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SEPTEMBER 1970

CONVERSATIONS WITH ENEMY SOLDIERS IN LATE 1968/EARLY 1969: A STUDY OF MOTIVATION AND MORALE

Konrad Kellen

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THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE/INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS AND THE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY

Rand
SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

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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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For a description of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Project and interviewing process, the reader should first consult W. Phillips Davison, *User's Guide to the Rand Interviews in Vietnam,* R-1024-ARPA, March 1972.

These reports can be obtained from The Rand Corporation.

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RM-4517-1 Some Impressions of the Effects of Military Operations on Viet Cong Behavior, L. Goure, August 1965.

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RM-4983-1 A Profile of Viet Cong Cadres, W. P. Davison, J. J. Zasloff, June 1966.

RM-5013-1 A Profile of the PAVN Soldier in South Vietnam, K. Kellen, June 1966.

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RM-5353-1 The War in the Delta: Views from Three Viet Cong Battalions, M. Gurtov, September 1967.

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RM-5450-1 A Statistical Analysis of the U.S. Crop Spraying Program in South Vietnam, A. J. Russo, October 1967.

RM-5462-1 A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp in 1966-1967, K. Kellen, November 1969.

RM-5486-1 Viet Cong Recruitment: Why and How Men Join, J. C. Donnell, December 1967.

RM-5487-1 The Viet Cong Style of Politics, N. Leites, May 1969.

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RM-5533-1 The Insurgent Environment, R. M. Pearce, May 1969.

RM-5647 Volunteers for the Viet Cong, F. Denton, September 1968.

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RM-5799 The Viet Cong in Saigon: Tactics and Objectives During the Tet Offensive, V. Pohle, January 1969.

RM-5848 Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion -- Part One: Unit Composition and Personnel, D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969.

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RM-6131-1 Conversations with Enemy Soldiers in Late 1968/Early 1969: A Study of Motivation and Morale, K. Kellen, September 1970.

RM-6375-1 Rallying Potential Among the North Vietnemese Armed Forces, A Sweetland, December 1970.

PREFACE

This Memorandum is the last of a series on Viet Cong motivation and morale undertaken by The RAND Corporation for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) and the Advanced Research Projects Agency.

The Memorandum attempts to assess elements of cohesion in the enemy forces that have made it possible for the enemy to retain effective control over his actions and his organization throughout many years of warfare. For the purpose of this analysis, interviews collected primarily during 1968 and early 1969 have been exploited. Although eight months have passed since this Memorandum was written, the author likes to think that this in no way renders the contents obsolete. Subsequent events have confirmed the basic findings, i.e., enemy troops, despite increasing hardships and frustrations with no rewarding victories to show in return, have failed to reveal any signs of cracking. And the results of the principal investigation of the report -- the enemy's motivation for continued fighting -- appear as valid today as when the report was first completed.

Previous studies published by The RAND Corporation that relate to this general subject are: *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale* RM-4507-ISA, by John C. Donnell, Guy Pauker and Joseph J. Zasloff, March 1965 ; *A Profile of the PAVN Soldier in South Vietnam* , RM-5013-1-ISA/ARPA, by Konrad Kellen, March 1967 ; *A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp* , RM-5462-ISA/ARPA, by Konrad Kellen, October 1967 .

This Memorandum addresses itself to three groups of readers, in descending order: (1) Military and civilian decisionmakers now trying to assess what concessions can reasonably be expected from the enemy in the future course of the war; (2) analysts concerned with "lessons learned" from the war; and (3) students of communism and Southeast Asia in general interested in learning something about Communist soldiers under the actual stress of a long war.

SUMMARY

This Memorandum is the last in a series of investigations into what in broad terms would be called the morale and motivation of the enemy forces in Vietnam.

The findings of this report are difficult, if not impossible, to summarize in such a way as to preserve the full content of this non-quantitative study. Theoretically, they could be summarized in two ways. One way would be to give short, consolidated answers to the questions that were asked, for example: the respondents said food was adequate; or, the Americans were responsible for this war; or, their leaders were good leaders. One could also make a short statement regarding the enemy's morale and motivation, such as: morale is high, and the enemy's main motivation is his belief in the "Revolution." But such summaries would not contain the essence of the interview materials, nor would summary statements actually made at the conclusion of each section reflect fully the content of the study. Only the complete text can give the reader the full flavor of the responses.

Reading the full text, the reader may have two adverse reactions. One would be: "The same old stuff! That's what they said years ago!" To this, the analyst can only say that such continuity and sameness of responses, after the enemy forces have been assailed for years by the twin thrusts of our military and political efforts, is in itself a finding, perhaps a most important one, deserving careful consideration.

The second adverse reaction by the reader may be: "Why repeat all this communist propaganda? I know what the line is on most of these subjects!" But it makes a world of difference whether some web of totalitarian "lines" is enunciated by the Lao Dong and promulgated through the media, or whether the lower rank and file absorbs it all, makes it its own, assimilates it and believes it, professes it and teaches it to others. It is well-known that totalitarian propaganda is often not "bought" by the lower levels, at least not in its entirety. There is usually considerable slippage. On the other hand, to the extent that it is accepted, often it is repeated in a parrot-like fashion, which may indicate brittleness. The latter is what we call indoctrination,

a term we also tend to apply to those on the enemy side who follow their leaders willingly, and which, in the view of this author on the basis of what follows, is a particularly ill-chosen term. For, in the case of pure indoctrination the victim is generally made to believe something of which he had no personal experience and about which he really has little personal opinion or feeling. But the enemy soldier's views and responses in Vietnam are different, and therefore deserve, in this analyst's view, the reader's patient attention.

Only by immersing himself in these responses can the reader obtain a genuine feeling of how high morale or how strong motivation is on the other side, and under what circumstances these two related forces are likely or unlikely to disintegrate. The enemy's picture of the world, his country, his mission, and our role in his country is remarkable by its simplicity, clarity, and internal consistency. And the tenor of his responses is remarkable by the control of his passion,* and by his matter-of-factness and clarity. Finally, the responses are impressive by their straightforwardness. Unlike interviews with prisoners or defectors of World War II, the Korean War, or refugees from behind the Iron Curtain, these interviews reveal few attempts of the Vietnamese prisoners to ingratiate themselves with the interviewer, nor do these prisoners appear sullen. Prisoners report and explain, one is tempted to say, patiently, to the interviewer what they have experienced and what they believe and think.

Analysis of the present material indicates that *neither our military actions nor our political or psywar efforts seem to have made an appreciable dent on the enemy's overall motivation and morale structure.* The findings also disclose, as in the aforementioned 1967 study of the enemy, that both morale and motivation in fighter and cadre ranks are unlikely to collapse under similar circumstances in the near future.

These findings are based on *what only 22 haphazardly chosen men* have said. It is impossible to demonstrate that they are representative. Two elements, however, favor the assumption that they may be, to some extent: one is the internal and external consistency (as perceived by this analyst) of their responses with over a thousand other interviews; the second is the validation by events -- in the six and more months since

*Which he shares with the highest leaders of the Lao Dong.

these interviews were conducted, the enemy's performance has been in line with what one would expect from an army composed of soldiers similar to the 22 men heard here.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is greatly indebted to J. F. Digby, Dan Ellsberg, J. W. Ellis, Jr., F. C. Iklé, William Jones, and Anders Sweetland, all staff members of The RAND Corporation, for their assistance. Some aided with their suggestions and criticisms, while others expedited the laborious interview process. This, naturally, does not implicate any of them in the shortcomings of this Memorandum; the responsibility lies solely with the author.

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"Were you disappointed with the results [of an inconclusive battle]?"

> Sincerely speaking I was never disappointed with the result of any battle. Fighting the war we always think that there will be times when we lose and there will be times when we win, and we should not be too optimistic when we win or too disappointed when we lose. When we lose we must find out what caused us to lose and gain experience for the next time.
>
> Deputy Squad Leader, VC (K-13)
> January 9, 1969

I. INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND OF PRESENT STUDY

The first of the motivation and morale reports on the Viet Cong -- based, as are all the others in the series, primarily on interviews of enemy soldiers by RAND-trained Vietnamese interviewers using RAND-designed questionnaires -- appeared in March 1965. Produced by RAND staff member Guy Pauker and RAND consultants John Donnell and Joe Zasloff,* it showed that enemy morale was high.

Subsequently, about a dozen more reports were produced in the general area of morale on the basis of additional interviews. The results of some of these reports, restricted more or less to a search for vulnerabilities, spoke of a variety of weaknesses in the enemy's psychological armor. But most of the reports that tried to "feel the pulse" of the enemy force as a whole concluded that the enemy forces, whatever else they lacked in the fighting, had high morale and strong motivation. These findings remained constant over time. From the Pauker/Donnell/Zasloff analysis produced in 1965 and from this author's own analyses of mid-1966 and again mid-1967, morale of both VC and NVA forces -- forces that became increasingly intermingled -- emerged as high. And from additional research memoranda by other authors, dealing only with limited groups of the enemy forces, the results were similar.**

This author's October 1967 report on enemy morale went considerably beyond merely trying to form a view of the status of that morale, however. After examining the principal single elements of that morale and uncovering how they interacted, and what, in particular, they seemed fed by or sensitive to, the author concluded that the enemy's morale was well-nigh indestructible and therefore not likely to be significantly lowered by pressures on the soldiers in battle. At the time of this conclusion, the enemy forces had yet ahead the most extensive U.S. Army

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* *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale* , The RAND Corporation, RM-4507-ISA, March 1965 .

** *The War in the Delta: Views from Three Viet Cong Battalions* The RAND Corporation, RM-5353-ISA/ARPA, September 1967 , and *Viet Cong Cadres and the Cadre System: A Study of the Mainland Local Forces* , The RAND Corporation, RM-5414-ISA/ARPA, December 1967 , both by Melvin Gurtov.

military actions ever to be applied against them.

The 1967 study found, further, that the enemy forces' high morale and cohesion was likely to last, even under sustained pressures. The study reached the conclusion that ". . . in sum, the enemy may well be *incapable* of giving in" and that, because of this cohesion within his own structure, and his perhaps slightly deteriorating but amply adequate relations with the population, he could "force us not only to accept increasing losses of our own, but also to kill more of him (and his civilian population) than can be our national interest."* Our experience on the field of battle seems to have borne out this conclusion, which was based on depositions of men captured as early as the end of 1966.

In 1968 no motivation and morale study was issued but interview reports continued to arrive routinely from Vietnam. They tended to show that the 1968 Tet offensive, which had been both a success and a failure, in different ways, for the enemy, but of which, at the time when prisoners or defectors were questioned, only the failure was fully apparent, had no more shaken the enemy's morale than any prior failures. Due to the great losses suffered, the absence of the promised and expected general uprising, and the now inevitable prolongation of the war whose end had been expected and hoped for, the morale of some of the soldiers apparently diminished slightly after Tet as it had on other occasions. But once again, the cadres, and particularly the political officers, individually and in Kiem Thao (criticism/self-criticism) sessions, apparently "redressed" the fighters' morale very effectively. (This confirmed, among other things, that even if formal trend studies could be made showing declines in morale, the findings would possibly be unreliable, as the "bouncing back" under the ministrations of those charged with it is perhaps the most outstanding feature of enemy morale in Vietnam.)

Finally, in 1969, the writer was encouraged to take one more look at the structure of enemy morale. To undertake the study, the analyst utilized some interview schedules that he had designed in 1967 particularly

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*Kellen, *A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp*, The RAND Corporation, RM-5462-ISA/ARPA, October 1967 (hereafter referred to as *View of the VC*), p. 74.

tailored to uncover morale and motivation factors. These questionnaires had been put in the field in mid-1967 and tested extensively. They were now used -- in the early months of 1969 -- to produce a final set of interviews. This Memorandum, which one might call an exercise in military sociology, is based on the product of those interviews.

The writer did not carry out any of the interviews himself. Rather, the interviews were conducted by a team of Vietnamese interviewers who had been in Rand's service for 3 to 5 years. When they were made, the interviews were partly tape-recorded, partly transcribed in longhand. Later, some were translated first into French and then into English, others directly into English. Ultimately, the responsibility for the accuracy of the translations is with the Vietnamese who did the translating, not U.S. personnel familiar with Vietnamese. The translated interviews were typed in Saigon and copies were sent to Rand's Santa Monica office.

There were no contacts between this writer and the interviewees. The writer proceeded exclusively on the basis of the translated interviews received from Rand's office in Saigon. The closest the analyst ever came to the respondents was through conversations with U.S. interview *team leaders* reporting in Santa Monica on their observations and practices, and two conversations in Santa Monica with one of the Vietnamese *interviewers* who was fluent in English. The only other control exercised by the writer over the interrogation process was that he designed the questionnaire, which is discussed below and appended to this report.

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In designing the questionnaires for the interviews upon which this study is based, clusters of questions were built around *indicators* of high (or low) morale. These indicators were culled from work done on Wehrmacht morale,* work on Korean and Chinese prisoners in the

*See Daniel Lerner, *Sykewar*, George W. Stewart, New York, 1949, pp. 109ff, 291ff; A. L. George, *The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The Korean War and Its Aftermath*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1967, pp. 14ff.

Korean War, and lessons learned in several years of interviewing prisoners and defectors in the Vietnam War. Also, central in the thinking that went into the designing of the indicators of cohesion and disintegration (and had gone into the writing of the mid-1967 analysis on cohesion) were the considerations shown by Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz in their classical study "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II."*

In testing for phenomena that, toward the end of both World War II and the Korean War, had been *harbingers of incipient disintegration*, particular attention was paid to disturbed relations between officers and men, group disobedience, and failure of control mechanisms. In addition, painstaking efforts were taken to design the questions in such a fashion that no particular premium would seem likely to accrue to a respondent for answering in a specific way.

The following areas of inquiry were predominant in the study:

1. Behavior in Battle
2. Attitude to Leaders
3. Mechanisms of Control
4. The Soldier's Self-image
5. The Soldier's "Reliability"
6. The Soldier's Career in the Enemy Force
7. Expectations Regarding War Termination
8. Perceived Course of War
9. Political Views
10. Relations with "the People"
11. Attitude to the Enemy
12. The War and the Soldier's Values

Several other elements were also probed, such as possible *changes* in views and attitudes after the Tet offensive of 1968.

Lest the reader think that the study is lopsided in the direction of either disintegration or cohesion: Cohesion and disintegration are of course always only opposite sides of the same coin, and the individual phenomena probed (confidence in leadership, win expectations,

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The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 12, 1948, pp. 300ff.

and so on) would, depending on whether the findings were positive or negative, yield indications of one or the other.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In analyzing the data produced by the questionnaires, the respondents are extensively quoted verbatim in the main body of the report (which might be called a qualitative analysis), and a "nose-count" of certain findings is shown in Appendix C (which might be called a quantitative supplement). The primary method used in preparing the main body of the text was to let the respondents speak for themselves, i.e., to quote them extensively on all the subjects under discussion, at the risk of straining the reader's patience. Each soldier is identified by a number in parentheses, which may be related to the personal data found in Appendix A. In connection with every question dealt with in this report, the author ensured that at least one of the four categories of respondents represented in this report (NVA cadre, NVA private, VC cadre, VC private) would be quoted, and that both typical and atypical answers would be recorded.

The respondents were selected arbitrarily and purely on the basis of availability from prisoner compounds in Saigon and Bien Hoa. The only criterion for selection was a certain articulateness and basic intelligence. In the application of this selection process, about 1 out of 5 available prisoners was actually used. The decision to use 1 out of 5 prisoners was made by the Rand representative in Saigon, who felt that the questionnaire might produce better results with the more articulate of the available respondents. In view of the nature of the questions (see the questionnaire, Appendix B) this writer agreed, especially as this was not a quantitative study. So few respondents were selected (and so few considered) because time was short and manpower was lacking in Saigon. Naturally, it would have been preferable to have much larger numbers of men selected out of a much larger pool. However, as the writer's endeavor was not so much to establish a gauge of morale as to discern just what -- in cases of high enemy morale -- such morale was based on, he felt that even a small number of prisoners could provide useful clues.

In all, only 22 individual interview reports underlie this study. The respondents fall into the following categories:

Cadre		Fighters	
NVA	VC	NVA	VC
6	7	4	5

More complete data on the individuals quoted in this report can be found in Appendix A.

Can anything valid or useful be deduced from a sample that is not only unrepresentative, or, at least, most unlikely to be, but is technically called "tiny"? Even if the author extracted the essence from the interviews without over- or under-emphasizing this or that, what reason is there to assume that the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and convictions expressed here mirror in any way those prevalent in the enemy forces still facing us? It is all well and good to know what 22 men out of an estimated force of at least 200,000 say, but what does it mean?

There are several reasons not to dismiss the findings on such grounds. First, each interview is consistent in itself. Second, the interviews are consistent with each other. Third, they are consistent with roughly a thousand other interviews the author has read in the past four years.* Finally, the 22 interviews were conducted not with men from only one or two units or regions, but with men from a considerable variety of units with different backgrounds, and from areas of operations in *fifteen* different provinces. Therefore, in the author's view, these interviews may well reflect the climate in the enemy forces and represent an accurate description of their situation and practices.

The reader may object to the slight preponderance of cadres among those quoted in the text and say, "Well, of course, the cadres have high morale and are well-indoctrinated." But there is nothing "of course" about that. The noncoms in the Wehrmacht, for example, faltered rapidly in the West after the 1944 invasion, which resulted in the collapse of the German Army,** and so did the cadres in the Chicom Army in Korea.***

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*Some analysts might disagree that such consistency exists.

**M.I. Gurfein and Morris Janowitz, "Trends in Wehrmacht Morale," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1946, p. 78.

***George, *op. cit.*, p. 167ff.

The noncoms are indeed the "steelframe" of the armed forces, as the enemy likes to say, and if they hold, his forces are likely to hold. As an important reality, they deserve particular attention.

Naturally, the very high-ranking cadres up to and including the leadership of the Lao Dong, both North and South, may have different views and feelings than those catalogued here. The morale of the top leaders may be either high or low, on the basis of intricate calculations they may make in which the lower ranks in no way partake. It is possible that the enemy leaders, for a variety of reasons, may be inclined to capitulate now, or in a year, whether to gain time, or simply to quit. But this is unlikely. For often in history it is precisely the other way around: the top leaders are more determined to go on than the lower ranks, and for a longer time. But this analysis does not address itself to the higher leaders or their estimates and intentions. *It only tries to determine whether, if those higher leaders wish to continue the fight, they still have the instrument -- the low cadres and the fighters -- to be able to do so.*

In answering this question, the low-ranking cadres such as the ones examined here -- squad leaders, platoon leaders, sergeants -- are of critical importance. Many of those have risen from the ranks of fighters at an accelerated rate since Tet 1968 and are therefore essentially the same kind of men as the plain fighters, and it is upon their orientation and energy that the armed forces depend in such large measure. No armed force, to the knowledge of this analyst, whose low-level network of cadre has remained intact, loyal, and vigorous has ever disintegrated. Despite the considerable emphasis on the cadres, however, the morale configuration of the *plain fighter*, both VC and NVA, has received careful attention.

Except for two cadres who are 37 years old, the average age of the men with whom we are dealing is about 25, both cadres and fighters. We are not, in other words, dealing with senior members, for the highest rank is held by a lieutenant, and the rest of the men are privates and noncoms.

II. BATTLE EXPERIENCE

FREQUENCY OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, CASUALTIES

As the heading to this section indicates, no attempt has been made to describe in objective terms what the battle *situation* on the enemy side actually was, at least not comprehensively. Rather, this section represents a collection of impressions and opinions on how the actual military clashes look to the enemy soldier from his side; how he experienced them. The only "hard facts" in this section are numbers of engagements in which the respondents claim to have participated, and even those may not be regarded as too hard because the term "engagement" is stretchable.

The analyst was interested in determining the *frequency* of combat to which the respondents had been exposed, in order to gain an impression of how heavy or continuous the pressure really is on the enemy soldiers. In the author's 1967 report on enemy cohesion, the average combat exposure of those interviewed was found to be extremely small.* For the current study it was impossible to provide parallel figures, partly because the nature of individual engagements seems to have changed somewhat. Contrary to what the soldiers were reporting earlier, most respondents are now speaking, in addition to "battles fought," of "counter-sweep operations." Battles fought were more frequent than in the 1967 report, often exceeding two to three in the final six months before the prisoner was actually captured. Counter-sweep operations are reported to take place much more often than battles fought, but as they can be anything from a bloody clash with a pursuing ARVN or U.S. force to a quick unilateral withdrawal from a merely suspected sweep, it would be meaningless to include them in figures on combat exposure. Only one thing is clear to the analyst: combat exposure, though still well within the limits of what the soldiers seem to be able to endure, has apparently become somewhat more frequent per month than it was in

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*In an average of 26 months of service, 2.32 engagements. Kellen, *View of the VC*, p. 76. Due to many ambiguities, however, this is not a "hard" figure.

previous periods. It would seem that the enemy leaders are demanding more of their soldiers than they have in the past. But whether the enemy leaders believe they have to do this out of necessity, whether they do this because of certain opportunities they now see which they did not see before, or whether for other reasons, is a matter of sheer speculation. In any event, what is most important here is how the soldier himself views the frequency of combat to which he is exposed.

A VC cadre captured in September of 1968 and asked how many operations his unit had gone on in the last months before his capture, stated: "None. This was because after the offensive in May 1968, my unit's losses were not replaced before I was captured." (Appendix A, K-2) Thus, strangely enough, the cadre was out of combat for four months after the May offensive. How did he do in the preceding months? "My battalion took part in the Tet offensive in Cholon and the attack at Gia Dinh in May 1968. These were the two main operations. By the way, we also took part in some anti-sweep operations which were of very small scale and should not be called operations." How did he make out personally? "During the Tet offensive in Cholon I was slightly wounded after three days of combat. I rested for some time in my home base. In May 1968 I went along to my unit to Gia Dinh and was wounded again." (K-2) This VC cadre also reported that the Tet operations were "more fierce" than any battles he had hitherto experienced, adding in a matter-of-fact way that in the course of it "more than 50 percent of my unit's strength were killed and wounded." He added that "during the second-phase offensive [presumably the May offensive] my battalion was reorganized with a replacement of more than 60 NVA soldiers." This apparently represented one of those heavy infusions of NVA men into VC units in the course of 1968. The cadre, who had actually only become one after May 1968 because of the heavy losses incurred, reported, when questioned about the battle at Gia Dinh in May, that "our loss in this battle was more serious than in the Tet offensive. About 80 percent of my unit's strength were killed, wounded and captured." (As his unit he gave a company that eventually had shrunk to 30 men.) It may be regarded as remarkable that the same cadre remained seemingly undismayed

in the face of such formidable losses and expressed confidence in his leaders and the ultimately favorable outcome of the struggle.

A VC cadre, in this case a squad leader, reported that in the last months before his capture, "my battalion went on two operations," and that during the six months before his capture he had been on five operations. Asked whether he thought if fighting five or six battles in six months was few or many, he answered: "Few." He added that he would consider eight to ten battles in six months as "many." Were the battles won or lost in which the squad leader participated? "We won all five battles." The interviewer asked: "How come your unit was so good that it won all five battles?" The squad leader replied: "We were always ready in our strong defensive positions; we had good weapons and plenty of ammunition, and this is why we defeated the attacking force." Asked to relate what had been his "most successful battle," the squad leader said: "After attacking An Hiu in Dinh Tuong Province, my unit withdrew to Cai Be in Kien Tuong Province. The U.S. force pursued our unit to Cai Be where they met our strong defense. We repelled their attack. They were not able to enter the village." (K-9) It may be significant that the cadre cited this *defensive success* as a successful battle. If he and his comrades see the war from this perspective, they may, in their own minds, be forever successful (as long as they are not physically decimated).* The squad leader had a few words to say on the respective strength of the units that clashed at Cai Be: "We had one battalion and the Americans had two battalions. The action took place sometime in September 1968. We learned from our source that the Americans lost one platoon and only two of our men were wounded. The battle lasted one day, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m." Asked whether his unit had been more successful in the "past six months than previously," the squad leader said, "more successful." Why? "By fighting more battles we gained more experience." As to losses, the squad leader reported that

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*To some extent the same can be said of our own side, and this may go a long way to explain why both sides have continuously and probably quite sincerely claimed "successes" at times when the situation has actually not changed.

his battalion "which consisted of about 300 men"* lost "one killed, four wounded, and two captured" in the last six months before his capture. If we can trust the squad leader's report, we see here great differences in the casualty rate from unit to unit when we compare what he has to say to what the other VC cadres (K-2) reported.

The interviews contained a few disclosures on the subject of combat that deserve to be included. One respondent (K-8) reported that, as before, enemy units still *discuss* their missions before they go on them: "Before moving on to our objective we met with the platoon leader to discuss our job and how to carry it out. Everybody was invited to give their opinion. Through this meeting the platoon leader learned what would be best to do. The procedure was also applied at squad and cell levels." One VC cadre (K-9) expressed the view that "seven men out of ten were good fighters, the other three were new." Whether, as the cadre implied, all old fighters are good fighters can, of course, not be taken for granted. A statement by an NVA cadre attests to a certain amount of ingenuity on the part of the enemy: "My company had a 107mm mortar but we did not use it because it was too heavy. By firing at Nha Be, we only employed the shells. We placed them on a dirt mound, measured the angle, then connected them to an electric current to fire." (K-3)

One VC private, describing heavy and inconclusive fighting in the area of Trang Bang, when asked how he explained that his unit had lost this and similar battles, replied: "Generally speaking we didn't lose, we were just unable to take the targets, but we didn't suffer heavy casualties." He added: "In the first battle in Suoi Sau we failed to take over the outpost because we were discovered during the move. Though we suffered casualties in the second and third battles in Trang Bang, the casualties we suffered were light compared with casualties suffered by the enemy. In these two battles in Trang Bang, we moved deeply into the district town and caused heavy casualties and losses to the enemy side prior to our withdrawal. But the last battle in

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*Almost all enemy units, of course, have been what we call "under strength" for a long time, if not from the beginning.

Trang Bang resulted in heavy casualties for us because we were not able to withdraw before the airplanes came. Many of us got wounded because of bombs. I don't know how many were killed." (K-22)

"HARDSHIPS," TREATMENT, R&R

"Hardships"

Hardships to which the enemy soldiers are exposed, if objectively or subjectively unbearable, can, of course, be one of the crucial elements in breaking an enemy's morale. By making the hardships too numerous or heavy to bear one can, at least theoretically, defeat a force one has not defeated strategically; therefore, the respondents were questioned extensively on the subject in an effort to determine whether the burdens of combat were wearing them down. Conversely, just as hardships can break a man's morale, so can the absence of relief from hardships, such as inadequate medical services or insufficient rest and recuperation policies. In view of the close relationship between these elements, they are being treated together here.

"What," an NVA cadre was asked, "were the greatest hardships you and your unit suffered since Tet?" He replied: "Of course fighting involves hardships. Lacking food* is a hard thing to bear. However, I would consider the greatest hardship that of, in operations since Tet, moving to another place immediately after we attacked some place in order to avoid the artillery and the planes." How did the hardships caused by such moving around affect the fighters? "As I said, moving was a hardship. But at the news of going down to the plain, the men were enthusiastic although they knew they were going there to fight. They would feel lonely and depressed if they had to stay too long in the jungle." (K-15) Another NVA cadre stated: "The troops did not complain about anything. We felt uncomfortable restricted at one place, but we gradually got used to it." He added, "Since we began operations in Long An Province in March of 1968, we did not have to stand any great hardships at all. We only lived a rather uncomfortable life for

*Generally, food is reported to be adequate. See pp. 16, 17.

we were restricted to the jungle." How did that affect the soldiers? "The troops did not complain about anything. As I just said, we felt uncomfortable restricted to one place, but we gradually got used to it." (K-3) An NVA master sergeant and company commander said: "We actually experienced no hardships except for movements across rivers and streams." Asked whether he considered ARVN sweep operations a hardship he answered: "That was a usual element of combat and not a great hardship. Naturally, when we did not hunt ARVN troops they looked for us. That is war." He added: "The troops made no complaints. Though moving was strenuous, it was necessary in order to avoid discovery. Everyone realized it." (K-4)

A VC private, who had been operating in the IV Corps area, was somewhat "softer" in listing the catalogue of what he considered to be the principal hardships: "Since Tet, the Delta has been frequently swept by allied troops. I and all the others in my unit were unable to eat and sleep properly. In the staging area my unit was generally widely scattered in small groups. Any group that was spotted was immediately attacked by American airborne troops. When we tried to counterattack, more airborne troops were immediately sent on the spot to surround us." (K-19) An NVA private tried to take a resigned view: "Naturally we had to stand it [the hardships]. What else could we do?" Asked what his comrades felt, he replied: "They did not say anything but I think they were unhappy." How about the cadres? "The cadres tried to encourage us. They said we should endure the hardships today in order to have a happy future." (K-8) Finally, this NVA private, a student who had infiltrated the South in May 1967 and had been captured in September 1968 after operating in Long An and Tay Ninh Provinces, reported: "The greatest hardships since Tet were air attacks and sweep operations. We had to move very often in order to avoid being discovered and bombed. Every three or four days we had to flee from sweep operations once we knew we hadn't enough strength to deal with the enemy's forces." And how did these hardships affect him and the other fighters? "We all knew there were always hardships while fighting a war. We disregarded them because we were fighting for the country, for the independence of the country, and we should expect all kinds of

hardships and if necessary even the sacrifice of our lives. Therefore, we never complained about the hardships." (K-12)

One cadre stated that: "It was tiresome to have to avoid operations conducted by the enemy, if we had to stand such a situation for a long period of time. [But] I did not hear anyone complain and I think there was nothing worth complaining about. That was war." (K-4)

Treatment (Health)

Asked about the health of his men in the last six months before his capture (September 1968), a VC cadre stated: "As compared to previous times, the health of the men had deteriorated. Before, our base was seldom attacked by air, artillery, or helicopters. Later, while we were at Tan Nhut, sweep operations were conducted more often. We soldiers could not sleep at night, moved often and feared sudden attacks. Our health was not as good as before." (K-2) The cadre added that "each company had one medic who took care of the lightly wounded. This cadre also had medicines to cure general sicknesses like headaches or bellyaches, and to dress light wounds. Soldiers not seriously wounded and sick would stay with the unit, while the seriously wounded or sick would be sent to Ba The Military Hospital." (K-2) An NVA cadre stated that "the troops in my company were all healthy. Only a small number had malaria, but they still continued to fight. None of them was so sick that he had to stop going on operations." And how was the medical care? "As I have just said none of the men in my company was seriously wounded or sick. We had enough pills for treatment of malaria, headache and so on." (K-3) An NVA cadre operating in the Delta found that "since we moved to the Delta the health of the troops improved. However, their health was relatively unsatisfactory because my unit consisted of people who had recovered from illness. A couple of them had malaria, but were not serious cases, and still able to operate." (K-4)

From the perspective of an NVA fighter the situation was not entirely satisfactory: "When in battle, medical care was not very good because we had only two medics. One was good and the other was not. He was too scared and used to stay behind." (K-8) The soldier added

that in the six months prior to his capture "a great many" of the men had been sick with malaria -- "20 or 30 out of 70." Another NVA private took a more optimistic view: "Generally speaking, the health of the men in my unit improved in the last few months because they got better food, and they got used to the climate in the South. When we first arrived in the South, we were tired and many of us had malaria. I think that was because of our long and hard trip to the South." (K-11) Another NVA fighter confirmed this: "Generally speaking, the health of the men in my company was good . . . the health of the men was much better after early 1968 as compared to 1967 when we first arrived in the South." He elaborated: "When we first arrived in the South we were not used to the climate and at the same time we were very tired after the long trip walking [?] all the way to the South; therefore many of us got sick with dysentery and malaria. But we had medicines and rest, and we got gradually used to the climate, and after several months we recovered." And, since Tet, "we moved around the Delta areas where the people were living, so we had more and better food to eat than in previous times; therefore our health improved." (K-12) One VC soldier, on the other hand, though also confirming that men with malaria would go right on fighting, stated that medical supplies were "pretty short" (K-22), while another stated: "We didn't have good medical care because medical supplies were not adequate." (K-19) A VC cadre confirmed that the health in his unit was poor because the climate in the jungle was "terrible." He, too, stated that health improved after moving to the plains. (K-14)

As to the care for the wounded, no clear picture emerges. Some respondents claim two medics per company, some two medics per battalion; others spoke of even fewer medics.* In all, there seem to be few serious cases that were returned from the hospital to duty, so that information about the hospital care is largely absent. But as to local treatment for "slight wounds" it was generally regarded as adequate by cadre and fighters alike. Finally, on the sensitive matter of the wounded

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*It must be taken into account that these units are often seriously "understrength."

and dead being left behind rather than taken along during retreats (most respondents were in the category of wounded left behind) there were no complaints. The rigors of battle were held responsible, and the respondents agreed that all humanly possible efforts were made to bring the wounded back. "Yes, the men in the units always made efforts to remove their wounded and dead comrades from the battlefield for medical care and burial. But in some cases they were unable to remove all the wounded or dead because of enemy air attacks after the ground attacks were over. In such cases, the men had to concentrate their efforts on removing the wounded, and of course the dead were left behind." (K-11)

As to food supply (included in this section because it is of such crucial importance to the combat soldier, particularly the guerrilla soldier) a VC cadre said that ". . . we were not short of rice. Our rice ration always remained the same -- one liter per day. The food allowance also remained the same -- eight piasters a day. Our monthly pocket money was sixty piasters per man. However, we were short of foodstuffs to go with the rice. Before, we could buy these foodstuffs at the market easily but later on, due to frequent sweep operations, we no longer dared to go and buy foodstuffs." (K-2) An NVA cadre: "There was a section which took care of the rice supply for us. Rice was shipped to the riverbank where we were stationed. We just went there to pick it up. We were never short of rice." (K-3) Another NVA cadre said: "Generally speaking, the procurement of rice was difficult, for at many places the people didn't have any to sell to us . . . nevertheless, we never encountered food shortages." (K-4) (It might be commented in this connection that whenever soldiers report that the population was short of rice, the *soldiers* still ate, and that if they ran short of food on rare occasions due to battle dislocations, the matter was invariably immediately remedied. This would indicate that crop destruction, while depriving the villagers, continues to fail in denying food to the enemy.)

An NVA private: "Since Tet we have received more and better food than we used to have before." Why so? "Since Tet we have been moving around in people's areas where the people provided us with better

foodstuffs." Did the people provide food for the entire unit? "Yes." (K-11) And a VC private confirmed that food was always adequate: "While I was still with the 5th Battalion we purchased rice from the people and never encountered any food shortages." (K-18)

Rest and Recuperation

Just as food is of great importance to the combat soldier so, too, is rest and recuperation. It was not entirely clear from the interviews exactly how much rest and recuperation the soldiers were given after engagements. Actually, it seemed that the periods varied considerably from unit to unit and area to area. Some soldiers spoke of "ten or fifteen days of rest after an operation." (K-11) Others spoke of five to ten days, again others of from three to five days, and some stated that on occasion they had even less than that to recover from some combat operations. This does not necessarily mean the soldiers had to *fight* again, but that they were used in performing other labors. One NVA soldier stated the matter as follows: "It depended on the situation in the area; sometimes we were given ten days of rest after an operation, sometimes we took only five days because we had to conduct countersweep operations or we had to change our station area." (K-12) He continued: "In the last few months before I was captured, we had less rest than we had in the past because we had to go on more operations than in the past." This did not seem to affect him adversely, however. Did he have any complaints about the whole system of rest and recuperation from fatigue and military action? "No. Sometimes I even thought that I didn't need to rest." (K-12)

One of the VC privates making up the group of respondents for this study painted a somewhat less rosy picture. When asked whether the men were given more, or less, rest as time went on, he replied: "Since the Tet offensive, my unit has had almost no rest." Asked why, he said: "In Long An Province my unit was almost unable to find a secure area for rest." (K-19) This statement showed that the principal hazard to rest and recuperation policies did not necessarily come from enemy plans to use, or not, units at certain periods of time, but,

rather, from the inability of their leaders to find secure rest areas; in other words, areas secure enough to afford the soldiers a real respite from combat. Others, too, indicated that whenever rest and recuperation was inadequate it was not because they were driven too frequently to fight, but rather because their rest areas were not secure and were subject to artillery and air attack. But, as in the case of so many things in connection with the war in Vietnam, evidence on this is also contradictory. An NVA cadre, for example, who stated that "lately we were given only three or four days' rest," indicated that the shortened rest period was compensated for by the fact that at least when there were periods of rest the troops could truly rest. When asked if he felt really secure from attack in rest areas, he said: "Yes, we had good security because we camped deep in the jungles." He added that during the camping he had seen L-19s, helicopters and jets flying over but that the unit had never been bombed. (K-15)

As to how the time in rest and recuperation was actually spent, one cadre reported: "We took a walk, visited friends, chatted, sang and drank." (K-9) The statement on the part of a platoon leader showed that severe losses and an increased tempo in the fighting did not necessarily affect rest and recuperation adversely, partly because the enemy customarily does not fight with units that are greatly depleted, and it takes some time to refill these units. When asked whether the men were given more, or less, time for rest lately, this platoon leader said: "Lately, due to successive operations conducted by U.S. and ARVN troops when a great number of troops in the unit were killed, we rarely went on combat, and had more time to relax." (K-3) This was confirmed by an NVA private who reported that he spent periods of rest by "doing nothing, just eating and fooling around," and who added that in the last several months, "we were given more rest than in previous times because after one or two battles our unit suffered heavy losses and the number of men left over in the unit was not enough for going on big operations, therefore we had to wait for more men being sent to our unit for replacement." (K-11) Actually, this man was a hothead who was spoiling for combat. Asked whether he had any complaints about the system, he said: "I think that sometimes I was given

too much rest. I'd rather like to go on fighting continuously than to take several days of rest after each battle because I didn't feel good when I was doing nothing."

TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

A VC cadre, when asked whether he felt that he was well-prepared, properly trained and sufficiently well-armed when he went on an operation answered: "Since I joined the Front I did not attend any training course. My senior members of the unit showed me how to use infantry weapons. Little by little, after a few battles, I knew how to use them fairly well. There was no difficulty at all. As to the attacks on small outposts in the years of 1966 and 1967, we always had enough ammunition. The exceptions were the two offensives during Tet and during May 1968, when we were short of ammunition because we fought in the city and our supply route was blocked." (K-2) Somewhat exceptionally, an NVA cadre reported that his training had not been all that it should have been: "I think that proper training had not been given me. I should have been trained in the techniques of firing." (K-3) Another NVA cadre reported a change: "While the unit was still in the jungle, good preparations were made for myself and the whole unit before each operation. However, such preparations were no longer made after our move to the Delta. The reason was that orders were usually given on short notice. At times we received orders at six o'clock and by twelve o'clock we already had to open fire. We did not have time to make good preparations." And even his training did not satisfy him: "I myself had not received proper training. I was specialized in land survey and intelligence. I had studied the techniques of artillery firing but I had not practiced it. Regarding H-12 rockets, which were issued to my unit, I was given training for only three days." (K-4) This man felt, however, that his company was sufficiently well-armed.

An NVA cadre and company commander, only recently appointed, stated that while his military training had been adequate, he lacked combat experience when he took over his command. When asked why he was designated to be company commander while he still lacked combat

experience, he explained: "Everybody had to engage in combat to learn by experience. Moreover, there would be no second battle without a first one. Also, there were platoon leaders who had been engaging in combat for several years, had much experience, and were always with my unit. Therefore my assignment to the position of company commander was no problem." (K-5) An NVA private also felt that essentially everything was in good order: "Yes, I was well-prepared and well-armed when I went on operations. After joining the Army in the North I received a three-months' military training course. After I finished this training course and especially after participating in the first few battles in the South, I felt that I was relatively well-trained." (K-11) Another NVA private reported the same: "Yes, I was always well-prepared, sufficiently well-armed, and was ready for operation for any time day or night. I had one year of artillery training in the North after joining the army. Therefore when I arrived in the South I felt that I was properly trained and was ready for battle right away." (K-12) One VC private, on the other hand, stated that he was well-enough armed but not properly trained. (K-19) And another VC private reported precisely the same -- sufficient armament, insufficient training. (K-15) The same private, when asked whether the troops in his unit were seasoned, replied: "I think that they were not seasoned troops. If they were good combat soldiers, they would not have sustained so many casualties." (K-18) Still one more VC private (K-22) stated that he was well-prepared but not properly trained.

On balance, however, the men seemed to feel that they were about as well-equipped and trained as was necessary (this always being a relative matter with soldiers of all ranks); that their medical services and R&R policies were all that could be expected under the circumstances and quite adequate; and that the frequency of combat exposure (always very hard to quantify because of the very stretchable word "battle" in the Vietnamese context), while apparently higher than before, was not straining the soldiers' endurance to the limit. This is but one of the many divergencies between the opponent in Vietnam and the Chinese enemy in Korea after 1950. More about this will be said later.

III. THE LEADERS

THE POLITICAL OFFICER

In every army the relationship of the men to their immediate leaders and the relationship of the latter to their higher leaders is, of course, crucial for the performance of any mission that an army may have to fulfill. For that purpose extensive efforts are made in every army to produce an esprit de corps. War being a dangerous and demanding business for everybody involved in it, a man, whether a private or a cadre, can really do his job only by transcending himself and his apprehensions. This, in turn, is most likely to be achieved if, by mutual trust and even admiration, men enter into a type of reciprocal relationship that will mobilize all their inner resources. Every military leader knows that no amount of soldiers and no quality of equipment will permit him to win battles if the men do not willingly and enthusiastically -- at least up to a point -- follow their leaders. The past RAND study on cohesion therefore paid particular attention to the relationship between the fighters and cadre both in the VC and the NVA,* and this study is doing likewise.

As all observers know, in the enemy forces a distinction is made between political and military leaders. Even though the political leaders, or rather the political officers, also participate in combat, they do not have any direct command function. Their task is not to give orders but to "mobilize the spirit" of the men by word and example. The political officer, in many ways, is the "mother" of the fighters, listening to their troubles, consoling them and rebuilding their morale if it is adversely affected by the death of some comrades, by failure in battle, by nostalgia for family, or by other factors. In contrast to the combat leaders, who are on the whole very tough, the political officers are generally described as "gentle, affable, friendly." From past interviews they emerged as universally liked and respected men.

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*Kellen, *View of the VC*, pp. 44ff.

When questioned on the subject of the political officer and his role in the enemy forces, a VC cadre began by saying: "In the unit everybody had to keep in mind the proverb which says, 'The political task is the primary task, and the morale motivation is the first mission.' This meant that the political task was more important than any other. The political task was composed of different kinds of activities, and the morale motivation was the most important activity in the political task." Why, he was asked, do you think the morale motivation is so important? "Morale motivation was always an important mission. If a man carried a rifle but he didn't know why he was fighting and whom he was fighting for, or what purpose he was following, this wouldn't bring to himself or anybody else any good thing, regardless of how modern his weapon was. He would have to know whom he was fighting for and how great his task was. If all the men in the unit fully understood their obligations and the purposes of the fighting, they would fight the war and carry out their other tasks very enthusiastically. And the revolution, of course, would be served." When asked whether the political officer in his own unit had any faults, he replied: "As a human being of course he had faults. But the only fault I found in the political officer of my unit was that he sometimes got hot-tempered with his subordinate cadres when the result of their assignments was not satisfactory. Generally, he was a very nice and gentle person, especially when everyone in the unit did his work well. Then the cadre used to talk and joke to the men in the unit very cheerfully. But not when the results of the work were unsatisfactory. Actually, a political officer must always be gentle and nice to everyone in the unit. . . ." (K-14)

The cadre added: "I understand that our political officer had joined the Vietminh to fight against the French for many years. After the war with the French was over, he regrouped to the North where he attended political training for almost two years. After returning to the South he was assigned to serve as political cadre to several other companies before his assignment to my unit at the end of 1967. He was a South Vietnamese and had a lot of experience in treating South

Vietnamese soldiers. And of course I think he had gained a lot of experience from serving in the North."

The respondent was then asked whether he thought that the political officer was sincere and told the fighters the truth. His answer: "As far as I understand it, the political officer only told the fighters the truth when that truth was good for the morale of the unit. He only informed the men of the unit of victory news which he thought made the men more enthusiastic. Of course, in the war there were times when we won and there were times when we were defeated. But the political officer didn't tell the men about the defeats we suffered because that would have discouraged the fighters." In other words, the political officer, in a way, was doling out good news the way one might dole out food when it is not too plentiful, but his charges, even though they were aware of it, did not fault him on it. The respondent, asked whether he believed what the political officer said, replied: "I believed what the political officer in my unit said but I knew that he was not 100 percent sincere because he had to motivate the men's morale and if he was sincere and told everything, the victory news together with the defeat news, the men's morale might deteriorate. In carrying out this task I realized that he must not be completely sincere. For instance, he told us about the good results of the general offensives which had brought about the Paris talks. I believed this because the radio and the newspapers told us all about it. But he told us that we won, both militarily and politically, during the general offensives, which I did not believe very much. The fact that led me not to believe him was that we were not able to take the big cities as we had planned to, and after Tet we were attacked many times in our areas." We see here how this respondent, a cadre himself and a party member, treats the political education as something that is more, and at the same time less, than objective communication of unfolding events; and he for one approves of the system.

The effectiveness of the political officer was attested by another cadre who reported the following: "Of the number of 18 men in my company, 12 had been killed in a sweep operation by ARVN troops

in August. Among them there were the company commander and the political officer, but the remaining troops still had high morale. None of them seemed discouraged, frightened, or wanted to defect or rally. I think this was due to the effects of the political indoctrination by the political officer." (K-13)

How did the political officer appear from the perspective of the fighters? "He usually informed the men in the unit about the war situation in other areas. He told us about victory news. All the news he gave us was from the radio, so I think he was sincere." (K-11) So you did believe him? "Yes, I believed what was said by the political officer. For example, he told us that the people in many areas gave our units a great deal of support. And when we came to the people's areas near our station area, the people did give us support. They provided us with food willingly and talked to us in a very friendly way. There were times when people even asked us to remain in their houses, to have meals with them when we came to their area to get supplies." When asked whether he had changed his opinion about the truthfulness of the political officer since Tet, the respondent replied: "No, myself as well as the other men in the unit still had confidence in the cadres. In fact, we had even more confidence in the cadres since Tet."

A VC private had a somewhat more ambivalent attitude: "Sometimes the political officer was sincere and sometimes he was not sincere." When was he sincere and when was he not? "When talking about politics he was sincere. However, when he gave out information, he was not sincere." How was he not sincere? "He mostly gave out news on combat operations at different places. Since I had never seen them I did not believe him and I think that he was not sincere." (K-18) Another VC private had this to say: "The political officer was a native of South Vietnam, a man of very high character . . . he was responsible for the political education and motivation of the men . . . his mission was very important. He was responsible for the good morale of the men without which the men's unit would have broken up. . . . He was a nice person, always used correct language. He was gentle and never harsh to the men . . . he was never rude so everyone

liked him . . . he was well qualified . . . he was especially good at political education; that means he knew how to boost the men's morale. The men did what he told them to do." Was that good for you and the unit? "Thanks to his political education I understood more about the Front policy. That was good for me. The political officer succeeded in boosting the men's morale. Thanks to his education the men's spirits were more stable and they were more determined to fight. The number of deserters dropped. That was good for the unit." What were his chief faults? To this question, universally asked of respondents, the fighter gave the standard answer: "He had no serious defects." (Political officers are rarely accused of any shortcoming except, occasionally, a "hot temper.") To the other standard question asked of all respondents, that of whether the political officer's behavior, attitude, and performance had changed since Tet, the VC private also gave the prevalent type of response: "No, I did not notice any change." (K-9)

Somewhat less on the positive side: "We all obeyed his orders, but I don't think the men liked him very much. He used to talk too much, especially during the night meeting when we were all tired and he kept on talking." What was he talking about? "He said we would go on trying harder and harder. We should go on trying harder and harder, doing this and avoiding that . . . which we all knew about already. Young fighters did not enjoy listening to lengthy speeches." (K-11)

But another NVA private had this to say: "The political officer was a very gentle and very pleasant person. No one ever complained about him. We all liked him and considered him our eldest brother." (K-12) And a VC cadre, when asked about the political officer's principal faults: "I don't know what faults he had but I never heard any complaint from the men about him." Finally, one more VC private's somewhat skeptical deposition: "The political cadre was not entirely successful in influencing the spirit and behavior of the men. That was because the war became fierce in my area [in the Delta] and many people couldn't refrain from fearing the rigors of war." (K-19)

THE MILITARY CADRE

As far as the *military* leaders are concerned, previous investigations found that the relationship between men and cadres, and the respect on the part of the men for their cadres, was high. Cognizant that deteriorating relations between officers and men heralded a lowering of fighting efficiency and the eventual disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,* the analyst searched the interviews in the materials at hand for indications of any incipient alienation between fighters and cadres without, however, finding any more disharmony there than between the men and their political officers. Seen from the vantage point of a cadre, the situation was as follows: "The cadres in my unit were always fair. They liked the men as if they were their brothers. I would even say that their affection for them was warmer than that between brothers in a family." (K-15) And seen from the vantage point of a private (NVA) interrogated on this subject, the feeling was reciprocal: "The cadres treated the fighters like their brothers, they never used harsh words on them or showed discrimination between the cadres and the fighters." (K-16)

Instead of furnishing the reader additional examples of the close relationship between the fighters and their military leaders both in the NVA and the VC, the author directs the reader's attention to the table in Appendix C, which quantifies pro-leader sentiment found in the interviews studied.

THE CADRE AS ARBITER

The interviews revealed that in the enemy forces, discussions about any and all subjects that agitate the soldiers never end. The questionnaires probed very hard for subjects that might not be so freely discussed, as such suppressed subjects, where they exist, are sometimes harbingers of incipient disintegration of an armed force. In the case of our sample, no such hidden problems were reported.

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*Shils, Janowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

What problems existed were brought up for discussion, and problems the men could not solve among themselves or disputes between them they could not settle were "solved" by the cadre. This role of arbiter seemed to add to the cadre's prestige and power. In any event, the role of arbiter that the cadre played seemed to contribute very considerably to the unity of the forces.

Perhaps this section is best ended with a quote from an NVA master sergeant: "Generally speaking, the cadres in my battalion were friendly. They always treated other men in the unit kindly and cordially. They had the troops realize their errors and corrected the errors for them. In the unit, if one man does not know something, he will be helped by the others. The cadres would criticize the troops and the latter could do likewise. We understood that we had the mission to fight for the nation and the people, so the first thing we had to do was to unite, understand, and coordinate with each other. Most of the cadres in the unit were serious and friendly. Being commanders of the troops and the people, we had to act in such a way as to gain the confidence of every person. If the troops trusted the cadres they would fight zealously, and if the people loved the cadres and the troops they would provide help to us and we could record victories. All the cadres had remembered these things and upheld their conduct." (K-5)

IV. MECHANISM OF CONTROL

Perhaps the most delicate and complicated, yet highly effective, element on the enemy side is the control mechanism of his forces and the individuals in them. This mechanism is a continuum from actual physical coercion used to draft, and if necessary to redraft, men, to instilling in them the means of generating in and by themselves the emotional stamina and political devotion needed to overcome the hardships, dangers, and disappointments of their mission. Of the various methods, all of which prodigiously intermesh, psychological measures and methods are much more frequently used to bring and keep men in line than straight coercion, which is seldom reported. This would not necessarily mean that the latter is less important, as a great deal of effective terror can, under certain circumstances, be exerted with very few cases of actual physical force. However that may be, physical coercion inside the system and its younger brothers, threats and abuses, are conspicuous by their absence in the interviews perused in this exercise.

Essentially, there are three internal means of inducing the men to work and fight at their best. The first is actual direct *supervision*. This watching of all fighters at all times encompasses a control over physical activity of which, theoretically, desertion or malingering might be included, and a watch for signs of low morale, "sadness," or other indications of reduced valor or enthusiasm. The second is the method *criticism and self-criticism*, a form of group control and group therapy. And the third is the division of the entire fighting force into *three-man cells*, producing a virtual symbiosis of three soldiers (no cadre) who live, work and fight together, encourage and supervise one another, and are duty-bound to help each other in combat, to help their wounded buddies to the rear, or to remove their dead bodies.

WATCHED AT ALL TIMES

A VC private had this to say when asked whether the men in his unit were watched over by the cadres for signs of good or bad morale:

"Yes, the cadres did watch over all the troops." How was the watching organized? "They watched over the way of talking, the behavior and combat spirit of the troops to see if they had good or bad morale." Did the cadres personally watch over the troops or did they instruct the troops to watch over each other? "The cadres did it personally." Did the men in the unit always know they were being watched? "Yes, they all knew they were being watched by the cadres." How did the troops in the unit react to the knowledge that they were being watched? "It did not bother them. They became more friendly with each other because of the knowledge of being watched." (K-18) Another VC private reported that the constant watching was designed primarily because the cadres "were afraid that the men would rally or desert home. They were also afraid that there were GVN spies among the fighters."* This man reported, contrary to the other respondents, that even the cell leader participated in the watching. He confirmed that "everyone knew that he was being watched" and said that because of the watching "they had to be cautious in their speech. If anyone had any hidden thoughts, for example, to desert home, he would have to conceal it until he was able to have a good opportunity to escape." (K-17)

One NVA cadre, when asked about the watching of the men, replied: "It is not correct to use the word 'watch.' The cadre only supervised the daily activities of the troops. Moreover, in the three-man cell, the troops watched over and knew the actions of the others." Did the troops know? "Yes, that is right." Did they have any reactions? "Their reaction was to work more zealously in order to display their high morale." (K-3) And another (K-4) added: "The first thing was to see how the troops followed their orders. The second thing was to observe their relations with the people and with women. And the third thing was their health." Replying to the question of whether the men knew that they were being watched, this cadre had the following to say: "The watching was kept secret from the troops. However, they noticed it."

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*This latter statement is unusual. Generally, the presence of spies in a unit seemed remote from the minds of the members.

In sum, it can be said that all troops are watched all the time, and that almost all of them are aware of it. It also appears that they submit to this routine without any bitterness or anger. Watching the troops is nothing very unusual per se -- no army provides much room for privacy and the men are always accountable to someone or in the view of someone. Yet there is a difference in the never-ending watch that the cadres keep on the men in the enemy forces, not only with regard to performance, but also with regard to their moods. This supervision might be called total, and the soldier who, theoretically, should be unaware of it but who is, in reality, made aware of it purposely, does not seem to resent being monitored in this fashion. Nor does he seem, particularly, to fear it. It is only one of the devices employed to keep him in line for the enormous demands made on him when confronting the combined U.S. Armed Forces, and it is, perhaps, even a consciously perceived help for him.

KIEM THAO (CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM)

For some time it has been recognized that the so-called criticism/self-criticism sessions are an effective psychological device to keep the enemy machine operative. The sessions are organized to assist the individual as well as the collective group. They are designed to improve performance by improving relations between man and man, man and cadre, and cadre and cadre, by analyzing, and thereby correcting, past mistakes in battle, and by relieving individual anxieties and hostilities before they can expand and corrode individual or collective morale. The sessions are well-suited to nip in the bud all possible mental and, subsequently, physical resistance by bringing out not only what some men may worry, or feel antagonistic, about, but also by allowing the leadership to apply remedial measures from the beginning. It is not the purpose of this subsection to investigate whether or not Kiem Thao is an effective instrument in maintaining cohesion; many previous studies by RAND and others have shown the positive effects and occasional hazards of this procedure. Rather, the purpose is to determine whether Kiem Thao *remains* an effective instrument, as it unquestionably was in the past.

The NVA master sergeant who was a company commander had this to say: "I was pleased when the company cadres criticized me for my mistakes because, thanks to them, I could make corrections and they were not known to the troops who might lose their confidence in me." Recall that, while the fighters and lower-ranking cadres attend the same sessions and criticize each other, men of somewhat higher rank are not criticized by the privates but only by their peers and superiors. The master sergeant continued: "I could not see any better method to correct the errors of the troops. At the beginning the person criticized was pretty upset. However, the troops gradually realized that it was a good method." Asked what influence the criticism sessions had on behavior, fighting spirit, and performance "of your units," the sergeant replied: "After each criticism session I noticed that the discipline was improved and personal sentiments were better." Were criticism sessions properly organized? "Yes, the troops elected the chairman and the secretary for the criticism sessions. The sessions were very democratic. . . . They helped the troops to observe discipline strictly, thus correcting their morale and thoughts." Occasionally, according to the respondent, the sessions made the men angry or discouraged, "especially when the criticism sessions failed to solve their problems. At times, one man had a prejudice against someone and tried to exaggerate his faults. Therefore, problems could not [always] be solved in crowded sessions." Such difficulties, which did not seem to occur frequently, were then "solved by the two respective persons themselves." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre, when asked how he felt about the self-criticism in which he had to engage from time to time, replied: "In self-criticism sessions, I promised I would make corrections, and after that I felt relaxed." (K-3) The cadre added: "Criticism is a good method, and it is a token of mutual affection in a unit. If there were any errors we would help each other to correct and avoid them. . . . [Also] criticism is always fair because it is based on the ideas of several people and of the group, not of a single person or a few people." (The group is always right.) Do the criticism sessions make the men

angry or discouraged? "Criticism sessions helped the respective persons make corrections; thus they were not angry or discouraged." (K-3) What were the specific forms of content of sessions? A VC cadre reports: "After the Tet offensive I was criticized once for being lightly wounded in Cholon while trying to withdraw hurriedly from the battlefield. Upon reaching the unit home base, I had no idea of the actual strength of my platoon and I was not able to help any wounded get away from the battlefield. Therefore, I was criticized by the company for having a passive attitude, being an egoist, fleeing alone, and not helping fellow fighters while I was still able to help them." How did you feel about it? "I did not feel depressed, nor discouraged, because I admitted I was too scared and ran away although the wound on my hand was not serious. Upon reaching the home base, I felt I was guilty because I was an assistant platoon leader, I was only lightly wounded and turned to flee, leaving behind many seriously wounded soldiers who were close to where I was. Actually, I ran out of ammunition. I was afraid that if I moved deeper I would not be able to find the way out, and then I might be killed or captured." (K-2)

How does the criticism procedure look to the privates? An NVA private stated: "When a person whose defects were not criticized made a mistake or had a shortcoming, he could never realize his mistake and thus could never correct his defects. So I think the criticism is good." As to the reactions on the part of his comrades to the sessions, he said: "To be criticized means to receive assistance from the men in the squad. Without criticism one might not know one's shortcomings and consequently make even bigger mistakes. So the persons involved in the criticism never got mad. On the contrary they felt enthusiastic for being helped by their comrades." (K-11)

A VC private had this to say: "Yes, it has a good effect. I would compare criticism sessions to a mirror with which I could look at my face. If my face had a stain, I could see it through the mirror in order to clean it up." You think criticism helped to make your unit a good one? "Yes, I think so." The VC private added that the beneficial consequences of the sessions are not always immediate: "Some

men were angry at first, especially the ones who had too much self-pride. But after a few days they will have forgotten about it and later on, little by little, they will have realized that the criticism session is necessary." (K-8)

When asked what he primarily criticized about his men in sessions, a VC cadre said: "I criticized those who did not carry out their orders well or did not finish their work on time." At this point, the interviewer challenged him, "Nobody is perfect, anybody can make mistakes though he does not mean to commit any." The cadre replied: "When a man is resolved to do his work well, and pays great attention to his work, he will seldom commit a mistake. I do not want to tell you that I am perfect, but sincerely speaking, I seldom made mistakes." (K-9)

A VC private, when asked whether he could explain how the criticism sessions corrected and improved bad morale and "incorrect thoughts," answered: "Let me give you an example. For some reason I do not like you and think you are bad. But I keep this to myself and think that I am right. Now, in a meeting, I criticize you and you defend yourself. Other people will listen to us and join in the discussion. This way will help us know each other better, and thus our friendship will be consolidated." (K-22) It is interesting to note that the private equates the absence of personal animosities with high morale and absence of "incorrect thoughts." Thus, any transgression, from the most mundane, such as returning late from a mission or losing a weapon during river crossings, to the exclusively psychological, such as hidden personal animosities, were subjects in these sessions, as they were in previous years. Responses to the sessions were as positive, also, as they were in previous investigations: men and cadres submit to them, not always without some initial resistance or irritation, but they seem to emerge from the sessions strengthened and reconciled to their fate. As to the fairness of the proceedings, there are few doubts in the minds of the participants, and the conviction prevails that criticism/self-criticism, as a collective endeavor, is likely to be fair.

THREE-MAN CELLS

Just as earlier studies show that Kiem Thao was an effective means of maintaining and redressing morale before and after, i.e., in between, combat experiences, so, too, do past studies show the three-man cell to be highly effective, not only for VC and NVA forces, but also for Chinese forces during the Korean War, from whom it was actually adopted.

The three-man cell takes over in actual firefights, and is the perfect complement to the criticism/self-criticism sessions with regard to control and correction of troop behavior. It is an institution practiced only by fighters, not by cadres. But we have the views of fighters who belong to such cells, as well as the view of cadres under whose control the men were fighting. "The three-man cell was very helpful to me. For example, during the infiltration to the South, the other man in my cell had given me a lot of assistance such as carrying my gun and ammunition or other items for me when I was tired or sick. That attitude of the other men in the cell was so encouraging that I was even more determined to endure the hardships in order to arrive in the South." (K-16)

We see here that the three-man cell system was effective even during the march to the South. And it works elsewhere, too. One VC private reports: "The other took good care of me. When I was wounded the first time on an operation, the other two men helped me to get out from the battlefield." (K-12) Another private reports: "Yes, in combat the three men in the cell always kept close to each other. They moved forward together and withdrew together in case they had to . . . but it also helped the men do their work when not in combat. When I had a problem, the other men in the cell helped me to solve it. When I quarreled with someone, the other two men helped me to calm down and explained to me what the problem was. When I got sick, the other two men called the medic and got medicine for me." (K-11)

Another NVA cadre put it this way: "When not in combat, work to be done would be assigned to the cells. I think human beings have the tendency to work with friends rather than working alone. Three heads are better than one, as you know." (K-8) Apparently the three-man cell was also a good antidote to homesickness.

One VC private, though, who had been fighting in the Delta had a different view. He felt that the system did not help the fighting spirit and did not help the men in combat. He did not elaborate. (K-19)

A VC cadre had this to say: "I was a company executive officer. Though I lived among the men, I did not have time to talk with every man in my company in order to know what he thought or how he worked. It was the three-man cell system that helped me to better understand the men's spirit." (K-2)

Another cadre summed up the matter in these words: "The purpose of the three-man cell was to consolidate the men's morale and fighting spirit. A big unit like a platoon or a company could not hold meetings regularly. Therefore the big unit was divided into cells, the cells held meetings every day, regularly, and the men in the unit had better opportunities to consolidate the morale of each other and to motivate their fighting spirit." Did it help the men in combat? "Yes . . . the three-man cell helped the men to carry out their assignments properly. It helped the men to go into combat enthusiastically and helped them to carry out noncombat duties." Did it help you in any way? "Yes, it helped me to fulfill my task. My job with my battalion was to keep records on the unit's strength. During combat the squads had to keep me informed of the number of men killed or wounded so I could report to my commander. Since the cell had only three men, it was easy for them to know whether anyone among them was killed or wounded." (K-6)

It would appear, at least from the depositions of those few whose responses underlie this study, that the multifarious and helpful functions of the three-man cell still exist and the three-man cell is still a central element in the cohesion of the enemy forces.

V. SELF-IMAGE AS A VC/NVA SOLDIER

In assessing the soldier's morale it is important to determine how he sees his own role in the action to which he is being committed. The big question will always be, does he see himself as a victim? Does he see himself as doomed? In many battles soldiers are indeed "cannon fodder" but what is crucial from the point of view of a soldier's morale is whether he regards himself as such -- a posture that undoubtedly reflects and causes poor morale. This posture can depend on a considerable variety of factors, ranging all the way from the physical to the ideological: whether he regards himself as well-armed and equipped, whether he regards himself as having a fighting chance, whether he regards his cause worth the possible supreme sacrifice. In this section an effort is made to summarize from the underlying interviews some of the elements of the self-image possessed by the NVA/VC soldier.

FIGHTING EFFICIENCY

It is an almost irresistible temptation for both sides, in the course of a lengthy war, to uncover evidence to the effect that the enemy army's efficacy is declining. In a lengthy war, experienced and well-trained low-level leaders are replaced on one or both sides by men with lesser training; ideal age groups are replaced by men either too young or too old for combat; training and preparation become less adequate, and so on. Above all, from a morale standpoint, the question arises whether those exposed to combat, and in the case of the Vietnam War rather unequal combat, tend to become battle-hardened or battle-softened. Do you think, the respondents were asked, that it becomes easier or harder for a fighter to fight when he stays in the war for a long time? "That depends on each individual. Some experienced fighters fought harder and better as the war went on; others became frightened and preferred noncombat missions."* (K-8)

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*Which, incidentally, the surprisingly lenient and flexible system would then provide for them.

Do you think your chances of surviving became better or worse the longer you fought? "Many high-ranking cadres whom I know have fought since 1960 are still alive. Even in my squad, some members have participated in the revolution longer than I. Of course the more violent the war becomes the larger the number of men killed. [It should be noted that enemy propaganda always stresses that the war, before coming to an end, will become "more violent."] However, we all see that many older friends are still alive. This shows that the better experience a man has, the better chance of surviving he has." (K-9)

To the question, "Did you feel that you became more experienced and less afraid as you gained combat experience, or did you feel that you became more frightened and less willing to fight?" an NVA private replied: "I felt that the more battles I went on, the more enthusiastic I felt and the less afraid I was. Speaking sincerely, when I first engaged in battle after arriving in the South, I was a little frightened, but after participating in several more battles, I gradually gained combat experience and was not afraid of fighting any longer. Not only that, I even wanted to go on combat more often. . . . Of course it is easier for a man to fight when he stays in the war for a long time. . . . In the beginning I could hardly find the direction of the unit when it moved forward. But the more operations I went on, the easier I felt the fighting was." (K-11)

Another NVA private confirmed this view: "The more operations I went on the more experience I gained and the less afraid I was. At the beginning I was a little frightened when I engaged in battle, but after two or three months of going on more battles with the unit I became very brave and fought very enthusiastically." A VC private whom we have quoted several times above and who showed himself as on the lower end of a few morale indicators (K-19) had this to say: "I felt I became more experienced and less afraid as I gained combat experience. But a small number of men in my unit became more frightened as they gained combat experience." One NVA cadre responded: "When we had been in the war for a long period of time we became less afraid of bombs and shells and learned much from experience. Combat is only

an ordinary thing." (K-3) Or: "The longer I fought the more I became experienced. For example, I learned how to take up my position better and to avoid the shelling. However, as fighters, we shouldn't let ourselves be affected by fear even if we really feel fear. We should expect the arrival of the enemy in order to fire at them." (K-15)

A VC private (K-18) described the matter somewhat differently. "The longer you fight the more experience you gain. However, I noticed that bombs and shells were so intensive lately. Therefore, the longer I fought the more fear of bombs and shells I had. Many people engaged in fighting for a long period of time, but they still defected or rallied to the GVN due to their fear of bombs and shells." (This man's principal area of operation had been Long An Province.)

A VC private who had been operating in Tay Ninh Province stated: "I noticed that the more the men gained combat experience the less they were afraid of fighting because they knew how high or low the firing line would go and where the bombs would hit . . . those who had fought for a long time would feel that fighting was an easy thing." (K-17)

VIEW OF DEATH

It is known that among the VC, and also in the NVA Army, fear of death must be eliminated as a soldier progresses from a novice to a good fighter. In other words, the attitude is somewhat different from our own; we feel that the soldier should perform even if he is plagued by fear of death; the enemy seems to feel that fear of death itself can and must be overcome. In fact, in captured documents we sometimes found enemy soldiers admitting, under the rubric of self-criticism, that "I still experienced a fear of death."

One NVA cadre ruminated this way on the subject: "I was almost killed right in my first battle . . . of course, everybody prefers to stay alive. However, when I went South I knew that I would either be killed or captured. I accepted my fate. Many North Vietnamese were killed by American bombs, and many South Vietnamese were also killed and disabled by American air and artillery attacks, so how can a soldier like me avoid death? The point is, sometimes one should

accept death so that his younger generation will grow. One feels better when he knows about this fact of life." What did the other men say? "The other men did not say anything but I believe they shared my point of view." (K-8)

An NVA private reported: "Well, when I was not in combat, I thought of my people, my family, and of course I hoped that in the future when the war was over I would rejoin them. But when I went on operations, I never thought of my family. All I was thinking of during combat was how to kill many enemies." What did the other men say? "Sometimes we sat down and talked to each other about how we all wanted to see our loved ones again but we all knew that the country was being invaded, that many people in the South were being dominated by the Americans, so all we could do to rejoin our people sooner was to fight the war. We all agreed that as long as the war still goes on we cannot place the happiness of our own upon our obligation to the country." (K-11)

An NVA private: "Of course, there must be losses in fighting, but I never worried about getting killed. When I volunteered to join the Army, I had already made up my mind very clearly; I understood the problem of the country, and I accepted all kinds of hardships, and if it was necessary for the country to have independence, I would offer my life for the war. I knew that I could get killed when I joined the Army, but I strongly committed myself to the cause of the salvation of the nation, which is very sacred." (K-12) The VC private with the slightly shaky morale (K-19) said: "I never thought of my chances of surviving. But I think the chances are the same for everyone." One might say that from the point of view of enemy army leaders, this is not too bad a posture to assume for one whose morale is not particularly high. One NVA private simply said: "Certainly my chances of surviving would become poorer [the longer I fought]. The longer I fought, the more the shelling and bombing would be a threat to me. So if the war lasted too long the men would have less chance to survive . . . I think all the men thought the same way." (K-16)

Another NVA private: "We had thought about it. But our thought was rather temporary, because after all, everyone must die some day.

Yet, to get killed would be inevitable in battles. Without this sacrifice we could never liberate the country." (K-15) Despite all his efforts at expurgating the fear of death, the enemy, or at least some of them, remains human: "In recent battles, because the actions were so violent, I was afraid of being killed. Therefore, I didn't fight as hard as I should." This is a VC private speaking. (K-17)

On the whole it can be said that the enemy soldiers, both cadres and privates, who responded to the questions in the interviews underlying this report, did not seem to feel any particular disharmony between the task assigned to them and the fate that might await them. Therefore, if they were indeed cannon fodder, they did not feel aware of it.

"MORALE"

This subsection is, of course, not concerned with the morale of the enemy army as we try to see it, for the entire Memorandum is devoted to that. Rather, we will attempt to answer the narrow question of the captured soldiers' viewpoints regarding the morale of their comrades, described in subjective terms. They were asked: How would you describe the morale of the fighters in your unit? Good, average, poor, getting better, getting poorer, or unchanged? "On the whole, during the period of time after the offensive in May 1968, a number of fighters became confused due to the serious losses of the unit. That is why the unit was reorganized and a number of NVA soldiers were introduced as replacements to strengthen the troop's morale." (K-2) The respondent, an NVA cadre, had been operating in Ghia Dinh Province.

Another NVA cadre had a contradictory evaluation: "The morale of all the troops in my unit was high. Especially after the victory at Nha Be in mid-July, the troops were very encouraged. . . . The morale of the troops was always high since the activation of the unit. Even after sustaining heavy casualties in a sweep operation conducted by ARVN troops in mid-August in which a great number of the troops were killed, the morale of the remaining troops was still high." (K-3)

Another NVA cadre: "Generally speaking, all the men in my

battalion were northerners. We followed socialism and we understood our mission in the South. Thus, we fought actively and had high morale. We struggled for the sovereignty of the nation and for our ideals, not for personal interest or money like ARVN troops. Therefore, we did not fear combat nor did we retreat in it." (K-5) A response common in the past, to the effect that the ARVN soldier was a poor soldier of low morale because he was a mercenary, has not been prevalent lately, at least not in the interviews examined here. The reason may well be that the ARVN soldiers gave the enemy too much trouble to justify this response. An NVA fighter said, "Recently I noticed that the morale in my unit had changed. At the time when all of the men in my squad were present, we had a pretty interesting life. But since the time some of us were killed or wounded, we were sad and thoughtful. We promised to avenge our comrades and wished to rapidly finish the war so that we could return home." (K-12) Note the various aspects of ambivalence in that statement. Another NVA man gave this laconic description: "The morale of my unit was just average; that means that everyone tried to perform his duties properly." (K-16) Similarly, "The men's morale didn't get poorer, nor did it get excessively high." This speaker (K-21) is a fighter and former party member who was expelled from the party for having embezzled some money. A VC private took a skeptical view: "The morale of my unit was average. Some of the troops had high morale; some others had low morale. The people who had high morale were small in number." (K-18)

A VC cadre finally had this to say: "The morale in my battalion was still good, although sometimes the men appeared to be less enthusiastic than at previous times because of the intensive war situation. A number of fighters began to have fear in a long and tense war. However, the cadres knew about this and they paid special attention to motivating the morale of the unit." He did not, however, view the problem as too serious: "Though the morale of the unit sometimes appeared to be a little bit low, the cadres tried hard to strengthen it. They were then successful in keeping up the good morale in the unit. The fighters were still enthusiastic to fight, and they still obeyed the orders strictly." (K-14) Here, whether by chance or not,

we encounter the word "still." As it is unique in the selection of responses, we cannot attribute any significance to it, we can only note it.

An NVA private, questioned on the subject, reported that "The morale in my battalion has been getting better since Tet because men in the unit were told by the cadres that our forces were winning in many battles in the South." (K-11) A VC cadre reported that "the morale of my battalion was getting better. We listened to our radio and heard of several victorious battles that the Front Army had fought against the Americans and the GVN. We even attacked the enemy in Saigon. In addition, people all over the world sympathized with us, morally and materially. We could see all this; that's why our morale was getting better and better." He added: "The cadres were more effective than before, strengthening the fighting spirit of the men due to our favorable position in South Vietnam as well as in the world." (K-9) The cadre realized that not every man had high morale. When asked whether the men in his unit fought as hard as they could, he answered: "Some did, some did not. This depends on each individual. The political officer who led an attack and my three dead friends did. The ones who pretended to be sick did not."

Finally, one NVA private stated: "The morale of my company was average. It was not very good because some men hesitated to attack under heavy fire, while it was not bad because we were able to fight." (K-8) Without anticipating the conclusions of the report, we can say that the findings of this analyst are, on the whole, somewhat better, and certainly not worse, than the evaluation of this participant observer. The reason for the difference may be that the enemy aims at an extremely high level of morale, and that what this NVA private calls "not very good" may be amply sufficient for the task at hand.

VI. THE SOLDIER'S RELIABILITY

Perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, this section has been subdivided into the elements of the soldier's attitude to the orders he is receiving and his compliance with them; to malingering and desertion, the latter being only a more serious act of the former; and to the soldier's response to psywar, which is, of course, one element in the fabric of his morale.

COMPLIANCE WITH ORDERS

In the summer of 1944, in World War II, it was observed that captured and defected soldiers from the Wehrmacht frequently reported that the orders they had received from their commanders were entirely unreasonable and could not be followed. For example, a tank unit would be given the mission to attack a certain point or to proceed to a certain place with insufficient gas. Soldiers would be compelled to be in the line too long or to fight with insufficient food or ammunition, or be given what they considered inadequate protection -- in short, orders that were regarded as unreasonable and orders that made the leaders appear as villains in one form or another and for whom they no longer had respect or trust.* In the Chinese forces in Korea, in early 1951, we found the same: fighters and cadre *en masse* considered some orders unreasonable and impossible to fulfill.**

The prisoners were questioned on this subject. Were the demands that the cadres and the leaders made on the fighters in your unit reasonable? "In my opinion, the cadres never demanded from the fighters anything which was too difficult for them to do. All the orders of troop movement and of digging trenches were aimed at safeguarding the fighters. There was nothing to complain about." The speaker is, himself, a cadre (K-2); in other words, the giver rather than the receiver of orders. But we shall later also hear from those

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*Based on the author's personal experiences as an interrogator in World War II.

**George, *op. cit.*, p. 171ff.

who are receiving them. It might be noteworthy that the aforementioned cadre referred to the troop movements and digging of trenches in what appeared to be a somewhat defensive manner. One may assume from his deposition that in those areas a certain critical level may sometimes be reached with regard to demands made on the soldiers.

Were there cases where the fighters refused to carry out any orders? "Never. The cadres and the fighters always strictly carried out orders given to them. There were some cases when some fighters were afraid of death, claiming to be sick, but that was all." (K-2)

Another NVA cadre said: "If the troops thought that the orders of the higher commanders were unreasonable they might request further explanation. For example, if they should be ordered to set fire to the houses of the people, they would find that it was an unreasonable order and would hurt the prestige of the Armed Forces. They could refuse to carry out the order and request their commanders to explain the purpose. Of course, this was only an example, and no one in my unit ever received such an order." The cadre (K-3) added that there had been no cases in his unit where the troops had refused to carry out any order and that "no matter what rank" he thought that no one would have dared to do so. He explained -- and this has always been the custom in enemy forces -- that before operations the troops were invited to discuss and criticize operational plans. He added that there were cases when the commanders did not have time to discuss the operational plans with the troops. But compliance was never wanting.

Another NVA cadre reported: "Generally speaking, most of the troops were willing to obey the orders of their superiors. I said 'most' because sometimes a few of them followed the orders without enthusiasm." (K-4) In other words, the orders were not always executed "cheerfully," but they were nevertheless executed. This cadre had a somewhat different report on the rights of troops to protest if they considered orders unreasonable. If the troops felt they were, they immediately protested against them. What kind of protest did they make? "They said that the orders were not virtuous or not suitable to the combat situation, and they refused to implement them." Could he give an example? "For example, when the political officer

or the commander had a relative living in a certain place, he ordered a troop to go there to pick up something for him. The men could refuse to go, for it was a personal business. However, if it was a combat order, the men would certainly have to implement it." In other words, orders were followed. But apparently there were also some operators among the cadres who sent the men off on some "personal business."

Even though the troops did not refuse to obey orders, not all cadres were convinced that they carried out the orders as willingly as they could have. "My unit was not activated before Tet; therefore I do not know what the situation was before then. But since the activation of my unit, I felt that the troop's willingness to obey orders decreased over time. There was no evidence, but I felt it." (K-4) Why did their willingness decrease? "Probably due to operations in the Delta. We had to move very often there under difficulties and danger, and it was already near the end of the year but the war still had not brought success; thus the troops were somewhat discouraged." Still another NVA cadre, in answer to the question of whether the troops tried to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions: "Only combat missions are unpleasant and dangerous ones. I do not know the status of other units, but nobody in my unit produced reasons to avoid combat missions. The soldiers fought zealously." (K-5) The cadre added: "The strength of human beings is limited. Therefore, when making decisions to perform any mission the cadres would have to estimate the strength of their troops. For example, each man could carry 40 kilograms of rice. If they were forced to carry 50 kilograms they would not go."

What do the privates have to say? "If it was a combat order, the men were always willing to obey. For example, my company was ordered to attack an enemy stronghold. First of all, we knew that this kind of order came from higher echelons, so we had to carry it out. Secondly, we did not know this enemy stronghold well, so we could not tell whether the order was unreasonable or not. This is why we always obeyed combat orders. As to internal orders, fetching rice, for example, if we felt that the order was unreasonable, we

might talk to the leader right away. The leader used to listen to us and always tried to work out a proper way. As a matter of fact, sometimes we thought that the order was unreasonable, but we had to obey. We then voiced our opinion later in a criticism session."

Can you give an example? "For example, once we stopped and stayed the night in a jungle. There were plenty of trenches and foxholes around us, but the company commander insisted that each fighter had to dig a new hole. We were very tired due to the march and felt that this order was unreasonable. Actually, some fighters dug their holes without enthusiasm. During the next day, in the criticism session, we criticized the company commander for wasting our labor. He explained that he expected more troops would be coming to our camping site. They might need more holes just in case of enemy attack. We agreed with his explanation, and the ones that did not dig new holes admitted their shortcoming."

But were there cases where the fighters actually refused to carry out an order? "None. Some fighters might carry out an order without enthusiasm, but nobody refused to obey it." Still, there seemed to have been certain exceptions. For: what happened if a certain fighter refused to carry out an order? "His conduct would be noted in his record." Would he be punished? "No. We did not believe in punishment. This man would be corrected by education and indoctrination." (K-8) An NVA private had this to add: "Most of the demands that the cadres and the leaders made on the fighters in my unit were reasonable, but some were unreasonable." Can you give an example? "For example, a person was sick and yet he received the order to carry 40 kilograms of rice from the place to the station area, which was about 18 kilometers away. This order was considered unreasonable and he didn't take it." What happened? "The man was criticized by the cell leader and the cell members in the squad. The squad and cell leader told him that if he didn't feel well he should have said so and the cadres could have assigned another person to carry out the work. He shouldn't have ignored the order." (K-1) One cadre added: "Most of the demands the cadres made on the fighters were reasonable because the cadres must always know the ability of the subordinate

cadres as well as of the fighters before they make these demands." (K-14)

Finally, a VC private: "I didn't know of any demands that were too difficult." Were there cases where the fighter refused to carry out an order? "No." (K-22)

MALINGERING, DESERTION

Did the cadres or the troops try to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions? "Nobody could shirk unpleasant or dangerous missions. In a war, every mission is dangerous and difficult. However, the commanders always tried to avoid dangers for the troops. . . . Commanders only had to avoid dangers for the troops, but not to shirk dangerous missions." (K-3)

An NVA cadre who said that he himself had "fought zealously and gallantly" but could not continue to fight "because I was wounded," was asked whether he thought the other men in his unit fought as hard as they could. "I noticed that other cadres as well as the soldiers fought with zeal. All the troops advanced aggressively . . . they attacked gallantly even though the enemy had artillery and air support." (K-5)

One NVA private, when asked whether he had ever engaged in malingering, replied: "Yes. I could have participated in a particular battle, but I did not. I was sick at that time, but I was not too sick to fight. The cadre said that as I just got out of the hospital, I should rest for some time, and I did not insist to go." The analyst would conclude that this soldier was giving evidence of extremely high standards rather than of malingering. The same soldier reported that "some fighters, two or three, were afraid of being killed in combat, so they pretended to be sick in order to remain in the base." (K-16)

A VC cadre answered the question on whether he had ever engaged in malingering: "Never. Since the day I joined the Front I have always been present in all battles my unit fought. Naturally, everybody wants to remain alive, but the most precious thing to me is freedom and independence for the country. I would rather die for the country than accept foreign domination and see my people suffer." (K-9) The same man, when asked whether he or the fighters ever tried

to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions, said: "No. We always felt enthusiastic and always wished to accomplish our missions well. Our motto was 'live great, die gloriously.'" (K-9) The VC fighter whose morale was not overly high said, perhaps significantly: "I think I always fought with the same eagerness. The successes or failures often resulted from circumstances beyond our control." And he added: "Very few people try to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions." (K-19)

Another VC private, when asked whether he thought he could have fought harder, affirmed this. Why didn't you? "Since I was forced to fight, and seeing so many people killed, I no longer wanted to fight and only wished to return to my wife and children." He also claimed that "very few people" in his unit fought "zealously." But: "I never declared myself sick in order to be excused from going on combat." Perhaps somewhat atypically he added that "in my unit only the more seasoned soldiers were malingerers, but no recruit like myself dared to engage in such an action." (K-18) An NVA private responded this way when asked whether he ever engaged in malingering: "Never. The other men in my unit never did either. On the contrary, before a battle I participated in, a man had just recovered from illness. He, however, asked for joining the unit. But the cadres turned down his request because he was still weak." (K-16)

DESERTION

In all, the soldiers interviewed for the purpose of this report had little to say on the subject of desertion, either as desired by themselves, observed by others, or witnessed in other cases. One NVA cadre with whom the subject was discussed, had this to say: "Since the activation of my unit, no one has attempted to desert, rally, or surrender. [If people did] I think there were two reasons. The first reason was they noticed that the last general offensive did not bring any success, the war had lasted too long, and they did not think that they would achieve victory. The second reason was bombs and shells were seen everywhere; U.S.-ARVN troops successively conducted more operations, and they thought that they could hardly avoid death." Of the two reasons, which one was more important? In other words, which

one was more likely to make men desert or rally? "I think that the second reason was more important. I mean they feared bombs, shells, and death." (K-4)

RESPONSE TO PSYWAR

Those who have had any experience with psywar seem to agree that it has been least effective in the Vietnam War, as compared to World War II, the Korean War, or certain cold war operations in peacetime.* Thus, in Vietnam, psywar operations have met with the same lack of real success as the war effects as a whole. This can be, of course, theoretically attributable to two different causes: bad quality of the effort, or inauspicious situations in which it was made. There probably are some people who view many of the general failures our side had to accept in this war as psywar failures. This analyst, who has had extensive experience in psywar, would not agree. While he has seen no particularly inspired psywar forays, he believes that, on the whole, the situation for psywar was inauspicious in the Vietnam War, and he regards this motivation and morale study as evidence. Just as the enemy forces in Vietnam were remarkably invulnerable to military efforts, so were they remarkably invulnerable to inroads through psywar.

Some conversations with soldiers on the subject follow. "About one month after the Tet offensive, one fighter in my company was the subject of discussion among his cell members because he had a 'pass' leaflet in his pocket. In the cell meeting his friends asked him for an explanation. He said he did not have any intention to rally to the GVN. He had picked up a leaflet while digging trenches. He wanted to read it sometime during the day, but forgot and left it in his pocket. After this incident, the man did not show any signs of being discouraged or desiring to desert. As time passed, the story was forgotten." (K-2)

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*Some readers would disagree and cite the Chieu Hoi program as evidence.

You have said that nobody in your unit read GVN propaganda leaflets. Were the troops forbidden to pick up GVN leaflets to read? "No. There were no orders forbidding the troops to pick up GVN propaganda leaflets to read. They did it at will." (K-3) It should be noted that this deposition is at variance with what is generally reported; namely, that the enemy troops are not allowed to read the leaflets.

Did you believe the combat news released by the Front Radio? "Yes." Did the troops believe them? "Though they did not speak out, I am sure they also believed them as I did. They only wondered why the radio did not give the Front casualties for each battle." (K-4)

One NVA cadre, when asked whether he had seen GVN propaganda during the past six months, said: "Many, many times, I could see it all the time." As to his reaction, "Broadcasts and propaganda leaflets usually said that if we rallied we would be welcomed by the GVN, issued clothing and money. I doubted that. Frankly, I did not believe this because I have never seen it and I thought that it was only a decoy to demoralize the men. The only type of propaganda that I believed was about the B-52 bombers. This leaflet said that if we did not rally to the GVN we would certainly be killed by B-52s. I already knew of the effectiveness of the B-52s, and thus I believed that I might possibly be killed by them. I noticed that this propaganda was effective." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre, asked to assess GVN propaganda, replied: "I did not believe the propaganda made by the GVN. First I noticed that the GVN review said that the people in South Vietnam were enjoying a prosperous free life. Even without being told anything about it by the cadres, the troops all realized that this was completely untrue. There was no such a free regime as the propaganda claimed. In reality, the people were living a miserable life, and their homes destroyed by bombs, their rice fields and gardens left uncultivated. The people did not have enough food to eat and had to live in huts. Second, the propaganda said that the people in South Vietnam were given economic aid by the allied nations, had nice homes, motorcycles, television sets, bicycles, etc. However . . . the Vietnamese people

were being killed by bombs and shells and had to earn money for each meal. Due to these things, we did not believe any propaganda made by the GVN. The more we saw the realities, the more logical would be our struggle, and the more encouraged we were." (K-5)

An NVA private, however, seems to have been somewhat more strongly affected. Telling the interviewer that he had heard two GVN broadcasts and seen some GVN leaflets that had urged him to rally, he answered, after a long pause, when asked why he did not comply: "I did not know the way." He went through conflict: "Actually, I do not know how the other fighters felt. As for me, sometimes I was very scared of being killed and was tired of the hardships. But I did not want to betray my side, my family, and my country. While in the North I was a worker, but I was not admitted to the Lao Dong because I was often criticized for having love affairs with various girls. I felt very much hurt but I know that I was wrong. I don't want to be a traitor." (K-8) We see that this man was tempted, and at one point ready to give up, but in the end his morale held. He was not specifically discouraged from rallying by his cadre: "I did not hear anybody say anything about rallying. As to desertion, we agreed with one another we would not do that but would fight till success no matter what hardships and difficulties we would encounter. By the way, my home is in the North, so I could not desert home, and besides my family would lose all privileges reserved for a fighter's family." (K-12) Whether or not it was wishful thinking on the part of the VC cadre who was asked to evaluate the influence of GVN propaganda on the attitudes of his men, he said: "They all understand that this was a trap laid for them by the enemy. The Americans came to Vietnam and brought death and destruction for our innocent people. They destroyed our houses and orchards, and made our people suffer. The Chieu Hoi propaganda is nothing but a demand for surrender. Since we know about this, we do not let ourselves be influenced by it." (K-9)

VII. CAREER IN THE ENEMY FORCE

REASONS FOR JOINING*

When asked how he had become a member of the enemy forces, a VC cadre who had been fighting mainly in the Gia Dinh area reported: "At first I was forced to join the Front. Before that I had worked as a gas station attendant in a Saigon suburb. One day in February of 1966 I visited my parents in a nearby village and spent the night there. A group of three or four armed VC soldiers came to my house and asked me to go with them. I did not dare to resist because they were armed. I went with them to a place about two hours' march from my family's home. There I was instructed for three days, and right after, I volunteered to join the Front military service. Little by little I understood the Front's policy better and remained with my unit until I was captured." How do you feel about the VC now? If you had the past to live over again, would you join again? "I still feel that the Front is right. The Front has the right cause to carry out the struggle. If I were released and the war were still going on, I would join the Front again to fight." (K-2) In other words, here is one of those by no means infrequent cases where a person forcibly inducted was turned into a genuine convert. Another VC cadre gave the following reason for joining: "I personally witnessed the American activities in Vietnam, so I decided to fight them." Please tell me what you have witnessed. "I rely on the people and our weapons to fight the Americans." No. You said you personally witnessed the American activities in Vietnam. My question is what have you witnessed. What made you decide to join the Front? "My people suffer. Myself and my family are enslaved by the Americans." How were you enslaved? "We were poor and had a difficult life. The Americans bombed and shelled my village. My house and my orchard were destroyed. My father, my relatives, and other countrymen were killed." In what circumstances did you join the Front? "My home area

*This is not a thorough investigation on a subject that has been studied at great length.

was liberated in 1960. I volunteered to join the Front when I was 18 [in 1965]. I was grown-up and I realized that the American presence brought death and destruction to the Vietnamese people." Did you ever feel disappointment with the Front? "Never. I love the revolution, that's why I joined the revolution." How do you now feel about the Front? "I am now a prisoner. I know that many other Vietnamese are now fighting for the Front to achieve the same goal. Eventually my country shall be liberated and I shall be liberated, too." (K-9) Another VC cadre stated that: "The unjust death of my uncle bothered me very much. The GVN Rangers killed my uncle and beat me up when I was just 12 years old because they suspected us of being VC. I was very angry with the GVN, and when the GVN troops came to the village I always looked away just because I hated them. I had no place to go but I did want to take revenge for my uncle. Therefore I left the village to join the Front. At that time I didn't know what the Front was doing but I did know that the Front was fighting against the GVN." Did you find that the Front came up to your hopes and expectations? "Sincerely speaking, when I joined the Front I just wanted to take revenge. I did not expect anything from the Front. I didn't hope the Front to do anything for my family either. But gradually I felt the Front was going along with the people's aspirations and had won the confidence of the people. The Front troops never beat up innocent people. They never burned the houses of the people and never oppressed them. But the GVN troops did. I am now in jail but I have never thought that I made a mistake in joining the Front." (K-21)

The VC private who had admitted to being scared in combat stated that he had joined of his own free will. Pressed to be more specific, he simply repeated: "I joined of my own free will, that's all." When asked whether the Front had come up to his hopes, he replied: "I didn't have any hopes and expectations." Was he disappointed then? "Quite the contrary, I was satisfied with the VC." Give me the reason for your satisfaction. "I was satisfied because I was able to fight against the Americans." And he added: "My feelings remain unchanged." (K-19) An old VC cadre who had been fighting

since 1953 explained his motivations in this fashion: "I volunteered to join the Vietminh formally and have been serving in the Army for many years. I fought for the ideology of the Vietnamese people. There were many injustices in the society and I hated to see poor people suffer being ill-treated and exploited by rich and powerful people. The oppression and exploitation that the poor Vietnamese people had to suffer made me feel very disgusted. Therefore I joined the Army in order to realize the revolution, a real revolution, which means to improve the situation." (K-14)

Contrary to such purposeful men, others were merely caught between two grindstones. "The cadres conducted propaganda in my village. They said that if I did not volunteer the Front forces I would be drafted. On hearing that, I had to join their forces; I volunteered. In fact I only wanted to remain at home to make my living and I did not want to fight." But, once in, he did not regret it. (K-18) A cadre said: "I had to choose one of two paths open in South Vietnam to a man in order to improve my living, which had been poor and difficult. If I didn't adopt one, I had to take the other." (K-21) But once in, this man accepted the Front whole-heartedly: "I became convinced of the righteousness of Front policy." And he added that his main reason for being in the VC was that it gave him a chance to fight for the people's rights and for the liberation of South Vietnam. In any event, he was not disappointed. The gradual induction of a VC private proceeded as follows: "I was forced to join the VC. I lived in an insecure area. I had to go out to work. By moving around I met the VC. One day they began to propagandize me. They told me that as I was grown-up I could not stay home to work like that all the time. While I had been still young I had belonged to my parents, but once I was grown-up I would be the son of the government and the Front. Therefore I would have to leave my family behind in order to join the revolution and help liberate the people. On the other hand, if I stayed home, I would be drafted by the GVN. Then, being their soldier, I would certainly hurt the people in one way or another." This man was not easily convinced: "Despite what the VC said, I kept on staying home in order to work to support my old mother. In the

meantime, the villagers were relocated to a New Life hamlet in Dah Do district. But in November 1967 the VC overran my hamlet. They propagandized the villagers, and then picked up five or six youths, including myself, and took us away." However, despite his original reluctance and forcible induction, the young VC was not disappointed. When asked whether he had come to feel that he had made a mistake, he said: "Well, when I realized that the VC were doing right I followed them. So I don't think that I made a mistake." Yet, even now he would rather go home: "If I could go home and live freely I would never join the VC again. I would stay with my family and take care of my old mother." But he thought he would go on if he could because "according to the cadres, the Americans want to help the GVN, in the first place. Secondly, they want to take over South Vietnam. And third, from South Vietnam they will initiate war in other places." Do you believe it? "Yes, I do." (K-22)

REASONS FOR PERSEVERANCE

One of the great mysteries of the Vietnam War is the perseverance of the enemy in the face of his great material and technological disadvantage. By any rational thinking he cannot hope to win the war militarily. What keeps the enemy fighting for so long a time? This study tried to get some insight, by direct questioning on this point, into whether the main reason for the enemy troops' perseverance is due to coercion, conviction, or some other motivation.

A VC cadre had this to say: "I am the son of the people. Our people always want peace and happiness. The American aggressors came here and brought with them death and destruction to our people. It is my duty to fight the aggressors and restore peace and independence to the country." What kept the men in your unit fighting as long and as well as they did? "We are fighting for a goal. Our goal is to drive the American aggressors out of the country and restore freedom and independence for the country. We are near final victory and we have been repeatedly victorious recently. My friends see and understand this. That's why they keep on fighting for the people." (K-9)

Another VC cadre pointed to the road he had traveled: "Sincerely

speaking, while I lived in the GVN-controlled area, I did not have the slightest idea of what the war was about. More precisely, I did not know who was fighting whom and for what purpose. After joining the Front [in February 1966] I spent most of my time in the rural area, where rural people lived poorly and miserably and suffered death as a result of the war, day after day. The Vietnamese farmers worked hard in their fields and their gardens. Their lives depended on the crops they grew. Unfortunately, the Americans brought over bombs and shells to destroy their fields and gardens which were their dearest property, and killed their relatives as well. Knowing these heart-breaking facts, I had pity on my fellow countrymen, I hated the Americans who caused the war and I actively took part in the fight, though I had known beforehand that I might be killed or captured before my native land is liberated." How about the other men in his unit? "The majority of fighters came from rural areas. Since they came from rural areas, they all knew the misery of innocent people. Once they knew the suffering of the people -- their families among them -- naturally they fought with enthusiasm in order to liberate the country and to bring back a normal peaceful life to the innocent people." (K-2)

An NVA cadre expressed himself more briefly: "I think that it is my duty to make a contribution to liberating the people and safe-guarding the nation, thus I had to fight." And the other men? "I do not know for sure, but I believe they fought for the same reasons." (K-3)

An NVA private took a somewhat simpler view: "I came to the South to fight, so I fought. It was my duty . . . as for the other men, they realized the Front was right, so they supported the Front." (K-8)

Another NVA private: "I fought very enthusiastically for a year because I fully understood the revolutionary line of the party and of Uncle Ho. I was told about the political situation and about the American aggression in Vietnam; I am strongly determined to take the way the party has planned in order to liberate the country from the American imperialists. I have always believed that the Liberation

Front and our Army have been fighting for the just cause, and sooner or later the people who fight for the just cause will win the war." And what kept the men in your unit fighting as long and as well as they did? "They have the same idea about the war. They have great confidence in the party and they are hoping that a great victory in the future will bring peace and equality to the people in all parts of Vietnam." A VC private put it very simply: "Since I lived in a VC-controlled area, I had to work for the Front. While serving in the Front forces I didn't have any reason to leave them." And his buddies? "The VC knew very well how to stir up the fighters' pride. They kept them always busy trying to achieve some feat in frequent emulation campaigns." (K-19)

A VC cadre: "We are fighting for a class, the poor people. This is the main reason why we have been fighting that long." (K-21) An NVA private insisted that he had fought "because I wanted our people to be liberated from the American imperialists, and everyone to have land to farm, and for our country to be reunified." (K-16) Another NVA private said: "When I was still in the North I heard about the situation in the South; I heard about the miserable life the Vietnamese people in the South had to suffer, about the American bombardment damaging the country, killing people, and I felt that as a young man of the country which is being invaded by the foreigners, I must do something to give the South Vietnamese people a hand to liberate the country. Therefore I volunteered to join the Army. After arriving in the South, I understood more about the miseries of the people there, I hated the enemies more and I became very enthusiastic to fight. Now that I am in jail, of course, I cannot do anything, but if I were still in the Army, I would keep on fighting to the end. I would fight until the war is over, the foreigners all leave Vietnam and the country regains its independence." What about the other men? "I think all of the men in my unit and in other Front and NVA units have the same point of view about the war, and the same ideology, and we were fighting for the same purposes." (K-12)

Finally, another NVA private: "The reason why every one of us fought this war so hard was our willingness to liberate the country.

And war is the only means to accomplish it. If we don't fight, the Americans would conquer our country. Moreover, after the Americans dropped bombs on North Vietnam to destroy our economy, to kill the children in the schools and patients in the hospital, our willingness to fight increased considerably." (K-15) One last VC fighter should be quoted: "I trusted the VC propaganda. . . ." As to the other men: "I don't know." (K-22)

CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTURE

In this subsection, the report investigates the circumstances of the soldiers' capture not only to uncover some clues as to the men's dedication, but also to learn of their attitudes in general, as well as their fighting methods.

"On December 26, 1968, I was ordered to come and see the battalion commander. I left my place and arrived at night. He was not there. I decided to stay there to wait for him. The next day the ARVN and U.S. force conducted a sweep operation in the area. I was not able to escape and was captured." Do you think that you could have escaped? "When I learned about the sweep, the hamlet in which I was had been surrounded. I had no way to flee." (K-2) The speaker was a VC cadre. An NVA cadre showed remorse over what he thought was his ineptness. "By the time of my capture, the company had only six men left [!]. On the day I was captured, four of the men were transporting rice. Only one soldier and I remained in the jungle where we bivouacked. One of the local guerrillas who had rallied led ARVN troops to the place. They captured me while we were hiding in the trench . . . I think [capture] was due to my carelessness. First, I had let local guerrillas know about the secret cache. The second thing was, I had rushed to the cache too early. On hearing the roar of helicopters I should have fled to the jungle instead of hiding in the cache. I could then have avoided capture by ARVN troops." (K-3)

One NVA cadre was captured while reconnoitering a place 10 kilometers from Saigon from which to bombard Y bridge. "Well, I had just arrived at Long Tuong village. I ran into an operation conducted by U.S. troops and I was captured. My team had three men: myself, the

company executive officer, and one intelligence agent. We were all captured." Could you have avoided capture? "In previous times I felt sure. This time, however, when I received the order I felt I might run into a mishap. The reason was, I had to go to a place which was completely strange to me. A second reason was that the place was on the outskirts of the capital where ARVN/U.S. troops frequently operated, and if I came across them I could not avoid being captured." (K-5) An NVA private reported the following: "On the day of my capture we moved for four hours through the jungle to reach our objective. We stopped 300 meters from the barbed wire fence to prepare for an assault. We made the mistake of making a lot of noise; therefore, the enemy inside opened fire first. Our cadre then shouted for us to make the assault, but not all the fighters did.* I think the majority were afraid of enemy firepower so they kept on lying on the ground. I must say the enemy firepower was very strong. They used all sorts of weapons -- machine guns, mortars, air support . . . it was 11 p.m. then. I followed the political cadre and reached the barbed-wire fence. The enemy inside fired very fiercely. A friend of mine was hit in the head with a bullet; he cried out, and died. When I looked around I saw three others already dead. I myself was also wounded. I was hit by eight bullets in my legs and my head. I lost contact with my unit and lay there till dawn. At five or six in the morning an American and two GVN soldiers came out and carried me inside." How did he think he had performed in his last battle? "I think I fulfilled the mission entrusted to me." (K-8)

A VC cadre was more self-critical. "I was hit by machine guns from the helicopter. I hid in a bush and the next day I was captured." How do you think you performed during this battle? "I am sorry for not having been able to kill any enemy during this battle. I don't think I fulfilled my mission." (K-9) An NVA private: "I participated in the last battle with my unit, when I was wounded and captured. . . . As in any other battles of the past, I was very enthusiastic to fight until I was wounded, but the fighting took place at night so my

*Again, evidence that the enemy is no superman. Yet one wonders how many remained behind, and how many attacked.

comrades didn't see me and at the same time the enemy's firepower was quite fierce, so they fled and left me behind and I was captured." Had he felt differently than in previous battles? "No, I didn't have any different feelings. I followed my commanders and fought as I used to, without having any fear." Do you think you could have avoided capture? "No, if I could, I wouldn't be here now." (K-11)

In most of the stories of capture, the soldiers, whether NVA or VC, whether private or cadre, were captured only after having been wounded, or at least stunned by a blast. Only two or three of the group in question were taken without having been physically incapacitated. Thus, the story they gave on the whole, reflecting high morale, would seem to be corroborated by their effective behavior in combat.

VIII. EXPECTATIONS REGARDING TERMINATION OF WAR

One may safely assume that a soldier's expectation concerning the outcome of the war is a powerful indicator of his morale. Soldiers who do not expect to win their country's war are particularly prone to low morale, for the obvious reason that they consider the ultimate sacrifice they possibly may have to make as being made in vain. But beyond that, i.e., beyond the simple question as to whether the war, in the soldier's view, will be won or lost, is the question of what victory or defeat will do for him, for his family, and for his country. A man who expects a decisive advantage from victory and a sizable calamity from defeat is likely to be an ardent fighter. But soldiers do not always feel that way. For example, toward the end of World War II, there were many men in the Wehrmacht on various levels who, no matter how great the urgings on the part of propaganda minister Goebbels, did not think that an American victory over Germany was the end of the world.* Nor were they any longer convinced that their own victory under Hitler would bring eternal bliss to all Germans. Thus, next to the question, "Will we win this war?" the question, "Is this war really necessary?" will play a great role in the psychological makeup and fighting capacity of a man.

VICTORY? FOR WHOM? BY WHAT MEANS?

An NVA cadre, when asked what would happen if the Front should lose the war, found this so difficult to imagine that he finally stated: "If it happens that the Front loses the war, the Front troops will concentrate in some safe area, foregathering strength to fight again when they have the opportunity." (K-6) A VC private, when asked whether the U.S./GVN could destroy the Front if the war continued, at first demurred: "I am a PFC, not a politician. I do not know much about this."

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*Based on the author's personal experiences with German PoWs after D-Day in Normandy.

When pressed ("Do you think the U.S./GVN can win the war?"), he answered: "No, the Front will win." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "We shall win on the battlefield, but the war will be solved at the conference table." What do you mean by conference? "I mean the peace talks in Paris." (K-18)

A VC cadre had this to say: "The United States and the GVN can never destroy the Vietnamese armed forces (Front Army) because we come from the people; we are the people. The enemy can never destroy our people." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "The Vietnamese people have the ability to chase the Americans out of Vietnam by military means." (K-9) But when further pressed, the cadre amended his statement: "I mean by combined military-political means." A VC private said: "The U.S./GVN has more troops and is better armed than the Front. But the VC is armed with high morale and better ideology. I don't think the U.S./GVN can destroy the Front, particularly when a better part of the people side with the Front." Can the Front drive out the United States by military means? "I am not sure that the Front can drive out the United States by military means." By combined military-political means, then? "In that case, I think the Front can drive out the United States." (K-22) Another VC private was slightly less optimistic: "The United States has all kinds of aircraft and artillery and the Front does not have them. At present, the Front is unable to drive the Americans out. However, if the war is prolonged I cannot predict." He added: "If both military and political means are used, however, it probably can." (K-18)

A VC cadre: "I don't think the U.S./GVN can destroy the Front because Vietnam is our country. In this war everyone should fight. If someone is killed, the other will take his place. So it is impossible to destroy the Front." (K-21) One VC private said: "I cannot tell yet because as far as I can see it, in their fighting neither the United States nor the Front are prevailing" -- a statement that may be less naive than seems at first glance. (K-22) The NVA private again, when asked, On what did you base your statement that the Front will win this war?: "I do not want to use the term 'Front.' I want to use the term, 'the South Vietnamese people.' The South Vietnamese people are

being helped by the great socialist North Vietnam. They are also helped by our friends all over five continents, especially the Soviet Union and China. People all over the world are supporting the Vietnamese people to defeat the American imperialists. This is why I believe we shall win and Vietnam will be reunified." (K-8) An NVA cadre believed that "neither side can destroy the other by force. Only political means can solve the war." (K-4) The same cadre had this to add: "The present situation is unfavorable for the Americans to realize their plans. The Republic of Vietnam is supported by the free world nations, but the Front is supported by the socialist nations. The two parties are still disputing, and the settlement of the war is coming to a deadlock. I think the war will become protracted and very fierce." (K-4) A VC cadre was more optimistic for his side: "If the war is prolonged, sooner or later the Americans will be driven out because the American forces are restricted and the Front is supported by the people. Therefore, finally the Americans will be repelled by both military and political means." (K-14)

Another VC cadre, when asked what effect the growing number of American and other foreign troops were having on the outcome of the war, stated: "Since Tet, the United States has lost a great many troops. Now if the United States should bring fresh troops to Vietnam, the new troops would serve to replenish the loss of the past but could not affect the outcome of the war." (K-9) Here we have the familiar notion, seen in many previous interviews, that the enemy soldier sees the result of additional force to be merely a prolongation and intensification of the war, not a change in its fortunes. An NVA private expressed more or less the same view: "I think that if the United States should send more troops to the South, or the GVN's allies send more troops to the South, the war would become fiercer and a lot more people would be killed. In the meantime, I am afraid the war would go on for much longer." (K-21) These statements are included here even though no increase in troop levels is under consideration, but simply to demonstrate some of the enemies' views on having to meet an even larger unfavorable ratio of forces.

Finally, one more VC cadre: "Everybody in the world, not the Vietnamese alone, knows that America is a rich country and has all modern weapons. But modern weapons do not make the United States win this war. The NLF does not fear the American modern weapons and I think the Front was aware of this before it started its anti-American struggle. I think this war will last a long time and the Vietnamese people will certainly win it. The Americans are engaged in an aggressive war which is nonrighteous and they will lose it." (K-2)

IMPACT OF OUTCOME

Because the fighting ardor of people is greatly influenced by the images they have of the probable effects of both victory or defeat on themselves and their country, respondents were asked to hypothesize on that subject. A VC cadre said: "Regardless of how many more years the war will go on, the Vietnamese people will keep on fighting till all the Americans leave. The war has been going on for many years, the United States has been using all kinds of modern weapons -- airplanes, jets, tanks, and has sent a great number of troops to Vietnam. But it always suffered defeats. There is only one kind of weapon that the United States has not used on the battlefield of Vietnam and that is atomic bombs. But if the United States has to use atomic bombs in order to win the war, I am afraid it would not be considered a powerful country any more. Unless all the Vietnamese people die, the Americans will never win. . . . The big fish can eat up the small fish but the people cannot use strong arms to eliminate weak people if they have no just cause. The Americans are fighting an unjust war, and they will never win." (K-4)

On the question of what would happen if the Front should lose the war, some respondents had a difficult time imagining it. An NVA private was asked: If the Front should lose the war, what do you think would happen to those who fight for the Front? He replied: "I don't think the GVN and the United States can win this war." But suppose the GVN would win? "Impossible." Did you ever think the GVN could win this war? "I never thought of it." On the other hand, if the

Front should win the war, "the North and the South would be reunified. The South Vietnamese people would have independence like other independent countries. . . . My family will continue to live in the North under the same socialist government. From then on, North Vietnam will work on developing its country like Russia, Red China, and other European countries. . . . Vietnam would be unified. Her people would be independent and free." (K-15)

An NVA cadre had very somber expectations: "If the GVN wins this war, all people who fought for the Front will be killed." What do you think will happen to you? "I would also be killed." (K-3) Another NVA cadre: "If the GVN achieves victory, it will gain the confidence of the people [!]. As for the people who fought for the Front, I do not know what would happen to them. They certainly could not live with the GVN and probably will have to flee to the jungle." What would become of you? "At present, I am a prisoner of war -- I do not know what would be my fate." And what would become of Vietnam? "Vietnam would remain partitioned for a long time." And if the GVN should lose? "If the Front achieves victory, the entire people will have confidence in the Front and will join the Front. Those who have fought for the GVN will be employed and remain in their former positions like the Hanoi government who used the civil servants who stayed there." What will become of Vietnam? "If victory is gained, the first thing the Front would do would be to form a coalition government. After a period of time, if North and South Vietnam can associate with each other, they will move toward the unification of the nation. This was prescribed in the Front policies that I have studied. I cannot predict the future developments." (K-4)

One more NVA cadre: "I do not believe that the GVN will win this war, therefore I have never thought of this question. But if the GVN win this war, the people who are fighting for the Front will continue to fight until national sovereignty is recovered. As long as Vietnam is oppressed by foreigners, we will carry on the fight to safeguard the nation; even though we have to sacrifice our lives, we will not be discouraged nor frightened." (K-5) Here again we have a man who cannot even imagine a complete defeat that would put an end to the Front.

An NVA private, asked what he thought would happen if the Front lost the war, began as others of his colleagues: "I firmly believe that the Front will not lose." When pressed, he said: "What would happen? I don't know." But if the Front should win the war? "I would meet my family again and Vietnam would be a prosperous and beautiful country." What do you mean by prosperous and beautiful? "I mean mines, bridges, and industrial centers." (K-8) A VC cadre, in answer to the same question, stated: "Being revolutionaries and liberators, we are resolved to fight until the country is liberated. As long as the country is dominated and the people are enslaved by the Americans, we shall fight till our last man." I said *if* the Front should lose the war. . . "The Front can never lose because we have the right cause, we have set up our objectives, and we shall go until success." But if by any chance the Front should lose anyway, what would become of Vietnam? "Vietnam would live under the American rule and the people would suffer." What would happen to you and your family? "Myself and my family would be slaves of lackeys of the Americans." But, conversely, if the Front should win the war? "The people would have a happy and prosperous life. They would no longer be slaves . . . myself and my family would have a freer and happier life. And Vietnam would have peace, independence and be a happy country." (K-9)

An NVA private: "I never thought that the Front could lose the war. This war is a war of the Vietnamese people fighting against American imperialists. As long as the Vietnamese people still exist, and as long as the Americans are still in Vietnam dominating the Vietnamese people, the war will go on. Whenever the Front people should get tired or whenever they feel that they are too weak to fight, they would probably withdraw to some area to rest for a period of time, and they will then continue to fight until all Americans leave." What do you think would happen to you and your family? "As long as the war goes on, I don't think of myself or my family. I will keep on fighting as long as I can when the Front still needs me for the liberation of the country." Now, if the Front should win the war, what do you think would happen then? "If the Front should win the war, North and

South Vietnam will be reunified. Socialism will be applied to both North and South, and all the Vietnamese people will enjoy a good life; everyone will have enough to eat and proper clothes to wear." (K-11)

One more NVA private, when asked what would happen if the Front should lose the war, answered: "It could never happen. The war might go on for many more years, but the Front will not lose. With the determination and the hatred toward the American invaders, the Vietnamese people will win the war. The question of losing never entered my mind, because I think the Front is fighting for a just cause; it fights for the freedom and the equality of the people and it will never lose the war. In case the Front becomes weak, that also would not mean that it is going to give up. It would probably withdraw to some secret base for gathering strength and continue to fight until all Americans leave Vietnam." What would happen to you and your family? "If I am still alive and the Front has not won the war, I would never return to North Vietnam. In other words, I would keep on fighting as long as the Front needs me for the liberation of the country. My family in the North is being taken care of by the North government and by the people there in the North; I don't have to worry about my family." What would happen to the country? "I don't believe that the Front will lose the war, but if it should, I think Vietnam would still be divided into two, like it was according to the Geneva Agreement." If the Front should win, on the other hand? "If the Front wins the war, a coalition government will be established in the South and the people of this coalition government will sit down together with the North Vietnamese government to discuss the reunification of the country. Vietnam will have no war, North and South Vietnam will have freedom and only one government, and all Vietnamese people will be free to travel from North to South." What would happen to you and your family? "If the Front wins the war, Vietnam will have peace, and if I am still alive I will return to the North to rejoin my family and will live happily again. I also believe that as soon as the war is over, the country will be reunified, socialism will be applied all over Vietnam, and all Vietnamese people will enjoy equality, good life, and there will be no rich people exploiting the poor." (K-12)

A VC cadre also insisted that he never thought of what would happen in case the Front should lose the war: "Regardless of how many more years the war will go on, we Vietnamese people will never give up. We are very determined to continue the war until all Americans leave Vietnam. I never thought of the Front losing the war, and I will never think of this even now that I am in jail. When I decided to join the Front I thought either one of three things could happen to me, which were: either I get captured, killed, or wounded. One of these things has happened to me, I am now a prisoner and I accept the situation. But I strongly believe that the Front will finally win the war." (K-9)

A VC private, when asked what would happen in case the Front should lose: "The Americans came here to cause death and destruction, wretchedness to all the country. Therefore those who fight for the Front will keep on fighting till the end. If the Front should lose the war, I think the Americans would kill or mistreat all those former enemies." What do you think would happen to you and your family? "I don't know what would happen to my family. As for myself, I only think of fighting until I get killed." If the Front should win? "If the Front should win, South Vietnam would have a coalition government and the Vietnamese would be able to govern themselves." And what would happen to you? "I would be serving the Front again." (K-19)

One VC private gave answers that were strikingly different from all the others. He thought that "if the GVN achieves total victory, the people who fought for the Front will have to join the GVN." He added that "I will also join the GVN and my family will enjoy happiness." As to Vietnam, "there would be no more bombs and shells. The people will live a peaceful life." And if the Front should win? "My family and I will be happy." You said that if the GVN wins, you and your family will be happy. Now you say that if the Front wins you and your family will also be happy. Why? "I do not care who is going to win this war. Whether the GVN or the Front gains victory, my family will enjoy a peaceful and happy life." If the Front should win the war what do you think would happen to Vietnam? "It would be the same as if the GVN gained total victory. There will be no more war, and

peace will be restored to Vietnam." In your opinion what are the objectives of the Front? "Like those of the GVN, the objectives are to serve the nation and the people." Yet, even this strikingly different respondent finally came around to stating the following: "[The objectives of the Front] are important." Are they important enough to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "If they are designed to serve the nation and the people, it is worth it for me to suffer hardships." Do you think that they are important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "If the Americans are still present in this land, it will be worth it for the people to continue to suffer hardships." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "If the Americans are still present, our children must also continue to fight this war. If there were no Americans, we need not have to fight." (K-19) In other words, this man, *while he is indifferent as to whether the GVN or the VC should win the war*, also sees his struggle, like most others, devoted exclusively to driving out "the Americans."

Another VC private: "According to the cadres, if the Front won the war, South Vietnam would be run by the Socialist Party. Myself, I would be happy then." How did you feel about the importance of the aims of the Front and of achieving them? "I think the Front's aims are worthy to be achieved." Did you think they were important enough for you to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "Yes, I realized they were important and I was even convinced of it." Did you think they were important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "I don't know." Did you think your children would go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "I think it is necessary for the Front to win this war. Therefore my children should go on fighting too." (K-22)

IX. PERCEIVED COURSE OF WAR

By "perceived course of the war," to which this section is devoted, we mean something other than "expected outcome." Perceived course, in the framework of this inquiry, is not a respondent's guess as to the end result, but observations on his part on how things are and have been developing in the area subject to his personal observation.

CHANGES SINCE TET, 1968

This section will examine changes that may have occurred, in the general view of respondents, since the days of Tet, and, in particular, changes in opinions with regard to the course of the war. A cadre was asked: Since Tet, has your feeling about the course of the war changed? "My opinion about the course of the war and the aims of the Front never changes. I always think that the Front is fighting for the right cause, for the interests of the people and its aims must be achieved. . . . As long as the Americans continue to occupy South Vietnam, cause death to Vietnamese people, I shall go on fighting though I may risk being killed. When I was captured I was beaten but I never felt sorry for joining the Front. On the contrary, I felt more hatred for the Americans." (K-2) This cadre reported several aspects of the Tet episode: "My unit suffered serious losses in the offensive during Tet and in the second phase of May 1968. But I do not think it was a mistake or a shortcoming of the cadres. It was because our strength was less than the enemy force." How did the other men react? "Actually, after the failure of the two offensives [this man used the word "failure" to describe the offensives, which is rare], a number of men became worried and confused. Nevertheless, they understood that the combat orders were issued from higher echelon, not from the battalion leaders. Thus, they complained that the higher echelon had not studied and planned carefully before giving the orders." Did you feel the men followed orders as willingly as before Tet? "The men still followed orders. Some became worried and feared combat, but they never disobeyed orders."

What about their fighting competence? "On the whole, the majority of the soldiers in my battalion only had fighting experience in the Delta [translator's note: the word "Delta" here means rural area] and did not have experience in combat in the city. Fighting in the city was strange to them. In addition, they did not receive enough ammunition while fighting. This hindered their fighting capability."

Another NVA cadre was asked whether he thought that the Tet offensive was the turning point in the war. He answered: "I do not know what you mean by the word 'turning point.' It is correct if you mean the situation has changed. The war situation has changed. The Front has launched attacks on the cities. The offensive has helped us to evaluate the real strength and tactics of the two parties. But I myself did not participate and had no chance to observe that turning point." (K-5) An NVA private, when asked whether he felt the Tet offensive was a success or a failure, replied: "Of course it was a success. We attacked Saigon and several other cities. The radio said that we won." Did you expect or did your friends expect that a general uprising would actually materialize? "People in some areas did revolt to overthrow their local government." How about the second offensive in May 1968 -- are you satisfied with its results? "We learned about this success and everybody felt encouraged a great deal from what we had gained." How about Tet as a turning point? "I haven't heard anybody say that. I don't know." (K-14)

A VC cadre: "My comrades and I felt that the Tet offensive was a success. The United States and the GVN used to label the VC as the destroyers and killers of the people. Actually, when we came to My Tho, the people were very glad to see us. They fed us and showed us U.S./GVN locations to attack." What had you actually expected would be the result of the Tet offensive? "We expected it to end the war." Did you expect a general uprising would actually materialize? "Yes." Were you disappointed with the results? "No. The people did show sympathy with us. The Front Army was able to control Ben Tre for five days. We did not have a general uprising in My Tho because the people still lacked absolute faith in the Front." In your opinion, why did the people lack absolute faith in the Front? "The American force in

Vietnam is somehow a mighty force. It will be defeated; however, we need more effort to convince and organize the people." Some people have said that the Tet offensive was the turning point of the war. Would you say it was? "Yes, it was. It opened the new stage and will lead to our final victory." (K-9)

And a VC cadre: "Since Tet, the Front has gained a great deal militarily, has won more and more of the people's support; therefore the Front shall achieve its aims." (K-9) As to the course of the war itself: "The war has changed a great deal since Tet. We have engaged in combat with the U.S. forces more often and the American losses increased a great deal as compared to previous times." Since Tet, did the cadres talk about the way the war was going? "The cadres said that the war was getting more and more violent. This was a sign of our final victory being near." (K-9) (This statement accommodates the general theme that the war will get more violent before it will end.) The same cadre added, when asked whether the political officer's behavior had changed over time: "Yes. During the last six months before my capture, due to the great success of the Front Army, the political cadre seemed more encouraged with the good news and he more often reminded us to try harder to accomplish our mission."

An NVA private who fought in Saigon during the Tet offensive reported that during the action, two men of his company were killed and six others slightly wounded. He added that he did not remember the number of casualties his unit had suffered in the May offensive in Tay Ninh but that it had not been high. Was Tet a turning point? "Yes. I would say so, and it was in the Front's favor. The Tet offensive proved to the Americans and the GVN that our forces were strong enough to attack all the important cities and areas throughout the country at once. The Tet offensive has changed the position of the Front to the initiative." (K-11)

Another NVA private had this opinion: "The Tet offensive was the first step of many waves of attack on the part of the Front. The Tet offensive woke the enemy up, it let him know that the Front was powerful and had a proper communication system for contacting all the units in order to launch such a large-scale attack all at the same time. It

also let the enemy know that they have no control, not only in the rural areas but even in the cities." Did you yourself participate in the Tet offensive? "Yes. During the Tet offensive my company participated in the battle in Tay Ninh. We shelled Tay Ninh town and many outposts outside of Tay Ninh town for our friendly units to move in. This battle resulted in over 10 men killed and several others wounded in my former unit." However, despite these losses, the private added: "Yes, the Tet offensive was a success for the Front in both military and political ways. Militarily speaking, the Tet offensive pushed the Americans into the defensive. The Front units had attacked all the big and important cities which the enemy never expected that they could do. The Tet offensive caused death for many thousands of the enemy. Politically speaking, the Tet offensive made the people in the world know that the forces of the revolution side had matured. It made the people in the world know that the more the Vietnamese people fight, the better and stronger they become. It proved to the world that the Vietnamese people are very determined and very united to fight the war against the Americans." How about the general uprising? "When we first attacked Tay Ninh, we were told that the people were going to back us up by a general uprising. But my unit withdrew before the general uprising took place. When we returned to our unit's station area, the cadre said that the people had had a general uprising in many big cities, but they were suppressed by enemy airplanes." As to whether Tet was a turning point, "I would say it was, as it indicated the power and good development of the revolutionary forces. The Tet offensive turned the revolutionary forces from the defensive to the offensive position." (K-12)

One VC private was more reserved. While he also shared the view that the Tet offensive was a success, he finally concluded: "I only know that the Tet offensive included the biggest battles in the Front's history." (K-19) Another private who had not yet been a member of the VC at the time of Tet and therefore did not participate, struck a very different note from most of his buddies by sternly disapproving of the Tet offensive: "It was not a success to set fire to the people's houses and to bring death to the people while they were enjoying Tet."

(K-18) Another VC private simply stated that since Tet "the Front has become stronger." And he added that "I think the war situation is now more favorable for the Front than before Tet." (K-17)

A VC cadre added: "We hoped that the general uprising would happen. It would be highly welcomed so as to help us achieve the liberation and the reunification." Were you disappointed with the results? "No, I wasn't. If we failed this time, we would try the next time." (K-21)

One VC cadre counted the beginning of the Paris talks (about which he was moderately skeptical) among the "good results" of the offensive. As to the general uprising, he stated: "Yes, at first I thought we were going to have the people's support by a general uprising. But the general uprising did not take place, as I think the people were still in a confused situation. They did not know which one would win; in the meantime they were afraid of being oppressed by the GVN if the Front forces were not able to liberate their areas; therefore, we did not have the backing up of the people." Were you disappointed with these results? "No, I understood the confused situation of the people. If I had been a civilian I would have acted the same way. The people wanted to be left alone. They probably agreed with what the Front did, but they were afraid of being killed, being oppressed, and therefore they rather kept quiet." As to the other effects of Tet, he thought it had been very costly for both sides: "But it built a good reputation for the Front in world opinion." (K-14) This cadre added that he had been "very optimistic" right after Tet but "then we were counter-attacked. So the cadres knew that we had to suffer more hardships and encounter more difficulties."

An NVA private who had participated in both the Tet and May offensives (in Bin Duong Province in the former) took a positive view of both battles: "They were a success because we were able to bring about some political change in our country and the world. Our people were given more confidence in our strength." As to his expectations: "Our intention was to speed up the war in order to reunify the country and put an end to the suffering of the people." This man had not expected

a general uprising or at least stated that he had not. "It was just a testing period. However, if the people had joined us in a general uprising, it would have been ideal. When we launched the offensives, we did not expect a general uprising, we just went on fighting as we previously had." (K-15)

PRESENT TRENDS

One VC private -- a man of somewhat low morale who was indifferent to whether the GVN or VC should win -- was pessimistic about the immediate course of the war: "It was easy to notice that in my area, all the conditions for a VC victory were lacking. We were unable to regroup our forces, our communication lines were disrupted, and our armament was out of date." (K-19) (This man had been fighting at Long An Province.)

Against this, a VC cadre: "Recently the war was getting more and more violent. We had victory after victory while the Americans went from bad to worse. Their mechanized equipment, aircraft and artillery could not help them from being defeated." (K-9) (This man's area of operation had been in Kien Tuong Province.)

Rather than quote extensively from the interviews: The majority of the interviewees felt that the war was going reasonably well in their area, but no one else, however, duplicated the brassy description of observations given by the above quoted (K-9) cadre. On the other hand, the above quoted private (K-19) was unique in his negative evaluation of the immediate situation observed.

X. THE ENEMY SOLDIER AS A POLITICAL MAN

There has been much discussion as to what the other side is truly fighting for, or thinks it is fighting for. How a soldier evaluates his role in a war and how he views his cause is, of course, of considerable importance for gauging the strength of his motivation and the cohesion of his fighting morale. We shall examine, first, the extent to which the enemy soldier considers himself a Communist or whether he upholds a different political affiliation.

Would you describe yourself as a Communist, a Democrat, a Socialist, a Revolutionary, or something else? "I do not know anything about communism . . . my educational background is very poor and I don't have any political standpoint at all. However, I know for what I fight. I know that I am fighting for the country's independence and to save the people from suffering and death. If I survive and if the war ends and the people live a free and happy life as a result, I shall return to my normal life -- a life of a citizen who earns his living by his own labors." And the other men? "I have no idea about the political standpoint of other cadres and fighters and I do not know to what faction they belong. I guess the majority of fighters are fighting for the same goals as mine." (K-2)

An NVA cadre stated simply: "I am a Communist. I was admitted to the party in 1965." Why did you join the party? "I joined the party because I believed in communism." In this man's view all his comrades were Communists also: "I do not know for sure, but I noticed that they all acted in accordance with the Communist ideology in order to liberate the people and build up socialism. Therefore I believe that they were all Communist." (K-3)

Another NVA cadre: "I do not have to repeat it because you already think that I am a Communist. I was a party member. From the sentimental point of view, I am a Democrat. I want the people to have their rights." (K-4)

Still another NVA cadre: "I am a citizen of a socialist nation, I am a Socialist, and I like socialism. Socialism is a fair regime.

The more you work the more you enjoy and there is no exploitation of manpower. . . . As far as I know, most of the cadres and troops in my unit followed socialism. They all appreciated socialism and did not want to see the exploitation of people, the oppression of the weak, or disdain for the poor." (K-5)

An NVA private, when asked how he would describe himself, replied: "I was a soldier." Would you describe yourself as being a Communist? "Your side calls us Communists but I call myself an army soldier." Do you call yourself a Socialist? "Yes, North Vietnam is a socialist country." How would you describe most of the others in your unit? "They are Revolutionaries." (K-8)

A VC cadre also described himself as "a soldier of the Liberation Army." Do you call yourself a Democrat, a Socialist or a Revolutionary? "I fight for democracy, socialism, and I am also a Revolutionary." You are a member of the PRP. Why don't you call yourself a Communist? Is it because communism is bad or the PRP is not a communist party? "I do not use the term 'Communist' because your side often gives it a badly distorted meaning. Actually, I myself do not know much about communism. I do not need to know about it. As long as my country is occupied by the Americans, my people suffer daily from American bombs and shells." (K-9)

An NVA private: "I am not a Communist because I haven't been admitted as a party member yet. I have lived in the North and followed socialism, so I am a Socialist . . . I think most of the cadres and fighters in my company were Socialists." (K-12)

A VC cadre: "I have not been able to understand much about communism or socialism, but I considered myself one of the Front people who is carrying out the revolution. When I first joined the Front, I really didn't know what the Front was fighting for, but after being with it for a while I understood its aims, which were to liberate the country and bring freedom to the people. I therefore remained with it to fight the war." How about the other men in your unit? "Most of the men in my unit followed socialism because they were from the North. They told me that the people in the North all followed socialism. I myself have never lived under socialism, therefore I didn't know what

the difference was between socialism and communism, but I knew that these people who were from the North also followed the same objectives." (K-13)

A VC private stated: "I only know that I am a soldier serving in the Revolutionary Army. And I don't describe myself as being a member of a political party." How would you describe most of the others in your unit? "They are all most the same, except the cadres." (K-19)

Another VC private: "I am a Revolutionary." Please elaborate. "By 'Revolutionary' I mean that I am fighting for the poor class. This for me is a just cause." How would you describe most of the fighters in your unit? "They are composed of various types of people including uncommitted individuals. These neither wanted to fight, nor did they care for the country. They only wanted to have a nice living with plenty of food and clothing." Were there many people of this type? "There were quite a few." (K-17) Whether this particular admission is to be interpreted as a weakness or a strength is open to question. On the surface it would certainly appear as a weakness, considering that there are "quite a few" of this type in the enemy forces. On the other hand, the system, as it operates, seems to be perfectly capable of absorbing and using them or, should they turn into defectors, doing without them.

One VC private said, "I am a Democrat. I only like democracy," without elaborating what he meant by this. (K-18) An NVA cadre: "Like most of my fellow soldiers, I consider myself a Revolutionary who came here to liberate the country." And a VC cadre: "I am a Revolutionary . . . most of the men in the unit were the Front's fighters. That was what they thought of themselves. They didn't claim being anything else." (K-23)

An NVA private who was a student in the North [and therefore a *rara avis* in this army predominantly composed of villagers] stated: "When I reached draft age, I was drafted and sent to the South for fighting. I am just a Socialist follower." (K-16) He added: "I think we all have the same goals, which are: fighting the Americans, liberating South Vietnam in order to reunify the country, and setting up a government in the South as was done in the North. Thus, animated by

the same ambition, which is to expand socialism, I think we should all be Socialists." (K-16)

An NVA private had this to say: "It goes without saying that I am a Socialist. I am not a Democrat. I am almost 30, and able to distinguish between capitalists and socialists. I am sure that only socialism can bring about a nice living to me. Take an example: In the past there were no brick houses in my village. But since the introduction of the socialism regime, 95 percent of the villagers' houses are now built with bricks. We now have electricity in our homes and tractors to work our land. The poor families who had no rice to eat before now have a decent living." (K-15)

WHAT SYSTEM FOR VIETNAM?

The respondents were also asked what system they would like to see installed in Vietnam -- at first glance a question that might seem superfluous as they had already been asked for their personal, political preference. In view of the vagueness of the terms used, however, the second question was asked in order to find a more definitive meaning. "What do you think," was the question, "would be the best political or economic system for South Vietnam?" The VC cadre who had more or less declared himself a political agnostic replied: "I don't know what political system Vietnam should have. But first of all, the Americans must understand that they have no rights in Vietnam. They have no right to make war with the Vietnamese people. After the Americans pull out of South Vietnam, the Vietnamese internal affairs will be solved by Vietnamese. In my opinion, there should be a single government for both North and South Vietnam. This government must be elected by the Vietnamese." (K-2)

Perhaps somewhat strangely, the NVA cadre who declared himself a Communist and stated that he had been a party member since 1965, said: "I cannot determine which political system is most suitable for the South Vietnamese people. I only hope that Vietnam will be reunified and independent, and socialism must be built up all over the territory of Vietnam in order to pave the way for communism." (K-3)

Another NVA cadre: "I do not know. I was only a company cadre and I do not know much about politics. I think that this problem should be discussed by the leaders of the two parties." (K-4)

Another NVA cadre opted for socialism: "I believe that socialism will be suitable not only to North Vietnam, but will also satisfy the aspirations of the entire Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese do not like war or bloodshed, and want independence and a free life. Every citizen in a socialist nation has the same rights. . . ." (K-5)

An NVA private said: "First of all, the Americans have to leave Vietnam, and after that I think socialism will be the best political system for the whole of the country. I have lived under socialism in the North, I liked it and I think that almost all people in the North like it. Under socialism the people have the same living standards. Socialism is very reasonable, the people who work more enjoy more benefits and the ones who work less enjoy less. In the North workers working in the factories for their living were also owners of the factories. They were not working for anyone but for themselves and for the interest of the country. No one was the owner and no one could exploit the workers. In a word, socialism brought equality, proper clothes, enough food for the people, and it did not allow the rich people to exploit the poor." (K-11) This long quote is given not merely in order to reveal a northern soldier's personal views, but also to indicate that if they talk in this manner to their southern comrades in the units where northerners and southerners are intermingled, the northerners may likely be effective propagandists for their cause.

A VC cadre: "I don't know anything about politics, but I think, first of all, Vietnam needs to regain its independence, and it should have democracy." (K-13) A VC private, in answer to the question of what political system the South should have: "I have no idea." (K-19)

Another VC private: "I do not know because I am quite ignorant of politics." (K-18)

One NVA cadre merely insisted on "neutrality." (K-20)

A VC cadre, who had declared himself a Revolutionary, answered: "This subject is beyond my understanding." (K-21)

Another private who insisted that "democracy would be the best political system for the South" was pressed to elaborate: What democracy do you mean? Nationalist democracy? Communist democracy? "I don't know about Nationalist democracy. I mean the Communist democracy in which the people would have complete freedom, be free to work by themselves in a collective organization." (K-17) Others called for socialism because it "perfectly fits the Vietnamese people," and again others said that socialism was the ideologically correct road to take. One added that "South Vietnamese intellectuals were already in the lead in that direction." (K-15)

FIGHTS FOR WHOM?

In a further variation of the above two main questions (political affiliation and preferred system), the respondents were asked whom they felt they were fighting against -- the United States or the GVN -- and whom they felt they were fighting for -- Hanoi? the Front? Vietnam? others? All regarded this war as a war against the Americans and almost all stated "I fought for Vietnam."

XI. THE FISH'S WATER

One may assume that Mao is right when he postulates that one of the principal elements in insurgency warfare is the support by "the people" of the insurgent army. In past investigations this analyst found that while there was not always ideal harmony between the NVA-VC armies and the people of South Vietnam, there was enough of it to provide the fish with the water he needed. The strains and stresses caused by the protraction of the war were, to some extent, caused by measures the enemy had been forced to take that were, to some extent, against his principles; he had to tax more heavily than he wanted to in accordance with his desire to win the friendship of the people; he had to recruit to a greater extent; and his presence had drawn artillery and air bombardment. Nevertheless, the relationship between the fighting forces and the local population in the past was identified as one of the pillars in the cohesion the forces not only enjoyed, but appeared assured of for future operations.*

What is the situation on the basis of the interviews examined here? The respondents were asked: What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming either stronger or weaker? A VC cadre, whose principal area of operation had been Gia Dinh Province, answered: "Due to the bombings, a number of villagers in my area left their hamlet for another place. Nevertheless, they sometimes returned and helped us dig trenches and buy foodstuffs. If they did not support us, they would leave their hamlets for good or would never help us in any way." (K-2) The same man continued: "Although my camping area was swept often . . . the villagers still helped us in many ways [when we returned], thus I believe with the villagers' support we shall win." He added: "Most of the villagers in our camping area were very kind to us. They were pleased to see us. Very often they helped us cook our meals or buy foodstuffs at the markets for us." Why were they so friendly to you? "We are Vietnamese like them, we come from the

*Kellen, *View of the VC*, pp. 8ff.

countryside like them and understand their problems, poverty, hardships. We understand their misery, death, and destruction due to the war, and we stand up to fight for the liberation of the country and the people. We fight for a better life for poor people and to make their life free of fear; thus they support the Front and welcome us. We have passed through many hamlets. The villagers there worked hard in the fields for a living. They did not hate anybody. Somehow bombs and shells were dropped on them and they became victims. I believe not we Front soldiers alone, but any Vietnamese who has witnessed this kind of death would feel heartbroken and hate the ones who caused it." (K-2)

An NVA cadre took a less emotional view: "[The people] treated us like other civilians and there was nothing special about it. They never organized a reception for us, and they did not seem to be happy. They neither hated us nor protested against us. They sold rice to us if it was available. If they did not have it, we had to find it at some other place. Usually they were willing to let the troops sleep in their houses. At times, some of them did not like it, so we had to go to other houses. In short, as I have said, they treated us in ordinary ways and there was nothing special." (K-4) What signs or events lead you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger or weaker? "Through their cordial behavior, we understand that the people sincerely liked us. In addition, they volunteered to do labor and work for us during military operations; they fed us, they furnished us with information on the enemy situation, strength, and direction of movement, so that we could avoid contact or make preparations for defense. If they did not support us, they would have fled and would not have lent us their assistance." (K-5) The man continued: "I lived with some people during the period I received medical treatment of my wounds. Generally speaking, the people living in liberated areas were very happy to see the Front troops. We were cordially welcomed and the people brought all the food available in their houses to feed us. Sometimes we sat down and talked with them. They complained about the behavior of ARVN troops when conducting

military operations in the area. They added that during sweep operations, ARVN troops tortured the people and questioned them, 'Are there any Viet Cong in your house?' when there were no Front or NVA troops in the village. . . . Thus, the people were ill-treated by ARVN troops and could not make protests against them. Therefore, when they noticed that we were fighting for them, protecting their interests and lives, naturally they liked us and helped us. In addition, they noticed that the Front troops loved the people, were friendly with the people, and had never threatened or tortured the people." (K-5)

As to whether support for the NLF was increasing or decreasing, an NVA private said: "Support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger and stronger." Asked to state what he based this observation on, he replied: "The country is divided into two halves, and the people in the South suffer hardships, death, and destruction. Bombs and shells destroyed their houses, and killed their children. The war took away their husbands and sons . . . they look forward to the socialist revolution. Thus, they support the NLF." (K-8) Then, somewhat surprisingly, he added that he had had no contact with civilians: "Even if there were civilians [in our area] we would not be allowed to contact them. Only the cadres would." Why? "Meeting the people is not the soldier's job. Each man has his own job."

A VC cadre stated: "We depend on the people's support to fight the enemy. We know this and the people also know this. They were glad to see us and tried to meet us so they could ask us about the battles we fought, the victory the Front has won . . . they got to like the Liberation Army and to trust the Front more and more. They know we won several famous battles," and he added that the performance at Tet had greatly increased the villagers' confidence in the Front. Yet, he also stated that one of the frequent subjects in criticism sessions were mistakes committed in dealing with the villagers. "For example, one fighter might borrow this thing from the villagers but he forgot to return it in time or he might forget to put it in its old place. Or the man would be criticized if he did anything which made the villagers feel badly about him." These, however, appear to be harmless transgressions, as compared to what villagers are reported to complain about in ARVN.

One NVA private, asked to support his rhapsodic statement about constant increase of popular support for the NLF, stated: "They gave us foodstuffs more willingly and they did not leave their area even when the GVN appealed to them many times to do so." (K-11) Also: "They spoke angrily about some VC cadres who had been cowardly enough to rally to the GVN."

Another NVA cadre also seems to have had positive experiences: "The villagers were very glad to see us. They understood the hardships we had to endure and they appeared to have deep sympathy toward us. They treated us like members of their families. . . . They helped us a great deal. They helped us to buy foodstuffs from other areas. They even cooked meals for us. . . . Their attitudes never changed during our stay here." How do you think the people liked you? "They liked us because they know we are fighting for the country and their interests. They knew that the GVN and the Americans did nothing for them, but cause miseries to them. They complained that the GVN troops conducted sweep operations, arresting many innocent villagers and torturing them badly, although they did nothing to deserve torturing. They complained that the Americans bombed the area, destroying their houses, gardens, and killing their people." (K-12)

As to the damage incurred by the people, one cadre had this to say: "Bombing and artillery attacks only caused losses to the people. The victims were the villagers. We never lived in one place, but we moved around all the time. The villagers had to live in their houses, they didn't move around like we used to, therefore they were the ones to get hit." (K-13) A VC private said that the villagers were always glad to see his unit and explained it in this fashion: "In places where the Front units used to establish camp, most of the families had children serving in the Front forces. So they enjoyed being able to entertain the soldiers, even if the latter were not their sons. They did so in the hope that their own sons would be treated the same way in other places." Were there any villagers who were afraid of the Front troops when they saw them coming? "There must have been some villagers who feared that the presence of Front troops would cause their villages to be bombed or shelled by the ARVN.

But they were not afraid of the Front troops themselves." As for recent changes in villager attitudes: "I did not notice any changes in the villagers' attitude toward my unit during all the period of my serving in the Front forces." (K-19) This man, it might be added, had served only since March 1968 and was captured in December of 1968.

One VC private said that since Tet "contacts with villagers had been increased because the Front had carried out more propaganda among the villagers." Were the villagers glad to see your unit? "The villagers were nice to us. They gave us food to eat. Some, however, did not seem to like us very much because they were not able to give food to every troop that passed through the village." Did you notice any changes? "No. There were no changes in the villager's attitudes since Tet. Some of the villagers' support was found even greater and more sincere than before." Why? "To the villagers, the Tet offensive was a general uprising to liberate the nation. Everyone wanted to be liberated. The villagers said they wanted to support the Front troops fighting the war." Many people think the Tet offensive failed. Why did the villagers continue to provide more support for the Front? "The Front told the villagers that the men did not cease to fight after Tet, that they had to fight three battles in order to win two. Therefore the villagers had to continue to support the men." (K-17)

A VC cadre said: "In the areas where I had been the people gave us a great deal of material support. The people seemed to understand our situation. They knew that we troops had a very hard life and they gave us food to eat. The number of the people in the Front-controlled area where we were had sons and husbands serving in the Vietminh who had regrouped to the North in 1954. These people have not returned to their families. When their families met us it reminded them of their relatives and they showed warm sympathy toward us. I guess these villagers understood that we were siding with their people." But this cadre, for one, did not think that support for the Liberation Front was increasing: "Sincerely speaking, recently the Front received less support from the people as compared with previous times. In 1965 and 1966 when I first returned to the South, in many areas the people gave

a great deal of support to the Front. Many people still remained in the liberated areas because the war was not so intense, the liberated areas were not attacked by bombs or artillery as frequently as recently. Beginning early in 1968 the people got tired of the war. Most of them left the liberated areas for fear of being killed by bombs. Those who stayed behind appeared to have some change in their attitude toward us Front troops. They still think that our task is reasonable, but they wanted to stay away from trouble. They don't want to support either side. As a matter of fact, due to the bombing attacks, the people couldn't cultivate their land, and they couldn't give us material support." What effect did this change in the attitude of the people have on the morale of your unit? "The change in the attitude of the people did not really affect the morale of my unit. It did cause us supply shortage problems, but we understood that the people left the areas for other places just because they were afraid of being bombed. They left for other areas to take refuge just for temporary reasons, and I believe that their sympathy toward us did not change." (K-14) This statement tends to confirm what was found also in earlier investigations -- a general leniency, a live-and-let-live attitude on the enemy's side, which is in stark contrast to the vicious and vindictive methods he uses on other occasions.

But even though none of the respondents reported that the villagers had become actually disaffected, one VC private reported: "The NVA is losing the support of the people." On what did he base these comments? "The GVN has more aircraft and artillery. The population in Front-controlled areas could not stand it. Moreover, it will be better to fight for the GVN than for the Front. Life with the Front was so miserable." (K-18) This statement is unusual. So were the villagers glad to welcome the troops? "I think that the people worried every time we came to the hamlets. They feared sweep operations conducted by the American troops or ARVN forces. If there were any engagements in the hamlets, the people would suffer casualties and death. So, certainly they were sad rather than happy. Though they did not speak out, I just guessed so because I noticed that the villagers seemed to be frightened." Yet the man did not notice any basic

changes: "Their attitudes remained the same at all times. They always treated us kindly; however, they seemed to be frightened every time we came to their hamlet."

An NVA cadre reported that: "The GVN always made every effort to separate the people from us, by forcing them to leave their home area and settle in strategic hamlets. That caused us some difficulties but we were always able to overcome them. In some strategic hamlets we were able to stay for a few days without being detected by the ARVN. This means that the people most of the time were on our side." (K-20)

Another NVA cadre: "While I was with the Front, I often had contacts with villagers. The people in my unit did not cause them any trouble nor did they to us. I often saw old women from the Soldiers' Foster Mother Association, who showed us great sympathy, particularly when they knew that we were NVA soldiers who had endured so many hardships to get down here and were courageously fighting for the liberation of this country. There were many of these mothers who just cried when looking at us. In so doing they showed their sympathy and also they would have thought of their sons in the Front forces as well." Where did you recently have contact with the villagers? "In Vinh Long Province." Were the villagers glad to see you? "Anywhere my unit came, the villagers were glad to see us, even the children. They came to give us food. Sometimes we were each given a package of cigarettes." Were there any people who feared that your presence might cause the village to be attacked by heavy artillery? "Only the wealthy people who had big houses, automobiles, or Honda motorcycles feared that. The majority of the population, I think, willingly accepted sacrifices." (One cannot quite imagine villagers with "big houses and automobiles." The respondent may have included a few larger places in his generalizations.) Were you ever asked to leave the area by the villagers? "That did not happen to my unit." (K-20)

A VC private reported, when asked whether the people were afraid of an eventual attack by the GVN: "We used to pass through the villages at night. Some people were afraid of us because they thought we were GVN soldiers, for we were wearing the GVN soldier's uniform [?].

But their fear vanished as soon as they realized that we were the Front troops. As for the fear of an eventual attack by the GVN, I just don't know." (K-22)

To an NVA cadre, things look pretty good. Recently, did you have more, the same, or less contact with villagers?: "Recently, because we operated in the Plain, we have had more contact with the villagers." Did your unit live with the villagers? "No. We met them from time to time at night. We went away in the daytime." Were the villagers glad to see your unit or other Front and NVA units? "The villagers from the children to the aged persons were glad to meet us. In welcoming us they shouted and clapped their hands." Do you think the villagers were sincere? Or did they welcome the men because they had weapons? "I don't think the villagers were afraid of the Front troops. It was commonly understood that the Liberation Front was a people's organization and the fighters were considered the sons of the people." Did you notice any change in the villagers' attitude since Tet? "I noticed that the villagers' attitude has changed a great deal since Tet. Just take an example: The villagers mostly live on their crops and land products. However, since Tet the Americans have dropped bombs that destroyed everything. This made the villagers extremely resentful against the Americans." (K-15) This man, when asked about a change of attitude, did not even consider that what was meant was a change of attitude toward the Front. The man added: "The people's support for the Front is increasing day after day because its final victory is very near. Although the final phase is the most difficult, the people were very confident that they would certainly be liberated." What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger? "I noticed that everywhere our troops passed the people gave us a cheerful welcoming. They helped carry the wounded fighters and provided us with food."

The investigation into enemy-villager relations was not conducted in order to determine whether there is an adequate (from the enemy's point of view) working relationship between the two; the enemy's strength, mobility and relative security in the field proves beyond doubt that the working relationship is in fact adequate. The study

here was trying to find clues as to whether, compared to the 1967 Cohesion Study,* there were indications that the system was being subjected to increasing physical or emotional strains, or was perhaps even reaching a critical point. Comparing individual statements on the subject contained in the interviews then and now, there was no evidence of increased strains.

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*Kellen, *View of the VC*, Sec. II.

XII. IMAGE OF THE AMERICANS

U.S. ROLE IN GENESIS OF WAR

What did the cadres say about who started and is responsible for the war? "Before we went South, we had to undergo a political education course. As I was told, the Americans started this war and are responsible for it." What is your own opinion on this? "There would be no war if the Americans did not send their troops to Vietnam; thus, I think they must be responsible for it." Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "The war would be ended if American troops were withdrawn. Therefore, the Americans must be responsible for the prolongation of the war." This NVA cadre was then asked whether he thought the North was right in sending NVA soldiers to fight in South Vietnam. "During the nine years of resistance against the French, all the people without distinction of northerners or southerners participated in it. The present war is against the Americans. The North Vietnamese government was right in sending troops to South Vietnam to fight." (K-4) To the same question, another NVA cadre replied: "The present war in Vietnam was initiated by the Americans, and the United States will be held fully responsible for it. According to the 1954 Geneva Agreement, Vietnam was to be reunified two years after. However, the Americans employed the rotten Ngo Dinh Diem government to prevent the application of the provision in the agreement in order to wage another war in Vietnam. Every Vietnamese knows that Diem was a cruel and corrupt man. He decreed Law No. 10-59 to massacre innocent Vietnamese people who wanted to have an independent and free life. Law 10-59 has brought about death and separation to many Vietnamese people. However, Diem has paid for his crimes. He was overthrown and killed miserably. The failure of Diem resulted from his acts and the crimes committed by his family. At present, South Vietnam has [again] such a government, the Thieu-Ky government which is also established and master-minded by the Americans. They surely were not elected by the Vietnamese people to head the government, because they have not done anything good for the nation." (K-5) One thing, at least, may be said about the above disposition: the

political officer who graduated this cadre has every reason to be proud of his disciple.

A VC cadre: "The Americans came to our country and brought death and destruction to our people. They are aggressors and we Vietnamese are fighting the aggressors. We shall fight till final victory." Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "The American imperialists are responsible for this. Vietnam is a peace-loving country. We did not invade or bomb any country. It is the American presence in Vietnam that started the war and made the war continue so long." Do you think the North was right in sending regroupees to South Vietnam to fight? "The regroupees are South Vietnamese. They have the duty to liberate their native land from American aggressors." But do you think the North was right in sending NVA soldiers to fight in South Vietnam? "Yes. North Vietnam and South Vietnam are but one country. North Vietnam certainly has the right to help his brothers in the South and fight the aggressors." Do you think the United States had the right to send its troops to South Vietnam? "The United States had no right at all. Vietnam belongs to the Vietnamese. The United States has nothing to do with our country." (K-9)

A VC private reported that the cadres had told him that the Americans had started the war but his own opinion was more restricted: "I think that because of the influx of Americans to South Vietnam the war has become larger." He also felt that "both sides are responsible for this long war. As long as the North and the South are not unified this war will last forever." He felt that the North was right in sending the regroupees down South. As to regular NVA soldiers coming down, he felt that they had come in response to U.S. aid to the GVN, and rightly so: "How could North Vietnam stay quiet in the face of America's aggression in South Vietnam which, together with North Vietnam, is the same country?" (Curiously enough, some respondents do not condemn U.S./GVN shelling of villages, even if they insist that the United States started the war and is responsible for it. They somehow seem to accept the inevitability of shelling under the rules of war.

An NVA private stated: "I agreed with the cadres [about America having started the war]. North Vietnam is a socialist country; we North Vietnamese people never did anything to hurt the Americans in their country; we never dropped bombs on America, so why would the Americans bomb our country, killing our people and damaging our factories?" Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing so long? "Of course, the Americans." (K-11)

A VC cadre on the start and responsibility for the war: "At the beginning, the war had the nature of an internal war. According to the Geneva Agreement of 1954, the North and South were to be reunified in 1956 by general election. The South Vietnamese government, however, ignored the agreement and it intended to maintain the division of the country. The South Vietnamese then formed the Liberation Front, standing up to request the government to reunify the country. This request was disregarded; therefore the Front had to start fighting against the government in the South in order to reunify the country. At the beginning, the war was only fought between the Front, with the support of the North Vietnamese troops, and the South Vietnamese troops. But the South Vietnamese government sided with the free-world bloc; therefore the United States sent troops to South Vietnam to fight us. . . ." Through this conventional VC reasoning, the sergeant reached the unusual conclusion that, "The important thing is not who started the war, but who made the war become violent, and I think the American Government caused the war to become fiercer day after day, and is [now] responsible for the war in Vietnam." Also unorthodox was the sergeant's answer to the question of who was responsible for the war's long continuation. He said: "It is hard to tell, because I think nobody wants the war to drag on. The longer the war goes on, the more casualties and material losses those involved have to suffer. I believe that the United States wants to end this war, as we Vietnamese people do. However, the problem is that if the war is over, there must be a loser and a winner. And who wants to be the loser? Both sides want to be winners; they [the United States] want to be the winner; therefore the war is still going on." What did the cadres say about who started and is responsible for the war? "Not only the

cadres but we, the fighters, realized that it was the Americans and the puppet government of the South who started and are responsible for the war." (K-17) Thus, in one way or another, all the respondents, cadres and privates, NVA soldiers and VC fighters, are of the opinion that the war was caused by the Americans and is being sustained by the Americans. And, despite the slight variation in the theme, as in the case of the above-quoted cadre, there is no one among the respondents who does not ultimately place the blame on the Americans, and there is no one among the respondents who does not see the war in defensive terms from his own vantage point. From the standpoint of morale and cohesion, this, of course, is of great importance. For he who considers himself unjustly attacked will go to any effort and sacrifice to defend himself. He will, in fact, feel that he has no alternative.

This conclusion is further consolidated by the answers to the series of questions probing the respondents' attitudes on the rights of the NVA to fight in the South and the rights of the United States to fight in South Vietnam and bomb North Vietnam. Uniformly, from northerners and southerners, come the answers that the NVA was justified, in fact obligated, to enter into the hostilities in South Vietnam, while, conversely, not one of the respondents could see any justification for U.S. action in either the North or South. Though it is well-known that the Hanoi government and the Front in the South subscribe to these convictions, it is revealing to learn that all respondents in this group fully endorse them, in their own terms and with considerable emphasis, rather than merely parroting the official line.

Only one man, a tough NVA cadre, when asked whether he thought the United States had the right to bomb North Vietnam, replied: "I do not know whether this bombing was legitimate or not. According to the cadres in North Vietnam, it violated the sovereignty of North Vietnam. However, I think that the United States bombed North Vietnam because the North Vietnamese government sent its troops to the South. It was only a retaliatory action." (K-4) But this man, like the rest, stated that "there would be no war if the Americans did not send their troops to Vietnam; thus, I think they are responsible for the war." And he

added: "The war could be ended if the American troops were withdrawn. Therefore, the Americans are responsible for the prolongation of the war."

What, then, is it that the Americans want in Vietnam? "I think the Americans want to take over South Vietnam and use it as a stepping-stone to attack the North and other countries in Southeast Asia, and if they are successful in doing this, they will try to attack China and make this war a modern international war." (K-11) Do you think that the Americans are different from the French in their aims? Or in their methods? A VC private replied: "I was still a child when the French were in Vietnam, so I really don't know much about our country under French domination. According to what I have learned in school, Vietnam was dominated by the French for many years, and yet the Vietnamese finally drove them out after almost ten years of fighting. In some way I think the Americans are like the French; the Americans also want to dominate the Vietnamese people like the French formerly did. But the dream of the Americans now is even greater than the French plan because the Americans want to take over Vietnam in order to set up more military installations in Vietnam for attacking other countries in Southeast Asia." (K-11)

A VC cadre had this to say: "According to the radio and the cadres, the United States wants to expand capitalism in Southeast Asia. I don't know much about politics but I think Americans want to take over Vietnam and dominate the Vietnamese people. The Front and the North Vietnamese government are planning to apply socialism in the whole of Vietnam, and the United States wants to expand capitalism. Socialism is opposed to capitalism and the United States therefore used its powerful forces to fight the Front and the North Vietnamese troops." How does he evaluate U.S. efforts? "The Americans did nothing good for the Vietnamese people but they bombed people's areas, killing innocent people, and damaged houses." (K-13)

A VC private was asked whether in his opinion the Americans do anything beneficial for the South Vietnamese people. He answered: "The Americans did not do anything beneficial, but only bad things to the people. Bombs and shells have caused the death of the people, and the land was left uncultivated." (K-18)

An NVA private, queried on what the Americans really want in Vietnam: "I think the Americans want to invade and occupy Vietnam. They want to conquer South Vietnam in order to use it as a springboard to attack the North." Are the Americans different from the French? "Yes, the Americans are different from the French. They are more powerful, wealthier, and more clever than the French." Are the Americans' aims different from those of the French? "The aims of the French and the Americans are identical -- that is, the invasion of Vietnam." (K-16) Did he regret having come to the South? "No." Why? "When I was in North Vietnam I saw U.S. aircraft attack my country. My intention in coming to the South was to revenge our people." In your opinion, did the Americans help the South Vietnamese people in anything at all? "No."

A VC private, on America's real aims in Vietnam: "I think the Americans want to conquer South Vietnam to make it their territory and to use the South Vietnamese people as slaves, like the Negroes in the United States." What do you personally think of the American people? "Personally, I think the Americans are the number one enemy of the Vietnamese people." Is there anything the Americans are doing of which you would approve? "Absolutely nothing." (K-17)

A VC cadre, on America's real aims: "The Americans want to occupy South Vietnam and use it as a base to attack the North." Why are they fighting the VC/NVA? "In order to occupy South Vietnam, they have got to fight the VC because the VC will not let them occupy Vietnam." Do you approve at all of any single thing the Americans are doing? "I do not approve anything the Americans are doing at all." Do you approve of anything the Americans are trying to do, though they have not been able to accomplish it yet? "I don't know what they are trying to do. But I do know what they are doing. They are bombing, shelling, spraying, killing the people, the animals, and the crops as well." (K-9) Do you think that the Americans will be able to do in Vietnam what they have come to do? "The war has lasted so long. Many people were killed and suffered. The people hate the Americans more and more. They decided to fight the Americans and chase them out." Do you think the Americans are different from the French? "The Americans are not different from

the French" How not? "The French enslaved our people. So do the Americans today. The French were defeated by the Vietnamese people. The Americans will not be able to avoid the French fate, being defeated by our people." But, the man was asked, the French called Vietnam a colony -- the Americans do not call Vietnam an American colony, do they? "Like the French, the Americans are using violence to oppress our people." (K-9)

An NVA cadre had a somewhat simpler view: "I do not know what they [the Americans] really want. I only know that they came here, live here, and occupy the South." Why do you think they are fighting the VC/NVA? "In order to occupy South Vietnam, they have to fight us." Do you approve of anything the Americans are doing? "Whether I approve or not, the Americans keep on doing what they want. My opinion means nothing." (K-8)

A VC private, to the question whether he saw this war as a war against the United States: "I think this war was against the Americans because the latter had started it. It was not against the GVN." Do you see yourself as fighting for Hanoi, the Front, or what? "I primarily fought for my family." Why? "Because my house has been destroyed by American bombs. I fought in order to keep the land, first, and second, to save my country." (K-17)

One VC private, though roundly condemning the Americans, was one of the few willing to give the GVN the benefit of the doubt. Are they mere lackeys of the United States? "In my opinion, the GVN efforts are also aimed at securing the country." In that case, why didn't you side with the GVN? "I was young. But the GVN did not make itself known to me. How could I join it?" Though at first glance this distinction in the private's responses between his complete condemnation of the Americans and his semi-acceptance of the GVN appears somewhat bizarre, it is in various ways also reflected in other depositions. Many of the respondents dismiss the GVN and the ARVN as lackeys and mercenaries, and the thrust of their negative emotions is directed against the United States and the Americans, not against the GVN.

ASSUMED STANCE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

One of the repeatedly stressed lines in enemy propaganda is that America is divided, not into hawks and doves, but into "the American people" and "the American Government." The American people, according to the VC/NVA line, are opposed to this war. How well does this line go over with the soldiers and in what form is it echoed by them?

How do you think the American people feel about the war? "The American people do not like this war, they hate the war. That was what I had learned through the newspapers in North Vietnam. I myself do not know it." This is an NVA cadre speaking. (K-4) A VC cadre had this to say: "The American people support our Liberation War. They refuse to be drafted and they do not support the American imperialists' actions in Vietnam." (K-9) Another VC cadre: "According to the radio, the people of the United States have many times asked their government to stop the war in Vietnam. Many people who have sons and husbands fighting in Vietnam demonstrated against the United States Government and requested the Government to send their people home. The radio also said that the people of the United States admired the Vietnamese people who have been fighting for the independence of their country." (K-13)

An NVA private on the subject: "I think most of the American people are resenting this war. And the same goes for the people in all other countries. They are all critical of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam." (K-12). A VC private, asked how he thought the American people felt about the war: "According to what I have learned from the radio, the American people were protesting against this war. They requested that their husbands and children be repatriated, and let the Vietnamese fight with each other." (K-30)

XIII. THE STRUGGLE IN RETROSPECT, FROM THE PRISONER COMPOUND

A VC cadre, when asked whether he thought the aims he had been fighting for were important enough to be "worth the suffering of the people in a long war," answered: "The Vietnamese people have endured a lot of hardships, but they are prepared to accept them to oppose aggression so that their children may live in freedom." (K-2)

An NVA cadre was asked whether he thought the aims he pursued were important enough for him to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed. "The objective of the Front is the common objective of almost all Vietnamese people, which is to liberate the nation from U.S. domination. To those who are fighting for the Front and the Vietnamese as well, it is an extremely important objective, which determines the existence of a population and a nation. Therefore, we know that we will have to sacrifice our lives, and we will continue our fight with zeal. We want to show the world that we are fighting to protect our people, to safeguard our land, and to preserve the sovereignty of our nation; we do not fight the Americans on the continent of the United States and we do not bomb the United States of America; thus, our fight against foreign aggressors in Vietnam is entirely logical." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "Yes. If this war is prolonged and I am killed or captured, my children and the next generation must continue the fight in order to restore independence and sovereignty to the nation. As for me, I would rather die in the struggle for independence than live under the domination of foreigners. As instructed by Uncle Ho, we will still have to fight even if the war is prolonged for five more years, ten more years, or twenty more years. If fathers cannot achieve victories, sons will succeed them." (K-5) What seems noteworthy in this statement from a man who was a draftee rather than a volunteer, is the clarity and simplicity with which he enunciates the line as imposed by his side. Anyone who has listened to the aimless ramblings of captured Nazi soldiers in World War II cannot but be impressed by the difference. Aside from permitting us an insight into the unified and stable

thought-structure of such a cadre, the two passages also permit us a guess as to the efficacy of such a cadre as a teacher. One has reason to assume that men of this type are not only able to withstand many hardships and disappointments, but they are also able to instill a great amount of fighting ardor and resilience into the younger and less-experienced men.

How about a simple VC fighter on the subject? Since Tet, how have you been thinking about the importance of the Front's aims and of achieving them? "I always think the Front's aims are very important and have to be achieved." Did you think they were important enough for you to go on suffering hardships and risk being killed? "I thought they were important [enough] to sacrifice myself for the Front's cause." Did you think they were important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war? "I thought all the people should make the same sacrifice in order to drive the Americans out of this country." Do you think your children should go on fighting this war if this is necessary for the Front to win? "I think another generation should pursue this war if this is necessary for the Front to win." (K-22)

A VC cadre: "I have whole-heartedly supported the Front's aims. I am proud to be a prisoner today because I am worthy of the people." Did you think the aims were important enough to be worth the suffering? "Yes, they were." Do you think your children . . . ? "Yes, no matter how long it is, we shall fight until the Americans pull out of our country. It could be five years, ten years, or longer. My children and grandchildren would continue to fight until final victory." (K-9)

It would serve little purpose to go on quoting directly. Of those interviewed, NVA and VC, private and cadre, all said that the sacrifices had been worthwhile and all said that in one way or another the war would have to continue through future generations if they themselves should be unable to achieve their aims.

XIV. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this exercise, from designing the questionnaires to summarizing the replies and quoting from them so extensively, was to arrive at some estimate of the enemy's morale, i.e., the nonmaterial strength of the enemy's fighting forces -- their resilience, their "reliability," their emotional vigor. To anyone experienced in interviewing soldiers in war, the results are -- as were the results of previous similar investigations into the VC/NVA -- extraordinary: enemy morale appears high indeed, particularly in view of the enormous disproportion in power and resources of the two contenders.

What we mainly undertook was to examine whether the enemy's cohesion and fighting spirit is still as formidable as we concluded it was in our study of 1967.* For various reasons it was impossible to make a trend study in a technical manner, and direct comparisons cannot be made in a formal way. But morale, as it emerges from this present study, unquestionably seems no lower than it was then. It may be even higher. The positions taken by the respondents on all issues that we considered critical for an assessment of morale have been streamlined, adjusted, simplified, and clarified, so that a high degree of sameness and simplicity of views and reactions on the part of the soldiers with regard to basic questions was achieved. The soldiers, both the cadres and privates, apparently think and feel similar toward most important issues. What is perhaps still more important, their views, feelings, attitudes, and responses tend to represent an intrinsically cohesive, logical whole; and the men emerge as the opposite of certain totalitarian types who "parrot" one-half of a "line" but either do not accept, or cannot remember, or yield under pressure, the other half. Certainly not all of the respondents accept all of the line all of the time; particularly the privates, who express a few doubts and disagreements on individual points. But if adequate morale is defined -- and the author thinks it can be so

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*Kellen, *View of the VC.*

defined -- as enough of the men accepting enough of the line enough of the time, one might say that the enemy leadership has a large margin of safety; even a substantial dip in morale would not be likely to seriously impair the enemy's fighting efficiency.

The analyst found particularly remarkable (as emphasized in the text) the degree to which the men do not simply "mouth" what they have been told, but seem to have fully absorbed and assimilated it, rendering it in their own terms, illustrating it with their own examples and experiences. Thus, what may have begun as indoctrination has become sincere conviction, opinion, and emotion, and may, therefore, be regarded as virtually impossible to dislodge. The men polled here -- all except one -- are unlikely to change their views or to lose their readiness to make the necessary sacrifices commensurate with those views. They can perhaps be killed, but they probably cannot be dissuaded either by words or by hardships. As found in previous analyses, all of the elements of strength and cohesion, impressive by themselves, tend to reinforce each other. The enemy soldier* trusts his leaders, likes his political officer, gains strength from criticism/self-criticism and the three-man cell, draws pride from his military successes, is encouraged by what he sees as the unalterable support and sympathy of the people, and relies heavily on what he insists is the righteousness of his cause. This parallels the findings of some of the 1965, 1966, and 1967 RAND studies on the same subject.

Is this report "up to date"? True, all of the interviews on which this paper is based were conducted with men who were captured in January 1969 at the latest. Enemy troops have subsequently been exposed to additional hardships, losses, and disappointments, and it is theoretically possible that a change has taken place. But there is no reason to assume that the men who expressed themselves as they did in 1968 would have had their spirits broken or their minds changed after having been exposed to the additional combat and hardships of 1969. And as, in addition, the most visible and persistent of all indicators of high enemy morale -- effective performance in the field --

*Both the private and the low-level cadre, VC and NVA.

seems unabated, there is no reason to dismiss the results as being obsolete because they are dated by six or more months.

The enemy soldier who, lacking all the important modern engines of war, cannot be broken in his morale and motivation seems anomalous, because probably few enemy armies could have carried on the war under comparable circumstances. At the very least, others would resent fighting an enemy who had B-52s, sensors and napalm, which they lacked. But it is precisely that *resentment* -- a powerful corrosive agent to morale -- that seems entirely absent in the enemy forces. One of the most effective leaflets in World War II was one entitled "Human Hands vs. Steel." It told the Nazi soldiers that men could not be expected to fight with their bare hands against steel; that their air force, equipment, and supplies were inferior to ours; and that it was, therefore, not dishonorable but only logical for them to give up the fight and surrender.* To Hitler's supermen this was an eminently sensible way of thinking, and they responded in large numbers. But the enemy in Vietnam thinks differently.

The reader, however, will no doubt find comparisons with other forces in another war more significant. In his excellent study based on PoW interrogations of the Chinese Army in Korea, George describes the disintegration of the PLA after General Matthew Ridgeway had taken command of the U.S. Eighth Army in early 1951.** Chapter 9 (The Erosion of Morale) says: ". . . combat morale was often so low that it required the immediate presence and active leadership of higher leaders at the front line to control the troops and obtain performance of military duties . . . many of the prisoners flatly stated . . . that PLA training and preparations had been totally inadequate . . . the disparity in weapons had exercised a profound effect on these prisoners . . . not only ordinary soldiers *but many PLA combat cadres* [italics added], at least on company level [i.e., at the level of NVA and VC cadres to which this study has paid

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*Lerner, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

**George, *op. cit.*

particular attention] also shared this belief. . . ."* George adds that in addition, "PLA military doctrine was discredited in the eyes of the Chinese soldiers by what they had experienced in Korea. *It is of particular importance to note that disillusionment with Mao Tse-tung's doctrine extended to combat cadres* [italics added]. . . . Under these conditions Chinese combat morale was not able to stand up. . . ."** Chapter 10 (The Erosion of Organizational Controls) then tells how the "hard-core cadre" began to complain about "the unreasonable demands made upon them," demands that were "grossly unrealistic" under the prevailing conditions. The cadres also complained about "lack of personal freedom." This, says George, was "a major gripe." Beyond that, ". . . the politicization of the military cadre structure even in the best of PLA armies . . . remained incomplete and uneven, particularly at platoon and squad levels."*** In a word, the contrast between what George found in the PLA, based on interviews with PoWs, and what this report has to say about NVA and VC soldiers, particularly the political reliability of the cadre, is stark indeed.

Of similar relevance is a Memorandum, presented on July 29, 1951, by RAND staff member Herbert Goldhamer to the Commanding General, Headquarters FEAF, classified Secret at the time.**** Goldhamer stated: "It is my considered judgment that the cease-fire bid [by the enemy] was an imperative necessity for the CCF. This necessity arose not because CCF power had in the ordinary sense been destroyed. . . . A more dangerous development had taken place. The CCF has increasingly lost its capacity to control its troops. It is a matter of the greatest importance to realize that . . . the loss of its military-political grip over its troops . . . reached a point in June that for the Communist command cannot be estimated to be less than critical." Goldhamer

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*_Ibid._, p. 167ff.

**_Ibid._, pp. 171, 189.

***_Ibid._, pp. 190-194.

****"Information Bearing on Cease-Fire Talks," Project RAND, USAF, July 29, 1951, AUFERG, 2d Log Command, APO 59, (declassified September 22, 1966).

reached these conclusions "on the basis of interrogations originally undertaken to provide a basic study of the social and military structure and the psychological characteristics of the CCF and PA." However, the collapse of morale at that particular time was so striking in Goldhamer's opinion that he felt himself incumbent to immediately advise those in command of his findings.* None of the indications for such a breakdown that led Goldhamer to detect, and subsequently enabled George to trace, the course and the causes of the disintegration, have emerged in this report from interviews with the PoWs.

For the balance of the war, for the negotiations that we are conducting, and for the postwar period when we shall have to live on some kind of terms with those now fighting us, a careful consideration of how the enemy feels about what he calls "The Revolution" could be a useful guide for us. If what these 22 men have said -- *and the analyst will say once again he is well aware that only 22 are heard from* (though equally aware that hundreds have spoken similarly over the years) -- corresponds to what large numbers of soldiers, or perhaps even the majority of Vietnam's 30 million people similarly feel, then the chances of rooting out that revolution by military force (or political devices) is dim indeed, and emerges as an undertaking questionable in more ways than one. The findings would, if accurate, indicate, also, how narrow the area of compromise in negotiations can be, at best.

In an indirect way, however, the findings also indicate a way for an ending different from the one we have been pursuing. The intense anger against us, the full responsibility the respondents attribute to us for the war in its present form, are in visible contrast to the virtual absence of violent words by the respondents against their enemy compatriots. Does this indicate a high reconciliation potential? To be sure, such potential, if it exits, does not mean that the opposite groups, as now constituted, can attain such reconciliation. The principal conclusion of this report, however, is that, at least on the basis of these 22 interrogations, the

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*Goldhamer, in a personal conversation with the author.

Front as a group, as man for man, seems unlikely to yield, let alone disintegrate, under the type of pressure the United States can apply in the pursuit of current objectives. The thought of compromise in the current struggle, even in return for concessions, seems alien to these men. They see the war entirely as one of *defense* of their country against the invading Americans who, in turn, are seen merely as the successors to the French and, though perhaps not as clearly imperialist in the exploitative sense, as even more dangerous and pernicious because of the influence they seek and the greater physical damage they inflict. If what these 22 in-depth interviews contain, and what has been corroborated by many other interviews over the years, corresponds to enemy attitudes as a whole, then this conviction appears to be the mainspring of the enemy's motivation, and the main pillar of his morale.

Appendix A

PERSONAL DATA ON RESPONDENTS

This Appendix contains the basic data on the 22 interviewees whose statements form the basis of the above report. The reader will note that there is no No. 10, but instead a No. 23.

K-1

Name of subject:	Chu Van Cuong
Rank:	Platoon Leader
Unit:	1st Platoon, 2d Company (District Main Force Unit)
Date of birth:	1942
Place of birth:	Tan Loi Village, Thoi Binh District, An Xuyen Province
Years of education:	3 years
Marital status:	Married, 1 child
Social class:	Poor-class farmer before joining the Front; middle-class farmer after joining the Front
Residence area status:	VC-controlled
Date of joining the Front:	1962
Party member or Youth Group member:	Party member
Date of admittance:	1964
Operational area:	Thoi Binh District, An Xuyen Province
Date of capture:	July 31, 1968
Date of interview:	December 17, 1968
Place of interview:	National Interrogation Center, Saigon

K-2

Name of subject:	Vo Van Hung
Rank:	Company Executive Officer
Unit:	3d Company, 6th Battalion (Independent Battalion)
Date of birth:	1945
Place of birth:	Tan Son Nhi Village, Tan Binh District, Gia Dinh Province
Place of living prior to joining the Front:	Son Ky Hamlet, Tan Son Nhi Village, Tan Binh District, Gia Dinh Province

State of control of the living area at the time of joining the Front: GVN-controlled

Years of education:	3 years
Marital status:	Single
Mother:	Living
Father:	Living
Number of brothers and sisters:	Two brothers and three sisters
Profession prior to joining the Front:	Gas station attendant
Social class:	Poor
Date of joining the Front:	February 27, 1966
Party member or regroupee:	Party member
Date of admittance:	June 1967
Operational area:	Tan Loi Village, Binh Chanh District, Gia Dinh Province
Date of capture:	September 27, 1968

K-3

Name of subject:	Nguyen Xuan Truong
Rank:	Aspirant
Unit:	6th Artillery Company, 3d Subregion
Date of birth:	1942
Place of birth:	Quoc Oai District, Son Tay Province, North Vietnam
Years of education:	7th grade
Date of joining the NVA:	April 1962
Membership:	Party member
Date of joining the Party:	September 1965
Date of infiltration:	July 1967
Operational area:	Long An Province
Date of capture:	September 12, 1968 at Can Giuoc, Long An
Date of interview:	December 19, 1968
Place of interview:	National Interrogation Center, Saigon

K-4

Name of subject:	Pham Bang Cu
Rank:	Master Sergeant, Company Commander
Unit:	C7 Artillery Company, Subregion 3
Date of birth:	1940
Place of birth:	Non Khe Village, Ninh Binh Province
Years of education:	10th grade
Date of joining the NVA:	December 1962
Party member:	Since December 1966
Date of infiltration:	April 1966
Date of departure:	October 29, 1965
Unit area of operation:	Long An Province
Date of capture:	November 11, 1968
Date of interview:	December 30, 1968
Place of interview:	National Interrogation Center, Saigon

K-5

Name of subject:	Ha Tam
Rank:	First Lieutenant, Company Commander
Unit:	3d Company, 14th Battalion
Place of birth:	Long Ma Hamlet, Duc Lap Village, Duc Tho District, Ha Tinh Province
Years of education:	Completed 6th grade
Marital status:	Married
Number of brothers and sisters:	One older sister
Profession prior to joining the army:	Farming
Date of joining the NVA:	April 1963
Party member or regroupee:	Party member
Date of admittance:	December 1967
Operational area in the South:	Quang Tri Province
Date of infiltration into the South:	May 4, 1968
Date of capture:	October 5, 1968
Place of capture:	Trieu Phong District, Quang Tri Province

K-6

Name of subject:	Tran Xuan Nhut
Rank:	Sergeant
Unit:	34th Battalion
Date of birth:	October 1946
Place of birth:	Minh Tien Village, Phu Cu District, Hung Yen Province
Years of education:	8th grade
Marital status:	Single
Number of brothers and sisters:	One younger sister
Profession prior to joining the army:	Student
Draftee or volunteer:	Draftee
Date of joining the NVA:	September 15, 1965
Party Member or regroupee:	Party member
Date of admittance:	February 1967
Operational area in the South:	Darlac Province
Date of infiltration into the South:	December 15, 1967
Date of capture:	October 23, 1968
Place of capture:	Dakdam area, Daklac Province

K-7

Name of subject:	Le Van Gioi
Rank:	Company Executive Officer
Unit:	402d Company, 265th Battalion
Date of birth:	1941
Place of birth:	Tan Thuy Village - Ba Tri District, Kien Hoa Province
Years of education:	5 years
Marital status:	Married, 2 children
Social status:	Poor
Residence area status:	VC-controlled
Date of joining the Front:	1963
Party membership:	Party member
Date of admittance:	May 1967
Operational area:	Can Ginoc, Nha Be
Date of capture:	August 19, 1968
Date of interview:	December 31, 1968

K-8

Name of subject:	Nguyen Xuan Dai
Rank:	Private First Class
Unit:	3d Company, 1st Battalion, 2d Regiment, 250th Infantry Division
Age:	28
Place of birth:	Quyet Thang Hamlet, Thanh Ha District, Hai Duong Province, North Vietnam
Marital status:	Single
Date of joining the NVA:	July 30, 1967
Date of infiltrating into the South:	May 1968
Date of capture:	November 13, 1968
Date of interview:	January 8, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-9

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van Binh
Rank:	Assistant Platoon Leader
Function:	Squad Leader
Unit:	Reconnaissance Squad, 261st B Battalion, 1st Regiment, Region II
Age:	21
Place of birth:	Nong Kinh Hamlet, Vinh Thanh Village, Mo Cay District, Kien Hoa Province
Marital status:	Single
Social class:	Poor farmer
Date of joining the VC:	December 9, 1965
Date of party admittance:	December 1966
Date of capture:	October 5, 1968
Date of interview:	January 9, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-11

Name of subject:	Nguyen Ngoc Dung
Rank:	Private First Class
Unit:	2d Squadron, 1st Platoon, 3d Company, 1st Battalion, 16th Regiment
Date of birth:	March 1950
Place of birth:	Van Luong Village, Thanh Son District, Phu Tho Province,
Years of education:	5th grade
Marital status:	Single
Mother and father:	Still living
Number of brothers and sisters:	One older sister, 4 younger sisters and 3 younger brothers
Profession prior to joining the NVA:	Student
Date of joining the NVA:	March 1967
Party member or regroupee:	Member of Youth Group
Date of admittance:	March 1967
Date of infiltration into the South:	October 2, 1967
Operational area in the South:	Tay Ninh Province
Date of capture:	October 8, 1968
Place of capture:	Ap Chanh Hamlet, Trang Bang District, Tay Ninh Province
Date of interview:	January 8, 1969
Place of interview:	PoW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa Province

K-12

Name of subject:	Chu Van Cham
Rank:	Private First Class
Unit:	3d Squadron, 2d Platoon, 7th Company (Independent Company)
Date of birth:	1945
Place of birth:	Tan Linh Village, Tung Thien District, Ha Tay Province
Years of education:	7th grade
Marital status:	Single
Number of brothers and sisters:	Two younger sisters
Mother:	Dead
Father:	Living
Profession prior to joining the NVA:	Student
Date of joining the NVA:	September 1965 (Volunteer)
Party member or regroupee:	Member of Youth Group
Date of infiltration into the South:	May 1967
Operational area in the South:	Long An and Tay Ninh Provinces
Date of capture:	September 1968
Place of capture:	Can Duoc District, Long An Province
Date of interview:	January 9, 1969
Place of interview:	PoW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa Province

K-13

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van An
Rank:	Deputy Squad Leader
Unit:	1st Squad, 1st Platoon, 3d Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment
Date of birth:	1947
Place of birth:	My Qui Tay Village, Duc Hue District, Long An Province
Years of education:	Can read and write
Marital status:	Single
Number of brothers and sisters:	One younger sister
Mother:	Living
Father:	Dead
Profession prior to joining the Front:	Hired laborer
Date of joining the Front:	April 1966 (Volunteer)
Party member or regroupee:	Non-party
Operational area:	Trang Bang District, Tay Ninh Province
Date of capture:	August 1968
Place of capture:	Loc Hung Village, Trang Bank District, Tay Ninh Province
Date of interview:	January 9, 1969
Place of interview:	PoW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa Province

K-14

Name of subject:	Phan Van Chanh
Rank:	First Lieutenant, Deputy Battalion Commander
Unit:	5th Battalion (Mechanized Vehicle Battalion) - 4th Sub-Region
Date of birth:	1931
Place of birth:	Long My district town, Can Tho Province
Years of education:	7th grade
Marital status:	Married with one child
Number of brothers and sisters:	Two younger brothers and two younger sisters
Profession prior to joining the army:	Farming
Date of joining the army:	1953
Party member or regroupee:	Party member - Regroupee
Date of admittance:	1961
Date of return to the South:	November 1965
Operational area in the South:	Tay Ninh and Gia Dinh Provinces
Date of capture:	September 31, 1968
Place of capture:	Long Binh Village, Thu Duc District, Gia Dinh Province
Date of interview:	January 10, 1969
Place of interview:	PoW Camp, III Corps, Bien Hoa Province

K-15

Name of subject:	Tran Van Le
Rank:	Sergeant
Unit:	3d Platoon, 8th Company, 15th Battalion, 2d Regiment, 9th Division
Date of birth:	August 1942
Place of birth:	Huong Gia Hamlet, Phu Cuong Village, Kim Anh District, Phuc Yen Province
Years of education:	7th grade
Marital status:	Married and two children
Father:	Dead
Mother:	Living
Number of brothers and sisters:	One younger sister
Profession prior to joining the NVA:	Student
Date of joining the NVA:	March 1963 - Draftee
Party member or regroupee:	Non-party - North Vietnamese infiltrator
Date of infiltration into the South:	September 1967
Operational area in the South:	Tay Ninh Province
Date of capture:	September 14, 1968
Place of capture:	Thanh Dien area, Tay Ninh Province
Date of interview:	January 14, 1969
Place of interview:	National Interrogation Center, Saigon

K-16

Name of subject:	Dinh Van But
Rank:	Private First Class
Unit:	5th Battalion of the 5th Work site
Date of birth:	1946
Place of birth:	Vinh Village, Yen Bay Province
Years of education:	5th grade
Date of joining NVA:	July 22, 1967
Party member or Youth Group member:	No
Date of infiltration in South Vietnam:	July 1968
Operational area:	Tay Ninh Province
Date of capture:	August 22, 1968
Place of capture:	Near Ba Den Mountain, Tay Ninh
Date of interview:	December 8, 1968
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-17

Name of subject:	Phan Van Nhanh
Rank:	Fighter
Unit:	C511th Company, 1st Battalion, Tra Vinh Province
Date of birth:	1939
Place of birth:	Can Tru Village, Long Ta District, Tra Vinh
Education:	2d grade, primary school
Party membership or Labor Youth member:	Labor Youth member
Date of joining the Front:	September 14, 1967
Date of joining Labor Youth:	February 14, 1968
Operational area:	Tra Ving Province
Date of capture:	July 17, 1968, Duc My Village, Cau Ke District, Tra Vinh Province
Date of interview:	December 9, 1968
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-18

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van Sau
Rank:	Combat soldier
Unit:	265th Battalion, Subregion 3
Date of birth:	1948
Place of birth:	Can Giuoc, Long An Province
Education:	Illiterate
Date of joining the Front:	February 1968
Party or Group member:	No
Unit area of operation:	Long An Province
Date of capture:	August 29, 1968
Place of capture:	Long An Province
Date of interview:	December 10, 1968
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-19

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van An
Rank:	Fighter
Unit:	2d Squadron, 2d Platoon, 2d Company, 520th Battalion, 3d Southern Subregion
Date of birth:	1941
Place of birth:	Phu Tuc Village, Ham Long District, Kien Hoa Province
Years of education:	Read and write Vietnamese
Date of joining the VC:	March 1968
Party member or Youth Group member:	No
Operational area:	3d Southern Subregion - MR 4, Long An Province
Date of capture:	December 2, 1968
Date of interview:	January 8, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-20

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van Phong
Rank:	Squad Leader
Unit:	2d Squadron, 1st Platoon, 6th Co., 2d Battalion, 17th Regt., 7th Div.
Date of birth:	1939
Years of education:	7 years
Date of joining the NVA:	1967
Party member or Youth Group member:	No
Date of infiltration into the South:	December 1967
Operational area:	Binh Long and Loc Ninh
Date of capture:	September 14, 1968
Date of interview:	January 9, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-21

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van Co
Rank:	Assistant Platoon Leader - Adjutant
Unit:	21st Co. (Rear Service company) under direct command of 1st Regt. - 9th Div.
Date of birth:	1931
Place of birth:	Tan Trung Nien Village, Hoa Lac District, Go Cong Province
Years of education:	4 years
Date of joining the VC:	Early 1965
Party member or Youth Group member:	Party member, 1966 (but expelled from party in 1967 for having embezzled 7,000 piasters)
Date of admittance:	1966
Operational area:	Tay Ninh Province
Date of capture:	May 17, 1968
Date of interview:	January 10, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-22

Name of subject:	Nguyen Van Mung
Rank:	Fighter
Unit:	3d Squadron, 3d Platoon, District Main Forces Unit
Date of birth:	1947
Place of birth:	Long Tan Village, Dat Do District, Phuoc Tuy Province
Years of education:	Read and write Vietnamese
Date of joining the Front:	November 1967
Party member or Youth Group member:	No
Date of admittance:	No
Operational area:	Duc Thanh District, Phuoc Tuy Province
Date of capture:	September 1968
Date of interview:	January 12, 1969
Place of interview:	Bien Hoa PoW Camp

K-23

Name of subject:	Tran Van Khiem
Rank:	Squad Leader
Unit:	1st Squad, 1st Platoon, 4th Company, 261st B Battalion
Date of capture:	October 5, 1968

(No other personal data available.)

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MAIN FORCE AND NVA PRISONERS AND RALLIERS

I. Background

1. How long were you in your last unit (what kind of unit)?
   a. What other units have you served in?
2. (If cadre) When were you appointed a cadre? When were you appointed to the last position you held? What was your last position?

II. Recent Field Experiences

3. How many military operations did your unit (squad, platoon, company, battalion or regiment -- find out which), go on in the *last month* before you were captured or rallied?
   a. How many during the *six months* before your capture or rally?
   b. How many of those operations did *you* participate in (in the last month? in the last six months?)?
   c. (If reply indicates very few operations by unit) Please explain why your unit engaged in so little combat.
   d. (If reply indicates frequent operations by unit) Please explain why so many operations.
4. How many times has your unit (define meaning of "unit") been attacked in the last month before your capture or rally by: aircraft, ground units, and artillery? (If ground units, what kind of ground units?)
   a. How many times has your unit been attacked in the last *six months* before your capture or rally?
   b. Which attacks caused your unit the most damage and losses? How many lost? When did it happen?
   c. How many losses did your unit (squad, platoon, company, or battalion) sustain in the six months before your capture or rally?
5. In the battles your unit participated in in the last six months, how many did your unit win, and how many times was it defeated?
   a. Please explain why your unit won and lost these battles.
   b. Has your unit been as successful, more successful, or less successful in battles in the past six months than in the time before that? Explain why.
6. How was the health of the men in your unit?
   a. How many in the past six months were usually too sick or weak to fight?

b. Has the health of the men in your unit changed in the six months before your capture or rally as compared with previous times? Explain.

c. Has the medical assistance given to the men in your unit in the six months before your capture or rally improved, been the same, or become worse as compared to previous times?

7. What were the greatest hardships you and your unit suffered in the six months before your capture or rally?

a. Have the food rations issued to your unit been the same or different in these six months as compared to previous times? Describe and explain any change.

b. How often did your unit move in the past six months? (If unit moved frequently) Why did your unit move so often? Has your unit moved more or less often than before? Explain.

c. How did the moves affect the fighters? What did they say? What did the cadres say?

d. In the past six months, did your unit usually stay in people's houses, huts, caves, or in the open? How did your unit usually camp before that time?

8. Describe the circumstances of your capture (or defection).

a. If capture occurred in combat, how do you think you performed during this last battle?

b. As best as possible, describe your feeling during the battle.

c. Did you feel differently than in previous battles?

d. Do you think you could have avoided capture? Explain.

III. Attitude Towards Unit Leadership

9. Describe the cadres in your unit (for squad, platoon, company and battalion). What kind of persons were they?

a. How much experience have they had?

b. What did you think of them? What did the other men say?

c. Did you have confidence in the unit's leaders? What did the other men say? Explain.

d. In the six months before your capture or rally did you have as much, more, or less confidence in your unit's leaders than before? Explain why. What did the other men say?

10. Who was in charge of political education and morale problems in your unit? Did your unit have a "political cadre"? If so, what sort of person was he?

a. What did the "political cadre" do? What were his responsibilities?

b. Do you think his mission was an important one? Explain.

c. What did you think of the political cadre? How did the other men *feel* towards him?

11. Did the "political cadre" in your unit do his work well? Elaborate.

    a. What did he do *especially well?* Was that good for you and the unit? Explain.

    b. What were his chief *faults?*

    c. What training and experience did he have? Was he qualified for his work?

    d. Did his behavior, attitudes, and performance change over time?

12. Was the "political cadre" (and the other cadres and Party members) successful in influencing the spirit and behavior of the men in the unit? How successful was he? Explain.

    a. How successful was he in bringing about good comradely relations and cooperation among the cadres in the unit and between the cadres and fighters? Explain.

    b. What other cadres helped mobilize the spirit and watched over the correct behavior of the men? What did they do?

    c. Do you think that the cadre were sincere and told the fighters the truth? Did you believe them? Why?

    d. In the last six months before your capture or rally, had you changed your opinion about the truthfulness of what the cadre said? If so, why?

13. If the fighters had problems of any kind, with whom could they discuss them? Elaborate.

    a. What types of problems did the fighters feel free to discuss with the unit leaders (or political cadre)? What happened when they did so?

    b. Were there any problems they avoided discussing? With the cadres? With other fighters? Elaborate.

    c. Do you think the leaders of your unit had the right attitude towards the men's problems? Has their attitude changed in recent times? If so, why?

IV. Changes in Composition of Unit

14. What were the chief changes in the composition of your battalion, company, platoon, squad in the last 3-6 months before your capture or rally? *Why* did these changes take place?

15. (If subject mentions "changes in cadres") Did the new cadres come from some other unit, or were they promoted from within the company?

    a. What did you and the men think about the new cadres? Were they as good as the earlier cadres? Not as good? Explain.

16. (If subject mentions "new conscripts or new rank and file soldiers transferred to his unit from some other unit"):

    a. Where did they mostly come from (what units or areas)?

    b. Were these new soldiers in good physical condition? Well trained? Of high fighting spirit?

c. Did the new soldiers fit into your unit and get along with the other men well? What did the other, older soldiers think of them?

17. Has your company had enough *experienced platoon and squad leaders* in recent months? How did they treat the men?

a. Have the company or battalion cadres shown concern in any way about the quality and performance of the platoon and squad leaders? Elaborate.

18. How many Party members were there in your unit? Has this number increased, decreased, or remained the same while you were with the unit?

a. How many regroupees were there in your unit? Has this number changed?

b. What were the functions of these Party members and regroupees?

V. Surveillance, Discipline, Control

19. What attitude and behavior on the part of the men in your unit would be described as representing good morale and fighting spirit.

a. What did the cadres say about what the attitude and behavior of the fighters and cadres should be?

b. What were the *most* important indications that the morale and fighting spirit of the unit was good?

20. How did the cadre find out about the state of the morale, fighting spirit, and attitudes of the fighters?

a. What signs did they look for?

b. Who was responsible for keeping the company or battalion commanders informed about the morale and fighting spirit of the men in your unit?

c. Do you think the commanders were always correctly informed about the morale or fighting spirit of the men? Explain.

21. Were the men always watched over by someone for signs of good and bad morale?

a. How was the watching of the men organized?

b. Did the men in the unit always know that they were being watched?

c. Did the fighters in the unit always know who watched them?

d. How did the fighters in the unit react to the knowledge that they were being watched for signs of bad morale, incorrect thoughts, poor performance of duties?

22. When you or the men in your unit were depressed, discouraged, or had complaints, did you ever talk to others about such things?

a. To whom did you talk when you felt like that?

b. When and under what circumstances did you talk like that?

c. Did the men in the unit *trust* each other? Explain.

23. Did the fighters feel free to express their discontent, or to show that they were discouraged or depressed in front of squad, platoon, or company cadres?

a. If so, what caused them most often to be so discouraged, depressed, or discontented as to show it to the cadres?

b. Why did they show it to the cadres and when did they do so?

c. In the six months before your capture or rally, had the fighters shown discouragement or discontent more, the same, or less frequently to the cadres than before? Elaborate.

24. Could you generally tell who in your unit had really good morale, and who merely pretended to? How could you tell?

25. Were there times when fighters worked or fought without cadres being there to watch over them or to lead them?

a. If so, did the men do their work or fight well, or did they behave less well when not led by cadres? Explain why.

b. When men were separated from the unit during combat, or away from it while on a mission, did they do their best to rejoin the unit or obey their orders, or did they take advantage of being alone?

26. What do you think of the three-man cell system?

a. Did it help the men's fighting spirit?

b. Did it help the men in combat?

c. Did it help the men to do their work when not in combat?

d. Did it help you? If so, in what way?

e. Was your best friend a member of your cell?

27. Were there ever any serious arguments between the fighters in your unit? Elaborate.

a. Or between the fighters and the cadres? Elaborate.

b. Or between the cadres in your unit? Elaborate.

c. What were the most frequent causes of these arguments?

d. In the past six months, have there been more or fewer arguments between the fighters and the cadres in your unit than before? If any changes have occurred, explain why.

28. Were you ever criticized in a criticism session or did you ever engage in self-criticism? If yes, how often, and what were the reasons?

a. How did you feel about it?

b. Do you think the criticism and self-criticism is good or bad? Do you think it is fair? Explain.

c. What did the other men say?

d. In your opinion, what influence did the criticism session (or the fear of being criticized) have on the behavior, fighting spirit, and performance of your unit?

e. Do you think the criticism helped to make your unit a good one? If so, why?

f. Did the criticism sessions correct and improve bad morale, and incorrect thoughts? Explain.

g. Did the criticism sessions make the men angry or discouraged?

29. In the last six months before your capture or rally, has the frequency of criticism sessions increased, remained the same, or decreased as compared to previous times?

a. What were the most frequent subjects discussed at the criticism sessions? Have they changed in the past six months compared to previous times?

30. Were the demands the cadres and the leaders made on the fighters in your unit reasonable?

a. Were the fighters willing to obey orders? Were they enthusiastic?

b. Were the fighters willing to obey even if they thought the orders were unreasonable? Give examples.

c. Were there cases where the fighters *refused* to carry out any order? If yes, give examples. What happened to the fighers who refused to carry out orders?

d. Have there been any cases where *lower cadres* or fighters have tried to have some orders changed? If yes, what kind of orders? What happened?

e. Were the fighters given a chance to discuss and criticize a plan of operation before the operation? Give details.

31. (If the interviewee *is a cadre*, ask "Did *you* always agree personally . . . .") Do you know whether the squad and platoon cadres always agreed personally with the orders from above? How do you know?

a. Did they sometimes let the fighters know that they thought the orders were unreasonable, but had to be carried out anyway? If yes, what did they say?

b. Did the squad or platoon cadres ever deliberately not carry out an order from above? Elaborate.

c. Have there been any changes in the attitude of the squad and platoon cadres in the way they carry out orders or in not carrying out orders? Elaborate.

32. How have the cadres in your unit attempted to discourage or prevent the fighters from deserting home? Rallying? Surrendering in battle? Elaborate.

a. Have there been any changes recently in the way the cadres have been doing it?

b. What effect did these efforts have on the fighters?

33. Have there been any attempts at desertion home or rally to the Government in your unit (squad, platoon, company) in the last month before your capture or rally? If so, how many? What sort of person? How many deserted and how many rallied?

a. How many and what kind of persons deserted home, rallied, or let themselves be captured in the last six months before your capture or rally?

34. Why did the men rally or desert?

a. Have the reasons for rallying or deserting changed in the last six months?

b. What made the men decide to desert home, rather than rally, or to rally rather than desert home?

c. Did the men in your unit talk among themselves about desertion or rallying? What did they say?

35. What were the fighters most afraid of in connection with deserting or rallying?

36. (If interviewee is a rallier) Why did you rally? Did you discuss your intention to rally with anyone before leaving your unit? If so, who was that person?

37. Did some of the fighters ask to be discharged and allowed to go home? How many asked to do so in the last three months before your capture or rally? What happened to them?

38. Did the cadres or the fighters try to avoid unpleasant or dangerous missions? What did they do? How many did so?

a. Was there any change in that respect during the past six months before your capture or rally?

39. How would you describe the morale of your unit (good, average, poor, getting better or getting poorer, unchanged)?

40. Do you think that in the last six months the cadres were as effective or less effective than before in strengthening the fighting spirit of the men in your unit? Explain.

41. Have you and your comrades heard or seen GVN propaganda during the last six months?

a. What propaganda from the GVN have you seen?

b. What did you think of it?

c. Do you think GVN propaganda during the last six months had more, less, or the same influence on the attitudes of the men in your unit than previously?

d. What did the cadres do to reduce the influence GVN propaganda had on the attitudes of the men in your unit?

VI. Personal Experiences

42. What kept you fighting as long as you did?

    a. What kept the men in your unit fighting as long and as well as they did?

    b. Do you think that in the last six months the men in your unit fought as well as before? Explain.

43. When you were exhausted from an engagement or heavy exertions, with what kind of rest and relaxation were you provided?

    a. How did you personally spend such periods of rest?

    b. Were the men given more or less rest as time went on? Explain why.

    c. When a man was sick or wounded, where would he be given a chance to recuperate?

    d. Did you have any complaints about the whole system of rest and recuperation from fatigue and military action?

    e. Was it discussed among the men and what was said?

    f. Did you notice any changes with regard to these activities during the past year?

44. Did you have home leave?

    a. What was your unit's policy on home leave? Had it changed in the last year before your capture or rally?

    b. How did you feel about your unit's policy on home leave?

    c. Did you have home leave as often as you hoped? If not, how did you feel about not having enough home leave?

    d. What did the other fighters say?

45. Did you know how your family got along in your absence? How did you know about it?

    a. Did your family suffer any hardships in your absence? If yes, how did you feel about it?

    b. What did the other men say about the conditions of their families?

    c. Did you know what taxes your family paid to the Front during the past year? Do you think these taxes were reasonable?

    d. Do you think your family received help from the village Front organization while you were away? What did the other fighters say about the help their families received from Front organizations?

46. When you went on an operation with your unit, did you feel that you were well prepared for it? Properly trained? Sufficiently well armed? Elaborate.

a. Did you feel that your unit made sufficient efforts to remove and treat the wounded fighters and the dead?

47. How did you feel with respect to engaging in battles: Did you feel that you became *more* experienced and *less* afraid as you gained combat experience, or did you feel that you became more frightened and less willing to fight?

a. Do you think it becomes easier or harder for a fighter to fight when he stays in the war for a long time?

b. Did you think your chances of surviving became better or poorer the longer you fought? The longer the war went on?

c. What did the other men say?

48. When you were in combat how well did you fulfill your mission? Give details.

a. Do you think you could have fought harder and more effectively? If so, why didn't you?

b. Do you think the other men in your unit fought as hard as they could? Explain.

c. How did you personally feel when you were in combat?

d. Speaking frankly, did you ever engage in what your cadre called malingering while in combat? Give details.

49. Tell me about your experiences with villagers while you were with the Front? How often did you visit villages or talk with villagers?

a. Did you have more, the same, or less contact with the villagers during the six months before your capture or rally than earlier?

b. Were the villagers glad to see your unit in other Front and NVA units or were they afraid of them? Explain why.

c. What was the villagers' attitude toward the Front *civilian* cadres and *guerrillas?*

d. Did you notice any changes in the villagers' attitudes toward you and your unit during the time you were in the Front? During the last six months? What were the changes and what caused them?

50. Do you think the attitude and fighting spirit of the men in your unit was more or less influenced by the attitudes of the villagers toward the Front during the last six months?

a. Did any changes in the villagers' attitudes make you feel differently about the war? In what way?

VII. Political Posture

51. Would you describe yourself as being a Communist? A democrat? A socialist? A revolutionary? Something else?

a. How would you describe most of the others in your unit? The fighters? The cadres?

52. What do you think would be the best political system for South Vietnam to develop?

53. What did the cadres say about who started and is responsible for the war?

    a. What is your opinion on this?

    b. Who do you think is responsible for the war continuing for so long?

    c. Do you think the North was right in sending regroupees to South Vietnam to fight?

    d. Do you think the North was right in sending Northern soldiers to fight in South Vietnam? Do you think the North had *the right* to send these soldiers?

    e. Do you think the United States had the right to send its troops to South Vietnam?

    f. Do you think the United States had the right to bomb North Vietnam? Do you think it was justified in doing so?

    g. Do you think the Americans and the GVN forces are justified in bombing and shelling Front-controlled hamlets or contested areas?

VIII. Outcome of War

54. In the last month before your capture or rally, how did you think the war was going in your area of operation? Explain.

    a. Had your view of how the war was going changed during the last year before your capture or rally? Explain.

    b. (For captives) What did you think about continuing to fight? How long did you think you would have been willing to go on fighting?

55. In the six months before your capture or rally, did the cadres talk more than before about the way the war was going? If so, what did they say?

    a. Did you hear about the way the war was going from other sources (radio, leaflets, newspapers, comrades, or civilians)?

    b. Which sources did you hear more from in the last six months than before? Explain.

    c. Which information did you believe most? Why? What did your comrades say?

56. By what signs or events did you judge how the war was going in your area?

    a. What signs do you think were most important in showing who may win the war?

    b. What signs did your comrades talk about?

    c. What signs did the cadre talk about?

57. How do you think the war will end?

    a. Will the war be long or short? Explain.

    b. Will it end by negotiations or a military victory?

    c. Or will it never end? Explain.

58. What effect do you think the growing numbers of American and other foreign troops are having on the outcome of the war?

59. In your opinion, why do so many people in South Vietnam fight for and support the GVN?

    a. Do you think that support for the GVN among the people is becoming stronger or weaker?

    b. What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the GVN among the people is becoming stronger or weaker?

60. In your opinion, why do so many people in South Vietnam fight for and support the NLF?

    a. Do you think that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger or weaker?

    b. What signs or events have led you to believe that support for the NLF among the people is becoming stronger or weaker?

61. If the GVN were to win the war, what do you think would happen to those who fight for the Front?

    a. What do you think would happen to you and your family?

    b. Your country?

62. If the Front should win the war, what do you think would happen?

    a. What do you think would happen to you and your family?

    b. Your country?

63. In the last months before your capture or rally, how did you feel about the importance of the Front's aims and of achieving them?

    a. Did you think they were important enough for you to go on suffering hardships and risking being killed?

    b. Did you think they were important enough to be worth the suffering of the people in a long war?

    c. Did you think your children should go on fighting this war if this were necessary for the Front to win?

IX. Reasons for Joining (and Leaving) VC or NVA

64. Why did you join the VC (or NVA)?

    a. Did you join of your own free will or were you coerced?

    b. If of your own free will, what were your principal reasons?

    c. If coerced, give details.

65. If of your own free will, did you find that the VC (or NVA) came up to your hopes and expectations? Surpassed them? Fell short of them? Elaborate.

    a. Were you disappointed with the VC (or NVA)? When and why? Why did you leave?

66. Did you come to feel that you had made a mistake? Did you regret having joined? When and why?

67. If you turned away from the VC (or NVA), do you think you would have turned away from them also if they had won more battles and defeated the Americans?

    a. Did your recent combat experience help shape your decision to leave?

    b. What really made you turn away from them?

68. (In case of PoW): How do you feel about the VC (or NVA) now? If you had the past to live over again, would you join again? Why? If not, why not?

Appendix C

TABLE OF RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

The following table of prisoner responses is presented in a highly condensed form. The answers are divided into Positive (P) and Negative (N). Where totals fall short of the total number of interviewees (22), the difference is accountable because respondents did not answer the question in usable form or did not express an opinion.

A look at the figures shown in the table would seem to confirm, by the descending order of morale (remaining, however, well above adequate in all categories with all four types of soldiers), from NVA cadre to VC private, that the interviews -- despite the small sample -- may well be representative, because this same slightly descending order emerged as the general pattern in all studies known to this author.

RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

Questions	NVA				VC				All	
	Cadre (6)		Fighters (4)		Cadre (7)		Fighters (5)		Total Responses	
	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N
Medical care	5	--	4	--	7	--	2	2	18	2
"Hardships" bearable	5	--	2	1	6	2	2	2	15	5
Confidence in leaders	5	--	4	--	7	--	3	1	19	1
Attitude to pol. off.	5	1	4	--	7	--	4	--	20	1
Food adequate?	6	--	2	2[a]	6	1	5	--	19	3
Kiem Thao effective?	6	--	4	--	7	--	4	--	21	--
3-Man Cell effective?	6	--	4	--	7	--	2	2	19	2
Village response	4	--	4	--	6	1	3	--	17	1
Expected outcome	5	--	4	--	4	--	1	--	14	--
Changes since Tet	3	--	3	--	6	--	1	2[b]	13	2
Attitude toward Americans	--	6	--	4	--	7	1[c]	2	1	19

[a]Those who felt that food was inadequate did not complain that it was insufficient for any period of time, but that there was not enough variety (1 man) and that it had occasionally run short in combat (1 man).

[b]The two soldiers who felt things had changed for the worse since Tet did not mean that expectations of a win outcome had deteriorated, but that the war had become "more violent in their area."

[c]He blamed everyone, including Americans.