

Deepe

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page 1

May 19, 1965

COMMUNISM: THE NEW REALITY.

SAIGON--One of the biggest puzzles in the Viet Nam war is what makes the Communist-directed Viet Cong guerrillas fight with such fervor.

"It's fantastic the way the Viet Cong lay it out," one Vietnamese-speaking American provincial representative explained. "As seen through the eyes of young kids who fought with ~~the Viet Cong~~, they say the Viet Cong create a new order and a new reality."

deepe

series-article 2 of 7-article series

page 2

According to reliable sources who have talked with Viet Cong prisoners and defectors, the Viet Cong strength is divided into two broad categories: the older-generation troops who fought against the French 15-20 years ago and the younger-generation troops who were recruited locally in South Viet Nam.

Of the first category, more than 70,000 Viet Minh --as they were called during the French Indo-China War-- left their homes in South Vietnam when the country was partitioned in 1954, were sent to North Viet Nam where they continued their training, and indoctrination. From 1956 onwards they gradually infiltrated and returned to their native villages; the most significant aspect of their return was a transfusion of political leadership within the South to organize and recruit younger Southerners --simultaneously, the Party apparatus began directing a massive terror campaign of assassination against government village officials, virtually levelling its leadership capabilities.

This category fought the French for one simple reason: for independence, with its anti-French, anti-colonial, anti-white-race overtones. They fought-and won-militarily with guns, but their most effective weapon was hate.

deepe

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page 3

In one case, a member of a Viet Minh suicide squad wrapped himself in cotton, ran into a French ammunition depot in Saigon and burned himself alive to destroy the installation. The story of the "Cotton Boy" swept through the countryside.

"My father even wanted me to volunteer to be a Cotton Boy," a Saigon businessman recently recalled. In short, the father hated the French more than he loved his son.

Young Vietnamese students in their history books were taught that the French were the ancestors of the Vietnamese race. This argument undermined the Viet Minh "anti-French" campaign.

The Viet Minh cadre immediately said--throughout the countryside, "Please remember. Your ancestors were not the French. You know your ancestors were the dragon and the fairy," a legend commonly accepted by the population, while French troops drank imported wine, ^{the Viet Minh} preached self-sufficiency.

In one case, a Vietnamese doctor, now the North Vietnamese minister of health, developed "stand-up beer"--made from ~~distilled~~ ^{filtered} male urine plus yeast. It reportedly tastes like non-carbonated beer and the Viet Minh cadre joyfully drank it in their stronghold area of B-Zone north of Saigon.

deepe

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page 4

According to prisoners of this category, once they returned to South Viet Nam in the late fifties, they were surprised at what they had seen. They had been told the South must be liberated from its own poverty; One said he was astonished to see the government troopers wearing boots. (Communist troops often wear rubber-tire sandals). Another said he had been told that two-thirds of South Viet Nam had been liberated; but when he attacked government villages the peasants shot up his units. They had been told they must liberate the South from the American imperialists, but soon discovered they were fighting the Vietnamese themselves.

But few of these defect to the government side. One old-time propaganda agent captured in the South explained that he listen to VOA and BBC to discover the truth; but listened to Radio Hanoi to find out the correct party line. He reasoned that if the Party lied, there must be a good reason for it, and it knew best.

The younger-generation Viet Cong troops join the Liberation Army for different reasons. Some of them are virtually kidnapped; others have personal grievances--or simply boredom in the villages--and the Viet Cong promise them fun, adventure, excitement and a change to see life and be educated.

deepe

series---article 2 of 7 article series

page 5

There is no sharp over-riding national cause which the Viet Cong are pushing throughout the country, such as the anti-French campaign. But there are grievances. Some unmarried males join to get away from their landowners; some are fired from their job and join with the Viet Cong. Many prefer serving with the Viet Cong rather than government forces because they believe they can stay closer to their families. Some young married fellows join to get away from the in-laws; the Communists in the village promise to take care of his wife and children. (One Viet Cong trooper returned to his village, found his wife and children destitute, picked up a rifle and shot up the Viet Cong village committee). One was talked into joining when a sweet-voiced girl promised to marry him; he became disillusioned when he found she had ~~him~~ promised to marry six others also. Some are simply kidnapped at gunpoint; one was lead away with a rope around his neck; one was kidnapped when he happened to be in his village---while ~~of~~ his buddies had purposely gone fishing--- because he was married in the afternoon. He was kidnapped only hours after the wedding .

One reliable source estimated that about 10-15% of Southern-born Viet Cong strength were orphans; about 30% are farm laborers; about 80% came from the rural areas.

deepe

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page6 6

But the Viet Cong also have a strong appeal for the youth. "The Viet Cong promise them fun--that life will be gay," one reliable source indicated. "Many of them that join believe they get this."

But even if the youth are forced to join the Viet Cong, a very effective indoctrination session immediately begins to mold him into enthusiastic well-disciplined fighter.

Perhaps, this can be seen in their songs.

Neil Jamieson, a 29-year-old, Vietnamese-speaking provincial representative translated a number of Viet Cong songs and talked with incoming Viet Cong defectors. The ex-marine is a resident of Gloucester City, New Jersey.

One of the songs read:

We are peasants in soldier's clothing
Waging the struggle for a class oppressed for
thousands of years;

Our suffering is the suffering of the people.

"Many of their songs are centered on victory,"

Jamieson explained.

"They associate the soldiers with the peasants-- fighting oppression, not only against the foreigners, but also the upper-classes within the society.

deepe

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page 7

The troops accept--in fact, glorify--the hardship because it identifies the soldiers with the people. It's almost like old Christianity. It's like little kids' Sunday school hymns--the idea of picking up the Cross for Jesus but instead of a cross it's a pack.

He said most of the Viet Cong songs were "upbeat, emphasizing the positive in a normal Vincent Peale manner." government songs are often ^{SAD}ged and melanchaly .

"The young troops lived a very spartan life," he continued. They were short of medicine, and each had one case of malaria every several months. Many suffered real hardships. It was cold in the jungle, yet they didn't dare light a big fire.

"I talked with many of the Viet Cong about their songs. After their evening meal, they would break into teams of three and have their self-criticism sessions. Each one would go through his experiences of the day, his life, in society and also in his three-man combat team. If one of them was wounded in combat, the two buddies would take care of him.

"After supper they would go through this ritual. They are taught to do this immediately after joining the Viet Cong by the older cadre, who told them that sins can be forgiven but to conceal anything is a blow against the group.

deeps

series--article 2 of 7 article series

page 8

If, for example the young trooper had lost his ammunition or weapon, he'd criticize himself. This psychological aspect is a great Viet Cong strength.

"After the self-criticism session, there would be announcements by the cadre and then they would sit around and sing to pass their time in the evening. They would sit around a small campfire, if security permitted--just like the Boy Scouts used to. "These youth were uneducated, but the Communists taught them about Sputnik and Castro and Cuba. They didn't understand it well, but they knew Cuba was a tiny country near America and America was a paper tiger when Cuba stood up to us and we were powerless to do anything to them.

"We think getting ~~it~~ in the Communist youth organization is a privilege, but there were no privileges, in fact, they are, expected to work harder and set examples for others. The troops were short of rice, yet each day they put a few grains of each meal in a bamboo tube; when there was enough they'd take it to a tribal village and have a party for the children. This had a big impact on the guy who gave the rice--like droppin money into lanten box on family dinner table.

deepe

series---article 2 of 7 article series

page 9

"One youthful trooper was with the Viet Cong for three years, and was a member of a their Youth organization, which is the half-way point to becoming a party member. He was recruited at gunpoint; but he didn't % hate the Viet Cong,. He told me "If I told you what I thought about out there in the jungle you'd think I was crazy. The Viet Cong create a new reality; you feel you are in the world and not out of it."