ARPA ORDER NO. 189-1

MEMORANDUM
RM-4552-1-ARPA
APRIL 1965

EVOLUTION OF A VIETNAMESE VILLAGE — PART I: THE PRESENT, AFTER EIGHT MONTHS OF PACIFICATION

R. Michael Pearce

PREPARED FOR:
ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY

Rand
SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

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R. Michael Pearce

This research is supported by the Advanced Research Projects Agency under Contract No. SD-79. Any views or conclusions contained in this Memorandum should not be interpreted as representing the official opinion or policy of ARPA.

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SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

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SOUTH VIETNAM
17 TH PARALLEL
QUANG TRI
HUE
THUA THIEN
QUANG NAM
QUANG TIN
QUANG NGAI
KONTUM
BINH DINH
PLEIKU
PHU BON
PHU YEN
DARLAC
KHANH HOA
QUANG DUC
TUYEN DUC
NINH THUAN
PHUOC LONG
LAMDONG
BINH LONG
TAY NINH
BINH DUONG
PHUOC THANH
BINH TUY
BINH THUAN
Duc Lap Village
HAU NGHIA
GIA DINH
SAIGON
BIEN HOA
LONG KHANH
PHUOC TUY
LONG AN
CHAUDOC
KIEN PHONG
KIEN TUONG
AN GIANG
DINH TUONG
GO CONG
PHU QUOC
VINH LONG
KIEN HOA
KIEN GIANG
PHONG DINH
VINH BINH
CHUONG THIEN
BA XUYEN
BAC LIEU
AN XUYEN
CON SON
N
SOUTH CHINA SEA

FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of Rand studies that examine the organization, operations, motivation, and morale of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that fought in South Vietnam.

Between August 1964 and December 1968 The Rand Corporation conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with the activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. Reports of those interviews, totaling some 62,000 pages, were reviewed and released to the public in June 1972. They can be obtained from the National Technical Information Service of the Department of Commerce.

The release of the interviews has made possible the declassification and release of some of the classified Rand reports derived from them. To remain consistent with the policy followed in reviewing the interviews, information that could lead to the identification of individual interviewees was deleted, along with a few specific references to sources that remain classified. In most cases, it was necessary to drop or to change only a word or two, and in some cases, a footnote. The meaning of a sentence or the intent of the author was not altered.

The reports contain information and interpretations relating to issues that are still being debated. It should be pointed out that there was substantive disagreement among the Rand researchers involved in Vietnam research at the time, and contrary points of view with totally different implications for U.S. operations can be found in the reports. This internal debate mirrored the debate that was then current throughout the nation.

A complete list of the Rand reports that have been released to the public is contained in the bibliography that follows.

(CRC, BJ: May 1975)

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PREFACE

This Memorandum was prepared in response to a request from the Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), to study the evolution of a rural Vietnamese village as it passes from insurgent control through pacification to government control. The author conducted this research while serving in Vietnam as a member of the Research and Development Field Unit of the Advanced Research Projects Agency. He spent over two months observing the government pacification program at work in Duc Lap village, Hau Nghia province. During this period he concentrated on studying the civil aspects of the pacification program in Duc Lap.

This study was originally conceived to be a short-term task, but as the field work progressed it became evident to the author that the evolution of a single village is a lengthy process and that the complexities and diversities of pacification at the village level could not be adequately described in one short report. Therefore, in order to avoid a superficial survey of pacification in Duc Lap village, the author decided to publish this study in three parts. Each part will be concerned with the processes of pacification at certain stages of the village evolution: the past, the present, and the future. One purpose of these publications is to allow greater expression of the important, and often overlooked, individual villager's views of the government pacification program.

Ideally, in order to fully understand the evolution of Duc Lap, it would have been better to start with the history of the village and explore the origins of many of the problems being faced there today, rather than begin with the present situation and work backward. Unfortunately, the process of a foreigner establishing himself in a rural Vietnamese community in order to gather the detailed and often personal information necessary to reconstruct the history of the village is slow. Moreover, the questionable security situation in Duc Lap makes close communications with the villagers difficult. Even after two months of acquaintance with the author, some of the residents of the village were still hesitant to discuss the past for fear that it might be reported

to Viet Cong agents in the village and they might incur some sort of reprisal.

Therefore, this study is being presented exactly as it was conducted in the field. This first part will introduce the environs of Duc Lap and some of its inhabitants and describe the present situation in the village. The second part will present a detailed description of events in the village during the period of insurgent control. This will be followed by a third part that will forecast the possible course of pacification in Duc Lap on the basis of early and recent experiences.

It is difficult to determine whether the present situation in Duc Lap, after eight months of pacification, is similar to that in other Vietnamese villages after the same period of time. Thus, while the comparative value of the pacification experience in Duc Lap may be negligible, this Memorandum does point out the complexities and diversities of a pacification program at the village level.

Perhaps the most difficult task in preparing a study based largely on face-to-face communications is to overcome the Vietnamese villager's natural suspicion of outsiders, especially an inquisitive foreigner, even though he speaks their language. For helping him overcome this very formidable handicap, the author would like to thank Mr. Nguyen Quang Minh, his research assistant. In addition, the many hours spent by Minh at the tape recorder, transcribing conversations with the villagers, stand the author in double debt to him. Lastly, thanks must go to the people of Duc Lap for accepting a foreigner amongst them and for providing the information given in this Memorandum. If this record of their experiences will help the implementation of village pacification programs elsewhere in Vietnam, it will have served its purpose.

SUMMARY

With the coup of January 30, 1964, came not only a new government to Vietnam but a new plan for fighting the communist-inspired and communist-supported insurgents. This new program as outlined in the Chien Thang (Victory) plan was popularly known as "pacification"; it envisaged a combination of civil and military programs designed to consolidate the government's position in those areas already under its control, and to regain control in other areas under insurgent domination. Pacification was to be implemented at the province level, with each of the 43 provinces in Vietnam devising a plan for its own area.* Vietnam's newest province, Hau Nghia, barely three months in existence at the time, also submitted its pacification plan to the central government in Saigon. Hau Nghia was an area of heavy insurgent activity, beset by many other problems attendant upon getting a new provincial administration on its feet, and there was grave doubt in some official corners as to the ability of the fledgling province to survive at all.

Although pacification in Vietnam was conceived and implemented at the province level and higher, the real target of the program was to gain government support from the individual villager. It was at the village level that the real gains and losses of the pacification program were to be realized; yet, it seemed as if few village pacification experiences were being recorded for future guidance.

Hau Nghia provided a perfect setting for a village-level study of pacification because the province exhibited many of the problems being faced elsewhere in Vietnam. In addition, Hau Nghia also had the unique distinction of being a new province faced with the difficult task of getting organized in an area of extreme insurgent activity. The choice of a village to study in Hau Nghia was not difficult, as few villages in the province were secure enough to remain in for extended periods of time. Duc Lap village was considered one of the few relatively secure villages in the province, mainly because it was located two miles from the province capital on a main intraprovincial road. Moreover,

*With the creation of the two new provinces of Chau Doc and Bac Lieu in October 1964, the number of provinces in the Republic of Vietnam was brought to 45.

because of the proximity of the province capital of Khiem Cuong (which is still known locally by its old name of Bao Trai), Duc Lap was included within the top-priority area for pacification.

The nearness of Bao Trai also presents many unique problems for Duc Lap. The normal administrative chain in rural Vietnam is village-district-province. But because the road from Duc Lap to the district town of Duc Hoa has been cut and mined by the Viet Cong insurgents, the village has little or no communications with district; rather, its administrative problems are handled directly by province. This situation allows the province chief to bypass the intermediate district level of administration and to intervene directly in the internal problems of the village. Moreover, village officials are generally reluctant to take their problems directly to the province office for fear of being refused or ignored.

In dealing with rural pacification, five major themes are discussed: (1) the pacification program, the Hau Nghia province plan, and their implementation in Duc Lap village; (2) security and civic defense; (3) economic activities; (4) the education, information, and Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) programs; and finally (5) the impact of the pacification program upon the population.

At the time of observation in Duc Lap, pacification had been under way for eight months and had met with both success and failure. The security for the pacification effort in Duc Lap is handled by three separate forces: a regular Vietnamese Army battalion, a Popular Force platoon made up of Hoa Hao militia who came to Duc Lap from another part of Vietnam three years ago to help secure the village, and a Combat Youth militia newly formed from local village residents. The Army battalion is responsible for the security of the entire village but has turned over some security duties to the experienced Hoa Hao militia. The Combat Youth militia is still undergoing training and has yet to prove itself capable of handling specific defense chores within the village. Although the presence of these combined forces appears to have deterred the Viet Cong from attacking the village, the security situation in Duc Lap is still questionable. Several kidnappings and a murder have occurred in the village, and the village chief can still only travel to four of the six hamlets which comprise Duc Lap.

Perhaps one of the brightest aspects of the pacification in Duc Lap is education. In Ap Chanh hamlet, the village administrative center, 100 percent of the school-age children are enrolled. In the other two hamlet schools in the village the enrollment is also very high. The people of Duc Lap place a high value on education and are willing to make personal sacrifices in order to send their children to school.

The information program, as opposed to education, is one of the glaring failures of the pacification program in Duc Lap. Little or no information has been given to the population about the pacification program and its intended benefits for the rural population. Although there are three information offices in the village, none are operating because of the lack of qualified personnel.

Another aspect of pacification in Duc Lap, the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program, is also failing. This program is designed to appeal directly to the insurgent, rallying him to the government side, but thus far a total of only three ralliers have returned to the village under the Chieu Hoi program. Many of the residents of the village commented on the reasons for the failure of the program and were willing to make suggestions as to how to improve it and make it more effective in Duc Lap.

Some of the most interesting results obtained from the study of the present situation in Duc Lap were the villagers' opinions on the type of government they would like to have. As many individuals as possible were interviewed on this subject, and a composite of their opinions is presented as an idea called nhan dao. Roughly translated, nhan dao means humanity, but to the individual villager it is a summation of all the desirable qualities a government should possess.

If pacification is to be permanent in Duc Lap, or in any other village in Vietnam, it would seem necessary that a low-level government organization be built up in the village to maintain and supervise the many programs initiated under pacification. Duc Lap has the basis for such a governmental apparatus in the village administration set up by the village chief (dai-dien). Unfortunately, however, there has been a major shuffling of village officials by the province chief, which threatens to upset the whole administrative organization of the village and undo much of the efforts already expended to pacify Duc Lap.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The current conflict in Vietnam has been observed and analyzed by many people from a variety of vantage points. This Memorandum will add to the growing list of studies what is intended to be a fresh point of view--that from within a rural Vietnamese village undergoing pacification. Since most of the information contained in this report of the present situation in Duc Lap was obtained from direct interviews with village officials, the local population, and civilian members of the province pacification teams, the emphasis will be on the civil aspects of village pacification.

It is not the author's intent to minimize the role of the military establishment in pacification, because the security provided by the government armed forces is the sine qua non for the implementation of the civilian pacification programs. But the role of the government in pacification involves much more than merely establishing military presence among the village population; that is only the first step. Once the village is cleared of armed insurgents, teams of civilian pacification cadre enter to begin work. Generally, the first task of these cadres is to root out the "infrastructure" which the insurgents have built up for their support in the village during their period of control. Since this is one of the most lengthy and difficult tasks involved in pacification, additional pacification programs are simultaneously begun. Other cadres begin to initiate government service programs such as building and equipping dispensaries, schools, and information centers. Eventually other benefits such as agricultural loans, livestock, cement, and fertilizer are brought to the village. A final task of the pacification cadre is to establish an effective local administration and police authority to maintain control in the village after they move to a new area.

This initial Memorandum in the study of the evolution of Duc Lap not only details the progress of the pacification program within the village, but it also presents the views of some individual villagers on the government pacification effort. Since pacification is designed to gain the support of the rural population for the government and deny

same to the Viet Cong insurgents, it would seem that the views of the individuals most directly involved in pacification would be of some feedback benefit to the program. Evidence gathered in Duc Lap indicates that although the individual villagers may not always understand the complicated political issues involved in this insurgency, or why their support is sought by both the Viet Cong insurgents and the government soldiers, they do measure the opposing forces in this insurgency in very practical terms. The villagers judge the government and the Viet Cong by the ability of each to provide the security they desire in order to pursue their occupations and raise their children in peace.

While the government contributions to pacification in Duc Lap have been described above, the responsibility of the local population for the success or failure of pacification in the village is often overlooked. If pacification is to succeed in Duc Lap, it cannot be just a one-sided government handout program but must have the cooperation of the government and the people, both giving what is theirs to give. From the standpoint of the village population, their biggest contribution to pacification will be a change in attitude toward the government. They must show a willingness to help build an effective local government system and to support and defend that system. This change must not be expected to come overnight, but only when there are indications of the villagers' readiness to perform this vital task will the real evolution of Duc Lap and the other villages of Vietnam begin.

Perhaps one of the first criticisms to be leveled against a paper such as this is that only one village was used for the study, and one village does not make a Vietnam. Moreover, it would certainly be dangerous to make generalizations based upon this single village experience (Duc Lap is not intended to be presented as the "typical" Vietnamese village undergoing pacification). It was felt, however, that the intensive study of one village, rather than the superficial survey of several village situations, would provide for greater in-depth analysis of the complex problems of pacification at the village level.

The village is the lowest recognized social and administrative unit in Vietnam that maintains its integrity throughout the country.

Below the village level, Vietnamese society fragments into many unrelated and often unrecognizable units. This does not mean that all 2500 Vietnamese villages are uniform and exhibit the same characteristics. But by using the village as a countrywide common denominator, the transferring of certain pacification experiences from one area to another may be made easier. The problem being faced in Vietnam requires a long, tedious effort for its solution; the evolution of Duc Lap is the study of just one in what is hoped to be the beginning of a program of successful village pacification efforts.

II. THE SETTING

Duc Lap village is located in Hau Nghia, a new province recently created in an area of intense insurgent activity where the popular support for the current insurgency seems to be more obvious than in many other delta provinces. In terms of industry, Hau Nghia is extremely poor, although the deltaic soil covering much of the province supports a moderate agricultural base of rice and other crops. Other than a short stretch of the hard-surfaced National Route One, Hau Nghia has few good roads, and some areas of the province are almost inaccessible due to swamps. The challenge to government pacification in Hau Nghia is perhaps greater than in any other province in the area surrounding Saigon; if progress can be made in Hau Nghia, then progress may be possible anywhere in Vietnam.

Progress in Hau Nghia may seem like standing still to observers from other areas of Vietnam. But if the observers remember that this area recently was under almost complete insurgent control and that anything the government holds today had to be taken from the insurgents, then progress becomes evident. It may be true that the pacification program in Hau Nghia may not be moving as fast as in adjacent areas, but, again, the observers must be reminded that Hau Nghia's problems are often much more serious than the problems of other areas. Hau Nghia's stern test of the government's pacification may indicate, in the long run, whether the current concepts and theories of pacification are sound.

HAU NGHIA PROVINCE

Hau Nghia was formed on October 15, 1963, from the cast-off districts of three provinces. Long An gave up its two northern (and most difficult to control) districts, Duc Hue and Duc Hoa.* Tay Ninh province

*Duc Hoa district town was the scene of one of the most spectacular battles thus far in the insurgency. On June 7, 1964, the Viet Cong penetrated the town's defensive perimeter and fought a fierce house-to-house battle with a company of government Rangers, plus some assorted Army troops. At one stage in the battle the two government artillery pieces

contributed its former southern district, Phu Duc. Binh Duong province chipped in Cu Chi district.* The joining of these four districts gave Vietnam its forty-third province. The reasons for creating Hau Nghia have never been fully explained, although it may be assumed that the situation in the area was so untenable prior to October 1963 that only formation of a new province could bring any measure of government presence and control to the four districts. The gravity of the situation there was emphasized when Hau Nghia became one of the seven provinces to come under the new PICA plan.**

As a PICA province, Hau Nghia was considered part of the critical collar of provinces surrounding Saigon which coincides with what has been previously called the "arc of insurgency" around the capital. The growth and expansion of the insurgent organization in Hau Nghia had reached major proportions by 1963, and many people gave the fledgling province no chance at all for survival. The pessimistic attitude toward Hau Nghia was engendered by the fact that to establish a new provincial government apparatus takes time, even in more advanced countries with no insurgency raging within their borders. To further complicate the matter, there was not even a stable central government whence decisions and assistance might come.

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in Duc Hoa had depressed to zero elevation and fired point-blank at the invading insurgents. The sounds of the battle could be clearly heard by the residents of Saigon, only 12 miles to the east. The Viet Cong failed to take the town.

*Cu Chi district is perhaps best known as the location of "Operation Sunrise," one of the earliest failures of the ill-fated Strategic Hamlet Program of the Diem regime. The Cu Chi experience, which took place in 1962, has been described by Bernard B. Fall (The Two Vietnams) and others as an example of relocation forced upon an unwilling rural population.

**PICA, an acronym for Pacification Intensification of Critical Areas, was a U.S.-initiated plan to bring together the military, civil, and police organizations of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) to better coordinate their efforts against the Viet Cong in seven key provinces surrounding Saigon: Gia Dinh, Long An, Hau Nghia, Binh Duong, Phuoc Thanh, Bien Hoa, and Phuoc Tuy. These seven critical provinces, which contain 40 percent of the population and 90 percent of the industry of RVN, were considered to be top priority. When the plan was finally accepted by the Vietnamese, its title was changed to Hop Tac (Vietnamese for cooperation).

Looking at Hau Nghia, it is easy to see why the province is critical to both the government and the insurgents. Located just west of Saigon (see the frontispiece and Fig. 1), Hau Nghia forms a short segment of the international boundary with Cambodia at a point where the border cuts deeply into Vietnam. This proruption, which is called "the duck's bill," has been the scene of several recent border incidents between the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments. The Vietnamese charge that the Phnom Penh government allows insurgents of the National Liberation Front to use Cambodian territory as a sanctuary from which to slip across the border to attack Vietnamese targets, and then return, sometimes under the protection of Cambodian artillery and armor. The Cambodians claim that the Vietnamese often violate the border and have even bombed villages in Cambodia.

Precise demarcation of the border between Cambodia and Vietnam in this area is difficult, partly due to the fact that it runs through the famous Plain of Reeds, a vast marshy plain covered with perennially submerged swamp grass. Many fingers of the Plain of Reeds extend into Hau Nghia, where they are of no economic value to the government but do provide camouflaged access routes for insurgent troops on sampans. Moreover, the inaccessibility of the swamps to motor vehicles presents a real transportation barrier to government forces.

Because of its juxtaposition with the alleged Cambodian sanctuary and its many woodlands and swamps, Hau Nghia has become a passageway for insurgent men and material bound for other parts of Vietnam. While the physical geography of Hau Nghia contributes to making this area exceptionally well-suited for the clandestine movement of troops and supplies, the sympathetic support of a large segment of the population also helps the insurgents. Much of the population of Hau Nghia is well known for its support of insurgent causes; the French can attest to the difficulty of controlling the area. According to many villagers, the French never really held this area; they only swept through it with large forces and occasionally occupied a village for several days, but they always moved on. The insurgents openly recruit in Hau Nghia and have little trouble securing the local forces necessary to provide information and shelter to passing units. The importance of Hau Nghia

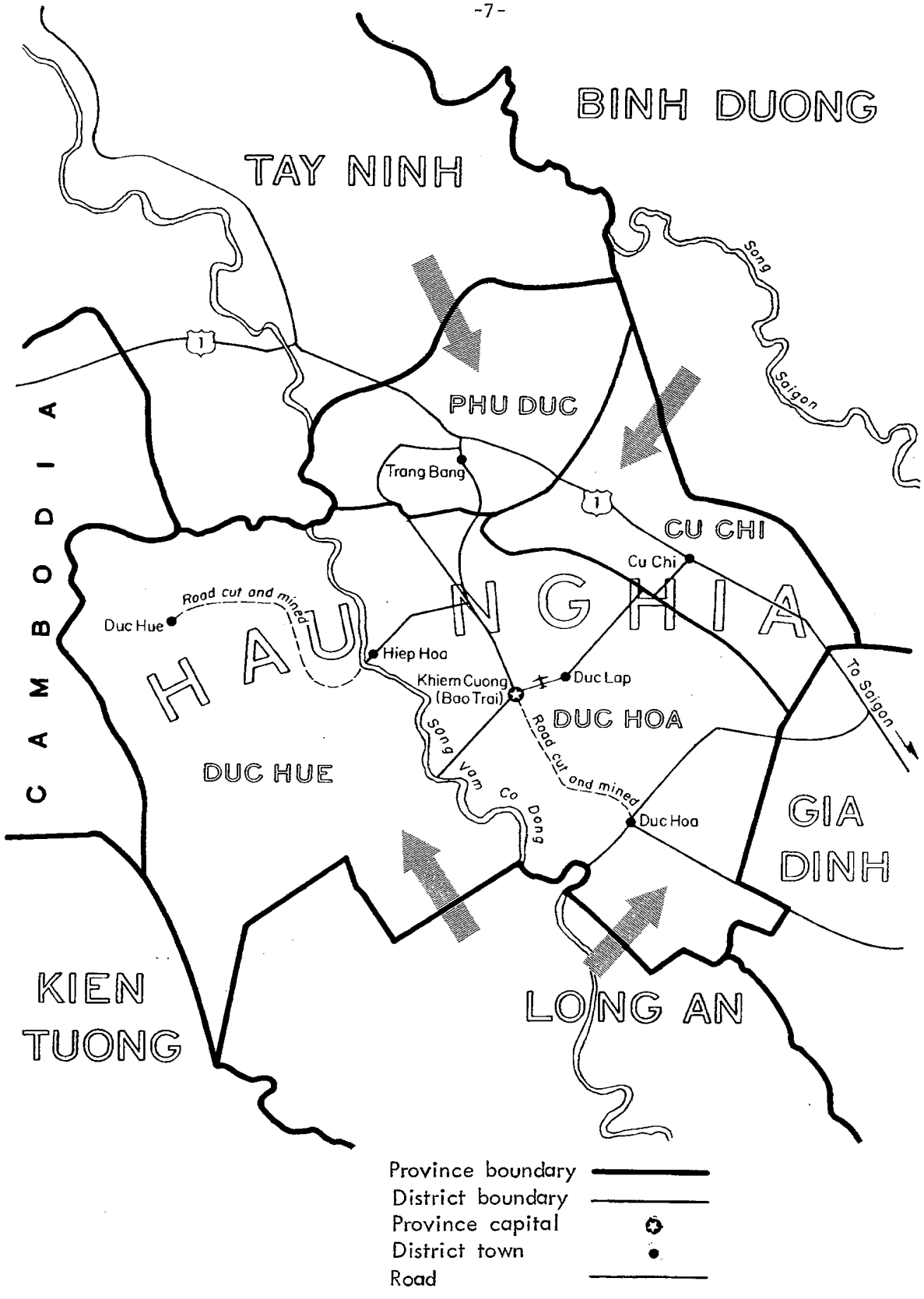
BINH DUONG
TAY NINH
Song Saigon
PHU DUC
Trang Bang
CU CHI
Cu Chi
CAMBODIA
Road cut and mined
Duc Hue
HAU NGHIA
Hiep Hoa
Khiem Cuong (Bao Trai)
Duc Lap
To Saigon
DUC HOA
Song Vam Co Dong
Road cut and mined
DUC HUE
Duc Hoa
GIA DINH
KIEN TUONG
LONG AN
Province boundary
District boundary
Province capital
District town
Road

Figure 1

as a passageway is emphasized when whole insurgent units of battalion size can be moved through the area intact.

Not all of Hau Nghia is low wetlands so characteristic of the Mekong delta. In Cu Chi district, next to the three-mile-wide swamp which cuts through the eastern half of the province, the land begins to grade almost imperceptibly into low hills which mark the transition from the lowlands to the highlands of Vietnam. This slight rise in the terrain, five to ten meters above the adjacent swamps, provides a natural location for National Route One, the main artery from Saigon to Tay Ninh and Cambodia.

One of the best indicators of the newness of Hau Nghia as a province is its capital. A little over a year ago, Bao Trai was a small hamlet of less than 1000 people located on a crossroads between Duc Hoa district town and the sugar mill at Hiep Hoa. Today Bao Trai has almost doubled its population and acquired a new name, Khiem Cuong. The transformation of this little hamlet into a province capital caught most of the people of Bao Trai unprepared and perhaps a little unwilling to accept the changes that come with the establishment of a provincial government. One never hears the new name of Khiem Cuong, as the capital is still referred to as Bao Trai or just plain Hau Nghia. The residents cling to their former hamlet way of life and seem to resent the intruders who have come to set up the administrative machinery necessary to run the province.

Bao Trai is reminiscent of a frontier town of the American West, with unpaved streets, numerous buildings under construction, and a general degree of activity that is uncommon in the average Vietnamese hamlet. The establishment of the provincial capital at Bao Trai has brought many benefits which would have otherwise never come to the former hamlet. Street lights are being erected on the main street and in the market place. A full-time dispensary has been built and staffed and is now operating. One of the most important advantages to come to Bao Trai is improved transportation in and out of the capital, with several buses running daily to Saigon.

THE SELECTION OF DUC LAP

While the general aspects of problems confronting government pacification in Hau Nghia have been discussed, it is only at the village level that the day-to-day problems of pacification become clear. The choice of a village in Hau Nghia in which to work was not difficult. Few villages in the province are considered secure enough to remain in overnight, let alone for an extended period. In addition to the problem of security, the chosen village had to be undergoing pacification in order to fit the charter of this study. Duc Lap village seemed to fill all the requirements and was selected as the village to be studied.

Under the present plan for Hau Nghia, pacification is to center on Bao Trai and spread eastward along the main road to Cu Chi. This was a logical step because the road, which passes through Duc Lap village, has military significance as a route for moving troops in case the village is attacked; the road also provides the civil population with an all-weather link to the market at Bao Trai. Duc Lap is located only two miles from the province capital, and although this provides the village with an added measure of security, it has created administrative problems.

The problems which arise in the administration of Duc Lap are indicative of the many problems in pacification which can only be uncovered at the village level, and which may never be considered in a province-level pacification plan. Through normal administrative channels, Duc Lap would be under direct control of Duc Hoa district, and the district would in turn report to province. The road distance from Duc Lap through Bao Trai to Duc Hoa is only nine miles, but the portion of the route between Bao Trai and Duc Hoa is so insecure that it is never traveled, even by heavily armed convoys. Moreover, at last count the road had 97 cuts or dirt mounds on it. In order to go from Duc Lap to Duc Hoa, it is necessary to travel to Cu Chi and by National Route One to Saigon-Cholon, thence to Duc Hoa, a trip of over 45 miles! As a result, the village officials rarely, if ever, go to the district town; and during the period of observation not one district official came to the village. The effect of this is to bring Duc Lap under

direct control of the province, which places a handicap on the village officials, who are often too timid to confront provincial officials with their problems. Or if they do request assistance from province they are often ignored or turned down. In addition, the peculiar situation in Duc Lap allows the province chief to deal directly with village problems that should be handled by the village or district officials. Because Duc Lap is one of the few villages in Hau Nghia undergoing pacification, the province has in effect staked its prestige on bringing Duc Lap under government control.

THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

One of the first difficulties encountered in getting acquainted with Duc Lap was to determine how many hamlets comprised the village. Most of the village residents are not really sure what areas and hamlets are included in Duc Lap. According to one of the oldest residents of the village, Duc Lap is composed of 25 hamlets. The village chief* says there are only four hamlets in Duc Lap, those over which he has direct control and can enter freely without fear of danger. The Army captain in command of the battalion stationed in Duc Lap considers the village to be made up of the six hamlets for whose security he is responsible. Each of these six hamlets has at least a three-strand barbed-wire fence around its perimeter, which is more for demarcation than defense, as will be discussed later.

Because of the varying degree of government control in the hamlets, it is important for the purpose of this study to consider Duc Lap as composed of six hamlets. One of the measurements of the evolution of Duc Lap will be the security and control of the six hamlets in the village, which range from the very secure Ap Chanh (main hamlet) to the insecure hamlets of Tan Hoi and Cay Sen.

Approximately 877 families live in the six hamlets of Duc Lap. Figuring an average of five people to a family, which is a standard

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*The present village chief in Duc Lap is called by the more functional title dai-dien xa (dye-yien), which means village representative. This change in title from village chief to representative is significant because the chief man in the village is now more administrator than traditional leader.

Vietnamese estimate of rural population, there are approximately 4385 people in Duc Lap.* No one really knows how many people reside in the village, because an accurate census has never been taken. In the four secure hamlets, Ap Chanh, Go Cao, Duc Hanh A, and Duc Hanh B, declaration sheets have been made up for each family, and the figures for those hamlets are very nearly accurate. In the less secure hamlets of Tan Hoi and Cay Sen, no head count nor family register has been attemped, and the figures given are only estimates.

The first-time visitor to Duc Lap would probably notice little difference between the six dispersed hamlets of the village and the countless other hamlets of the Mekong delta area. Upon close inspection he would note that the houses of the newly constructed hamlets are placed in rows along the Bao Trai - Cu Chi road and that the dwellings of the older hamlets are usually scattered under a cover of palm and fruit trees. Only in Ap Chanh does an occasional stone building with corrugated metal roof break the monotony of the dusty, brown, thatched huts.

An observer with a more specialized eye, say one looking at the village from the standpoint of its defense against insurgent attack, would note that the newer hamlets, while less esthetic, would be easier to defend than those with an abundance of natural cover. Also to be noted are the long tree lines which cut through the flat rice fields surrounding the village and at one point reach to within 100 meters of a hamlet fence. These trees could provide perfect cover for snipers trying to shoot into the village or could hide an insurgent unit attempting to infiltrate into the village.

The period of observation in Duc Lap coincided with the rainy season, and each afternoon a shower could be expected. The daily rains were welcomed because they filled the many livestock water holes around the village and also replenished the drinking water, which is caught

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*One government source lists Duc Lap as having a population of 7756; but this figure was based on the village having eight hamlets rather than the six used for this study, which may account in part for the greater figure.

and stored in large earthen jars placed under the eaves of each house. During the rainy season the provincial road running through Duc Lap remained passable; in fact, it seemed as if the dust on the road never really settled, rain or not. Because Duc Lap has no market place, the road junction in Ap Chanh serves as the village meeting place, and usually every morning an impromptu market place is set up there until the dust from the road traffic becomes unbearable. In addition, the road serves as a playground for the children, and various village livestock graze along the road banks.

Duc Lap is not a rich village, nor is it really poor. The people of the village seem to be able to grow enough food to eat and even have a small surplus left to sell in the market at Bao Trai. There are no automobiles in the village, but a few of the more prosperous villagers own motor bikes. The two main means of intravillage transport are buffalo or cattle cart and bicycle. If one desires to go to Bao Trai or Cu Chi, there is a choice of horse cart, Tri-Lambretta, or commercial bus. The fare from Duc Lap to Bao Trai is the same for all three means --three piasters.*

In order to acquaint the reader further with Duc Lap village as it exists today, the following paragraphs will provide capsule descriptions of each hamlet in the village, beginning with the most secure and working down to the least secure.

Ap Chanh is located at a local road junction and is the center of activity in Duc Lap (see Fig. 2). Located in this hamlet are the village office, the Popular Force post,** the village rice mill, numerous shops, and two restaurants. Ap Chanh also has a dispensary (tram y te)

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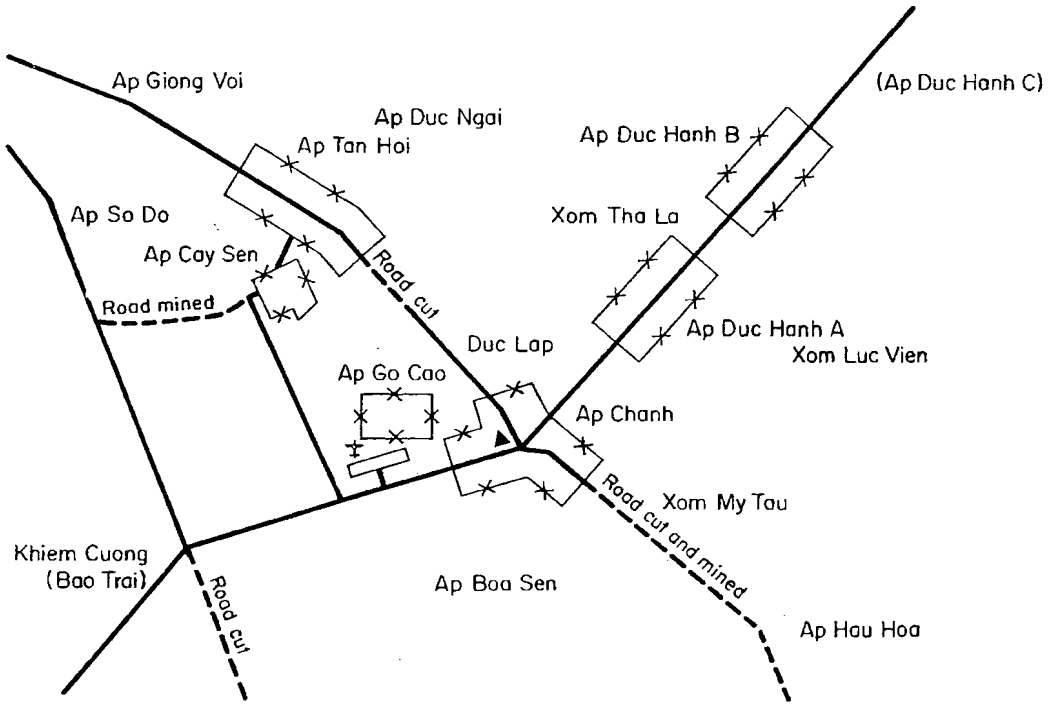
*A Vietnamese piaster is worth approximately 1.37 U.S. cents at the legal exchange rate.

**This post, which is a triangle-shaped fort with walls approximately 30 meters long on each side, at first resembles a decaying monument to the ill-fated Strategic Hamlet Program. Actually, the fort was built over a decade ago by the French in an attempt to exert some form of control over the area. Today the fort is in an advanced state of disrepair, and, although the present occupants, the local Popular Force platoon, maintain that this post has withstood many past Viet Cong attacks, including mortar barrages, its present defensive capability appears questionable.


Ap Giong Voi
Ap Duc Ngai
Ap Tan Hoi
(Ap Duc Hanh C)
Ap Duc Hanh B
Ap So Do
Xom Tha La
Ap Cay Sen
Road cut
Road mined
Duc Lap
Ap Duc Hanh A
Xom Luc Vien
Ap Go Cao
Ap Chanh
Road cut and mined
Xom My Tau
Khiem Cuong
(Bao Trai)
Road cut
Ap Boa Sen
Ap Hau Hoa

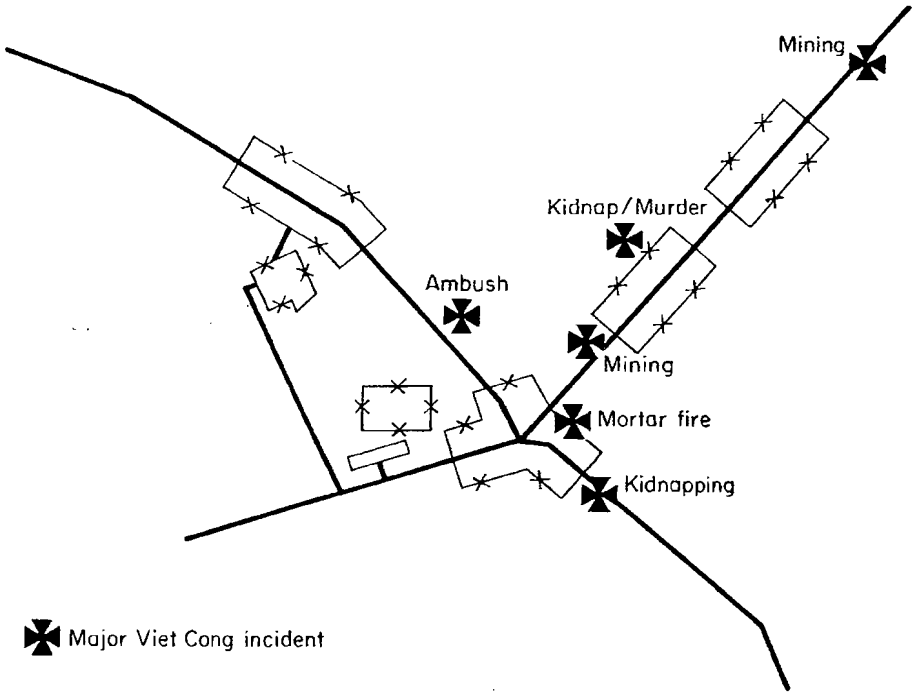

Mining
Kidnap/Murder
Ambush
Mining
Mortar fire
Kidnapping
Major Viet Cong incident

Figure 2

and an information office (tram thong tin). The school in this hamlet is the oldest in the village and is extremely overcrowded. There are 264 families in Ap Chanh, but plenty of empty land is available within the hamlet perimeter for additional houses if needed for future relocation. Because the battalion headquarters compound, with its three mortars, is located there, Ap Chanh is considered by far the most secure hamlet in Duc Lap. But security in Ap Chanh, as in all the hamlets of Duc Lap, is always a problem. Recently, Viet Cong insurgents entered the hamlet through the unguarded southern gate in broad daylight, kidnapped a hamlet section chief, and held him several days before releasing him. Sniping and an occasional insurgent mortar round fired into the hamlet never cease to remind the people of Ap Chanh that they are in the middle of an insurgency.

Approximately 400 meters down the road to Cu Chi is the first of the Duc Hanh's. Duc Hanh A, like Duc Hanh B and Ap Chanh, lies astraddle the road, and its location is one of the prime security factors of the hamlet. The 149 families of Duc Hanh A have mostly been relocated from outside the present hamlet perimeter. The hamlet is almost identical in area to its twin, Duc Hanh B, but has fewer people. A company of government soldiers is divided between the two Duc Hanh's, and at least one platoon is always located in each hamlet. Duc Hanh A has a new school and dispensary, plus an information office. The school and dispensary are now operating, although the school runs only half a day because of a teacher-recruiting problem, and the nurse who comes to the hamlet from Bao Trai spends only the morning hours in the dispensary.

Duc Hanh B has 202 families, many of whom were relocated into the hamlet from what was known locally as Duc Hanh C, a small hamlet formerly located near the swamp along the eastern edge of the village. There were 27 houses in Duc Hanh C, but all were removed and the families relocated to Duc Hanh B in order to provide better security for them. Because of the proximity of the swamp, which the insurgents use as a transportation route, Duc Hanh B receives more harassment and sniping than any other hamlet on the road. Moreover, the road has been mined just outside the hamlet on several occasions. Fortunately, the

road-clearing detail sent out each morning from the hamlet has discovered the mines before any vehicles have hit them. Duc Hanh B, like Duc Hanh A, has a recently completed school and dispensary but also has a problem getting people to staff them.

Go Cao hamlet is located next to the province airfield between Ap Chanh and Bao Trai. Because it is off the road and there are no government troops in the hamlet, Go Cao is not considered as secure as the three previously mentioned hamlets. Although Go Cao is close to the battalion headquarters, its security is handled by the Popular Force platoon from Ap Chanh. The 56 families living in Go Cao are mostly long-time residents of the hamlet, and very few are relocatees from other areas of the village. A few families who lived outside the perimeter of the hamlet have moved inside the fence, but the hamlet has about reached total capacity for living space. Since there is no school in Go Cao, the children of the hamlet must travel the short distance to Ap Chanh to attend classes.

The importance of location on or near the main road as a function of hamlet security within Duc Lap is reflected by the high degree of insecurity in the last two hamlets of the village, Tan Hoi and Cay Sen. These two hamlets are located approximately two miles north of Ap Chanh and are connected to the village center by a very poor local road. Tan Hoi was recently a large hamlet with 192 families living in two distinct settlement areas separated by 100 meters of rice fields. When the government surveyed the hamlet during the initial stages of the pacification program, it was decided to move the outlying group of families into the larger settlement area of Tan Hoi for better protection. The 43 families in the smaller area refused to move, and the province pacification officials, at the urging of the village officials, decided to create the new hamlet of Cay Sen. The hamlet was formed by merely erecting a barbed-wire fence around the outer edge of the small settled area. Although one company of the battalion is stationed in Tan Hoi, this area is still considered insecure. Surprisingly, though, the hamlets of Tan Hoi and Cay Sen receive very little harassment from the insurgents. The people of Duc Lap reason that this is because some of the families of local guerrillas live in these hamlets and the insurgents

do not want to harm their relatives. Because of the continual insecurity in the two hamlets, no government-sponsored hamlet administration has been set up and no intercourse with village officials has been possible.* For the same reason, neither hamlet receives aid from the village or province, and consequently they are much poorer than the other hamlets of Duc Lap. Tan Hoi once had a school, but the insurgents destroyed it, and nothing but a burnt shell remains. No attempt has been made to rebuild the school. The road from Ap Chanh to Tan Hoi is passable at times but is badly rutted as a result of the heavy rains of the past season. In addition, when the Army engineers built the road, they made no provision for drainage between the rice fields through which the elevated roadbed ran. The practical Vietnamese farmers cut their own culverts through the road to allow water to pass from one rice field to another via the natural drainage system of the land. The ravages of rain and the occasional truck traffic converted these crude culverts into quite sizable cuts in the road. To further complicate the matter, the road has been mined and often harassed by the insurgents, so that now few military and even fewer civil vehicles travel on it.

Because of their insecurity, lack of government-sponsored programs, and obvious support for the insurgents, the real evolution of Duc Lap will be measured by the success of pacification in Tan Hoi and Cay Sen. One is immediately struck by the contrast in living standards between these two hamlets and the rest of the village as an indication of the difference between government control and insurgent semicontrol, or, more specifically, government noncontrol. As mentioned earlier in this section, Hau Nghia province was chosen because of the many aspects of pacification that will have to be tested in this area before it can be brought under any measure of government control. Duc Lap village mirrors this image, only at much closer range; Tan Hoi and Cay Sen present the same problems as seen through a microscope.

Only near the completion of the present field work did it become evident from the events observed in Duc Lap that a new type of village appears to be emerging from this insurgency. Taking Duc Lap as the standard of this "new" village, the most obvious indication of this change is the disappearance of the old traditions on which the village system in Vietnam was founded and existed for centuries. In their place are evolving a new, more functional, less traditional set of standards, which are caused in part by the insurgency in Vietnam and in part by the changes being brought to all parts of the country as it tries to advance into the twentieth century. The village elders, those oft-revered senior citizens who dispense advice and tell stories of the past to all who will listen, are almost nonexistent in Duc Lap, and they certainly have no voice in the village administration. The village chief is no longer selected because of his qualities of leadership or because he is respected by the people. He is now the dai-dien, the village representative, chosen by the province chief, a man who has never visited the village or sought the opinions of the people over whom his appointee will exercise a nominal amount of authority. Under the dai-dien are now a committee of officials, chosen not in the tradition of the old village council, but selected to perform specific tasks within the bureaucratic village administration. The more conservative village council has been replaced by the more efficient, less personal, village administrative committee.

The traditional cohesiveness of residents within the village is being disrupted by the influx of relocated families, the many deaths due to the fighting, people leaving the village to move to Saigon and what may be a more secure life, and, finally, the general social disruption that attends any war situation in which there are soldiers passing in and out of the village at irregular intervals. Whatever its causes, the new village of rural Vietnam does not appear to be the product of the so-called social revolution that is supposed to sweep the country on the tide of the government pacification plan and leave in its wake a unified and determined people. The government information sources have thus far not been competent enough to reach the people in Duc Lap and tell them they are the source of this revolution. The only revolution of which they are aware is the bloody one going on in their midst every day.

III. THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM

This section presents a brief outline of the Hau Nghia pacification plan as it was conceived and implemented. Particular attention is paid to the application of the plan to Duc Lap village.

In March 1964, soon after the second coup in Vietnam in three months, a requirement was sent from Saigon to all provinces to submit pacification plans to the new Ministry of Pacification for approval. The five-month-old province of Hau Nghia, only two months older than the existing central government, responded as did the 41 other provinces, and the pacification program in Vietnam began.

THE NATIONAL PLAN

There was a master plan for pacification called Chien Thang (Victory), but it was classified top secret and therefore was unavailable to many province and district pacification planning committees. However, five basic steps of the Chien Thang plan were made available so that some guidance could be provided to the provinces, and a small degree of uniformity in individual province plans could be maintained throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

The first of these five guiding steps was to be the military clearing operation, during which the designated pacification area was supposedly cleared of armed insurgents by government forces.

The second step called for building New Rural Life (NRL) hamlets in the cleared area. Theoretically, before being certified as complete, each NRL hamlet had to meet six criteria: (1) a census taken of all hamlets and the "insurgent infrastructure" destroyed as much as possible; (2) an adequate hamlet defense force selected, trained, and armed; (3) the construction of an adequate hamlet defense system, i.e., earthworks, fences, trenches, etc.; (4) the establishment of an effective communications system with higher headquarters in case of a need to call for reinforcements; (5) the hamlet population organized into age groups in order to conduct hamlet defense functions and to begin NRL activities; and (6) a hamlet administration committee elected or, in

some special cases, appointed. The six criteria were highly theoretical, and even under optimum conditions a great deal of time, money, and manpower on the part of both the province officials and local hamlet residents would be required to fulfill them. In some areas of Hau Nghia, attempts have been made to meet all these criteria, but as one might suspect, few hamlets have been able to fulfill all six requirements.

While the NRL hamlets were being constructed, the third step was to begin. This involved sending pacification teams into the cleared area to begin improving the local government and to assist the people with economic projects.

At the same time, step four called for the creation of a coordinated self-defense capability throughout the designated area in cooperation with the military troops stationed there.

The fifth and final step was to be the organization of the people into specialized groups, i.e., youth groups, farmers' associations, etc., for support of the government and the continuance of the pacification program.

On paper, the five basic steps and six hamlet criteria look good, but experience in Hau Nghia indicates that in practice they are unrealistic. Few areas there have enough wealth of men and money to divert large amounts of either resource to pacification.

THE HAU NGHIA PACIFICATION PLAN

The pacification plan for Hau Nghia was not markedly different from the five basic steps set down by Saigon, and before undertaking pacification, the province officials conducted an assessment of the local resources available for their program. In terms of population, Hau Nghia has 228,407 people living in 24 villages scattered throughout the four districts. A conservative estimate by province officials revealed that 35 percent of the population openly supported the insurgents, 15 percent could be considered as government supporters, and 50 percent were uncommitted to either side.

In economic resources Hau Nghia is woefully lacking. By acreage, the major crops of the province in order of magnitude are rice, sugar

cane, rubber, peanuts, tobacco, and pineapples. Practically all industry in the province is based upon these agricultural products. The single most important industrial facility in Hau Nghia is the sugar refinery at Hiep Hoa on the Song (River) Vam Co Dong. In addition, there are 50 rice mills scattered throughout the province, 25 sugar factories, three brown-sugar factories, and five peanut-oil factories. Manufacturing installations include three brick kilns, one ice-cream factory, several blacksmiths and wheelwrights, and one coffin factory.

The province has 222 kilometers of roads, the best being the 33 kilometers of hard-surfaced National Route One which passes through Hau Nghia. The remainder of the interprovince and intraprovince roads are mostly hard-packed dirt, or seasonal, single-track routes. The most important intraprovince road is from Bao Trai to Cu Chi at the junction with National Route One. Second in importance is the road in the opposite direction, from Bao Trai to Hiep Hoa.

With the resource assessment completed, officials assigned priorities to areas and put the plan into action. The top-priority area was the province capital and the vital Hiep Hoa - Bao Trai - Cu Chi road link. Duc Lap village, being on this important road artery, was included in the first-priority area. The first phase of pacification was to center on strengthening Bao Trai as the base from which the imaginary "oil spot" was to spread. The second phase consisted of direct thrusts north from Bao Trai to Hiep Hoa and the sugar refinery and east to Duc Lap so as to include the province airfield. The spread toward Duc Lap has been generally successful, but pacification of the area north of Bao Trai has been beset by many difficulties. The road has been frequently mined and harassed. In fact, two American advisors were recently wounded when their jeep hit a mine 300 meters outside the fence from Bao Trai. Even more recently, the government outpost at La Cua, an important road crossing between Bao Trai and Hiep Hoa, was overrun by insurgents, resulting in a high toll of government casualties and equipment losses.

PACIFICATION IN DUC LAP

The clearing phase of the pacification of Duc Lap began in early April 1964. The specific task given to the government battalion which

moved into the village was to provide protective security for the construction of the province airfield and the building of the NRL hamlets of Go Cao and Duc Hanh A and B. As noted previously, the headquarters company of the battalion was located in Ap Chanh, one company was divided between the Duc Hanh's, and one company moved to Tan Hoi. A fourth company moved into Go Cao to protect the engineers then constructing the airfield. This company has since been moved to Bao Trai to strengthen the defensive force in the province capital, and security for the hamlet is now handled by the Popular Force platoon at Ap Chanh.

Once the military units were in place, step two, the building of the NRL hamlets, began. The province pacification committee pushed forward with their program and almost simultaneously began to send in pacification teams and NRL cadre. The economic assistance aspect of pacification was also started.

The economic aspects of the Hau Nghia pacification plan were based on districts, and since Duc Lap is only one of the nine villages which comprise Duc Hoa district, the figures given below are for the entire district, not the single village. The province plan envisaged a five-point economic-assistance program. The first point involved moving certain businesses into the secure hamlets for their protection and to deny their use by the insurgents. Second, 100 families in the district were to receive a loan of 5000 piasters (approximately 69 U.S. dollars) for the breeding of livestock. A third measure was to provide 50 families in the district with a pig. Twenty boars and 30 sows were allotted for this purpose in Duc Hoa district. Fourth, ten tons of fertilizer were to be provided for the district. Finally, a rice-seed program was to be started to aid poor farmers. During the period spent in Duc Lap, the author observed the pig-breeding, fertilizer, and rice-seed programs in operation. These will be discussed in more detail in a later section on the economic aspects of pacification.

The improvement of public health was one aspect of the province pacification plan aimed at directly benefitting the people. Trained public-health cadres were to work in the cleared areas in concert with the pacification teams. The health cadres were to stress four major points in their program: (1) the need for public sanitation; (2) the

benefits of individual hygiene practices; (3) the value of immunization; and (4) disease prevention by carefully following the first three steps. Through their field representative, the U.S. Overseas Mission (USOM) distributed small books on hygiene to the school children of Duc Lap to take home. The building of dispensaries in Ap Chanh, and the two Duc Hanh's also came under the public-health program, as did the training of the nurses to staff them.

Throughout all phases of the pacification program, the information offices of the central and provincial governments were to provide information to the people, explaining the reason for the pacification program and its progress. This work was to be divided into two phases. During the initial phase, the information office was to prepare propaganda material relevant to the pacification program. The underlying theme of this material was denunciation of the insurgents of the National Liberation Front (NLF)* in order to unmask their plot of a communist takeover of the Republic of Vietnam. The use of photos and posters of Viet Cong atrocities against the civil population was widely encouraged. Furthermore, the propaganda was to exploit Viet Cong failures and emphasize government victories.

The second phase of the information program was planned as a period of sympathetic understanding by the government to determine the people's real wants regarding property rights, freedom of religion, justice, etc. The intended purpose of this period of propagandizing was to discredit the Viet Cong insurgent in the eyes of the rural population and to strengthen the government posture in the pacified areas.

A more specialized type of information program was the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program, designed to appeal directly to the insurgent to return to the government side. During the execution of the first phase of this program, which was aimed at the prospective returnee, five

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*Whereas the national government calls the insurgents VC, or Viet Cong, which is really a pejorative term for Vietnamese Communist, the insurgents call themselves "liberation men," or "revolutionaries." The National Liberation Front is the political arm of the Viet Cong insurgent organization.

major areas were to be covered: (1) Chieu Hoi documents and leaflets were to be prepared for distribution in insurgent areas; (2) Chieu Hoi teams were to accompany government forces on operations in order to reach all parts of the province; (3) the major emphasis of this form of communication was to discredit the NLF in the eyes of the individual guerrilla by emphasizing the danger of communism to the people of Vietnam; (4) family ties and sentiments were to be used whenever possible in order to reach the insurgents and persuade them to return; (5) the propaganda material disseminated was to instruct the returnee to destroy the NLF by quitting its ranks and returning to the government side, burning and destroying insurgent food and ammunition, and refusing to participate in NLF subversive activities.

A second phase of the Chieu Hoi program was primarily an appeal to families to ask their sons, brothers, and husbands who were fighting as guerrillas to return to their homes; or if the families could not do this, to move to government-controlled areas where they would be afforded protection. The government leniency program for returning guerrillas was also emphasized as an inducement to bring the misguided insurgents back into the fold. In addition, the people were asked to provide the government with information about Viet Cong activities, cells, and troop movements. They were further directed to denounce the NLF in public meetings and to burn and destroy enemy installations.

The interdependence and interplay of the several programs listed in the brief descriptions above would seem fundamental to the success of the present government pacification plan. In theory, none of these programs was designed to work independently; rather, they were to be coordinated efforts to bring all possible resources of the government to bear on the problem of eliminating the insurgency in the rural areas of Vietnam and leaving in its place a responsible and effective government. In reality, the evidence from Hau Nghia suggests that in some areas of Vietnam even the minimal goals of pacification have not been reached. Moreover, there are further indications in Duc Lap that the "social revolution" associated with pacification may be failing to take hold for lack of a firm base of people willing to support and defend their government.

The close-up look at some aspects of the government pacification program in Duc Lap village presented in the following sections may give some insight into the reasons for the slow progress of pacification. It is necessary, however, to caution the reader again that this report on the current conditions in Duc Lap is in a state of suspension. Only when balanced against the forthcoming report on the problems of the past and a subsequent look at the possible future can the evolution of Duc Lap be fully understood and a more definite judgment as to the success or failure of pacification in the village be rendered.

IV. SECURITY AND CIVIC DEFENSE

By their own testimony, the villagers of Duc Lap agree that security is the foremost consideration in their lives. Many of them have been involved in war of one form or another for more than 20 years; in one extreme case, a man has been fighting various enemies since 1935! The experience in Duc Lap indicates that the people of the village have adapted themselves, in a partial sense, to the struggles which go on in their midst; but most of them, in a moment of serious thought during a conversation about the current conflict, reveal they are sick of the killing and want both sides to stop.

Security, as considered here within the framework of the government pacification program in Duc Lap, is classed as both temporary and permanent. An example of the former is the security now being enforced by the battalion stationed in Duc Lap. It is temporary because the troops must one day leave Duc Lap and move to a new village and begin their pacification task all over again. It is almost inconceivable that the battalion would remain permanently in Duc Lap; there are simply not enough battalions in the Vietnamese Army to place one in each village. Permanent security is the condition that hopefully will evolve in Duc Lap before the battalion departs for a new pacification assignment. This form of security would derive from a local security force and a responsible police authority under an effective province-district-village government system.

THE VIETNAMESE ARMY (ARVN)*

In working toward permanent security in an area such as Duc Lap, it is necessary to recognize the presence of government troops as an expedient. While the battalion is on station in Duc Lap, there is little fear in the villagers' minds that the insurgents will attempt to overrun the village in a full-scale attack. Insurgent activity is limited to harassment and an infrequent mortar barrage, or the insurgent terrorists may be reduced to the more insidious aspects of their

*Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

trade: kidnappings, minings (which includes placing hand-grenade booby traps in fields to keep the farmers from harvesting their rice), and murders.

But the final measure of the permanent security of Duc Lap will be a trained and armed civic defense force able to defend the village against moderate-sized insurgent attacks. No one would expect a village militia force to fight pitched battles with Viet Cong battalion-sized units, although there are instances of successful defenses by determined hamlet militia against such great odds. Departure of the battalion from Duc Lap before the development of an adequate local defense force almost guarantees that the return of the Viet Cong to the village can be counted in days, if not hours.

Even with the battalion in the village, one can never be certain of the security situation. Regardless of the number of troops stationed in Duc Lap, the omnipresent Viet Cong terrorists are able to continue acts of terrorism against the population. However, the presence of the battalion may account for the fact that the Viet Cong have not attacked any of the hamlets of Duc Lap since the troops were stationed in the village. Three reasons for the dearth of large-scale insurgent activity may be the one 60-mm and two 81-mm mortars located in the battalion headquarters compound in Ap Chanh. Every hamlet in the village, plus much of the surrounding area, is within range of these mortars. Around each hamlet are approximately 20 predetermined firing concentrations which the mortar crew can rapidly crank into the weapon to support a hamlet under fire. These have proven extremely successful for rapid-reaction-fire missions when Viet Cong harass hamlets with sniper fire at night. Most of these preset concentrations are located along tree lines, on trails, or at local road junctions.

Each hamlet in Duc Lap has a perimeter fence of at least three strands of barbed wire, but this is not expected to deter Viet Cong insurgents. The primary purpose of these fences is to demarcate the hamlets. The physical defense of the village, in addition to the mortars, is carried out by ARVN and Popular Force patrols, ranging from six to 20 men, which constantly rove about the area outside the village. During a normal patrol pattern in a single night these units may change

their position four times. The headquarters company has devised a special means of patrolling their sector of responsibility around Ap Chanh. They have formed an ambush squad, a group of hand-picked volunteers whose primary task is to operate as a small unit for ambushes and patrols. Each man is armed with an automatic weapon to provide the squad maximum firepower in case it encounters a large insurgent unit. Following a Viet Cong ambush described below, the ambush squad has been given the additional duty of handling road-clearing details and usually precedes the battalion commander when he goes to Tan Hoi to inspect the company stationed there.

As mentioned earlier, the road from Ap Chanh to Tan Hoi has frequently been harassed by the Viet Cong. On one occasion a road-clearing detail walked into an ambush only 600 meters outside the fence from Ap Chanh. At that point a house surrounded by dense foliage was located. The Viet Cong were dug in around the house and they allowed the detail to approach within 20 meters before opening fire. Two ARVN soldiers were killed and one wounded. As a result of that encounter the thick undergrowth around the house was removed.

One problem which plagues the unit placed on pacification duty in Duc Lap is the lack of battalion-sized operations by which to maintain the battalion as an efficient coordinated fighting unit. Because its primary mission is to defend Duc Lap village against insurgent attack, the battalion never operates as a full unit. When it does go on operations in the surrounding areas, it is never gone more than one day. Moreover, a reserve force is always left in the village to defend against an insurgent attack and to prevent insurgents from infiltrating into the village in order to ambush the returning troops.

Despite the presence of the battalion in Duc Lap, the insurgents are still able to penetrate the village perimeter to conduct occasional terror and propaganda activities. For instance, the hamlet of Ap Chanh is divided into four sections, with each section having a chief who reports on activities in his area to the village chief. The chief of the southern section, nearest the Viet Cong-controlled area of Hau Hoa village, was taken from his house during daylight hours and held for several days. On another occasion, the men of the battalion in Ap Chanh

awoke in the morning to find a sign on a stake outside the entrance to their compound. It read, "Kill the American advisor." The insurgents have also directed propaganda against the people via a loudspeaker broadcasting from the wooded area south of Duc Hanh A. The battalion mortars in Ap Chanh fired three rounds and the loudspeaker has not been heard since. In addition, insurgent propaganda leaflets are occasionally found in the village.

Perhaps the most difficult security task for the battalion in Duc Lap is protecting the single-lane dirt road which runs through the village against mines. The road has never been mined between Bao Trai and Ap Chanh, although the tree line (which runs right next to the road at one point and stretches over a kilometer in the direction of Hau Hoa village, where there are no government forces to detect infiltrating guerrillas) provides perfect cover for Viet Cong attempting to detonate a mine. The distance between Ap Chanh and Duc Hanh A is only 400 meters, but there have been two attempts to mine that section of the road. One of the attempts (described below) occurred during the period of observation in the village.

While on night ambush, a battalion unit located along the road saw several men approach them from a tree line 150 meters away. The ARVN force allowed the suspected guerrillas to approach the road before they challenged them. Their challenge was met by a burst of fire, which the soldiers returned. The surprised guerrillas fled down the road and began to fan out in several directions. One hapless Viet Cong tried to jump into a nearby pond in order to avoid capture, but the pond, one of many located in the village to store water during the dry season, turned out to be several meters deep, and he did not know how to swim. His cries for assistance resulted in his capture. It was later learned that he was from Ap Chanh and his house was located right inside the fence. He pleaded innocent, as did his wife, saying he was forced to accompany the guerrillas on their road-mining attempt. When later interviewed, his wife proved to be no help in the matter because she refused to talk.

Between Duc Hanh A and B there are only 200 meters of open rice field, and that section of the road is easily watched from either hamlet

and has never been mined. A spot at the edge of the swamp on the other side of Duc Hanh B, however, was a favorite Viet Cong mining location. Every day for more than three consecutive weeks the early-morning road-clearing detail from Duc Hanh B found a mine in approximately the same location. The insurgents' obsession with mining that particular spot has never been explained, but the 25 mines dug up attest to their failure.

No incident is more exemplary of the insurgents' perennial presence around Duc Lap and their ability to gather and act upon timely intelligence than the recent kidnap-killing of the pacification cadre leader in Duc Hanh A. Apparently the hamlet cadre leader had been regularly courting the sister of the hamlet chief, and on a particular Sunday when her parents had gone to Saigon to see their son race horses, the cadre leader had come to the house to visit the girl. Her parents' house stood only three meters from the hamlet fence at a point where a gate had been built to allow hamlet dwellers to go to their rice fields. On this afternoon, during the midday lull in hamlet activities, the cadre chief had just gone to the outside showerhouse when three Viet Cong entered the hamlet through the gate. One went directly into the house to silence the girl, another forced the cadre chief to go out the gate at gun point, while the third kept watch. As soon as the trio had departed with their prisoner, the girl ran to tell the soldiers, who were on the opposite side of the hamlet. The Viet Cong had a 200-meter lead when the soldiers reached the gate, but the prisoner slowed their progress and the soldiers began to catch up. The Viet Cong stopped, shot the unarmed cadre chief, and fled. He died in Bao Trai a week later. After this incident, the gossip in Duc Hanh A maintained that the girl had informed the Viet Cong of the cadre leader's coming, which led to his kidnapping and murder. Nothing has been discovered to substantiate this accusation, and the incident remains unsolved.

Most of the terror incidents are directed against the civil population of Duc Lap, but military personnel, and especially the American advisors to the ARVN battalion in the village, are often targets for the Viet Cong. The American advisors' quarters in the battalion compound at Ap Chanh is a small wooden hut with a new, shiny, corrugated-

metal roof. When viewed from the air during an approach to Duc Lap, the metal roof of the advisors' hut reflected the sun and provided a perfect visual-reconnaissance point. The roof also provided an excellent aiming point for enemy mortars, either by day or by night when the moonlight reflected off it. The Viet Cong used it as such during a recent mortar barrage when six rounds were fired into Ap Chanh; each round fell five meters apart in a straight line with the advisors' hut. Apparently the Viet Cong had hoped to "walk" the mortar shells into the hut, but, fortunately, the first round landed several meters in front of the hut and each successive round landed beyond.* Less fortunate, however, were a horse and pig of the family which lives directly across from the entrance to the compound. One of the rounds exploded behind the house, killing the family pig in its government-built pigpen and the horse in its stall next to the house. No other damage was done by the mortar fire. The roof of the advisors' hut was immediately painted in camouflage green and brown to diminish the possibility of its future use as an aiming point for Viet Cong mortars.

The government mortars are a visible sign of reassurance to the people of Duc Lap of the government's attempt to protect them, but to the people outside the village they are a thing to be feared. It was impossible to travel outside the village area because of the insecurity, but during October 1964 an opportunity arose to interview people from outside Duc Lap. Several women had come to the village office to ask compensation for damage done to their rice fields by government armored personnel carriers. None of the women could read or write, and many of them had to make an "X" at the bottom of the complaint drawn up by village officials. The village chief tried to explain to them why he could not come to their houses and personally check on the extent of the damage in order to certify the claims. The women guaranteed his safety and some cried and begged the village chief to help them. The following short conversation held with one of the women gives a brief impression

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*On November 8, 1964, at 2115 hours, the 3rd Battalion of the 46th Infantry Regiment, ARVN, succeeded where the Viet Cong insurgents of the NLF failed. Captain Herbicito Garcia, while on a night ambush on the road to Tan Hoi with elements of the battalion to which he was advisor,

as to what conditions outside the government-controlled area of Duc Lap are like:

Q: Why did you come to the village office?

A: To ask the government to give us payment for the damage done by their tanks and trucks [armored personnel carriers] to our rice fields.

Q: Why did they run over your rice fields?

A: I don't know. They just liked to go there, that's all.

Q: There must have been Liberation Front people at your houses and that is why the government tanks came.

A: No, nobody, in fact the government soldiers did not catch anyone ... maybe they [the insurgents] come to other places, we don't know, but not to ours, they never came.

Q: You must understand that the government forces don't want to damage your crops, but when the Liberation men come they create problems for you.

A: But they never come. Also at night, nine times out of ten, we have to sleep in ditches because of the mortars from province and from the government armies. They always explode around our houses.

Q: What do you want?

A: Just peace, peace, peace.

Whereas the people outside have to take cover in ditches during mortar attacks, many of the people of Duc Lap have built shelters inside their homes in which to hide. One of the finest examples of a home shelter in Duc Lap was in the house of a man who had relocated into Duc Hanh A. His house was next to the fence on the opposite side of the hamlet from where the pacification cadre leader was kidnapped. The shelter was made of cement and took up at least one-third of the living space in the house. The shelter walls were over six inches thick, and it stood approximately two feet above the surface of the

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was killed by mortar shells fired from the batallion compound that fell short of their target. Killed with Capt. Garcia was the battalion commander, Capt. Quan, and another Vietnamese soldier.

dirt floor. In fact, it was used as a seating place during the following conversation:

Q: Was this shelter hole made by you?

A: Yes, this hole is homemade to prevent misfiring by the misters [meaning both the soldiers and the insurgents]. If the "brothers" here fire out, then the "brothers" outside would fire in.

Q: How deep is your shelter hole?

A: Well, it is just a little lower than the earth surface.

Q: Can that shelter stop mortar shells?

A: No, the mortar shell would go right through. That shelter is only to prevent misfiring bullets. Look at that small hole in the lumber [pointing at a centerpost of the house]. The bullet came in small and went out big. And that was shot from the hamlet gate [about 200 meters away].

Q: How many times each month do you get into that shelter?

A: Well, we don't know. Whenever we hear shooting we jump in. We live close to those trees, so we must have a safety measure for ourselves.

Q: Then you often get into the shelter?

A: Oh yes, quite often. We let the children get in first.

The hamlet chief of Go Cao was not as fortunate as the man in Duc Hanh A. His house is near the rice fields which surround the hamlet, and his shelter filled with water when the water table rose during the rainy season. He was confident, however, that with the coming of the dry season the water would gradually recede so that his shelter would again become usable.

THE POPULAR FORCES (EX-SELF-DEFENSE CORPS)

While the relatively simple security measures of civic defense, such as secret hiding places and home shelters, may suffice for individual families, an effective and organized defense force must come from the civilian population if security in Duc Lap is to be permanent after the soldiers leave the village. At present the evolution of such a permanent security system in Duc Lap is based upon the two civilian

defense groups in the village. One is an experienced full-time Popular Force (Self-Defense Corps) platoon, and the other is the newly created part-time village militia, or, as they call themselves, Combat Youth.*

The backbone of the village self-defense system is the unique 25-man Popular Force platoon which has been in Duc Lap for over three years. The entire unit is composed of Hoa Hao religious followers who came to Duc Lap from their homes in An Giang province three years ago to fight the insurgents. The Hoa Hao are noted as being unswerving anticommunists, and this motivation has been needed at times to sustain the group when support from the government and the population has not been forthcoming. One of the Hoa Hao explained why they were considered such good fighters by the local population: "We have no choice. The communists will not capture us, they will only kill us; therefore, we have to fight until we are all finished." A more detailed look at the activities of the Hoa Hao unit in Duc Lap will be reserved for the second report, which will concentrate on past events in the village; this section will present only a partial look at their function in the village today.

At the time of the arrival of the Hoa Hao unit in Duc Lap, very few people lived in Ap Chanh, and the whole area was under insurgent control. The Hoa Hao moved into the triangle-shaped fort which stands just off the road behind the school in Ap Chanh, and for over three months they could not leave the fort because of the insecurity of the area. Eventually they secured a few houses near the fort and began to spread out through the hamlet. By the time the government battalion arrived in April 1964, Ap Chanh was fairly secure during the day, but the village chief and his relatives still had to retreat into the fort at night for their protection. The stationing of the government battalion in Ap Chanh ended the Hoa Hao's role as a free-roving fighting unit, and they were assigned specific security responsibilities. Initially this involved patrolling the road between Ap Chanh and Bao Trai

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*Although the Combat Youth have been integrated into the Popular Forces, the newly formed militia in Duc Lap prefers to be called by the former name.

and the tree line running to the south toward Hau Hoa village. When the fourth company of the battalion was transferred to Bao Trai, the Hoa Hao platoon was given security responsibilities for Go Cao hamlet and the province airfield.

During an interview in October 1964 with the platoon leader in Ap Chanh, he pointed out many of the problems faced by his self-defense fighters:

Q: Who pays the Hoa Hao fighters in Duc Lap?

A: Province.

Q: How much do you get paid?

A: As platoon leader I get 1300 piasters, and each fighter gets 1000 piasters per month.

Q: Is it enough to live on?

A: No, it is not enough to live on. Besides, we are not allowed to do anything else in order to make extra money.

Q: Do you receive a food allowance?

A: Every three months we were to be given two cans of oil for the whole post. This year [1964] we have received the oil twice. Last year we only got it three times.

Q: Have you requested uniforms?

A: Last year, each member of the Hoa Hao fighters who had been here two years or more received two pairs of black uniforms. This year we received none. Those other uniforms did not fit and it cost very much to have them altered so that we could wear them.

During the course of the conversation the platoon commander pointed out that only two fighters had been lost during the three years the Hoa Hao unit had been in Duc Lap. When asked if this was due to the magic wild-plant medicine which all Hoa Hao fighters are supposed to take to make them bulletproof, he replied: "No. Besides our doctrine, which teaches us to popularize the Hoa Hao religion to everyone, we do not believe in any other things. We only believe in Nature and Buddha."

THE COMBAT YOUTH

In addition to their primary task of providing security for the pacification program in Duc Lap, the battalion assumed a collateral duty of training a village militia, or Combat Youth, as they prefer to be called. In theory, this group will be the nucleus of the self-defense force left in the village when the battalion leaves Duc Lap. An initial force of 74 men was planned for the village, 28 coming from Ap Chanh, 20 from Duc Hanh A, and 26 from Duc Hanh B. The men chosen for the Combat Youth were thoroughly screened by the battalion and village officials before selection. One screening method was to ask the people of the village whom they would like to see as their militia to defend them against insurgent attacks. The neighbors of each selected man were further questioned as to the possibility of the candidate being an insurgent sympathizer or even a part-time guerrilla fighter. The province chief provided arms and a few uniforms to the 28 men in Ap Chanh, the first Combat Youth group to receive training. After a few weeks of training, the unit began accompanying the battalion in limited operations to gain some experience so that it might someday be able to fight independently.

Not only was there some resentment on the part of the Hoa Hao fighters towards this new group,* but there was talk of shady recruiting methods used to get some of the Combat Youth into service. According to the village chief, a Hoa Hao who accompanied the militia to Duc Lap to set up a village administration when none existed, many of the men in the Combat Youth were coerced to join by the village finance officer, who was aspiring to become village chief. It was said that he threatened to take away some ID cards if the men did not join the militia. Without an ID card a person is a virtual prisoner in his house; he cannot leave the hamlet for fear of being caught without it and accused of being a Viet Cong. Thus, if true, the threat of losing their ID card was the greater of the two evils confronting the men, and they readily joined the militia. The Hoa Hao platoon leader was aware of this situation and commented on the new Combat Youth in Ap Chanh:

*Considering that the Hoa Hao had been in the village for three years, the people of Duc Lap owed them at least a moral debt, in the opinion of the author.

Q: Is it true that these men were coerced into the militia and don't like the job?

A: Yes, that is true, because if they liked the job then they would have volunteered for it already.

Q: Do you think they will be good fighters and be able to protect this village?

A: These men are people who have never fought in battle before. This is the first time for them to do such work.*

Q: How can they protect this village if they do not have any experience?

A: I don't know that, but I do know that volunteers are better than those who are forced to fight.

Q: What do you think should be done to defeat the insurgents when you [the Hoa Hao] are gone from Duc Lap? What should the newly recruited Combat Youth do to fight the Liberation Front?

A: It depends on the leadership of the commander; moreover, the Combat Youth must have the people's hearts on their side. That reminds me of our last fight--the people told us ahead of time that the Liberation men were planning to attack this post and we had time for preparation.

Q: Did they attack you from outside the village?

A: They threw grenades and shot a light machine gun from those trees over there [in the direction of Tan Hoi].

Q: How do the intelligence agents inform you of the enemy's movements?

A: They are my men. They go fishing and working in the fields just like the ordinary people. When they see something worthwhile, they come and tell me. I send these people out every day.

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*While some of the Hoa Hao leader's comments regarding the inexperience of the new Combat Youth unit were true, the leader of the militia was formerly a sergeant in the government army and before that had fought with the French forces against the Viet-minh. He had been discharged from the service in 1963 because his medical records were mixed up with another man's who had tuberculosis.

Q: Do the people here know about it?

A: Only the people from this hamlet, but my men mingle with the people of the whole district.

Training of the Combat Youth was undertaken by the headquarters company of the battalion, and after three weeks the militia began to accompany some military units on patrols around the village perimeter. The Combat Youth drew their first blood in a brief encounter when an estimated 18 insurgents walked into a five-man ambush they had put in position along one of the local trails which crisscross the area. Three insurgents were killed and one wounded badly, with no losses to the militia. While one local success does not win the war, it was a good indication of the unit's ability to hold its position and meet a larger force. The intelligence apparatus of the Combat Youth is not yet at the level of that of the Hoa Hao platoon or the battalion, but most of the militia are from the village and the people have been more willing to talk to them than to the other groups. Unlike their Hoa Hao counterparts, the Combat Youth of Ap Chanh have not yet been assigned specific security responsibilities. But they are soon to begin assuming more and more responsibility for village defense and are thereby supposed to free the ARVN battalion to conduct more operations into nearby Viet Cong-held areas.

While the training and arming of the Ap Chanh militia have progressed rather well, the Combat Youth of Duc Hanh A and B have not reached such a state. Only one Combat Youth member in Duc Hanh A was sent to the Quang Trung Training Center, which is located on National Route One in Gia Dinh province. According to the hamlet chief, 20 men were carried on the roll as belonging to the militia, but only 17 were available; the other three were sick and not fit for duty. The state of training and preparedness of the Duc Hanh A Combat Youth was indicated in a brief conversation with the hamlet chief:

Q: How many guns do you have?

A: None.

Q: How many machetes?

A: None.

Q: Then with what do you fight?

A: We use Chinese wrestling.*

POPULATION CONTROL

In addition to the full-time task of providing security for the village undergoing pacification and training a village militia, the battalion is also responsible for maintaining a road control point in Ap Chanh. The road traffic through the village to and from Bao Trai has increased noticeably as the road has been freed from mines. The insurgents have not ignored the possibility of using the public transportation systems to move men and material from one place in Hau Nghia to another; therefore, all private vehicles, trucks, and buses passing through Duc Lap are stopped for a perfunctory check. While this checkpoint has not turned up much in the way of contraband or masquerading insurgents, province officials believe that it denies the insurgents one of the best access routes to and from the province. An occasional grenade is found, or a package of leaflets, but thus far no major seizure of vital medicines or weapons has been made.

Within the four secure hamlets of Duc Lap a population-control program has been initiated. This involves taking pictures of all resident adults for use as both ID card photos and as a record to be kept in the village office. As of September 1964 only 38 more pictures had to be taken and the entire population of the four hamlets would have been photographed. Another population-control measure in the village is the family declaration sheets. Each family in the village records the names and vital statistics of its members in triplicate on special forms. One copy is kept in the house by the family, one copy is retained by the village office, and the third goes to the battalion commander for

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*While this man's answer was in earnest, it is rather doubtful if a determined insurgent, especially if he were armed, would be deterred by the fact that the Combat Youth of Duc Hanh A were equipped with nothing but Chinese wrestling as a defensive measure. This seems to be a step down from the wicker shield and bamboo staff issued to many of Diem's Republican Youth militia.

his files. If a house is searched at any time at night and someone whose name is not on the family declaration sheet is found there without receiving prior permission, he is immediately a suspect and must explain why he is not in his own house. Thus far the results from this program have been negligible, and as the following conversation with the village police officer indicates, it has proven to be a great bother to the people:

Q: Are the people here influenced by the communist propaganda?

A: No, how can they believe in the communists when they [the Viet Cong] try to tear up all the family declaration sheets.

Q: Are they able to destroy them?

A: Certainly, they did it in Duc Hoa and in Duc Hanh A and B. I planned to distribute a bunch of those sheets this morning, but I have decided to keep them for awhile.

Q: Why?

A: I will try to distribute only a few sheets first, to see what the communists' reaction will be. Besides, the people really do not want to receive them. They are afraid that they will get into trouble with the government if the sheets are torn or missing. They must pay fines to the village office if the sheets are torn, and they are forced to fill out new ones. However, the people cannot do much when the communists stick guns in their backs and force them to turn over the sheets and tear them up. That is why I planned to give out only two or three sheets first and see what the communists do about it.

Both of these population-control measures--the checkpoint and family declaration sheets--are police-type functions. But because the civilian police have not been organized at this stage in the evolution of permanent security in Duc Lap, the battalion will continue to have prime responsibility for the internal, as well as external, security of the village.

A final control measure in the village is a darkness-to-dawn curfew when anyone caught moving around the hamlets may be considered an insurgent and shot. In addition, each house has a small oil lamp hanging over the main entrance at night. When a person is extremely ill,

or for some reason requires medical attention, he is allowed to come to the battalion compound in Ap Chanh for medical aid. Such persons must, however, come carrying a light and in small numbers. These precautions are necessary to prevent the Viet Cong from feigning injury in order to sneak close enough to throw grenades or fire into the compound.

The reader may get the impression, especially after reading of the Viet Cong incidents in the village, that Duc Lap can hardly be called secure. It is true that at times the security situation in the village is questionable. Yet, it must be realized that without even the modicum of security presently provided by the ARVN battalion, the Hoa Hao militia, and the Combat Youth, none of the other aspects of the pacification program described in the next section would be able to function in the village.

V. SOME EXAMPLES OF ECONOMIC PACIFICATION

THE GOVERNMENT PIG PROGRAM

One of the most visible results of the pacification program in Duc Lap has been the government pig program. While off to a small start in the village (two pigpens have thus far been built in Ap Chanh), the pig program is one of the few government economic measures which seems to readily meet the needs of the people of Duc Lap.

One of the pigpens in Ap Chanh was built between two houses occupying a narrow strip of land. This pigpen is used by the families of both houses. It is the largest and finest in Duc Lap and has been jokingly called "The Duplex" by the American advisors. A woman who owned one-half of "The Duplex" explained that only three government pigs had thus far been received in the hamlet and that it was the responsibility of the owners to provide feed for the pigs. The most common pig food in the hamlet is leftover rice and the trunks of banana trees. According to her, officials had come from the "cattle office" (presumably the province livestock office) and said they were going to build many pigpens and give the people many pigs. The people have resented the officials for coming and saying that they were going to do something and then not doing it. There are 30 locally built pigpens in Ap Chanh, most of which consist of nothing more than a small bamboo fence, some with and some without a thatched roof. The government pigpens, by comparison, have concrete floors, walls on three sides, and a roof. The two government pigpens look more sturdy than the houses of some of the people. A small pig costs five or six hundred piasters, which is a sizable investment for most families in Duc Lap. When full-grown, the pig may bring up to five thousand piasters.

THE FERTILIZER PROGRAM

A second government program, the distribution of fertilizer, has proceeded on schedule and has been well received by most of the people of Duc Lap. However, one of the men in Duc Hanh A mentioned the fertilizer program with some distaste. After pursuing the subject he finally admitted the reason: "The people complained about the fertilizer

given to them by the USOM representative from Hau Nghia. He came and promised to give them fertilizer for three fertilizing periods, but he only gave them enough for one, and that caused bad crops." He refused to mention the subject again and would not explain how a single application of the fertilizer caused the bad crops. Further checks with other residents of Duc Hanh A turned up nothing to either prove or disprove this man's statement.

The Go Cao hamlet chief pointed out that fertilizer was distributed free once in the hamlet and another time sold on a credit basis. When it was given by the government, each family received an average of two bags of fertilizer per ha (3600 square meters) cultivated. According to the hamlet chief, the people were happy with the fertilizer but would like the government to extend their NACO (National Agriculture Credit Office) loans so that they might be able to buy more pigs. Thus far, no government pigpens have been built in Go Cao.

A MARKET FOR DUC LAP

At the present time Duc Lap has no market. This ranks high among the peoples' requests to the government because they must travel three kilometers every day to the market in Bao Trai. A market place has been planned for Duc Lap through the USOM self-help program. At the present time a request is in the province office for permission to build the market.

Two general stores operate in Ap Chanh and sell a wide variety of inexpensive consumer items. An oriental doctor, a woman who is also the village gossip and one of the best sources of information on recent events, came to Duc Lap to open her shop two months after the pacification began. Several tailor shops opened up in private houses to meet the needs of the battalion soldiers. A blacksmith-knifemaker moved to Duc Lap from the district town and now has a steady business. As an example of the prices he charges, a hand-wrought, general-purpose knife costs 30 piasters, while a heavy machete used for cutting wood or thick bamboo is about 70 piasters.

Most of the iron used in the knives comes from springs salvaged from wrecked automobiles and trucks. When the author ordered a small knife to be made, the blacksmith said he would "make the knife for fame, so that when the people of Saigon saw it they would all come to Duc Lap to have their knives made."

VI. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS

EDUCATION

Although the teachers in Duc Lap suffer from the worldwide affliction of their profession, overwork and underpayment, education is one of the brightest aspects of pacification in the village. The 100 percent enrollment of eligible children in Ap Chanh alone attests to the desires of the villagers to have their children educated. When asked which the people of Duc Lap preferred, food or education, the school principal promptly replied, "The people here all want their children to be educated. They want education more. Food, or the means of raising food, is only minor compared to their desire to have their children go to school. These people have suffered much and now they want to sacrifice all they can for their children's future. Whatever the government does or gives them, it must keep its promise of what it says it will do. It must not fool the people."*

The greatest educational difficulty in the village is the lack of classrooms. The four-room school in Ap Chanh offers ten academic classes a day and that is still not enough to meet the demand. In the first grade, for example, the original plan was to admit two classes of only 120 students, but 360 applications were received, so classes were enlarged to 180. This many students could not possibly fit into the small school at the same time, so the first grade is divided into four separate classes.

The burden of educating the children of Duc Lap is particularly felt by the teachers who must teach two straight classes, five hours, without a break. The school in Ap Chanh is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. six days a week. In addition to the lack of schoolrooms and equipment, recruiting teachers is another major problem. The school principal described the teaching situation in Ap Chanh: "The salary for

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*Apparently the people of Duc Lap place a high value on keeping promises, whether their own or the government's, as several references were made to this subject in other interviews.

teachers of the first three grades is 1700 piasters per month. With the present salary the teachers here have enough to live at a reasonable standard [comparable with the average villager's]. The teachers must come from here because their families are here and they cannot afford to move on the low salary. Even though we are short of teachers, we feel that we must go ahead and admit the students wanting to come to school because the government is trying hard to pacify this area and asks people to come and live here. Therefore, there is no reason why we cannot educate their children."

The new school buildings in Duc Hanh A and B sat empty for more than two months for lack of qualified teachers and the necessary school desks and chairs. When the schools finally opened, classes were held for only half a day because of the shortage of teachers. The teachers in Duc Hanh A were still students; that is, they had not finished their teacher-training course at Bao Trai, but because the need for teachers was so great, the province chief sent them out. One of the problems in recruiting teachers was salary. The USOM was willing to give 600 piasters toward the monthly payment of each new teacher's salary. The province education office was to make up the rest. At the time of interview with the teachers in Duc Hanh A they had not been paid for two months because province had not decided how much money it was going to allot for their salaries.

In connection with pacification, education in Duc Lap can be considered as having short- and long-range purposes. The former refers to the evening seminars held by pacification cadres to explain the policies of the national government to the adults of the village. While policies have changed as often as national governments, these weekly meetings surprisingly have been attended by many of the villagers. Although the seminars are oriented along nationalist and anticommunist themes, democracy and democratic institutions are often discussed. A secondary purpose of these meetings is to provide the parents with background for at-home instruction of their children in anticommunism. The school principal explained the necessity for this instruction: "The children here generally follow what their parents believe. Besides, we don't have much time in school to go into anticommunist subjects,

for we must concentrate our time on the academic subjects so that the students will be able to pass their examination at the end of the fifth grade."

The long-range purpose of education is aimed at instructing the children, through a general education at the primary levels, in the fundamentals of democracy and freedom, which their parents may have never been taught. While the payoff from this type of education may not be immediate, it is an investment in the country's future which seems necessary if Vietnam is ever to develop a viable alternative to the government advocated by the insurgents of the NLF.

When students reach the end of the fifth grade, they reach a crossroads at which the course of their whole future life may be determined. If students can pass the elementary-school exam, they are then eligible to go on to high school. If students fail and cannot continue their education, then they will no doubt follow their parents before them, the boys tending buffaloes, and the girls helping their mothers. However, students passing the examination have no guarantee of acceptance into high school. As a teacher in the village school pointed out, "Most of the children here are the sons and daughters of farmers, and their parents do not have much money to send their children to a district town, or to Saigon, for a high-school education. It is very difficult to win a scholarship to go to high school. There are 120 of these available and more than 1000 students take the examination. Children in the city can go to private schools, but here they cannot as none exist."

The students' progress in elementary school is considered excellent by the principal who commented, "They are very intelligent. Even though this is just the countryside the children are very bright and easy to get along with." Regardless of how bright a student might be, the principal could not minimize the importance of the crucial fifth-grade examination, or not having enough money to go on to high school, as a turning point in a rural student's life. Without the possibility of being able to continue their education, the able students can indeed see only a dim future.

There has been considerable speculation as to why young people follow the Viet Cong. One answer provided by two boys aged 15 and 16 was

that they had very little education and there was no future for them at home. These boys were captured by the Hoa Hao militia one evening at dusk in the company of six men. All of the men carried hand grenades and one was armed with a rifle. The others escaped, but these two would-be insurgents were caught hiding in some bushes. The usual custom is to shield suspected insurgents from all contacts after their capture, especially with foreigners. Fortunately, the friendly relationship built up with the Hoa Hao militia was stronger than this custom, and the author was able to interview the two boys. They appeared frightened and at the same time insolent; they had been roughed up a bit during their first interrogation, but not tortured. During the questioning, one boy seemed particularly bitter about the fifth-grade examination and why he could not take it.

Q: What do you do here in Duc Lap?

A: I take care of the cows. I cut grass for my cows to eat. I go fishing to catch fish for my parents and myself to eat. I don't do anything else.

Q: When you were in the fifth grade, why didn't you take the elementary-school exam?

A: I planned to take the exam at that time, but my old man didn't have the money, did not have my birth certificate on time, so the teacher told me to quit school. No birth certificate, no money, how can I take the exam? I went home and watched cows and dogs and did not do anything else.

INFORMATION

While most phases of the government pacification program appear to be progressing in Duc Lap, the execution of the information program in the village has faltered. Although the government planned an extensive information program in connection with pacification, in Duc Lap it has not been exerted to its full potential. An information office was built in Ap Chanh and one in each of the Duc Hanh's. Since completion, these offices have remained empty due to the lack of personnel to run them. In Ap Chanh, the village office was located in an old wooden building, while the new concrete information office next

door was unused. It did not take the dai-dien long to put the empty space to practical use, and the former information office is now the village administrative office. Similar steps were taken in Duc Hanh A, when the hamlet chief moved into the empty office.

One information cadre was assigned to work in Duc Lap with the pacification team. When asked why the information program had showed no progress in the village, he answered, "Although we have an information office here there has not been anything in it. There have been no booklets nor leaflets distributed. Besides, there is no one in the village trained as information officer."

Two audible or visible means used by the government to reach the people with information are loudspeakers, located in the village or mounted on helicopters, and information bulletin boards. The village has been issued three loudspeaker and amplifier sets for the three information offices, but only the loudspeaker unit in Ap Chanh is currently in operation. The dai-dien admitted that he is afraid to put them up in the other two hamlets for fear of losing them. The province psychological-warfare office often flies loudspeaker-carrying helicopters over Duc Lap. This is a novel method of trying to inform the village population, but it has thus far failed miserably. The possibility of insurgent small-arms fire hitting the helicopter is so great that the heliborne loudspeakers are never flown below 2500 feet. Even without the usual noise and commotion going on in an average village, the height at which the loudspeakers are flown makes the messages almost inaudible, particularly when the wind is blowing. To add to the problem, two armed helicopters always accompany the unarmed loudspeaker ship, flying behind and below it, and their rotor and engine noise effectively drown out the loudspeakers.

The government has realized simultaneous success and failure in its poster and bulletin-board programs. Almost every house in Duc Lap has at least one government poster on the wall and some have several; they make very good patches for bare spots on the wall. The bulletin boards, however, have not met with signal success. Colorful bulletin boards were recently erected just outside the perimeter fences of Ap Chanh and Duc Hanh A, and the posters stayed on the boards until the

first rain. Moreover, posters located on the road are subject to the natural youthful urge of every passing child to tear them down. In fact, those posters which did not fall off during the rain, according to the police officer, were soon after ripped off by children. Because of these two difficulties of keeping posters on the boards, it is doubtful that the Viet Cong will even bother to destroy the bulletin boards.

The people of Duc Lap are relatively poor, and few of them own any luxuries, especially radios. There are only ten radios among the 264 families of Ap Chanh. Each of the other hamlets has an average of only five to six radios. The government radio station is broadcast over the loudspeaker system in Ap Chanh, but until the amateur operator gets over the novelty of switching the set on and off at irregular intervals, the intermittent broadcasts are more of a nuisance than an improvement.

Newspapers are one method of informing the rural population at considerably less cost than radios, and it was the practice of the author to take several current Saigon daily newspapers to the village when returning from Saigon. These papers were given to the dai-dien so that he and the other villagers might read them. The dai-dien was always polite and expressed his thanks for the gift, but after several weeks of this procedure, these papers could always be found stacked in the same place and folded up as though they had never been read. When asked why the papers weren't read, the dai-dien said the village received its own newspaper, Tan Sinh (New Life), in conjunction with pacification. This paper was written especially for the population in the rural areas and presented a weekly recap of the news events in Vietnam. A comparison of several issues of Tan Sinh with Saigon newspapers of the same period revealed that this paper never printed stories detrimental to the government nor ever mentioned the recent civil strife in the capital. Through this paper the government effectively controlled its image among the rural population.

As a crude experiment to determine how informed, or, more precisely, uninformed, the villagers of Duc Lap were about outside events, every person interviewed was asked who was head of the present central

government. A few people in Ap Chanh knew of the new civilian regime in power at that time, but most thought the military junta was still in control, and one man was not even aware of the second coup of January 30, 1964. A further test of their opinions was to ask individuals what they thought about the rumor of a government plan to dissolve Hau Nghia and return the districts back to the original provinces. Rather than detail the many answers given, they are summed up in the words of one man: "It makes no difference to the people as long as they can still farm their land."

Perhaps the best comment on the lack of information and news in the village was supplied by an elderly man who was asked what he thought of the recent government changes in Saigon. His laconic reply was, "That I can't tell. We here are just like crabs that have their pincers locked [meaning he doesn't know what is going on outside the village]."

While the government, with all its technological superiority and resources, has failed to provide information to the majority of the population of Duc Lap, the insurgents, with crude printing presses and poor paper, have been quite effective in getting their message across. The NLF propaganda arm has seldom varied from its theme of liberating Vietnam from imperialists and corrupt government officials. This is understandable if one recalls that most of the area which is presently Hau Nghia was a stronghold of nationalist supporters during the Viet-minh war against the French, and much of the population of the area has merely transferred its sympathies to the Viet Cong.

In the recent past, NLF propaganda in Duc Lap concentrated on the liberation of people from the government-built concentration camps (Strategic Hamlets) so that they "could go with their friends and freely farm crops." More recently the assumed take-over of Vietnam by Americans has been assailed by the Viet Cong, and their propaganda stresses the similarity of the present situation to the French period of control.

While the insurgent image of liberators is wearing a little thin within the area of Duc Lap, the insurgents still maintain a following outside the government areas of control. Moreover, they have been able

to mount "popular" demonstrations by the people, either through persuasion or force, for whatever purpose is desired. One of the two boys captured by the Hoa Hao militia told of an incident when the Viet Cong came to his hamlet to ask the people to demonstrate:

Q: When they [Viet Cong] came did they ask you to demonstrate against the national government?

A: No, they didn't ask us to do that. They told us to demonstrate and to struggle.

Q: Demonstrate for what?

A: To demonstrate and ask for no more shooting of the mortars, and not to drop the bombs which would kill the buffaloes and cows.

The ability of the NLF to react with timely propaganda was shown after the government had accidentally dropped a bomb in the village. (This incident is explained in greater detail on page 59.) Soon NLF propaganda leaflets appeared in some of the hamlets outside Duc Lap, telling the people of the bomb incident and that it was the Americans who dropped the bomb on the village. Furthermore, they said, the government did not pay the man whose land was destroyed by the explosion (which was true).

As the following incident shows, the propaganda-makers of the NLF are extremely clever and have great ability to make propaganda which will appeal to the rural population. Several leaflets were picked up on the road outside the fence in Ap Chanh and brought to the battalion compound for inspection. The leaflets were of normal size, approximately four by six inches, and printed on colored paper. On both sides of the leaflet in big print on the top was the name of a movie, complete with cast of characters, playing at a nearby movie theater. Below this was a short synopsis of the movie and then a heavy black line. Under the line in small news-style print was the main message of the leaflet. There were several sentences extolling the recent actions of the NLF throughout South Vietnam: a bombing in Kien Hoa, an attack on a government post in Vinh Long, the shooting down of a government plane in central Vietnam. The leaflet, designed to attract the reader's eye by calling his attention to the movie advertisement, was really a Viet Cong war-news bulletin.

THE CHIEU HOI (OPEN ARMS) PROGRAM

While the information service of the government, described in the preceding section, has not been a strong point in the pacification of Duc Lap, the Chieu Hoi program has been an even worse failure. There have been only three returnees to the village during the past three years. While discussing the dearth of guerrillas rallying to the government side in Duc Lap, many of the villagers commented on the program and some even offered suggestions on how they thought it could be improved.

Their first suggestion was to change the name of the program to allow the return of those fighting with the NLF who want to rally as nationalists, not communists. When a guerrilla rallies under the Chieu Hoi program, he is immediately suspected of being a communist and must prove himself otherwise. Many of the men presently fighting with the NLF apparently consider themselves as nationalists who are continuing the unfinished fight against the French and imperialism, only now the Americans are the enemy. That many of the people in the area around Duc Lap fought with the Viet-minh against the French and are proud of it does not necessarily mean they are communists, or even sympathizers.

While it might not prove wise to go back to the original Diem-era name of the Chieu Hoi program, Phong Trao Chieu-Tap Khang-Chien Lam Duong (Movement to Regroup Misled Members of the Resistance), something more suggestive of the nationalistic motivations of some of the guerrillas might be incorporated into the title. The dai-dien related incidents when men fighting with the NLF had approached him, either directly or through relatives, and asked if they returned would they be given favorable consideration by the higher authorities and be allowed to explain why they had joined the present insurgents. They did not want to return to the government side branded as Viet Cong. Some even asked to have neighbors testify on their behalf. Others expressed a desire to return but were afraid the Viet Cong would seek them out and kill them.

Speaking from experience (he had been captured by the Viet-minh in 1947 and tortured), the dai-dien said, "If a guerrilla was mistreated

by his comrades or his organization, then that man could become a useful person for us. He would work for our side. Oh, the communists are cruel! They will kill somebody who makes a mistake three times. Not like us--we will punish the person or put them in jail."

This man, who had been fighting the communists since 1945, fully understands how pervasive the influence of the NLF is in Duc Lap. By his estimate, 70 percent of the village population are Viet-minh sympathizers,* perhaps 1 percent openly support the government, and the rest are indifferent to the whole situation. The present insurgents of the NLF of South Vietnam have skillfully and shrewdly assumed the pose of reincarnated Viet-minh and have exploited the nationalistic sympathies of much of the rural population. In fact, the majority of the people of Duc Lap call the insurgents of the NLF the Viet-minh.

When asked about the progress of the Chieu Hoi program in Duc Lap, the present village police officer answered, "That program is a very difficult matter here, for the Viet-minh have been here before, much longer than the government, so the people believe their propaganda. The people will do what we force them to do, but regarding the returning of our young people we have no influence on them through the Chieu Hoi program."

The former police officer made some specific recommendations on how to improve the Chieu Hoi program in the village. According to him, "we should have an office here and publicize the Chieu Hoi program and have cadre here to deal directly with anyone who rallies [there are none now]. As for this village, the best method of information is to pass from one person to another verbally. Also we can use motion pictures. Propaganda motion pictures are seldom shown in this village and I think it is because of the poor security at night. Also we can use loudspeakers to call to returnees during the day."

Perhaps the most succinct statement on all aspects of Chieu Hoi, and one which also embodies many of the problems previously discussed regarding pacification and the evolution of Duc Lap, was made by the dai-dien: "As you know, every family has someone in the insurgent

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*According to the dai-dien, not all those included within this figure are supporters of the present Viet Cong.

ranks. If one does not, then perhaps his wife, or her husband, or a neighbor has a relative fighting for the National Liberation Front. They have not seen any government people who have been truthful to them; therefore, the government should use a program designed to deal directly and fairly with the people. You must treat them nicely and give them service if you want to gain their trust. If this is done, then their children, brothers, husbands, and friends in the Liberation Front will return to us. But this will be a very long process."

VII. THE IMPACT OF THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM

THE ATTITUDE OF THE POPULATION TOWARD SECURITY

One of the more intangible aspects of security in Duc Lap is the people's attitude toward the day-to-day danger of the insurgency and their ability to survive at whatever the cost. The people fear the guerrillas of the NLF, and the presence of the Viet Cong around and among the villagers of Duc Lap is very real to them. When a person is asked about the communists, usually he or she speaks very softly as if someone may be listening to the conversation and will report it to the insurgents. The often inexplicable ability of the rural population to appear to be supporting both sides of the insurgency at once was put into words by an old man living in Duc Hanh A. When asked if he would call the soldiers if he saw a group of insurgents outside the hamlet fence, he cautiously answered, "No, never, my goodness, that is making my death come soon. If I see them I would only keep quiet and pretend not to see them, let them go. Outside [the hamlet] the people follow the Liberation Front, inside they follow the government. They follow whoever is strong. You see, they have two shoulders, so they can carry everything [one shoulder for the insurgent burden and one shoulder for the government load], so they follow both sides."*

When it is realized that the dai-dien, a Combat Youth leader, a hamlet chief, a hamlet section chief, and numerous uncounted others living in Duc Lap have been captured or kidnapped at one time or another by the Viet Cong, the reasons for the people to fear them becomes clearer. But, if the villagers have this fear, they certainly conceal it well. Once, in the center of Ap Chanh near midday, several scores of people

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*This man's feelings were corroborated by another villager in a lucid statement on the role of the rural population in this insurgency: "You know, at present it is really hard to be 'people,' because they are expected to perform many duties. If they meet the Viet Cong they are recruited to be guerrillas, and if they support the government they have other duties to perform, like joining the Army, or joining forces to protect their homes."

were bustling about, getting ready for the noon meal, and children were playing their usual game of lagging coins in the dirt road. Suddenly, the normality of this scene was broken by the sharp staccato of automatic-weapons fire coming from just outside the fence in the direction of Tan Hoi. Obviously it was a hidden sniper harassing the hamlet; yet, unnerving as this unexpected interruption may have been to the uninitiated, not one person stopped his activity, and the children did not miss a lag. The people seemed completely oblivious to the fact that someone was shooting in their direction.

As mentioned earlier, some people in Duc Lap have been fighting for over 20 years, and one man has been fighting various enemies since 1935. His story, while perhaps extreme, indicates many of the difficulties facing people involved in the struggle which goes on daily in their midst. Although he seems to have lost a conception of time in recounting his adventures, the dislocation, fear, and finally utter physical and mental exhaustion brought on by all those years of fighting, running, and hiding are all fundamental to understanding why he has finally given up the struggle and become one of the so-called apathetic population, not caring which side wins in this war, only wanting peace. He is one of the 50 percent in the province population pacification assessment who are not committed to either side in this struggle, preferring to bend with the wind like a stalk of bamboo. He, and the others like him, are the real targets of pacification, and in order to win their support it seems necessary first to understand their problems.

According to him, he has been in Duc Lap "since 1935 when the French legionnaires were here. Then the communists came. That was about 1938 or 1940. We had heard that the communists were rising up against the French. Then the Legionnaires came and burned our houses. I had to leave my house and go to Binh Duong. After that I worked for the Japanese, but that also failed, so I came back here to rebuild my house. That was my second return to Duc Lap. Many things had happened while I was away. One of my sons was killed. He was shot by the enemy in this stronghold in which we are now sitting. At that time I was hamlet chief and the communists came and wanted me to quit the job and

just be a farmer. I resisted them, then I went to Duc Hoa to become an SDC.* Later I went to Thi Thua. I worked for a while, then I went to Binh Long, then Xuan Loc. I was a merchant then, and later I worked for the rubber plantation. Business was poor so I came back to Duc Hoa to join the Army. Then I went to Xuan Loc to farm tobacco but failed after one year. Then at last I came back here to the house of my uncle. At that time there was a village committee election. I was elected as the police member of the committee for ten months. During that time my house was burned down and many people were wounded. I was also wounded, as I was the SDC commander of this post then. I was lucky that I did not die, but my house was burned down. My hard life is a very long, long story."

Although the great majority of the villagers of Duc Lap have not been as peripatetic as this man, their reasons for wanting peace are just as valid. For example, the women who live outside the village want the government mortars to stop firing at their houses. The people inside the village want to be able to sleep the night through without having to scramble into their home shelters. Another generally unspoken, but certainly cogent, attitude toward peace suggests that much of the population of Duc Lap sees the current conflict not as a case of one side trying to achieve an incomprehensible political goal while the other tries to defend its control of the government, but as a bloody civil war with Vietnamese killing Vietnamese. Whether the Saigon government is overthrown or not is not the issue as the people of rural Duc Lap view the insurgency. Rather, they are confused, frustrated, and in despair over a war which only sees sons and husbands die for complex issues which the average Vietnamese peasant in Duc Lap cannot nor does not want to understand. It is this peasant who bears the greatest burden in the daily struggle for survival.

Comments on the foregoing aspect on the war are often branded as neutralist-seeking, or communist-inspired, propaganda designed to undermine the will and resolution of the population by playing on their sympathies and emotions in an effort to end the hostilities. Whatever their origin, the motives for ending the war are a real and growing force behind much of what some quarters label as the people's so-called

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*A member of the Self-Defense Corps.

apathy. In one instance a poem appeared in a central Vietnam newspaper and was immediately attacked in several Saigon dailies as being communist-inspired and detrimental to the national revolution. It is reproduced here, not to argue its political implications, but to express what many of the Vietnamese in Duc Lap (and no doubt in other rural areas) feel and think but fear to admit openly.

THE LAST ACT*

The corpses lie in disorder,
Their faces cannot be seen.
They do not have any clothing,
Lying together on a piece of land,
Poor, starving and miserable.
The old mother leaning on a cane,
Tears running down in two rows,
"Sir, are these communists?"
"Sir, are these nationalists?"
Sobbing, mother bends her head to see,
"No, these are Vietnamese."
Living together in the same village,
Children of the same mother,
That black hair and red blood
Of this pug-nosed yellow skin.
Here are the rifles and bullets of foreigners.
Outside, the garden has been burned
And the children dig potatoes
Like hungry dogs,
Seeing a dim future.
The vultures come.
Animals and human beings,
Neither can recognize the other.

*This translation by the author tries to retain the Vietnamese expressions used in the original.

A final note on the population's attitude toward security was provided by an incident that hopefully will not be repeated often in Vietnam. On September 21, 1964, four Vietnamese Air Force A1-E fighter bombers were circling over Duc Lap village, waiting to be called in to strike a target ten miles to the west in Duc Hue district. At exactly eight minutes after two in the afternoon, a loud explosion was heard and a large cloud of black smoke was seen rising from the direction of Duc Hanh A. From a vantage point in Ap Chanh it appeared that the explosion was near the road, and it was thought a vehicle had hit a mine. Upon arrival at the scene no damaged vehicle was in sight, only a large crater, 18 meters wide by 7 meters deep, in what was once a field of growing rice. Subsequent investigation revealed that a 500-pound high-explosive bomb had accidentally fallen from the wing of one of the circling aircraft. The crater was 75 meters from the road and only 50 meters from the fence of Duc Hanh A. The occupants of a house 75 meters away were unhurt, but the loss of a full field of rice represented a small personal disaster. The USOM and the American advisors provided the family with "western rice" (corn) and a can of cooking oil, hardly suitable recompense for the future rice crop. More interesting, however, was the reaction of the people living near the bomb crater when questioned about the incident. When asked if she was scared, one woman replied, "Of course, it was shaking the ground and I dare not look at it." But she and all the people later questioned were positive that the bomb had been accidentally dropped; they wished that from now on the government would "tie" the bombs onto the wings of their airplanes a little tighter.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN DUC LAP

Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult tasks for the ARVN battalion on pacification duty in Duc Lap is maintaining good relations with the local population. Because the government soldiers are the closest continual contact point between the government and the rural population, and because they have 24-hour-a-day contact with the people of Duc Lap, their every act is witnessed by the civil population and attributed

to the government. As direct representatives of the government, in a sense, they represent an image of the central government to the rural population.

Historically the Vietnamese distrust their soldiers and with good reason, as they were known to pillage and plunder the civil population with almost as much zeal as the enemy. This tradition, as it were, has been carried into this insurgency, where good civil-military relations are considered one of the essentials for victory. Much of the success or failure of pacification, and concomitant support of the government by the rural population, is dependent upon the reaction of the population to the government armed forces. The Viet Cong have made valuable propaganda gains by publicizing misdeeds of government forces against the people, while simultaneously stressing their "of-the-people" origins and joining the rural population in their hatred of government soldiers.

Credit must be given to the battalion commander in Duc Lap because he seems to have fully understood the role he and his troops must play in pacification. When a new group of recruits reports to the battalion, he lines them up as soon as they disembark from the trucks and speaks to them about two points: desertion* and the importance of good conduct in the village.

The captain proved to be as good as his word in stressing the importance of good relations with the population, and he leads his men in establishing a good rapport with the people of Duc Lap. One afternoon, just after the school in Ap Chanh had let out, the captain drove out of the compound in the direction of Duc Hanh A. At that time the school in Duc Hanh A had not yet opened and many of the children from the hamlet traveled to Ap Chanh for classes. Several children were beginning the walk to their hamlet when the captain stopped his jeep and filled it almost to overflowing with children and drove off with

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*The checkpoint set up in Ap Chanh to limit possible insurgent use of the public transportation systems serves a double purpose. More than once the guards at the checkpoint have found soldiers trying to leave the village without permission.

his noisy cargo. This act was witnessed by several people of Ap Chanh, who smiled and later voiced their approval of the captain and his soldiers in their village. What made this simple action even more important is that when a military vehicle approaches Ap Chanh billowing clouds of red dust, it almost never slows down upon entering the perimeter fence but hurtles through the hamlet without regard to the roadside stands or the children playing in the road. People know that the approach of military traffic usually means that they must clear off the road for fear of life and limb.

There have been few incidents between soldiers and civilians since the battalion came to Duc Lap, which suggests the commander's admonitions, among other things, have worked. The dai-dien related one experience regarding the conduct of the soldiers in Duc Lap: "There was a time when a soldier hit me in the face. He did not apologize for hitting me, but his commander did come and make the apology. Good harmony between the people and the soldiers is the best policy and conflict of this nature will only benefit the enemy. I considered that soldier a child."

Very vivid in the memories of the people of Ap Chanh is an incident involving not the soldiers of the battalion, but their wives. Several of the families of the soldiers stationed in the village came to Duc Lap to be near their husbands. Most of them were immediately welcomed into villagers' houses, as there were no empty houses available. According to many of the women who had these unexpected guests, they acted rudely and treated the other people of Duc Lap as if they were just ignorant peasants. The climax of the growing tensions between the women of Duc Lap and the soldiers' wives came when one of the wives carelessly started an accidental fire in a house and it quickly spread to several nearby dwellings. Many of the families lost their homes and all their possessions in the fire and they were unable to collect any compensation from the government for their losses. The dependents were moved out soon after; wives are now only allowed to visit their husbands for short periods, generally after pay day.

Civil-military relations will be a continuing problem in Duc Lap and elsewhere in Vietnam. With proper troop guidance, however, such

as that given by the ARVN battalion commander, and with a timely program by the government information services to tell the rural population why the troops have come, and to expect certain strains, many of the problems of the past may be avoided in future pacification efforts.

POPULAR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT (NHAN DAO)

While security is first and foremost in the minds of the people of Duc Lap, their next expectation from the government pacification program is not economic assistance, as one might expect, but the creation of an effective and responsive government. More specifically, they want a government with nhan dao. Roughly translated, nhan dao means humanity. But to the Vietnamese it means much more than that. The method used in determining exactly what nhan dao meant to the Vietnamese, and particularly to the population of Duc Lap, was to ask every available person for his or her opinion on the meaning of nhan dao. Opinions varied, but after extensive interviewing it was possible to discern that nhan dao appears to give expression to the desirable properties the individual Vietnamese of Duc Lap wants in his government.

The subject of nhan dao first came up during an interview with the former village chief about what the government should, in his opinion, do to persuade the Viet Cong to stop fighting and return to the government side. He quickly replied, "Well, humanity must be the first thing. We don't have to provide long-term help for these people, but we must give them a start on a new life,* and most important, we must show our good intentions." The use of the word humanity was puzzling in this context, and when asked for further explanation of the term, he answered, "The government must keep its promises. When the government representatives tell the people they will do something, they must keep their promise and do it. You see, sometimes friends love each other more than brothers, and even though their children are fighting

*The government already has a New Rural Life program in conjunction with the national pacification plan. It seems as if this program could be easily expanded to include providing a "new life" for returnees from the insurgent camp.

with the Liberation Front today, they would like to return to the government someday. To solve the security problem [of the returnees], humanity is the first issue."

After this discussion it seemed that nhan dao might not only be used as an appeal to returnees but also as the backbone theme of the government pacification program. After several more interviews in the village, it seemed that nhan dao existed as a real concept in the mind of the Vietnamese peasant.

The following segments of conversations with different people in Duc Lap are included here to give examples of exactly what nhan dao means to them and how it might be translated into a working program for the government. The reader will notice that while each person interviewed on the subject of nhan dao attempted to translate it into terms close to his own occupation or experience, certain central themes of the concept are maintained in almost every interview. The present police officer in the village defines nhan dao as meaning that "the authorities must help the people in all ways. Regarding their papers, we must work wholeheartedly to help them secure their papers, certificates, ID's, and so forth. We must not let them wait and wait. When people lose their harvest we must help them with fertilizers, seeds for planting, and many other necessary things so that they will be able to live without starving. We must help them enthusiastically and not let them lose everything that they have worked hard for."

The former police officer, the man mentioned previously for his many wanderings throughout Vietnam, drew upon his professional experience a little more to define nhan dao. He said, "Nhan dao means we do not beat the people, it means that we help them. We do not do cruel things, we do not arrest them without cause, and we do not torture the innocent."

"As I understand it," said the hamlet chief of Duc Hanh A, a resident of Duc Lap for all of his 36 years, "nhan dao is the government's understanding of its authority over the people and not misuse of its power to oppress the people." Another hamlet chief, in Go Cao, assigned a more specific task to a government having nhan dao than his Duc Hanh A counterpart. He specified that "the government must not be corrupted,

and does not depress the people, and does everything which pleases the peoples' hearts, and satisfies all claims from the people."

Perhaps all these various comments on nhan dao are best synthesized in the definition and example given by one of the people most responsible for creating nhan dao in Duc Lap--a cadre from the province pacification team. He pointed out that, "When I speak of nhan dao I can't tell all the details. It does not mean giving the people money and calling it nhan dao. It means a policy that must be democratic. If the government wants to treat the people with nhan dao, it should not do anything obscure. That means before it wants to do something it must explain it to the people very thoroughly before carrying it out. The people here would like the government to help them live peacefully. That means security. There was an agency that came here and arrested two women. None of us knew what the agency was. Much later we found out that they were taken to Saigon. It was charged that they were communists. The people here were upset because the hamlet chief was not even informed of that arrest. The Army here was not even informed and the soldiers only saw four men armed with rifles come and arrest the women."

There were many other opinions among the villagers of Duc Lap as to what nhan dao meant, yet in each of these few examples there are certain similar ideas which link them together. Primarily, the government must be responsive to the people's needs and desires. It must be a fair and just government, and paraphrasing one of the interviewees, "it must understand its authority over the people." When summed up, all these desirable qualities sought in a government by the people of Duc Lap smack closely of what is known elsewhere as democracy. This is not intended to be a plea for the immediate institution of democracy in Vietnam, because one thing absent in the people's assessment of nhan dao was cognizance of their responsibility to support and defend such a government.

Perhaps the answer for Vietnam is not western-style democracy, but what was recently suggested by a Vietnamese: "The only way to save our country is with a basic change--a new policy ... humanitarian

socialism."* While one may not agree with adding the theme of socialism to nhan dao, in suggesting the requirements for a successful government system in Vietnam, one that is borne out of Vietnamese considerations, it does indicate that the idea of nhan dao is held by more than just the Vietnamese peasants.

The opportunities for the government to exhibit nhan dao in conjunction with the pacification program in Duc Lap were legion, and the possible dividends to the government from this sort of practice would have far outgained the effort expended. The need for the government to understand the peoples' feelings and problems was underscored during the building of the province airfield. The elevated runway of the airfield was built right through several acres of rice field adjacent to Go Cao hamlet. The people who lived on this land were moved off and never paid for their loss. One family moved in with the hamlet chief and were still trying to earn enough money by tenant farming to be able to build their own house.

Perhaps the most stark example, in the eyes of the rural Vietnamese, of the government's disregard for the local population while building the airfield was the treatment of one old woman. One afternoon while waiting at the airfield for an aircraft to return to Saigon, the author observed an old woman coming from Go Cao hamlet. When she reached the middle of the runway, she stood there and refused to move. She claimed she had lived on this land for 70 years, and the government had taken her land from her without asking. Furthermore, they did not even allow her to remove the bones from the nine family graves under the spot where she stood. This was a serious charge against the government, as the Vietnamese, and especially the rural dwellers, revere their departed relatives, and their graveyards are considered sacrosanct.

THE PROBLEM OF RELOCATION

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks associated with the government pacification program, and one that certainly requires nhan dao,

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*This statement, appearing in Newsweek, October 19, 1964, was made by Col. Pham Ngoc Thao, who was the spokesman and co-leader of the abortive coup of February 19-20, 1965, against Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh.

is relocating people from their homes into government-controlled settlement areas. Today under pacification, as yesterday under the Strategic Hamlet Program, the uprooting of families has proven necessary in many cases to protect the individual and deny the insurgent contact with the rural population. During the ill-fated Strategic Hamlet Program, the delicate problem of relocation was generally handled in such a way as to alienate much of the rural population and drive them into the insurgent camp, rather than gain their support for the government.

One of the most glaring governmental neglects associated with relocating families into Duc Lap has been the lack of an information program to explain to the people why they had to move. Once the decision has been made to relocate families, they should be fully informed as to why they must move, and the government should provide whatever assistance it can. Thus far the government information services have not even done an inadequate job of informing the people; <u>they have done nothing</u>. It will be recalled that the women who had come to the village office from outside the village said they had never seen an insurgent in their area and that they did not know why the government tanks had come there. A similar story is told by many of the relocated families, who say it was perfectly safe in their old house, and they could see no reason why the government had made them move into the hamlets.

Esthetically, the treeless relocatee hamlets are reminiscent of tract housing in suburban America. The houses are placed in neat rows with little or no consideration of the people's desire for privacy or comfort. In addition to the obvious confusion surrounding a sudden command to move from what may be one's ancestral home, another problem of perhaps even greater urgency to the individual family is the cost of moving a complete household a distance of as much as a kilometer. In one case, which may be extreme, a woman said it cost her 4000 piasters to tear down her old house, move it and all her possessions into Ap Chanh, and build a new house there. The relocation allowance paid her was the standard 1100 piasters.

The major share of the relocation burden is borne by the individual peasant on his back--figuratively, because the government usually

provides no assistance with the move; and literally, because the government relocation allowance defrays only a fraction of the actual cost of the move. As the head of one relocated family related, "Frankly speaking, I should say that making a living here is hard, the going out in the morning [to the rice fields] and the coming back in the late afternoon is pretty far. The people here want to be able to get back to their own home and land to live. Everybody naturally loves to make his living easily, relaxing in his own place." "His own place" does not necessarily mean that a person owns the land from which he was relocated (this man rents land from a relative); rather it means the place where he built his house, had his garden and fruit trees, and no doubt buried his ancestors.

Among other things, many of the superstitious relocatees blamed their bad luck on having to leave their old homes. It will be remembered that during the mortar attack on Ap Chanh a horse and a pig were killed at the house of the family living next to the battalion compound. When questioned about the incident, the wife pointed out that "we are very poor and the government told us to move in and stay in the strategic hamlet. But now things have happened due to bad luck. The communists shoot the mortar and we seem to be getting all the poor luck. We are poor having so many children. If the government would love us, it would give us some means to feed the kids."

The horse provided the only means of livelihood for the landless family (the son ran a horsecart between Duc Lap and Bao Trai). When the mortar shell killed the horse, the woman had to turn to selling rice cakes to the soldiers and the children. To her it seemed almost impossible for the family to recoup the loss of a horse. According to her, "The horse costs 5000 piasters. We only have the horse to make a living. We don't know how we can have another one." When asked if the government had come to offer some payment for her loss, she laughed and answered, "Who would pay for that? It is up to the kindness of the province to give us much or little. The battalion did give us some rice, and American wheat rice [bulgar wheat]."

The other villagers in Ap Chanh, not being much better off themselves, tried to help the unfortunate family. The people "bought" the

horse from the family. Each person gave ten piasters to the family for a piece of the horse, yet very few actually took any meat. The pig that was killed provided the family with some meat, and when dressed, it brought in over 1500 piasters. The pig had just that day been put into a newly finished government pigpen.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

Step three of the Chien Thang plan called for the improvement of the local government in the area undergoing pacification. When pacification began in Duc Lap, there already was a well-functioning administration in Ap Chanh which was due largely to the efforts of one man, the village chief. He had come to Ap Chanh in 1961 with the Hoa Hao militia and set up an administration when there was none. At first, because of the general insecurity of the area, his task seemed impossible; but as the Hoa Hao were able to extend their control in the hamlet, he was able to provide more administrative services for the local residents. The introduction of the ARVN battalion to Duc Lap allowed the village chief to extend his administration into three more hamlets, Go Cao and Duc Hanh A and B. Today, only the hamlets of Tan Hoi and Cay Sen have no administrative contact with the village.

Outwardly it would seem that the village administration was one of the successes of pacification, as three out of the four full-time positions in Duc Lap are presently filled. In addition to the (dai-dien xa) village representative or chief, there is a (uy-vien canh sat) police offier and a (uy-vien tai-chanh) finance officer. Only the post of (uy-vien thong tin) information officer remains unfilled.

The administration in Duc Lap, however, faces its intrigues and crises just like the governments in Saigon, only in miniature. During the period of observation the village went through an administrative crisis which brought the removal of the village chief. The problem centered around a clash of personalities between the village chief and the village finance officer. To be equitable to both parties, each was asked to present his side of the story, but the finance officer declined comment on the incident; only the village chief's views can

be given here. Moreover, no one could be found in the village to argue for the finance officer.

The present police officer provided a complete picture of the incident, although his version may contain a certain amount of bias: "As you know, the village chief has been working here for two years or more. The people love him very much; in fact, I would say that 100 percent of the people love him. The finance officer, on the other hand, has been working here a very short time. In the last village-officers election, the finance officer submitted his name for election, but the people did not want him. When the ballots were counted, he did not receive one vote, but due to the lack of a finance officer here he had to take the office. He seldom comes to the office to work. When the people wanted to ask him for their papers or matters that are related to finance, they had to search for him. He did not observe the office working hours regulation. But the village chief always came to the office at the working hours to help the people with their papers or whatever else he could do. All the people, therefore, love him. Recently the finance officer took many ID cards from the young men here and forced them to form an army (the Combat Youth platoon) for him. The people complained very much because they did not volunteer, yet he forced them to join. He also used this method to try and overthrow the village chief. As I know it, the province chief said that the finance officer was to be the new village chief, and in turn the present village chief was to be his deputy. The official order has been issued, but at the present the finance officer has not taken the office of the village chief. When everyone here heard the news that he was to become village chief, they all complained. Therefore, he is hesitating to take the office. The present village chief does not want to fight for his office because he was the village chief and will now become the assistant and that would make him lose much face with the people. He would rather have the people think that he was removed from office because of disciplinary reasons rather than to have to step down to assistant village chief. The finance officer is supported by the province chief; therefore, the old man is helpless and cannot fight alone. As I have heard, should the village chief decide to go away, the people

here would submit a request to keep him here. They love him very much because he has been helping them so much before. He came here to this village and his men were sacrificed and even killed here. Before he came to the village, when there was no security here, no one wanted to be a village officer. Now that it is safe, many people would like to become village officers. That also discourages him."

The village chief did not want to discuss the matter, as it seemed to pain him; however, in the course of a general conversation he suddenly said, "I only hope I can help the government make its effort in this area permanent. I am from another place and I have been working here for three years, and now the financial officer is trying to take away my job. In comparison, my work is ten* and his is not even three. On election day he did not even receive a single vote, but today I find my position in the village beyond justice. He is made dai-dien [village chief] and I am to become his assistant. How can I have any more spirit to continue working? Regarding the people's feelings towards he and I, if I have ten then he does not even have two. Regarding the work of dai-dien, I do ten and he does not even make three. Everybody here knows about it. We must somehow do things here that are just and fair.

"Right now he has a strong force. He is supported by province, so he wins. There must be some justice here for the people, we must have a principle to work for, only by these methods will we be able to win the war. We can do nothing if dictatorship is practiced here.

"How can I stay here? You go out and check and see. That post, this post, they have been overrun and lost weapons, but not this post here. For the last three years only two persons have been killed, but the post has never been overrun. Not even a single bullet or rifle has been lost, and besides, the people love us too. Yet, now something like this has to happen. We are really broken-hearted. You think of what I said."

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*Apparently this is a scale used to compare work done by individuals, popularity, or any other measure desired. It appears that this scale differs from the common slang scale often heard in Saigon, where "number one" means something very good and "number ten" means something very bad.

On September 18, 1964, the province chief appointed the finance officer as the new dai-dien of Duc Lap village, and the present village chief was to be his assistant. Acccording to the new dai-dien (the former finance officer), 70 percent of the people in the village approved of the change. In a short interview he would not discuss his new position; rather, he advised that the way to win the war is to settle all internal differences. In his words, "This is our house, and if we want to defeat the enemy in our house, we must first clean out our house ourselves." Whether or not this comment was aimed at any particular situation in the village is not known. Internal politics in Duc Lap should be interesting to watch in the future to see what changes, if any, will result from the overturn in the village administration.

There was little comment from the village population regarding the change; most of them adopted a wait-and-see attitude. The general feeling of the villagers was summed up by the hamlet chief of Duc Hanh A, "We do not see any particular character in him [the new dai-dien] yet. But he addresses the people right."

During this same conversation with the hamlet chief, two interesting points were discussed which may give a little insight into the workings of a low-level administrative official in rural Vietnam. The first point dealt with the authority of the hamlet chief within his own hamlet, and although this incident was taken from the "rice-roots" level of Vietnamese government, one could easily imagine this same situation possibly being repeated under somewhat similar circumstances in a village, district, or province, or perhaps on an even higher government level in Vietnam. In fact, one perhaps needs look no farther than the recent change of village chiefs in Duc Lap to see the possible connection.

Q: [To the hamlet chief] Suppose you were to go and tell the dai-dien that a certain man in your hamlet were a communist?

A: Of course, he'll be arrested.

Q: And will he be tortured?

A: He certainly will be--if not much it would be a little, however.

Q: So if you hate someone and want revenge then he would not have much luck?

A: Yes, that's right, it's natural!

While this man in a crude way expressed the awareness of his authority in the hamlet, with--perhaps equal crudity he recognized his responsibility as hamlet chief and the possible consequences were he guilty of a misdeed. When asked if he would like to have a radio transceiver so that he could communicate directly with the village office in Ap Chanh, he did not appear too receptive to the idea. After a long moment of apparently conscientious thought, he answered, "Yes, it is all right if I get killed and the communists get the radio, but what if the radio is lost and I am not killed?"

GLOSSARY

Chieu Hoi Rallier: A rallier is any insurgent who leaves the Viet Cong and rallies to the government. The Vietnamese name for the program dealing with returning insurgents is Chieu Hoi (Open Arms). The Chieu Hoi program was recently elevated to ministerial level with the formation of the Bo Chieu Hoi (Chieu Hoi Ministry).

Dai-dien: This Vietnamese term literally means big representative. In Duc Lap the village chief is called dai-dien by the village population.

Hoa Hao: A political-religious sect of about two million people located mainly in the western provinces of the Mekong delta. The Hoa Hao are traditionally anticommunist, primarily because their sect founder, Huynh Phu So, was killed by the Viet-minh in 1947.

Hop-tac: This Vietnamese word, meaning cooperate, was used to entitle the joint U.S.-RVN program to secure the provinces surrounding the capital of Saigon.

National Liberation Front: The NLF is the political cover organization for the Viet Cong insurgents. Supposedly, the NLF is made up of several member associations formed from a broad popular base throughout Vietnam.

Nhan dao: This Vietnamese term can be translated as humanity, or to be humane. To the people of Duc Lap village, nhan dao is the main characteristic they would like in their national government.

Tram thong tin: The term for information stations, or information offices, which are built in many villages by the Government of Vietnam.

Tram y te: This literally means public-health station and is the general term for the dispensaries built in villages in conjunction with the pacification program.