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Saigon—The 1967 American-South Vietnamese battle strategy for running the war in Vietnam calls for more of the same, except for re-emphasis—on the ground instead of ⁱⁿ political speeches—on the revolutionary development program, or rev, dev, as American colonels call it.

The Revolutionary Development program, the attempt to pacify the rural population in selected ^e target areas—is clearly one of the chief barometers of progress in the current phase of the Vietnam war; the degree of progress or non-progress may well determine the crucial assessment of whether America and her allies can win the war and save South Vietnam from Communist control.

American officials here, speaking in private, concede that the Revolutionary Development program will determine American foreign policy within the next six months—and hence ^B probably the future of South East ^A Asia and potentially future insurrections in other under-developed countries. These officials argue that if the American-allied forces fail to make substantial progress in the Revolutionary Development program, American policy will fail in Vietnam. However, the reverse is not necessarily true, these sources say. If the Revolutionary Development program ^{Success} ~~success~~ perfectly, the country and the war could still be lost because the Communists have broadened their base of support in the urban centers, which are becoming festering sores of anti-Americanism.

The mood of uncertainty, if not pessimism, within circles of Americans here results from the ^{fact} ~~fact~~ that the Revolutionary Development ~~has~~ program has failed to make any progress since it was launched in a spectacular manner at the Honolulu Conference attended by President Lyndon Johnson and Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky a year ago this month.

The name of Revolutionary Development is itself a Madison Avenue-ism a la Vietnam and was born at the Honolulu Conference.

The words Revolutionary Development ^{are BUT} ~~only~~ the soft-self English translation for ~~jazzy~~ image purposes from ~~the~~ the Vietnamese words of "Xay Dung Nong Thon" which means literally, "rural building". ^{words meaning} American officials here are miffed ^{speeches} that for Vietnamese consumption the world meanier "revolution" are edited out of Vietnamese government spectacles.

Despite it's jazzy name useful for foreign press reports, the Rev Dev program is old in concept tactics and techniques; ^{back success} experts on pacification report. Some of these sources say the program is not only currently failing but is impossible ^{to succeed} in the future.

"The 1967 Rev Dev program is simply the resurrection of the old strategic hamlet program launched in 1962 by American advisors and the Vietnamese government then headed by President Ngo Dinh Diem," one Vietnamese politician explained. "The program failed then and it is even more certain to fail again unless radical changes are made." These sources point out that there are now far more odds against the program than there were in 1962, first because at that time the Communist controlled little of the rural ~~territory~~ territory or the population—and now they control substantial numbers—and second because the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem had disciplined political administrative and military channels ^{of} of command. Now the administrative-political structure under Prime Minister Ngyuen Cao Ky for purposes of governing is virtually termitted away with Communist subversion, corruption among government employes and general lack of leadership.

Of the 12,000 hamlets in the Vietnamese ^{Countryside} countryside, 5,000—on paper for public consumption—are considered by the Vietnamese government to be under government control. Privately, these well informed sources ^{say} that the Vietnamese government concedes it controls only slightly more than 1000 of the 12,000 hamlets in the country. According to the Revolutionary Development plan American troops are to launch offensive operations, which will provide an outer screen security for the four high-priority target areas in the countryside in the first phase called clearing. ^(more)

Then Vietnamese army and para-military troops will systematically attempt to protect these selected villages in the second phase of the program called securing.

Then in the third phase called nation-building, 500 pacification teams of 59 men each will be sent to these selected hamlets; each team will attempt to pacify two hamlets a year during 1967, ~~raising~~ by raising by at least another 1000 the ~~to~~ total number of hamlets under government control. ~~By~~ The 59-man teams are broken down into six kinds of cadre, each to perform different functions. They are: people's self-defense teams, real new life hamlet cadre, new-society-building cadre in charge of self-help projects such as building ~~sh~~ schools and bridges, rural political cadre, civic action teams and armed propaganda teams.

In addition to the 59-man teams, there is also a rather ~~sin~~ sinister bunch of "census grievance takers", which are inconspicuously linked to the American Central Intelligence Agency. They travel the country logging complaints and trying to keep track of who's who in the Viet Cong, ^{who's} ~~won's~~ on the Saigon side and who's sitting on the fence.

Census ~~gri~~ grievance workers must fill out nineteen forms each day so that American-supplied computers can digest how many ~~pe~~ pigs are in an area, how much food is in the market and so on.

Each census grievance cadre also has two ~~pencil~~ pencils, a red one for coloring Viet Cong areas on his village map and a green one for in-between and wavering areas. Friendly areas are left uncolored.

(More)

Besides the Revolutionary Development program, the over-all military strategy for 1967 calls for continuous, intensive and systematic tactical operations rather than the ~~rather~~ random reaction-type operations which have occurred since the arrival of American units here in March, 1965. The highlights of this more-of-the-same policy are:

1. An all-out effort to annihilate or neutralize roughly a dozen clusters of the ninety Communist military base areas in South Vietnam. The tactical implementation calls for the harshest, most destructive non-nuclear means seen to date in the war. American air, artillery and naval gunfire will be called on more than ~~ever~~ to ever to pulverize small portions of these selected targets. Other means include digging up Communist tunnel complexes with special engineering equipment and explosives, ~~sprink~~ sprinkling non-lethal tear gas in these selected areas, defoliation of large tracts of Communist-held jungle wasteland, destruction by aerial spraying of rice ~~land~~ crops grown by Communist or pro-Communist elements, blowing up important salt beds, rooting up sections of the Communist-held jungles with special plows and ~~large~~ significant resettlement of the rural population now living in the Communist-held base areas.

"In small selected areas, we want to take the jungle, the rice and the people away from the Communists," one source explained.

2. While destroying Communist base areas on a priority basis, other "search and destroy" operation—in a slight shift of emphasis since 1966—will be ~~be~~ confined to military priority areas which directly support and provide security ^{for} of the Revolutionary Development program.

(More)

More American ground operations are to serve as follow-ups of B-52 Strategic Air Command raids and artillery bombardments ~~in~~ rather ~~than~~ ^{than} than ~~seal~~ solely strike forces of ground-power.

3. An ~~see~~ across-the-board intensification of attempts to seal off both the ground and sea routes of infiltration into South Vietnam.

4. Far greater emphasis on psychological warfare techniques—~~n~~ leaflets, radio broadcasts, personal appeals—to ~~cause~~ ^{to cause} the Communist troops to defect to the Vietnamese government side or to desert their own units.

5. Far greater intensification of intelligence-gathering, not only for day-to-day tactical military and political information within South Vietnam, but also strategic information on over-all Communist plans, such as attempting to ascertain these questions: will the Communist Chinese directly intervene in the Vietnam conflict, either with ground forces in South Vietnam or other parts of South East Asia, or in the air either to fight American bombers over North Vietnam or ^{to launch} launching their own retaliatory air-raids against strategic American airbases, such as at Danang or in Thailand? Will a dissident, neutralist or pro-Communist group attempt to seize power in ~~either through a~~ ^{either through a} ~~another~~ coup d'etat or political insurrections?

(More)

Concurrently, political attempts are in the offing to strengthen the Saigon regime at the central-government level, the beginning being the drafting of a constitution and the re-birth of a popularly-elected executive and legislative ~~branch~~ branches of government which would provide a legal and representative basis not simply for the government ~~and~~ but also possibly for the American ~~pres~~ presence in South Vietnam. This process at the central government level is not considered a solution to Vietnam's political problems, but is simply the first of a long, painstaking series of steps necessary to build a cohesive body politic on the non-Communist side within the South, political sources report.

Some Western political sources believe that it is already too late to re-knit a ~~new~~ non-Communist political fabric strong enough to withstand the ever-expanding Communist subversion of the cities, the government, the police, schools and nationalist political and social organizations.

"The question is not whether the Communists think they can win South Vietnam politically," one high-ranking Western source explained. "The question is whether they believe they have already won it. Maybe they have."