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THE COMMUNIST SECRET WEAPON--THE GUERRILLA

Saigon--A tough, wiry Vietnamese Army major ~~stair~~ leaned against building at Tan Son Nhut airport not long ago, waiting for his flight to the battle-weary Mekong Delta area in the south.

While waiting, he began to reminisce about the days ^{two} twenty years ago when he was a regimental commander for the Communist guerrillas fighting the French--then called Viet Minh--during their anti-colonial war.

"When we started in the delta region, we had ² only five men--armed only with knives and daggers," he recalled, lighting a menthol cigarette. "We hid in the swamps and attacked the French with our knives and bare hands--and ² ten captured a few guns.

"Within a week, we had a squad and within a month we had a 40-man platoon and three months later we had a 150-man company. It did not take us long. When the French convoys came down the road, we aimed all our guns at ² the ~~mac~~ ^{grabbed only that} their machinegun and ² pretty soon we were well armed.

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~~"We beat the French because of their own carelessness. We~~
watched the little things. We would wait for hours when they
they went to their rear bases for supplies; when they returned they
though the road was secure and casually marched along. Then we
hit them and grabbed their supplies. We beat the French because of
their own carelessness.

He was asked whether the Communist guerrillas now fighting the
American-backed government in Saigon used the same tactics.

"Yeah," he laughed. "It's just the same now, but the time
periods are different."

American generals in Saigon frequently describe
Vietnamese guerrilla warfare as being similar to the "cowboy and
Indians" ~~typical~~ hit-and-run fighting of the American Old West.
While guerrilla warfare has been practiced for years, it was the
Mao Tse-Tung who made the first systematic study of it. He
By combining it with the revolutionary appeal of Communism, he
conducted one of the most radical revolutions in Asia.

One of his key tactical principles was, "In guerrilla warfare,
select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from
the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw;
deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision."

A more important principle was "political power comes out
of the barrel of a gun." Consistently in guerrilla warfare writing
Mao stresses the importance of the political factors which ~~control~~

and ~~control~~ condition all the decisions of the guerrilla ~~fight~~

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In his day-to-day ~~exp~~ existence, the guerrilla is both protected by and aided by the civilian population; one of the common problems facing all Viet-N Vietnamese field commanders is the ability of the Communist guerrilla to "melt" into the rice-paddy peasant population in the delta ~~mountain~~ as well as the "green hell" jungles of the mountains bordering Laos.

The significant political decisions of the Communist guerrillas in Vietnam are, of course, made by the Communist party, or the People's Revolutionary Party. ~~When~~ The Communist party in Viet Nam administers its political ~~policy~~ decisions through ten various "specialized sections," operating at the five basic levels or organization: the central level, inter-zone, provincial, district and village. ~~These~~ These specialized sections revealing the emphasis of party work are:

Military Section (Liberation Army)

Action Among Enemy Troops (i. e. infiltrate the national army)

Action Among Civilian Population

Action for the National Liberation Front

Propaganda and Cultural Affairs

Training and Education

Organization Work for the People's Revolutionary Party

Economic and Financial Affairs

Communication and Liaison, Bases

Security and Public Order

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While the military section is given primary priority in the administration of Party work, it is important to note that there are nine other areas of Party interest, with the other nine sections dealing with political and administrative activities. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The secretary-general of the executive committee of the Party is generally responsible for acting as chief of the military section, but he has other responsibilities as well. Sometimes one political cadre ~~XXXX~~ is chief of several sections.

Throughout their organization in Viet Nam, the Party has given the political commissar of one level an equal rank with the military rank of the immediately higher rank. A ^{Communist} Vietnamese battalion commander, for example, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ is outranked politically by a political cadre from his subordinate district level. Within his own battalion, an important political cadre with the rank of sergeant may outrank him on political decisions.

For example, the battalion commander may well decide that ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ a systematic campaign of terrorism would lead to greater military success in a shorter time. However, the political cadre would over-rule him, saying simply that no short-term military expediency ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ must be subordinate to long-term political objectives. In short, too much terror would create more staunchly anti-Communist enemies who would be eager for revenge against them.

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There are two basic theories about the nature of the guerrilla in Viet Nam. One is that the revolution they seek is basically "homegrown" with South Vietnamese peasant spontaneously rising against their own government. The second theory--the line generally followed by American policy-makers--is that the guerrilla support is based on the "foreign aggression" from Hanoi.

By a

By a quirk of history, both seem partial true. The 1954 Geneva Agreements partitioning Vietnam provided that made the basic provisions under which 600,000 South Vietnamese were resettled in ~~the~~ North Viet Nam and another 6-700,000 ~~North~~ North Vietnamese were ~~reset~~ moved into the ~~not~~ southern r ep republic. From at least 1961 onwards, the South Vietnamese, after intensive training and indoctrination in North Viet Nam, began r to infiltrate into their old homes in the South. Official estimates indicate that more than 5000 infiltrated into the South in 1961; more than 4000 in 1962 and ~~1962~~ another 4000 in 1963. These were primarily political cadre--not guerrillas--to provide leadership for the organization and formation of guerrilla units, to organize the Party. But their numbers are the equivalent of a national army division.

Yet, the infiltration also indicates a "homegrown" revolution, to liberate South Viet Nam by South Vietnamese of South Vietnamese by South Vietnamese. But the hardcore of them

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were trained and indoctrinated in North Viet Nam and then again returned to their homelands in the South.

The differences between the Communist guerrilla and the ~~American GI~~ political awareness of the American GI may be summarised best in the words of retired U. S. Marine general, Samuel Griffith:

"In the United States, we go to considerable trouble to keep soldiers out of politics, and even more to keep politics out of soldiers. Guerrillas do exactly the opposite. They go to great lengths to make sure that their men are politically educated and thoroughly aware of the issues at stake....His indoctrination begins even before he is taught to shoot accurately, and it is unceasing. The end product is an intensely loyal and politically alert fighting man."

This key difference between guerrillas and American military ~~system practice~~ may demand ~~in~~ a substantial re-adjustment of the ~~military~~ concept of the role of the military system if the guerrillas become the ~~new~~ ~~best~~ ~~new~~ ~~enemy~~ ~~secret~~ ~~weapon~~ of the future.

Tomorrow: "Ternite" Warfare.