

Cong Propagandizes Rice Paddies

By Beverly Deepe
A Special Correspondent

SADEC,
South Viet Nam.

Rice-paddy politics is inextricable from the Communist military effort here. The persuasion is part terror, of course, but an often ignored element appeals—and appeals well—to pride.

Villagers near this South Vietnamese army divisional headquarters town, 73 miles southwest of Saigon in the Mekong Delta, are told, for example, that they can stand tall among the downtrodden of the earth if only they'll heed the word from the Viet Cong's political stump.

"Half of our country, with only 14 million population, is heroically standing up against a nation of 200 million

people," many of them were told recently.

"We will win this war and our friends in other parts of the world will follow our example and the American aggressors will be defeated.

"We will be international heroes," the harangue went on.

It comes from the little-known top echelons of the Communist National Liberation Front. It appears at monthly meetings of Viet Cong political cadre and propagandists. They then fan out into the Communist controlled "combat hamlets," into villages in contested areas and into the paddy fields themselves.

Villagers exposed to the spiels repeatedly can quote them. A recent one:

"The 'people's revolutionary

war' is completely different from the conventional, Korean-type war, which the Americans are trying to manufacture in South Viet Nam," they were told in a village near here.

"After a number of years, the Americans then hope to end it with a conference, and they will continue to occupy South Viet Nam as they do South Korea. Viet Nam will be divided forever.

"Then the Americans can resume the war any time they wish. The Vietnamese people will never have peace. The country will never be reunited and our fatherland will never prosper," the Communist agent went on.

"The only way to peace and prosperity is to fight the American aggressors to the end."

As well as instilling ambi-

tion for "international heroism" in the Southerners, the Viet Cong political agents promise them they are to be "masters of the countryside." They can dominate the roads and bridges once reserved for the rich and the powerful; they can give orders to landowners, they are told.

One older villager laughed openly at the Communist propaganda and said older villagers do not believe it, but that the teen-agers are inflated and inspired by it.

"We dare not laugh out loud when we see these kids of 15 or 16 carrying Russian rifles that reach all the way to their ankles," the elder said. "They have weapons and they are the masters of the countryside. Who dares challenge them except the government troops?"