization and Ngo Dinh Nhu, for example, attempted to answer the Communist challenge by devising his own anti-Communist ideology, (Nhan-vi, or Personalism), but one which shared the cosmological world-view approach to politics found in Communist (and European continental) political doctrines and by a network of GVN political organizations which mirrored Communist practices to a considerable extent. In the latter category, he set up official mass organizations and parties for the youth, women, farmers and so forth, complemented by an elite vanguard party (the Can Lao) with secret membership rosters, party pseudonyms for the "comrades" and secret party manifesto and statues. In the countryside and also the cities there were combined family "mutual assistance" groups organized mainly for security control, the implementation of "community labor" projects and the general dissemination of government regulations and policy. The Diem government attempted to transform its functionaries into can-bo or cadres, again in a rather mechanical effort to capture some of the political dynamism of the VC, and it sporadically tried to introduce a version of the VC kiem-thao or criticism and self-criticism techniques into its own program of political study sessions for government personnel. A number of these approaches were retained in rural pacification programs continued after the fall of Diem and are being used in the current pacification project based on the operations of 59-man Revolutionary Development cadre teams in the hamlets. Most significantly* for U.S. policy, though, has been a reinforcement by Marxist-Leninist currents of an old Vietnamese suspicion of foreign powers seeking to play any important role in domestic policies.
It was suggested above that much of the hate propaganda of the VC appears to be manipulated in character and that such emotive qualities are used for limited purposes but are not allowed by VC leaders and cadres to interfere with political policy decision-making on more rational grounds. If this is generally true, the largely VC-generated legacy of hate should not prove exceedingly difficult to cope with in GVN programs to rebuild the country and win popular political support from segments of the populace now supporting the VC. The very fact that the VC has been able to reorient people politically is one proof among many that reorientation is possible; and VC indoctrination has not been a blind, one-way road, as proven by the cases of numerous ex-POWs and defectors.

The interviews dealt with in this study show that many men were motivated in large part to join the VC by antagonism to the Diem regime, as this was nurtured and inflamed by VC agents. By the time of Diem’s fall in November 1963, many of these men were not so completely indoctrinated as to accept the long-range VC goals of expelling the Americans and all non-VC political authority before they demanded to return to their homes and resume peaceable family life. Indeed, there is evidence that the VC cadres had a major job on their hands at that time to explain why the struggle must continue and that morale in at least some units was not good.

There are other indications that the long-range impact on the South Vietnamese people of VC propaganda, including
its violently anti-American aspects, may not pose a very great problem in a post-conflict reconstruction campaign, if performance by the GVN is positive and consistently so. But such performance will be a sine qua non. Without the deeds, the words will be ordinary propaganda in a country whose people have been over-exposed to propaganda of all kinds for a long time.

One question that arises here is the extent to which these Vietnamese, so long threatened and harrassed by the war and so heavily propagandized, will be satisfied with piecemeal political, social, and economic improvements, as opposed to more thoroughgoing reform. Their expectations for substantial reform have been raised by not only VC but also GVN propaganda and cadre teams, as, e.g., recently in the new "revolutionary development" cadre teams' promises of a genuine non-Communist social revolution, accompanied by not always guarded criticism of the present government as one continuing the old "corrupt" and "rotten" practices of its predecessors.*

Perhaps all that one can say about the dimensions of the South Vietnamese peasants' expectations for a better life is that many would be satisfied to see the war end and a modicum of order, stability, and social justice established in the countryside. But in the long run, the winds of change and the messages brought by the scores of thousands of cadres from both sides, over the years, have

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*See, e.g., Denis Warner.....Reporter and Charles Mohr, New York Times. The latter article describes how the GVN
have and will continue to strengthen demands for change on a substantial scale. These demands will not necessarily be for change of revolutionary magnitude in areas of the countryside where a good deal of de facto land reform already has been carried out by the VC and assented to at least tacitly by the GVN by now so that class conflict there is a comparatively abstract proposition. In such localities, there is doubtless a demand for preservation of much of the land redistribution already effected but not a wide range of demands for sweeping changes that would threaten the traditional institutions of family and private ownership, although some modernizing of these probably would be welcomed. (Actually, there is probably more demand for radical change in the urban areas where it has been so difficult to achieve stability, consensus, local cooperation in mutual-aid projects and visible signs of improvement in overall political and social conditions.) Therefore it should be possible to show the peasants that it is in their interest to support non-Communist forces to achieve his demands if those instrumentalities can gather the cohesion and political dynamism necessary to defend him and rally his support.

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discovered in about July 1966 that the political training at the Vungtau cadre school had been slanted to express a criticism of the GVN leadership by a group of officers and training specialists from the Bùy Dan group of the Đại Việt political party.
APPENDIX A

VC RECRUITMENT BASED ON COMBINED APPEALS OF PATRIOTISM AND PERSONAL INTEREST (SEE CHAPTER IV)

The following excerpts from nine case histories emphasize the VC's use of patriotic appeals combined with assurances of improvement in the individual's personal situation, in terms of career opportunity, a more interesting or less arduous life, and an escape from specific personal difficulties.

(1) One young defector (Z011-D) had worked as a waiter under trying conditions, hoping to save funds for further education. He was told by a schoolmate that if he was accepted by the Front, "they would give me money to pay for my studies," and this promise, plus his taste for adventure, drew him into the VC. Later he became an armed youth propaganda cadre and claimed that he personally had brought about the adhesion of some forty school-age youths to the VC by such methods as paying monthly allowances for their tuition or subsistence. (This total sounds exaggerated and the reliability of this source could not be determined.)

(2) One lad (Z011-D) said, "I wanted to be a male nurse but there was no hope for me. Then a VC officer came and promised me that the Front could send me to a medical school."

(3) One man (Z01050 ) was told that "joining the troops (VC) would bring me glory and fortune later when the country was unified. At that future date I would...have a high post in the government."
A Delta man in his early twenties (ZHO -D) had only a few years of formal education but longed to be a schoolteacher. He was able to find employment in rural schools for a time but then was deprived of jobs in three successive hamlets because other teachers possessed better academic credentials or had more influence with cliques of village officials. Finally he decided to move to a VC-controlled zone where teaching jobs were open, although his father and friends tried to dissuade him. He derived some puckish satisfaction from remaining in the VC's "petty bourgeois" social classification which enabled him to avoid participation in many of the usual political activities, although he eventually found himself furnishing special medical aid to a VC district agent. He eventually defected but his protracted detention in a Chieu Hoi center was further compounding his hopes for a teaching career.

One of the most poignant cases encountered was that of a twenty-four-year-old former peasant boy (ZH002- ) who had served four years as a medical aid man in a military unit. He still had three bullets in his body when interviewed in Saigon headquarters in DaNang. After finishing elementary school in his village, the future seemed to hold no promise for him. In his words:

In my village, I could not do anything to make myself happy. My family did not have enough for me to go to school. All my friends were going on to secondary school. I did not want to go to work yet. In my village, I worked in the daytime and I ate in the evening. I didn't want to live like that. I wanted to go to secondary school.
He was contacted by a VC recruiting cadre who knew about his desire for more education and also that his older brother had been re-grouped North in 1954. The appeal of earning a brother's example was combined with the promise of education. The subject decided that the recruiter's talk "made sense." He told him, "wait a moment, I'll go get my pants," and left without telling his parents. He told our interviewer four years later, soon after capture:

I didn't want to be a soldier. On the other hand, I didn't want to stay home and polish the earth all my life.... If I had had the opportunity to go to school, without having to pay for anything, I would not have joined the other side. They promised me to let me go to school. You cannot just forget about people's aspirations.

He was asked by the interviewer how he felt about the VC after the promises had not been kept. He answered:

Once I joined the Front, I couldn't just leave like that. I might be put in prison if I came back to this side. I want to have a free life. That's why I resigned myself to being a soldier indefinitely. Besides, they did give me some medical training....

There are all kinds of people in the Front. Some like the Army, some are draft dodgers... Some do not like the Government on this side. Some are re-groupers. Some, like myself, want to go to school... I can only answer for myself. Once I was in the Front, I had to serve vigorously so that when it won, I would be happier. If the Government satisfied the aspirations of people like me, there would be no more Front; nobody would fight anymore.
Many who had joined the VC regarded this act mainly as a solution to some personal, nonpolitical need, but the patriotic and altruistic ring of VC propaganda often played a role even here. For it could serve to put a patriotic gloss on an act of joining which actually was motivated fundamentally by a desire to escape from uncomfortable situations and community and family relationships and evade personal responsibilities.

One such lad (ZH027-R) was an orphan who had been placed as a servant in the home of another family at an early age. He said the work for his master had been heavy and the treatment harsh, so "and when I heard from friends that I might get a little more rest while working for the Front, I wanted to go." He got a job in a VC jungle grenade factory after hearing about it from a friend.
An eighteen-year-old girl (ZH073-SN) said, "Because my mother tried to force me to get married and because she beat me, I was angry and did what the Front told me to."

A twenty-three-year-old man reported he had run off to the VC to evade payment of a damage judgment against him arising out of a motor scooter accident. (He became disillusioned with the VC and defected to the GVN after a few months.)

A girl (2014-D) described with some embarrassment how failing her high school examinations made her feel sick and depressed. She was contacted by a woman VC cadre she had never seen before. (She said later she thought the woman might have learned about her case from an uncle in the VC.) The girl was so despondent that she "thought of nothing else except leaving home as soon as possible...I couldn't do anything to help my family." The woman cadre "knew how to talk very well and I didn't care how life with the VC would be. All I wanted was to get away...."

A former VC (ZH077-SN) who sold fruit for a living told how he had encountered a VC district committee on one of his trips:

I told him I had been a member of the Resistance. Sau Xe then told me that with such a record I should join the Front. I refused. Sau Xe repeated his offer two or three times, but I still refused. So finally Sau Xe asked me to bring back office supplies to him in the VC zone. I only wanted to obtain, through cooperation with the VC, their authorization to go deep inside the VC zone where I could easily sell my fruit. I made good profits...
APPENDIX B

PEASANT SATISFACTION AND DISILLUSIONMENT OVER VC LAND REFORM APPEALS
(See Chapter IV)

The first two statements below praise the VC land program. The last two are bitter in condemning it.

(1) People living in Ben Cat District of Binh Duong said the VC's land program had satisfied the poor, according to a defector who served in the regional forces there from 1960 to 1964 (G-19) though he had some qualms about one aspect of the policy. It had included land redistribution, labor exchange and mutual aid:
The Front organized a farmer's association for the villagers to help one another. For example, when the harvest time came, if your family had already harvested the crop, the Front would come and mobilize your family to go and help other families. If a family had more land than they could work, the Front would come and ask that family to share their land with the poorer families. This was their policy: "There are no rich people and no poor people -- everyone is on the same standing."

It was a good policy, and if the GVN would follow that policy it would be wonderful. However, there are some contradictions in that policy. To share what you have with the less privileged ones is good, but when you take land from the rich to give to the poor, and the poor don't have to pay anything to the rich -- and yet the rich still have to pay tax to the Front (which the Front calls "contributions"), then I do not think that practice is fair.

The poor were happy, but the rich were frustrated. But they couldn't say so openly. If a family refused to share their land with others, the Front would come and talk to that family two or three times. If they still were stubborn, they were done for.

(When pressed on the last point, he said one man in the village was shot because he had been accused of being a GVN spy.)

2. Land-poorliness was described as having an immediate and direct bearing on the ratio of villagers supporting the VC by a former male nurse in the regional forces (AG-110) who described conditions in his area of operations in Thanh Duc District. When he was asked what percentage of the population there was "active in Front organizations" he replied "fifty percent." The reason, he said, was the following: because that was the percentage which had been poor tenants farmers and consequently had received land in a redistribution program.
A criticism of the land program expressed by a 17-year-old (Z0-22) who had served as a VC hamlet militiaman in Hoa Loc District, Dinh Tuong, and then as an ammunition carrier in the regional forces briefly before capture, reflected a strong generalized resentment against the cadres:

The cadres got everything, all the advantages and privileges, and their mothers at home belonged to the mothers' association. When there is land distribution, their families get the first choice, but we would be the first to be killed. I got nothing. . . .

A Tay Ninh man (AG-196) who served in the VC for about a year and a half and became a squad leader before defecting in early 1965 was another who criticized the VC land program. However, certain parts of his story struck the interviewer as dubious and self-serving, so the reliability of the following statement is not certain:

What promises did the Front cadres make to you before you joined the Front?

Since my family was poor, the Front promised to lend them 10 bushels of paddy without interest, and to distribute one acre of land to us. But later on, after I had volunteered to join the Front, I found out that I had been cheated since my family never received any help from the Front.
APPENDIX A C

THREE FORMER OUTLAWS ATTAINING RELATIVELY HIGH RANK IN THE VC

(See Chapter II)

The first source (AG70) grew up in a poor family in Vinh Binh:
I worked as tenant farmer for the former chief of Tra-Cu District, a very rich landlord. While still very young, about nine years old, I worked four water-buffaloes for him. I led a very miserable life. I didn't wear any clothes except a loin cloth. Not a grain of rice was stored in my home because all the crops had to be turned over to the landlord.

When I was 19, this man lost four thousand piastres at gambling and had to work for two years at woodcutting and processing dried palm leaves and straw for thatched roofs to pay off his debts. But all was not well even yet.

I returned to my hamlet in 1958 to live with my mother for two months before I managed to live separately with my wife. My father hated me very much, because of my passion for gambling. So, he distributed land to my brothers and sisters, without giving me any. I had to request him to redistribute six cong of ricefields to me, so that I could support my family. [In addition to that] my father gave me only a sampan when I took my family to live separately.

In the late nineteen-fifties, his situation deteriorated, he claimed:

During the Diem regime, my family was in dire poverty. I was a member of the Republican Youth and so I had to work as a coolie for the construction of the Long-Vinh Agroville in Loan-Toan District, and the building of outposts in my village. I did not receive any wages for all these services, which lasted from one to two weeks [at a time]. I had to furnish my own rice. I escaped this hard labor twice by fleeing to the fields of Lang-Rang where I caught fish and crabs, and from time to time my wife came there.
to house my catch home for sale. Mr. Tep, the chief of police of my village, threatened not to protect my life any longer if I did not work as a coolie for the agroville. My wife kept me informed of it and I dared not go back home. Thus, I met some VC cadres who passed through my hideout in the fields....

These cadres came to arouse my hate for the GVN. I felt that I was extremely poor; I had lost my prestige among my acquaintances because of the debts I had recently incurred and also the thought of revenge for my grandmother's and uncle's deaths was kindled in my mind. [These relatives had been killed earlier by Cambodian-Vietnamese "working for the French." I confess that at that time my spirit was very low, so when the VC cadres persuaded me to join the Front I believed they were right. I was re-educated by them. In about May 1962 I sold all my belongings, my sampan and fishing nets, and as I was short of money, I let my wife live with her own parents in order to join the VC indefinitely.

The two propaganda themes that were used with him were "reunification of the country," "suppression of the landlords and struggle against Diem," and the latter two appealed to him most. He said that in his area, at the time he joined (late 1959), the anti-American theme was not yet dominant: "Before and when I joined the Front, I had not yet heard about it, but the anti-American move has been developing since then."

From this beginning, the man, then 27, rose in the movement to become a company commander and assistant to the district military committee before his capture two and a half years later.

Another source (AC-196) told of fleeing to his wife's native hamlet in a VC zone after getting into
Another man who attained the middle-level rank (but a relatively high one in our sample) of deputy chief of the military section of the district committee in Hoa Dong District, Binh Thuan Province, started his VC career from an outlaw status stemming from a landholding problem. When his family's rental contract expired, it was hoped that the landlord would offer a fairly easy renewal, but instead he called for open bidding and someone else got the land. This man then reclaimed some abandoned land about 12 kilometers from the village. However, he refused to comply with the village authorities' demand that he return home to the village each night and contribute his efforts to the local defense unit. He came back only every two weeks, and by then he could get around the village council's ban on his presence only because the chief of the Civil Guard unit stationed there happened to like him and dislike the village authorities.

Eventually, because he was living on reclaimed land at the edge of a forest, he was contacted by a small band of VC and persuaded to join in October 1960. He was promoted steadily through the ranks of village military
committee chief, village secretary and then became final before being captured in 1964.

Another type was that of a 37-year-old man from Quang Nam, who hid in the mountains from 1956 to 1960 (G-28). (Some details of his case are described more fully in the section dealing with "Ex-Resistance Members -- Special Appeals and Pressures.") He was a VM fighter ordered to go to North Vietnam in the 1954 regrouping, but he disobeyed the order and turned back to his village instead. He claimed that the Quang Nam provincial authorities had started "a terrorist campaign against old Resistance members" in 1956 and, according to him, arrested "about 10,000" of them. Terrified, he fled to the mountains. There he lived with three others from his village with support from the tribal people there. Local VC cadres found them there in 1960 and welcomed them back into the fold. This man became an acting company commander in the regional forces before his eventual capture.
EXCERPTS FROM THREE INTERVIEWS COMPARING ARVN AND VC RECRUITMENT APPEALS AND TECHNIQUES (SEE CHAPTER VIII)

A 32 year-old man who served the VC as a prison guard for over a year until his defection in early 1965 made some interesting comparisons of VC and GVN recruiting techniques, with reference to the "serve near your home" pitch:

Everybody knows that no matter which side one joins, one is but a soldier. However there is a difference in the recruiting methods. The GVN is satisfied with ordering all youths to complete their military service. The authorities in the village, in order to execute this order, force the young men to join the Army. Sometimes this is
done with brutality and never with explanation or propaganda. The VC also use force to recruit their soldiers, but force is always accompanied by explanation and propaganda.

For example, in the case of the young men in my village, the VC know that the majority of the people in the countryside do not like to be definitely separated from their hamlets and families. So they said that once the villagers become GVN soldiers, they would not be allowed to return home and see their families, that they would be sent far away and that in the end they would die in a foreign land without the hope of seeing their parents, wives and children again. The VC added that to be GVN soldiers is to be mercenaries in the pay of the Americans, to be working against the people and against their own families. It would be better then for the young men to become guerrillas. As such, they could stay near their families and go to see them whenever they wanted to. Besides, they would take pride in working for the people and for a good cause. The people in the countryside, being for the most part uneducated, tend to listen to this sweet talk.

This source was typical of many men in that he was sent away from his home area to serve in another district of the province.

A squad leader in the main forces (G-2) told what had actually eventuated from the earlier VC recruiter's promise that he could serve near home:

Towards the end of 1959, the Front abolished the village administration and put an end to the GVN control of my village. In April, 1960, the Front contacted me for the first time. I did not want to join because I knew the Front would lead me far from my mother. But the next month they came back and forced me to join the village guerrillas. They assured me that I would not have to leave my hamlet, and they gave me some hand-grenades.

However, after joining in Vinh Binh, he was sent away for four months of military training and then assigned to a unit in An Xuyen province, where he remained for three years and saw a great deal of combat (ten major engagements).

Still another draft-dodging case was that of a man who served for more than five years, and became a squad leader in the regional forces in Phuoc Ninh District, Tay Ninh before defecting in April 1965 (AG-155). He was dissatisfied with the strategic hamlet program and
its demands that he participate in the GVN's Combat Youth by standing night guard duty. He also was dissatisfied with the prospect of ARVN conscription and the impossibility of "postponing my enlistment in order to support my old parents." He therefore took the following action:

I ran away from my military service for the GVN and, in the company of three of my friends, I went to Hao Duoc village. There I met a VC cadre who was a complete stranger to me. He told me that I could not hide in the village because the GVN was certainly going to search there. He advised me to go with him and took me away with him. I joined the Front enthusiastically after having listened to the VC propagandist.

A transportation cell leader from Tay Ninh who was with the VC for four years before his defection in March 1965 said he had been joined by a cadre of the ARVN and had been given a very naive conception of what VC service would require. This person's recollection of his personal situation at that time was as follows:

I just wanted to live peacefully and have enough to feed the family. When those VC came [in 1960] and caused so much turmoil, I felt bewildered...

However, a friend of his who had received his ARVN draft notice worked hard on this source to go with the VC. He described this pressure and his uninformed reaction to it:

[In a draft notice, the ARVN would try to persuade me day and night to join the Front with him. He said if I did not join, sooner or later I would have to join the VC. I was not enthusiastic; however, I thought this was war and I could sit it out in the Front. When peace was restored, I would go home. I did not think much about what I was going to do.

...I joined the Front because of my friend. He lectured me day and night. He appealed to my emotions, saying that we were best friends, that he was going to be a VC and if I did not join the VC with him I would eventually be drafted into the ARVN. One of us would surely be on the wrong track and when it came to fighting we...
would shoot at each other, for you do not spare your friends on the battlefield. Then there were the VC who came to the village beating on gongs and lecturing to the villagers over megaphones. These VC caused much commotion in the village. They beheaded people and left the heads on the main road.

However, there were other positive appeals in addition:

Every now and then the VC staged a show in the nearby village and I was invited to attend. I felt very happy and eager to work for the Front.

Discouraged as he became with the VC before his defection, he was another who paid tribute to the persuasive power of the VC's recruiting propaganda:

If I look at the material side only, I should say that life in the ARVN is much better, but the Front knows how to appeal to youth; the Front's arguments are more convincing. As for the draft, in the GVN when a person has reached draft age he has to go. There is an element of force in the GVN. The Front does not force people; it uses politics and persuasion to get people to work for it. Front members went to the families who had someone regrouped in the North and persuaded other members in these families to join the Front. People were told that the Front's influence was spreading wider and wider every day and they would not be killed as readily as if they joined the GVN....

...I knew that I had three uncles working for the GVN, but my friend had begged me day and night to join the VC and I could not refuse him.... The VC told me to appeal to my uncles to come back either to join the Front or to work at home. If they did not, they might have to shoot me or I would have to shoot them...for when we were on the battlefield we would have to shoot at one another.
APPENDIX E

FOUR CASES OF EX-VIET MINH PRESSURED TO REJOIN THE MOVEMENT
(See Chapter IX)

Some of the personal histories of rejoining the VM-VC movement are very complex and involve switching sides several times. The first two presented here describe corruption in the policies of GVN authorities dealing with ex-VM elements while the latter of these and the last two of the four claim that indiscriminate arrests and the torture and killing of ex-VM by GVN local authorities played into the hands of VC propaganda and recruiting agents.

A man who had been in the VM off and on since the early days (2040- ) claimed that security officials of the earlier Bao Dai government also had been inconsistent and corrupt in their policies toward ex-Resistants. He said that in late 1950 he fell ill and was released from his VM duties as a cadre working among peasants. He returned to his home in Danang and went to work on the docks:

Then security agents who had been VM cadres denounced me to the police and I was arrested and imprisoned for three months. They had no proof against me, and no charges were filed against me. Friends collected a sum of one thousand piastres to bribe them for my release.

A dock contractor stood guaranty for him and gave him a job after he was let out of jail, "but the district administration was suspicious and would not give me any identification papers." After the 1954 ceasefire, the VM became more active in the area and he became again involved in the movement and was regrouped to North VN. However, this source claimed he long had resented the pressure on him to participate in the VM due to its control of his political milieu, and he defected six months after being infiltrated into the GVN in December 1963.
Another cadre who eventually became a party district level cadre joined the VM in 1949 at the age of 18 (AG-54) in Binh Dinh, which remained under strong VM control until 1950. Instead of regrouping North in 1954 he got permission to return to his native village to get married. In 1956, however, the former VM cadres resurfaced in his area. They praised his former contribution to the revolution and, as he described it, "I was awakened and joined them."

His first assignment was as an agent in the employment of the GVN Information Ministry's provincial branch, where he supplied information and did recruiting for the VC and also kept an eye on the families of departed regroupees. He was denounced and imprisoned by the GVN for one year and then allowed to return to his home village where he was kept under house arrest for an additional period. Eventually the village, although primarily under GVN control was penetrated by VC agents, and he rejoined the movement for a third time.

He commented incisively on the impact of GVN local behavior on the political loyalties of the villagers. The performance of these authorities obviously had been an important factor in his own history of repeated affiliation with the revolutionary movement; and although such a history as his, including prolonged and systematic political indoctrination and eventually a post as party district committee member for propaganda in Pleiku, would tend to equip him with eloquent arguments for attacking the system, he eventually rallied to the GVN and he was able to evaluate critically the VC technique of magnifying local government difficulties for its own inflammatory political purposes:

---How were the GVN officials in your village?

They accepted bribes, threatened the villagers and exploited them. The GVN local officials' bad behavior is the reason why the GVN is losing the people's support. The villagers are simple people who cannot have an overall view of the GVN. They judge and evaluate the GVN through the actions of the GVN local officials. I'm not saying that the GVN policy is wrong; on the contrary, I think that
the GVN policy is right, but unfortunately the officials of the lowest echelons apply it all wrong. In order to obtain the people's support, the GVN must reorganize its local government in hamlets and villages, it must make the local officials, who work close to the people and through whom the villagers will judge the entire GVN, work for the good of the people and of the country. The GVN must eliminate all the bad elements from the village and hamlet [administrations].

---Did many people in your village join the VC? If yes, why did they do so?

Yes, many joined the VC. There are two reasons why they did so:

a) They believed in VC propaganda.
b) They hated the GVN officials' oppressive actions.

---What did the VC propaganda say?

The VC distorted the truth. They told the people that the Americans, through their aid, were transforming South Vietnam into a new type of colony and a fortress which will enable them to provoke war in Southeast Asia. They said the people should rise up to overthrow the Americans and their henchmen, to reunify the country in peace, neutrality, independence, and harmony between all racial groups, with no distinction of class, region, or political affiliation, and to obtain their own economic rights.

The GVN, for a long time, has committed numerous errors which have had catastrophic consequences, such as indiscriminate arrests of the people, torturing those arrested, acceptance of bribes, etc...., which the VC exploit very aptly. The VC exaggerate the gravity of the errors committed, and inflame the hatred of the population against the GVN.

Another case of an ex-Resistance member's fleeing to the hills, joining the VC and ultimately attaining relatively high rank in our sample was that of a man from Quang Nam (G-28) who is described briefly also in the section dealing with "Social Process". After joining the VN in early 1954, he was ordered to join his companions being regrouped to North Vietnam but he surreptitiously turned back and went home. He described the ensuing events as follows:

---This case is described also in Appendix A.
I was staying with my family when, in 1956, the local government of Quang Nam started a terrorist campaign against old Resistance members. About 10,000 persons of the Resistance army were arrested and a good many of them were slaughtered. I had to run for my life and stayed in the mountains until 1960. I lived with three others who came from my village. We were given support by the tribal population there.

Then, in 1960, he said, local VC cadres came to "rally the old Resistance members" to work for the movement and he joined willingly. He became an acting company commander before he was captured at the age of 37, still confident that the VC ultimately would win the war. "The final story is the complicated one of a peasant-AG-39" from Thuy Hao district, Phu Yen Province (Central Vietnam), claimed the GVH had acted extraordinarily harshly to him over the years, pressing him inexorably back into the revolutionary movement despite his age of 53, an advanced one for such activity. Under the French, this man, who evidently possessed above average intelligence, had been a village chief at the age of 25, and in the following year, an assistant to the district chief. When the VM came to power it controlled Thuy Hao completely. He was sent back to his village, but four years later, in 1949, he was elected village chief under the revolutionary regime. He was taken into the Communist Party in 1949, but expelled two years later, evidently because he was a "middle," not poor, farmer. He was even slated for a denunciation trial as a "feudal tyrant" before the party made one of its periodic switches in policy on such purging at that time.

In the first month after the Geneva cease-fire on 1954, this man was again elected hamlet chief but was removed after three weeks by the GVH village chief. He was able to work his land undisturbed only until 1956 when the provincial administration ordered that all former Communist Party members of certain types were to be arrested to keep them inactive during the period set for the North-South elections by the Geneva Accords. He and the others were released at the end of that year but kept under loose detention requiring that he sleep at night in the village communal house and obtain...
permission from local authorities to travel anywhere outside the village. Occasionally he was again detained in the communal house for periods of up to a month, he claimed.

Along with this imprisonment and harassment, this man heard the GVN might kill him: the GVN village chief evidently was one of the number of anti-communist zealots who hounded ex-VN members in such areas as Phu Yen Province and committed atrocities against them and their families (Incidentally, this chief was being detained in the GVN "Re-education Center" at Tuy Hoa along with the subject, for abuses of his authority under the Diem regime.) The source claimed an atrocity against former Communist party members occurred as late as 1960.

The village chief said he was elected by the people... but it was not the truth. He was a stranger to the village. He was very cruel. He hunted down all the former members of the CP during the Resistance to arrest and kill them. All told, he slaughtered fourteen Party members in my village. I saw him with my own eyes order the killing of two Party members in Mau Lam hamlet. They had their hands tied behind their backs and they were buried alive by the militia. I was scared to death....

This man had no contact with the VC, he claimed, until GVN authority in the village was eroded by the gradual spread of VC control from the uplands of Central Vietnam down into the delta. By 1962, the VC controlled seven of the eleven hamlets in the village, and had destroyed the one additional strategic hamlet. Then during a VC raid on his GVN-controlled hamlet, a cousin who was a VC cadre and a returnee from North Vietnam left him a message advising him that he was in new danger of being killed by the GVN and therefore should flee to the hills to contact the VC unit there. He put in another rice crop, waited nine months, and then, upon receipt of a second message from the cousin, took to the hills without even telling his wife that he was leaving. He worked in a farm production unit for a year, becoming treasurer of the Economy and Finance Section of the district organization after a few months. When the entire VC unit advanced from the hills to the
plains, he was assigned to a dike repair job, and shortly after that was captured by the GVN.

While there is some doubt as to the veracity of certain of this man's statements, which reflect deliberate pro-GVN modifications, it appears that his motivation for joining the VC consisted at least in part in fear of harsh treatment or death at the hands of the GVN. However, a related motive is suggested by the very strong VC influence in the area which must have made his continued residence in a GVN hamlet appear increasingly hazardous. He may well have had more contacts with the VC than he was willing to admit, but it is quite probable that he did not relish leaving his family in the hamlet for the hard life in the hills at the age of 53.
APPENDIX B

THREE CAPTURED VIET CONG DOCUMENTS RELATED TO MILITARY PROSELYTING
(See Chapter V)

(1) A document captured in Vinh Binh Province on April 1, 1964 lists "propaganda and indoctrination activities" of a standard type employed by the VC. The present writer's explanations of some of the items are added in brackets. The translation follows:

Conduct verbal propaganda among the populace who live around the (GVN) posts and fortifications:
-- Public letters [to GVN officials and officers, etc.]
-- Private letters [to GVN officials and soldiers, etc.]
-- Appeals
-- Leaflets
-- Hanging slogans [on posters and banderoles] opposite the posts
-- Peace boat [propaganda messages affixed to small boats or objects which can be floated down a water course to GVN posts or communities]
-- Handkerchiefs [bearing VC slogans which are given away]
-- New Year cards
-- Appeals through megaphones [to GVN forces in a post being attacked by the VC to surrender, or on other occasions, merely to cooperate or defect to the VC]
-- Entertainment [songs and recitations, usually transmitted by a megaphone]
-- Face-to-face struggle [political persuasion or making demands on GVN officials and soldiers to desist from mopping-up operations, attacks on villages, etc.]
-- Countering GVN sweep operations by political means [including those listed in the preceding item]
-- Training and liberating POWs [This will be described further below].

*Document captured in Hiep Thanh sector, received from IA/IV Corps, MACV-J2 Log No. 9-293, October 1964, For Official Use Only.*
(2) A document captured in Thua Thien Province in January 1965* describes in detail VC military proselyting themes and specific approaches to be employed with various GVN military formations. (Some such themes and approaches are varied from time to time and place to place to accord with local conditions but some of them are standard and are not changed.) An excerpt of this document follows:

(1) **PRACTICAL PLANS TO BE CARRIED OUT:**

(a) **PROPAGANDA TASKS:**

The present main propaganda themes must be: [Do not] die for the American imperialists and their lackeys. Stand by the people's side to save the country and the families and request the enemy to halt the war.

**SOME SLOGANS FOR THE PRESENT**

Down with US invaders.

Stop the war and re-establish peace in South Vietnam.

Support the people in destroying combat hamlets and strengthen the pressures necessary to free our country.

---

*Document captured in the Huong Thuy sector, received from IA/I Corps, MACV-J2 Log No. 3-34-65, March 10, 1965, For Official Use Only.*
Appendix F

Don't be trapped and abused by American imperialists and their new lackeys.

No mop-ups; no massacres; no destruction of the houses and villages of your relatives and neighbors.

Join your people and your families and vigorously serve the Revolution.

Request your discharge just when your term expires. Never re-enlist.

Don't take part in military operations. Don't participate in mopping-up operations. Don't terrorize the population.

Resolutely protest against the draft, the scheme of the American imperialists and their lackeys.

(b) DIRECTIVES:

AIMS OF PROPAGANDA: To explain clearly to men and officers the present embarrassments and collapses of the American imperialists and their lackeys as well as their inevitable total defeat. Should they continue to serve the enemy, they would sin against our people and bring about shameful deaths and hatred of our compatriots.

To mobilize true patriotism and love of peace indicating that the present unique way is to stand by the people's side against the US invaders, and to request the neutralization of South Vietnam.

The above propaganda themes must be carried out in accordance with present local requirements such as: opposition to mopping up operations against the settled populace, the conscription, and economic seiges. [This evidently refers to GVN regulations prohibiting the transport or sale of certain supplies such as medicines, flashlight batteries, into numerous contested and VC-controlled areas.]

These themes have a general purpose of arousing the consciousness of the nation and social classes. Besides, we must pay attention to other concrete favorable targets.

TOWARD THE COMBAT YOUTH AND POPULAR FORCES (MILITIA UNITS):

The majority of them, being deceived or afraid they will be taken away from home as draftees, have enlisted as Combat Youth [hamlet part-time militia] or PF elements.

They are attached to their rice fields, neighbors, parents, wives and children, and relatives...they share with our people all the pain and hardship caused by the enemy. To them, we must awaken class feeling and also the spirit of national vigilance. We must point out particularly local traitors and enemy draft schemes which
step by step will take all youths for soldiers. Then we can persuade them into strong resistance.

TOWARD THE REGIONAL FORCE (FORMERLY DESIGNATED AS CIVIL GUARD):
Except for draftees, most of these are veterans, aged and married. For them the military life is a trade. Their brains are "poisoned" by enemy political conceptions. Their tactics are very cunning. But they and their dependents are usually faced with financial problems so they are dissatisfied. However, they understand us very little, so we must direct our attention to explaining to them our policies and indicating to them a way [out of their predicament].

TOWARD THE REGULAR FORCES: Most of them are forced into the enemy army. They are usually sent to suppress revolutionary movements in many areas so they are more sensitive than the other forces to the present situation. Daily they are ordered by Americans and their lackeys to kill our compatriots [including some of] their relatives. However, they still believe in US strength and money and do not yet believe in the mighty force of our true course, so they "wait and see" not daring to take revolutionary action. This state of mind is general. With them, our propaganda [seeks] to awaken their patriotism, making them believe that the combination of their own force and of our people can upset all the schemes of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, and [thus also] save the country and their own lives.

PROPAGANDA METHODS: It is necessary to revise the methods which have been usually applied so that they become, day by day, more numerous and effective. Following are some relatively good methods which have been collected by superior authorities and not yet applied broadly:

Use verses, satirical songs, pictures of popular characteristics of the delta areas to disseminate our propaganda themes among enemy troops.

Use special leaflets slanted toward enemy officers. Do not send "form letters" to many of them but write persuasive letters to each of them in accordance with their character, etc. . . .

Use elements which are capable and credible for propaganda activities (professors, notables, learned men, priests; Buddhist monks, qualified oriental druggists, soothsayers, etc. . . .). It is necessary to train and educate them thoroughly in propaganda tactics.

Teenagers, school children and youth are very capable in propaganda missions; POW's whom we have re-educated and freed are also effective.

The use of enemy deserters to broadcast appeals to enemy units is also effective.
NPLSVN
Tra Vinh/Vinh Binh/ Province  PEACE - INDEPENDENCE - NEUTRALITY

DECISION

The NPLSVN Committee of Tra Vinh Province decides to free brother ........., prisoner of war captured on _____ by the Liberation Troops, SVN.

This decision is made for the following reasons:

1. The policy of the NPLSVN is to grant clemency to those who have gone astray and to share in the situation of those who are forced to join the American - Diem army. This policy is generated from the long standing humanity of the Vietnamese people, the love of the people from the same country and the just cause of the NPLSVN.

2. The majority of Enlisted men and Officers are not pro American - Diem but are not yet aware of the Revolution and are forced to join them. Therefor, once they realize the just cause of the revolution, the tricks and crimes conspired by the American-Diem, they will certainly be able to distinguish between the just and the injust cause, and see who are the men who love the people and the country, which way will lead them to life, and which way will lead them to death and slavery.

3. After a period of indoctrination, brother.....has realized that the American-Diem are an enemy that joining their army is a crime. He has displayed repentance and promised he will never do anything that betrays the people and the country.

Day  Month  1963.

*Document captured in Hiep Thanh Sector, received from IA/IV Corps, MACV-12 Log No. 9-317(7), 13 October 1964, for Official Use Only.
APPENDIX G

VC RECRUITMENT BY ABDUCTION: EXCERPTS FROM FOURTEEN CASE HISTORIES
(See Chapter XVII)

These statements of alleged VC coercive recruiting were made by sources whose probable credibility was not always rated by the interviewer, but a few of whom were given dubious ratings in this regard, sometimes because of internal inconsistencies in their reports.

(1) A 28 year-old man who had been assigned to a village guerrilla unit in Cu-Chi, Dinh Duong in November 1964 (AG-85). He said he had been "forced" to join in a VC-controlled area and described the incident in the following terms: "They threatened that if I refused to join, I would be shot without mercy. My mother cried a lot." He said he had not been approached by the VC previously. (The interviewer noted that this subject tried hard to tailor his answers to fit his questioner's expectations, so the authenticity of his recruiting story is unknown.)

He was given a month of military training in the forest and assigned to the village guerrilla unit in which he served for three months before being captured.
A case is that of a 20-year-old defector (ZH096-D) from Thua Thien Province (Central Vietnam) who was treated as follows in 1964:

I had been working in the fields and I was sleeping in my house when Phung (a friend) came by to invite me to a chess game at his house. I came back from the game at midnight and on the road, some VC stopped me:

"Come with us to the Green Mountain."

"I don't want to," I said.

"Why not?"

"I am coming back from a game.... There will be nobody in my house to feed my parents if I go away."

"That's not a good reason.... Do you have a rifle?"

[was not allowed to]

"No," I answered. I had a rifle because I was in the Combat Youth, but I wasn't allowed to keep it in my house.

The VC pushed me around for awhile and then took me to the Green Mountain. There, two other prisoners of the VC told the latter that I did in fact have a rifle. Upon hearing that, the VC called me a liar and beat me up. Then I was shown a place to stay and for the next four months, along with two other prisoners, I worked at producing manioc, potatoes, and beans for the VC. There was a guard who always kept an eye on us.

He claimed that he never was given any political or military training whatever and that he was able to escape while being taken from one work site to another.
Another defector in his late teens (ZH097-SN) said he had been abducted by three VC in Hoa Vang District of Quang Nam in December 1963 while cutting wood in the forest. His real desire had been to follow the example of his two brothers who served in the ARVN "and thus were able to support our family with their salaries," and he claimed he had tried to join the GVN military unit but had been rejected for lack of a birth certificate.

After abduction, this man said he was at first put to work gathering manioc for about two weeks, then given a two-week political training course and then two weeks of military training. He was returned to upland farm production for about six months. Finally, he was assigned as a liaison agent and sabotage guerrilla and participated in the destruction of three strategic helmet defense systems before he found an opportunity to surrender to a GVN militia a few days later.

A 25-year-old man from Dien Ban District, Quang Nam (G12) said that after his job with a bus company in Central Vietnam collapsed, he returned home to help his family with farming but fell into the hands of the VC:

The crop of that year was very poor, and my family lived miserably. I made an application for enlistment in the ARVN's 2nd Division. I was on a bus on route to the 2nd Division headquarters in Danang. The bus was approaching the Ky Lan railway station when (four or five) VC suddenly stopped the bus to search the passengers. A Viet-Cong, finding that I held an enlistment application form, arrested me immediately.

He was sent to an upland production unit and after a year was transferred to a regional force company. He was sick (with malaria, mainly) during a considerable part of his time in the VC and his morale evidently was low during most of the period. He participated in two brief skirmishes during his eight months in the unit before being captured.

A 21-year-old man (AG-52) from Thuan Thanh District, Phong Dinh claimed he had been abducted and put into a VC civilian sabotage group to destroy roads and build roadblocks. However, the time of his joining makes it appear that either the VC or he himself had acted to forestall his impending induction into the local GVN militia unit which he had opted for instead of the ARVN draft. The very night before he was to enter the militia, he claimed, the 13-man village guerrilla squad came to his house and took him and two other young men away.
When they came to my house and told me to follow them, I did not want to go. My parents begged them not to take me away, so the VC fired a few shots to intimidate us. When they heard the firing, the SBC in the post fired back but we were already gone.

They took him about a mile away and put him in a group of about 50 other civilians doing sabotage work, he claimed. Two months later, he tried to surrender to the GVN militia, he said, but was captured, treated as a POW and finally, after what he described as severe interrogations and beatings, gave what he said was a false confession of having been a VC intelligence agent. (Various details of this story are not clearly developed in the brief interview and the interviewer commented that the subject seemed to be dissembling.)

Another case in this category is that of a POW in his late teens (Z1090-SN) who said he had been abducted by the VC after a Main Force attack on his GVN-controlled hamlet in Phong Dien District, Thua Thien in August 1964. He was already married and gave the impression he was satisfied with his life on the land. He served in the GVN hamlet defense unit and also as a kind of crier, reading official orders aloud to the hamlet residents as they were received periodically.

After the alleged abduction, he was given a month's political indoctrination for four hours per day, along with two hours of military training a day for two weeks. He was assigned to a two-man communication liaison team carrying mail along a five kilometer stretch of a relay system. He claimed he performed the work only because he had to:

They always had someone on my tail; if I had tried to run, he would have shot me down. I was given a rifle, but I had to walk in front of him all the time...I did not want to carry out the assignments, but I had to. I wanted only to go back home.

He was captured after two months in the VC and subsequently claimed he had considered defecting (or perhaps merely deserting back to his village) but feared it would lead to his arrest by the GVN.
This source tried hard to impress the interviewer with the sincerity of his anti-VC statements, but he made some significant lapses when stating that the VC objective was "to help Vietnam attain independence," and that only half of the country is independent.

(7) An illiterate peasant youth (ZH095-SN) from Quang Tin said he had first noticed the VC when they came into his village in 1963 to hold meetings, but that he had not been interested in them: "I was working in the fields when the VC came to kidnap me. I remember that it was in July and we were getting wood in the forest. The VC came to forbid us to cut down trees for fuel."

He was led off to another place and given two months of political training and then two months of military training. For the next three months, he was assigned to a farm production unit. Then one day he was given a submachine gun and assigned his first combat mission, the nature of which was never clear to him, claiming that he relied on his squad leader for this information. He was captured by the ARVN shortly afterward before his unit could carry out the assigned operation.

It is difficult to evaluate this source's claim to having been abducted and never having shown subsequent enthusiasm for a military assignment. During the interview, he expressed anti-GVN political views, but whether they had existed before his VC indoctrination was not determined. These included a strong resentment of GVN bombing of his village (even though he readily understood this had been done because of the presence of VC elements in the area) and antagonism to the land poorness of his and several families under the GVN.

(8) A 23-year-old man from Tan Binh, Gia Binh (G-36) gave an account of forcible recruitment in 1964 and service as a regional force medical aid man which is dubious in some details but appears to be generally plausible.

In 1961, as an act of reprisal, the VC executed my eldest brother in front of our house because he was a GVN soldier. On the same occasion, they (the VC) threatened to chop off my head if ever I cooperated with the enemy as my brother had done. At this time, I had already received
my military census card, but I had not been called up for military services under the GVN banner as yet.

Later, in 1964, they (the VC) came back and told me that if I carried out my military service with the GVN, I would certainly get killed and my family would not escape the Front's reprisals.

—Did they (VC) explain to you the Front's objectives?
No. They simply threatened me, as I have told you. If I was compelled to follow them, it was for my own safety.

He received most of a two-month medical aid course and later also received some political training before being captured by the ARVN—he may have been a passive surrenderer—after a total of about eight months in the VC.

A peasant boy from Phuoc Long, Ba Kuyen Province claimed two armed VC had come to his house in September 1964 and told him to follow them, although he was only 15 years old: "There were no older boys in all my village. They had moved with their families into the strategic hamlet near the district town."

They blindfolded him for the first stage of a 20 kilometer walk.

Next morning they gave him a two-hour lecture:

They said that I was grown up, that I should serve the 'government' in killing the enemy.

—What government were they talking about?
The Communist government in the South.

—Who is the enemy?
I don't know.

—Didn't they tell you?
No, they didn't.

Later that day he was given a rifle and ten rounds of ammunition. He was instructed in how to use the rifle, but not allowed to fire it. The second morning, he claimed, the VC unit was surrounded by a heliborne ARVN unit and he was captured.

The blindfolding technique used in the above incident terrifies some peasants and deserves further explanation here. One illiterate youth (ZH047-SN) described how fearful he had been of the prospect of being blindfolded and led off somewhere by the VC, after a neighbor had experienced such treatment and a similar dread was expressed by a few other sources. This source said, "I know a neighbor who was (blindfolded and ) taken someplace by the VC. When he came back, he
could not see for a long time. I was afraid." He himself was not taken away, but assigned a courier job in and near his own hamlet.

The reported disability resulting from blindfolding in this story may have been simply the result of great fear or psychological trauma. Blindfolding is widely associated with the act of being led off by VC cadres for any number of purposes ranging from brief, forcible, political indoctrination to regular induction into permanent service. Or it may presage even a serious political accusation followed by summary execution if the individual is considered by the VC to be a "cruel exploiter" of the people and is unwilling to recant.

A 26-year-old (AG-37) who had served as chief of a village military affairs committee (a rank equivalent there to that of platoon leader) in Binh Dai District, Kien Hoa before defecting in January 1965 was one of the sources who gave specific information on blindfolding and executions carried out under such circumstances. Asked about VC terrorism, he said the following:

Yes, it usually happened when the villagers could not pay taxes to the Front. In May 1964 we had to kill two villagers because they refused to pay taxes to the Front. In all we killed about 40 of them (he had served six years in the VC).

---What kind of people were they?
Some were old; some young. They belonged to the group of landowners and they refused to pay.

---Who gave orders to kill them?
I received instructions from the District to kill anybody who would stand against the Front by refusing to pay Front taxes (= khac phong).

---How did you feel about these killings?
I thought that the cruelest thing to do was to kill a man who had a wife and children. Now I feel very sorry.

---If they refused to pay taxes to the Front, did you kill them right away?
I received orders from the Front to kill them. I did not kill them the first time they refused to pay but first I warned them three times before my men killed them. In these warnings, we made threats or we blindfolded them.

---What were the results of these warnings?
In spite of the warnings and threats to their life these people often refused to pay and moved their houses nearer to the (GVN) outpost.
(12) A 36-year-old refugee from Long Dinh District, Khinh Tuong (AGR-1) reported the following on the effects of blindfolding on people he had known in his village:

The VC compelled the people to do collective labor three nights each month. The labor consisted of digging up the roads or driving piles across the canals. These night trips were very dangerous and nobody wanted to go. But those who evaded two or three times were shot. No one had been shot yet but many were tormented. They had their eyes blindfolded for two or three days and they were accused of being reactionaries. After such a torment they usually lost the use of their eyes for some time. That is why people were so afraid of the VC.

(13) The career ladder of men recruited by abduction includes assignments all the way up to the main forces, as indicated earlier. In this category was a youth from Phong Dien, Thua Thien (G-13) who was taken away by the VC in October, 1964, at the age of 16, as described in the following passage:

One night in mid-October last year (1964), while we were sleeping, two Viet Cong broke into my house. As my mother, in tears, pleaded with them to spare my elder brother, saying that he was going to be married very soon, so they arrested only me (along with six other men from the same hamlet). It was about 10 p.m., and I had to walk all night to arrive at a hill at about 6:00 a.m. the next morning. I had to walk again until noon before reaching a straw hut, in which I saw two other men. The two VC who arrested me disappeared, leaving me alone with those men. I stayed for three days in this hut, and on the third day a man came to take me to Company K105.

His main force unit was stationed in the jungle and during his two months with the VC, he received rudimentary military instruction but did not see action before being captured.

(14) A final case of this type was that of a 22-year-old (G-11) from Gio Linh District, Quang Tri village, which he said was visited regularly by VC agents coming to buy rice. He claimed he had tried to forestall being conscripted by sleeping in another village. However, the following events ensued:
Unfortunately, before I could carry out my plan, I was arrested by the VC one night (in August 1964), along with two other youngsters. I walked for five days running to an unknown place near Thua Thien Province.

He was given military training for an hour or two each morning (the interview is very brief and does not describe any political indoctrination he may have received) and then assigned to a Main Force unit. He did not participate in combat before his capture in December, which ended his VC service of only four months.
APPENDIX H

POLITICAL CONVERSION AFTER ABDUCTION AND INDOCTRINATION BY THE VC:
AN UNUSUALLY STRONG PRO-VC POLITICAL RESIDUE IN THE
ATTITUDES OF A DEFECTOR
(See Chapter XVII)

A former auto mechanic who had joined the SVN Marines to avoid
becoming a foot soldier, this source (AG-114; see Chapter XVII for
a detailed description of this case) was caught on a bus while AWOL
and given extensive indoctrination by the VC. He became a youth
proselytizer for the VC and during the course of his post-defection
interview he got emotionally carried away while recalling his
recruiting lines, lowered his voice, and reverted to his old role
to the extent of trying to convince the interviewer of the justice
of the VC position.

He started this speech with a description of the VC appeal
to the youth, as follows:

They [the U.S./SVN] used the "poisonous
method" (Chinh sach dau doc). I was told why the
young people of my age said that the city youth were
led into debauchery by corrupt movies showing nudes,
criminals, and cowboys. The young people got into
the habit of swearing, gambling and drinking. They would turn to delinquency rather than work. They thought they were happy but they were superficial in their thinking. They could not see the poisonous scheme of the U.S.-Diem clique which was to impoverish them away from work. Therefore they would run out of money and the only solution left for them was to enlist in the ARVN to serve as bullet shields for the U.S.-Diem clique.

I was trained to raise the people's hatred for the enemy. For instance, toward the young people I was supposed to uncover for their benefit the poisonous methods of the U.S. and Diem. The young people were led into debauchery by lewd pictures. They liked drinking, gambling and sex better than work.

...the GVN also organized a female army to hurt the pride of the young men and spur them into joining the ARVN. The poisonous methods used by the GVN depraved the youth and annihilated their patriotism.

On the contrary, the Revolutionary youth had moral virtue. Women were not permitted to marry before the age of 20 and men before the age of 24. The marriage ceremony cost only 300 plasters while in the GVN area, people competed for waste.

I was supposed to arouse the villagers' hatred for the GVN. I would ask them who paid the militia and the police to come to their villages and insult them, steal their poultry and their precious belongings. It was easy to make them hate the militia and the village council because the latter were ruffians. I saw them twist the necks of poultry reserved for ancestor worship, take rings and necklaces right from their owners, shoot at random at the farmers working in the fields, insult elderly people, etc.

I also urged the people to go and destroy the strategic hamlets, which were nothing but camouflaged prisons...because the villagers were surrounded by barbed wire with only small entrances...and under strict control by the
GVN. I aroused the people's hatred toward the Americans by asking realistic questions such as: Who provided the bombs and the ammunition to kill the people? Who flew the aircraft that bombed your school?

(Addressing the interviewer:) You should know that the Americans are devils. They kill only innocent people. One school in my area was hit by bombs which killed 60 to 70 children.

As for the GVN troops, I would come near the outpost and ask them how they felt at night on guard duty; whether they carried American-made or Vietnamese-made weapons to turn against their people; whether they or the Americans did most of the fighting.

(When the interviewer asked him, "Have you ever thought that by rallying you are indirectly helping the Americans to take over South Vietnam?"

he gave the following answer:)

The Government acts as henchmen for the Americans, but the Government and the Americans do not declare their positions vis-a-vis each other because they are afraid of the reactions of the Vietnamese people. I knew when I rallied I would be guilty toward the people because the people are fighting the Americans and now I am here I have become a tool of the Americans. However, I thought to myself that Vietnam is a small country and the United States is a big country, I am like a tiny particle living in this immensity...
APPENDIX I
"FORCED RECRUITMENT" TINGED WITH WILLINGNESS: EXCERPTS FROM THREE CASE HISTORIES OF MEN WHO ATTAINED CADRE RANK

(1) This man stayed with the VC a long period (over four years), became a Main Force squad leader and a party member, but he finally defected (G-10). *This source from Long An District.* He said the following about his recruitment:

I was farming the land when I was taken by the VC. . . . I was happy. I liked farming and wanted to stay with my family. The VC took me and six other young men of my village away to a training center. They told me it would only be one week of military schooling. I didn't want to go but I was afraid not to.

However, at that time he was much more sympathetic to the VC than to the GVN:
I thought a Viet Cong was a good man. The Viet Cong are good because they defend and love the poor people. The Viet Cong cannot give material advantages to the poor people, such as money, but they struggle and sacrifice their lives, not for personal gain but to give back the rights to the poor people. The majority of the people in the South are poor. Any government which loves and cares for them and gives them their rights will have their support.

-- Did you think then that the GVN did not give rights to the poor -- only the Viet Cong did this?

The GVN leaders talk about improving the life of the poor people. But the leaders only talk about it, and the lower officials do nothing, only talk. I've never seen any evidence of their efforts to improve the life of the poor.

He was taken to a jungle base and given six months of training and then assigned to a main force company with which he remained until he defected.

(2) An even higher-ranking cadre who joined in April 1961 in Tra On District, Vinh Binh, made the same kinds of conflicting statements (AG-100).

In one response to a question about how he felt about his life prior to joining, he included elements of both fear and enthusiasm as follows:

My father loved me very much. While I was living with my family I had most of the things I wanted. I never went hungry, but it was the young blood in me which wanted to go here and there and to see this and that. I was full of excitement. In addition to being young, if I did not join the VC I would be classified as the "hard-headed type," would be considered a spy, and who knows if they would not behead me like the others. The others were some GVN village officials he had seen executed there in 1960. Other than that I had nothing to complain about in my family life.
-- Were you forced to join the Front or did you join it of your own free will?

First I was afraid the VC would do me some harm so I agreed to guard for them while they carried out their mission. Later, when things got hotter, I was afraid the GVN might get wind of my working for the VC and arrest me, so I decided to join the VC all the way.

In a later statement he described his attitudes toward the VC before and the time of joining in lyrical terms:

The VC said those who work for them would lead a glorious life and die a grandiose death and their names would be remembered by many, but after I had been with them for a while I found out that life with them was extremely hard. We ate poor food and we slept in the bush. Many times after a battle, I realized I had committed many inhuman acts, but I had not foreseen such things before I joined the VC. I believed the VC were fighting for the just cause. They put the happiness of the people above all. I also believed that they would take care of my family when the country was unified and that those who worked for them now would be given priority in everything. These were their promises. They also promised to take good care of us once we worked for them; and when the country was peaceful again, they would take us to the North and we would be driven around in American cars.

This man eventually became an assistant company commander. He claimed his eventual defection was due to a dispute with his superiors about military tactics to be used by his unit, but the interviewers remarked that he probably had been motivated at least partly also by tensions arising over "his attitude and conduct toward women."
(3) Still another who claimed he originally had been forcibly recruited but stayed in a long time -- over five years -- and rose to an important rank was a 23-year-old from Kien Thien District, Chuong Thien (AG-89). He became an assistant platoon leader, serving last as platoon political officer. Again, this man's explanation of having been forced to join does not sound plausible, as the interviewers noted at the time, adding that he seemed to be following the tendency of many defectors to create a good impression on GVN or U. S. interviewers by exaggerating the evils of the VC.

This man claimed that when he joined, at the unusually early date of February 1959, VC recruitment methods in his village had been as follows:

I was forced to join the Front in February 1959. The VC forced all young men in the 16-35 age group to leave their families and join the army for three years. If these men refused, they would be accused of being pro-GVN, and their families would be arrested, tortured, and killed by the VC.

-- Did anybody ever refuse to join the Front?

Yes, many refused to join, many fled the village, many resisted the VC orders and were arrested by the VC.

-- Why did they refuse to join?

Because they did not want to kill other Vietnamese.

-- What happened to them and to their families?

The VC forbade their families to go outside the village perimeter. If they wanted to go somewhere, they had to ask for permission from the VC. Otherwise, they would not dare go anywhere at all. Those who were arrested were educated and subjected
to propaganda for a while. If after a certain time they still refused to join, their families would be tortured and killed.

-- Did it ever happen that the families of those who refused to join the Front were killed by the VC?

Never. Those who were arrested and imprisoned knew they had better join the Front, otherwise their families would be killed. 

* This source may have depicted VC methods of that period as somewhat more coercive than they actually were. For this was a region which long had been under earlier VM control and in which the VC reestablished control at an early date. Moreover, the VC still was using softer methods of persuasion in many such areas at that time than this statement would indicate.

As the interview ended, this man recollected and rationalized his VC recruitment and subsequent defection as follows:

When I was forced to join the Front, I had to go. I thought I would be left alone afterwards, when I had completed my military duties. However, at times I gave excellent performances; for example, when I was attending the training for new recruits and was regarded as the best student of my class. Or during battles, sometimes I had no choice but to fight the ARVN with order when too many of my comrades were getting killed. I had to fight hard to save my friends from getting killed. I left the Front because I did not believe in VC propaganda. I knew the Viet Minh had killed all the men who had contributed a great deal to the Resistance. If I had stayed in the Front, I would have made the rank of battalion commander some day, but I knew sooner or later the VC would kill me. If the Front won and the country was reunified, I would be killed by the VC, just like they had killed the Resistance fighters. 

* The last statement was only one of a number of incoherent passages of this interview and could not be clarified further. Apparently it refers to the terrorism and assassination used by the VM against non-Communist
nationalists in the movement over a period of years. However, this source's charge that the VM had killed all the men, who had made important contributions to the resistance apparently could not be clarified further. And it appears to have been based on a number of statements by this man which the author has described as incoherent.