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THE (NATIONAL) GUARDIAN

ARTICLES AND REPRINTS

1962-1966

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

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This Picture

... was taken at Cam Che in South Vietnam by a U.S. news photographer. It shows a mother seeking to comfort her child burned by napalm dropped by a U.S. plane during "Operation Colorado."

The child most likely has died since—and one is almost tempted to say, mercifully, because for most victims of napalm, survival is living death. You will note the care with which the numbed mother seeks to avoid touching her child's skin. If she did, her fingers would sink into the destroyed flesh.

It is not easy to write such words. One tries to wait until the nausea and the anger subside — if they ever will — and then to search for appropriate words to seek to convey to one's fellow Americans the meaning of such a photograph. In the end one concludes there are no appropriate words. There can only be a sense of horror, and a determination to take this evidence of U.S. behavior in South Vietnam and confront the conscience of a nation with it.

The photograph reached the GUARDIAN the day the President of the United States celebrated his 58th birthday. He sat in the comfortable living room of his ranch house in Texas, his wife by his side, and reminisced with reporters. He talked of his past, his parents and grandparents, the burdens of his office, and his feelings about his life. He said he had much to be thankful for—a happy family, lovely daughters and a lovely home.

He gazed across the lawns to the Pedernales River swollen with rain and said: "We spend too much time worrying about things that go wrong — and too little thinking about the things that go right."

He felt the war in Vietnam was going right, but of course things occasionally go wrong—like last week, U.S. planes napalm-bombed a U.S. outfit killing a (censored) number of troops and burning others the way the Vietnamese baby was burned. But that's the way war goes: there will always be children, and they become the unfortunate victims of war, and bombing mistakes do happen too.

By the same token we can expect more unfortunate victims — Vietnamese and U.S.—with the contemplated plan to raise the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam to 600,000 in the next 18 months. It's a small country, and even precision bombing can't be that precise.

The problem is, as the President took pains to tell the reporters on his birthday, the most important thing is to make the communist world "understand" that the American people and their government genuinely want peace. He acknowledged that there were difficulties in communication but he believed that "when they do understand it, I don't think there will be any trouble."

Perhaps if he had a chance to talk with the mother in this photo he might be able to impress upon her that her child was really a sacrifice to his desire for peace.

Somehow the nausea and the anger do not go away. There are no words. There can only be determination . . .

—THE GUARDIAN



NATIONAL
GUARDIAN
the progressive newsweekly

20 cents

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 3, 1966

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FOR THOSE WHO ARE READING this news-weekly for the first time, the NATIONAL GUARDIAN was founded as an independent radical publication in October, 1948, to serve as an antidote to the distortions and omissions of the commercial press and to offer the people of America an alternative, both journalistic and political, to what we conceived to be the dead end of U.S. policy—both at home and abroad.

At home, we have fought for and offered our services to all who have waged the good fight for equality for all Americans regardless of color (an example of our on-the-scene reporting in this field is by William A. Price on page 7) and for a restoration of Constitutional civil liberties of all Americans. We have espoused the cause of the wage earner and the small family farmer as well as the small businessman; we have fought to conserve the resources of America for fair distribution and use by all the people of this country. Above all, we have advocated a course of independent political action to offer an alternative to the deadly sameness of the major political parties—including an analysis of socialism as an alternative system for the U.S.

On foreign policy, we have opposed the predatory course pursued by the U.S. government since the end of World War II. This moved us to a strenuous opposition to U.S. intervention in Korea and to advocacy of friendship with the socialist nations of the world—particularly the Soviet Union and China—and economic aid without strings for the newly emerging nations.


The GUARDIAN is affiliated with no organization or political party and is supported by the people who read the paper. We invite all first and sometime readers to join us as permanent members of the GUARDIAN family.

—THE GUARDIAN

April 17, 1965

Reprinted from National Guardian

the SPECTATOR



Way of life in Mississippi

MRS. FANNIE LOU HAMER of Ruleville, Miss., seems to have vowed to follow the policy of the song with which she moves audiences to foot-stamping, clapping and fervor—"Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, to let my people go."

At conferences and meetings and in press interviews she tells her story. Will she suffer reprisals for telling the story of the Negro's life in the Delta of Mississippi? "I've been in hell for 46 years; it doesn't make any difference," Mrs. Hamer says in reply.

Then she recounts the troubles she has met since Aug. 13, 1962, when she traveled from Ruleville to the county seat at Indianola to register to vote as one step toward changing the hell she lives in.

That night when she returned to the plantation where she had worked for 18 years as a sharecropper and timekeeper she was met by the plantation owner. "He told me I would have to go back to Indianola and withdraw my registration or leave the plantation," she says. "I told him I wasn't trying to register for him; I was registering for myself. I left the place that night."

As life in Mississippi goes, the plantation owner informed Mrs. Hamer's husband, Perry, that if he would remain on the plantation to harvest the bean crop, he would be allowed to take their personal possessions with him when he left. Hamer acquiesced.

MRS. HAMER went to the home of friends in Ruleville. On Sept. 10, 16 bullets were fired at the home where she was staying. That was the night that two girls were injured by shots fired into the home of another Negro voter registration worker.

Mrs. Hamer began to work for the Council of Federated Organizations, coordinating body of civil rights groups working on voter registration in the state. She is a field secretary of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Her husband works in a cotton gin during the cotton season.

The Hamers' living conditions are typical of those of the Delta Negro. They rent a small house which has no running water; they supplement their food supply by growing peanuts, beans and okra. They supplement their clothing through the donations from the civil rights organizations' food and clothing drive. Mrs. Hamer says: "The first long coat I ever had in my life came from the clothing drive. It's rather hard to find clothes for me because I wear a size 22½." "But," she quickly added, "the clothing drive is most important for the children. There are children out of school because they have no clothes."

Major and minor harassments are part of Mrs. Hamer's daily life. She told how, one night just before Christmas when her husband got up to go to the bathroom, there was a knock at the door. "My husband said, 'Come in,' and in walked S. W. Milam; the night police, and Dink Flemings, the Sundown Kid, a deputy. They asked him: 'What are you doing up this time of night?' You know S. W. Milam is the brother of J. W. Milam, the man who killed Emmet Till, and he's our night police."

ON JUNE 3 when Mrs. Hamer and other registration workers were returning from a voter registration workshop in Charleston, S.C., they got off a bus at a rest stop in Winona, Miss. They were all arrested. At the jail Mrs. Hamer said, "They gave a Negro prisoner a club and made me lie face down on a bunk. He beat me until he was exhausted. They gave the club to another prisoner and told the first to sit on my feet while the other beat me some more. They beat me until I was hard as metal." (At this point, Mrs. Hamer interrupted her tale to ask: "How long do they think we can take these things nonviolently?").

"I could hear the screams of Miss Annette Ponder, [another registration worker arrested]; they beat us all. The next day when Lawrence Guyot [another SNCC worker] came to get us out they arrested him and beat him. His shirt was all bloody. When the FBI finally came to take pictures, they had me hold my hands up; they took pictures of the front, but didn't take any of my back where I was beaten."

(Last December a federal jury found the law enforcement officers not guilty in a U.S. Justice Department suit charging use of law enforcement power to deprive a citizen of constitutional rights.)

"You see," Mrs. Hamer said of segregationists, "they are afraid. They're afraid that why we want our rights is so we can be and act just as they do. But I couldn't act like that. I don't want to lie and cheat; I just want to vote and live decent."

MRS. HAMMER's family has lived in Sunflower County (the home of Sen. James Eastland) for three generations. She does not intend to leave; she is not afraid to stay. "I tell them the truth," she said. "I told the policeman who had arrested me: 'And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth . . . Acts 17-26.' He was mad; he just shook. I don't have to raise my hand to hit back; I hit them with the truth, and it hurts them."

Mrs. Hamer often intersperses her speech with Biblical quotations. As often as the opportunity arises she reminds powers-that-be in Ruleville that Jesus once said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

She is courageous and frank. She speaks of freedom and struggle at mass meetings when the Ruleville mayor and/or police are present with the same vigor as in their absence. She once remarked to an FBI agent: "If I get to Heaven and I see you, there I will tell St. Peter to send me on back to Mississippi."

—Joanne Grant
(Mrs. Hamer has urged that food and clothing be sent to her c/o I. Johnson, 820 Quiver St., Ruleville, Miss.)

This National Guardian Reprint Special contains several of Wilfred G. Burchett's exclusive reports written from the liberated areas of South Vietnam, and Guardian editorial comment on the course of the war there.

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ARTICLES FROM ISSUES OF JAN. 2-MARCH 21, 1964

EXCLUSIVE INSIDE STORY FROM THE BATTLEFRONT

U.S. debacle in South Vietnam

By W. G. Burchett

INSIDE THE LIBERATED ZONE OF SOUTH VIETNAM

FOR MORE THAN a month I have been traveling in the liberated zones of South Vietnam. I have talked with leaders of the armed forces of the National Liberation Front, with guerrilla chiefs, with political leaders of the NLF, with officer deserters from the U.S.-backed government forces, with prisoners-of-war and provincial and village councils in the freed zones. I have visited jungle arsenals, where with forges and molds set up under rough shelters, sections of railway tracks and chunks of scrap metal were being converted into guns, mines, hand grenades and other weapons.

Conditions in many places I visited are tough, especially in perimeter areas where the population is subject to savage raids, but morale is sky-high. The news of the Saigon coup which overthrew the Ngo brothers was accepted as one more proof that the people's forces had the U.S. interventionists and their local puppets "on the run," though I found no illusions that the military junta would be any improvement on the Diemist regime.

ON THE DEFENSIVE: The views of military leaders of the NLF regular forces were confirmed by interviews with ex-Diemist officers, and by everything I could see with my own eyes—not to mention the hard facts symbolized by red and blue lines, arrows and circles on the military maps—by even the despairing dispatches which poured into my little transistor set from western radio stations. The U.S. is plunged into a deep military and political crisis in South Vietnam; a crisis of strategy, of tactics and of technique. If U.S. correspondents in Saigon speak of "stalemate," the truth is that the U.S.-backed troops have been forced onto the strategic defensive.

They have lost the military initiative and for the most part are reduced to reacting to initiatives by the regular forces of the NLF. And this is nothing that can be repaired by ceasing to persecute the Buddhists or students. It is something that existed before the crisis over the repression of Buddhists arose. And it is safe to say that had military affairs been going well and enough "Communists" killed daily to suit Washington, the repression of Buddhists would have been passed over in official U.S. silence, just as the ferocious repression of the ordinary population has been passed over in silence for the past eight years.

"Special warfare," that special military arm of neo-colonialism which President Kennedy admitted is being tried out in South Vietnam, is a failure. Perhaps it was "unfortunate" for the Americans that they should have chosen South Vietnam for the first experiment, using as "guinea pigs" a people highly experienced in guerrilla warfare and in combining political with military tactics.

TOOLS



The specific feature of "special warfare" is that the "cannon fodder" is provided by the "natives" or local troops, while strategic and tactical control is exercised by the neocolonialists (in this case the U.S.) as opposed to imperialist intervention in colonies by means of an expeditionary force.

"Special warfare" in South Vietnam has been pushed to its extreme limits. That is, despite all the talk of obstruction by the Ngo brothers, the U.S., through Gen. Paul Harkins, has over-all strategic control of military operations; U.S. military advisers are present at every echelon in staff headquarters in planning strategy; they



'SPECIAL WARFARE': A U.S. HELICOPTER DROPS VIETNAMESE 'CANNON FODDER'
The U.S. strategy is a colossal failure; is direct intervention next?

are also at every level in tactical operations from army division down to company level. Political and military advisers also function at the level of provincial and district government. U.S. advisers, in fact, plan strategy and tactics and direct and take part in actual combat. The U.S. Air Force—with no further attempt at camouflage—participates in combat operations and transports government troops to combat areas.

THE NEXT STEP? In this sense, as a member of the Central Committee of the NLF expressed it, "special warfare" has reached its highest stage of development. For the Americans to go any further means abandoning "special warfare" and engaging in "limited" or "local" warfare, which entails commitment of U.S. ground forces. "They may do this," he continued. "We are not taking any chances. But do they really think with 150,000 or 200,000 U.S. troops here they can do better than the French did in seven years here with 400,000 troops or in Algeria for eight years with 800,000? We don't think so, but we're prepared for this and ready to wage a long guerrilla war until they learn a proper lesson."

Officers who deserted from the Diemist forces agreed that it was because of the crisis in U.S.-Diemist military strategy—and not because of repression of Buddhists—that Washington ordered the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother. There were differences of tactics and strategy between the Americans and Diem, but these also sprang from the one fundamental source—the defeat of "special warfare" in South Vietnam, and American acceptance of having been put on the strategic defensive.

For instance, U.S. advisers wanted to abandon many isolated military posts and the "strategic hamlets" which they were supposed to defend, whereas Diem was reluctant to abandon territory and population; the Americans wanted in this way to accumulate mobile reserves. But this represented a defeat in itself.

Diem preferred to launch big operations employing units up to one division; the U.S. preferred employing smaller units which could be transported by the helicopters at their disposal. Big operations which the Americans had planned had to be called off because the NLF forces struck in force in other areas—in the Mekong Delta, for instance—and troops earmarked for offensive operations had to be used on defensive operations.

LESSON NOT LEARNED: "The United States has not yet drawn conclusions from the theory and tactics of 'special warfare' because its application and its lessons are too new for them," a veteran military leader of the NLF told me. "But from our guerrilla activities specially designed to counter 'special warfare' we can draw our conclusions quite specifically. We know now that they cannot win." He went on to give examples of defeats in tactics, specifically the employment of helicopters (see the story on page 3) and then concluded:

"The Americans in South Vietnam are militarily bankrupt. We defeated their new tactics by employing only guerrillas. The crisis in their 'special warfare' tactics is there; but as yet this is not dangerous for them, because they are still superior in effectiveness and equipment. But the relation of forces changes every day in our favor and when this reaches a certain point, the crisis in tactics will also become dangerous for them."

The point is that the U.S. have been employing everything that their "special warfare" has to offer in strategy and tactics against NLF units of platoon, company and at most battalion strength—and have been forced into a static or defensive position. What are they going to do when they encounter units of regimental size or even of several regiments? And that such forces will be operating is the logical development of a people's war. It is the logic that led to Dien Bien Phu.

HOW VIETNAMESE REBELS TRAPPED THE U.S.-DIEMIST TROOPS

Slaughter at Loc Ninh: Guerrilla chief's story

By W. G. Burchett

INSIDE THE LIBERATED ZONE
OF SOUTH VIETNAM

ONE THING that helped seal the fate of the Diem regime was that the repression of the Buddhists 1) revealed that the NLF was excellently organized in Saigon, Hue and other cities, and 2) coincided with a succession of military disasters for the U.S. - Diemist forces. Had the support of the Buddhists been restricted to that expressed in the first slogan of "Religious Freedom," the Saigon demonstration would have been limited to a handful of Buddhist bonzes and a few thousand of the faithful. But to this original slogan were added two others, "Democratic Liberties" and "End U.S.-Diemist Terrorism."

It was these latter slogans and the NLF support in Saigon that brought hundreds of thousands of people into the streets in bloody battles with the Diemist gendarmerie, and struck terror into the hearts of U.S. military leaders and diplomats. On top of this came the military disaster at Loc Ninh, about 125 miles southwest of Saigon in the Mekong River Delta. It was a highly significant engagement.

Here was the perfected application of a new guerrilla tactic known as "wiping out enemy posts and annihilating enemy reinforcements." The American version of the engagement is that acting on perfect intelligence information, they trapped a battalion of 300 "Viet Cong" but were beaten off with heavy losses in their attempt to wipe them out. In fact, the NLF forces deliberately invited battle in a maneuver which was to be repeated time and time again in the weeks that followed. The engagement took place on Oct. 19-20 shortly after I arrived in the liberated zones.

BATTLE SETTING: Loc Ninh represents typical delta country—flat marshy land or ricefields intersected with canals and



A FLIGHT TO DISASTER?
Gi in a cove over South Vietnam

creeks, a few trees along the canal banks, some bamboo around the hamlets and marsh bushes three to six feet high growing in the wastelands. Loc Ninh is typical also of most villages in the Delta region which benefited from land reform during the anti-French resistance war, lost part of the land back to the landlords when the Diemist regime moved in, but took most of this back again after the NLF started organizing. It was surrounded by half-a-dozen Diemist military posts at from four to 12 miles distant. A nucleus of guerrillas from the resistance war had been reactivated under the NLF and expanded.

On Oct. 17, guerrillas attacked a post



SAIGON CROWD AT THE PALACE AFTER THE ANTI-DIEM COUP
Military defeats were a big factor in the regime's overthrow

at Nhu Ngang, killing 75 government soldiers after they had refused to surrender, and capturing a rich booty of arms. Next day the Americans sent a helicopter-borne force to recapture the post, but as they found themselves surrounded, they retreated to their helicopters, attacked by the guerrillas as they withdrew. Later that day, guerrillas assaulted two more outposts — at Ben Luong, where they blew up the blockhouse and a bridge over the Cai Chanh river, and at Lai Niem, where they also blew up the blockhouse with the kind of petards that blasted the fortifications at Dien Bien Phu.

THE PLAN: "When we annihilated these outposts we calculated what the enemy would do," explained a lean, hollow-cheeked veteran officer of the NLF regular forces who took part in the operation. "It was inevitable that they would come in force, and this is what we wanted. We had already planned to receive them at Bai-Ai, a deserted hamlet near Loc Ninh village, and we did not hide the fact that we were there." Bai-Ai is a patch of land about 1,800 yards long and 125 yards wide, with bamboo bushes around the perimeter, water-filled paddy fields with knee-high green rice around three sides and wasteland dotted with shrubs on the fourth side. The abandoned houses were all surrounded by deep ditches, as is customary in that area. The guerrillas, stiffened by a unit of NLF regular forces, but fewer than 500 in all, were well dug in around the bamboo perimeter, with communication trenches leading back to the ditches around the houses.

"Sure enough," continued the officer, "at dawn on the 20th, two B-26 bombers came over and started unloading high explosive and napalm bombs. Then fighters came in to strafe with rockets and machine-guns, while a total of 17 helicopters started unloading troops at two positions to the northeast and northwest of Bai-Ai. For the Americans, it must have seemed a perfect terrain, very flat, almost no cover for us—but in fact we were well dug in and with good camouflage that the bombings hardly disturbed. The air attacks continued as the Diemist troops advanced, two groups of 200 each wading across the ricefields up to their knees in mud. U.S. advisers with pistols and small automatics followed in the rear. After all the smoke and flame and noise, they apparently thought we had all been wiped out.

"Our troops held their fire until the first waves were within 17 yards and then we opened up with automatic weapons. Of these first waves, virtually all were killed. Those at the rear, out of our range, raced back towards their helicopters. A third force of 300 which had been brought up by boat from a big post at

Phuoc Long and which had started to advance in between the first two units, halted when they saw what was happening and refused to advance.

MORE BOMBS: "More bombers and fighter bombers arrived and started a terrific bombardment and strafing, but we sat well underground and just listened to it all. At 11 a.m. more helicopters arrived. We shot one down and hit a B-26 bomber, which we later learned crashed at Ca Mau. Another assault was made with the new reinforcements, but as soon as the first waves were mowed down, the others refused to advance and it was left to the planes to continue the attack. At 5 p.m. a third batch of reinforcements was flown in and another attack launched, but with the same results. Despite the urgings of the Americans—well in the rear, because they had also taken casualties—the troops refused to move forward once the first waves had come within range of our fire. The third attack was soon halted and the planes took over again until dusk. They left their dead and wounded where they had fallen in the mud and slush of the ricefields all night.

"During the night, most of our forces slipped away, leaving a few guerrillas be-

hind as observers. The Americans did not know we had withdrawn and early next morning they opened up an artillery barrage on our positions. But this was only a cover under which they evacuated their wounded—they did not try another attack."

U.S. reports on the Loc Ninh engagement put Diemist casualties at 42 Diemist troops killed and 85 wounded, plus 13 American wounded. But the NLF officer said that the casualties must have been several times this figure at Bai-Ai alone, and that they included one U.S. officer and seven Diemist officers among those killed. Because of the furious air assaults, it had been impossible for the guerrillas to count the enemy casualties. U.S. press reports said that because of bad weather, helicopters had not been able to come in for the wounded on the evening of the battle and they had been left all night where they fell in the ricefields.

NEW STAGE: "The Loc Ninh battle," said the NLF officer in conclusion, "marked a further stage in the development and maturity of the NLF forces. Despite the advantages of helicopters in giving the enemy troops great mobility and the possibility of quick reinforcements, it showed that not only can they not wipe out our forces, but we could wipe out a lot of theirs. It proved once again that there are ample possibilities of defeating the helicopter tactics, which the enemy still considers its trump tactical card in waging 'special warfare'. The method and tactics we used at Loc Ninh are common to many other such successful actions."

In the weeks that followed, these tactics were used time and again, and western radios were full of accounts of military posts attacked and lost all over the Mekong Delta region. The U.S. strategic command has only two alternatives—either abandon the military posts completely, or "send good money after bad" and suffer an endless series of defeats as the reinforcements fall into the sort of traps set at Loc Ninh.

The morale of the puppet government's troops, always low, has dropped still further since the Saigon military coup. The rank-and-file soldiers hoped that the end of the Diem regime would mean the end of the war. Instead they have been ordered to throw away their lives on a larger scale and faster tempo than before.

Burchett: Old Asia hand, veteran reporter

NATIONAL GUARDIAN correspondent Wilfred G. Burchett, the only Western newspaperman who has written for a U.S. publication from the liberated areas of South Vietnam, is a veteran Asia hand who has roved and written about almost every corner of that vast continent. Australian-born, Burchett was assigned by newspapers in his country to report on Japanese activities in New Caledonia just prior to World War II, went on to Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and China. He became correspondent for the London Express as the war with Japan broke, reported the Burma campaign and then walked through the jungle to India. He covered the war in the Pacific in 1943.

He spent several years in Europe writing for British newspapers at the end of the war. When the London Times suppressed his stories from Budapest in 1950, Burchett quit and went back to Asia, where he made his home in Hanoi with his Bulgarian wife. His two children were born in Southeast Asia.

He covered the end of the Korean war and became the main source of information for Western reporters at the Panmunjom truce talks. He reported the French debacle in Indo-China, and later moved to Moscow, where he now lives and is resident correspondent for the GUARDIAN if not on assignment elsewhere.

In addition to his newspaper dispatches, Burchett has written a play and such books as *China's Feet Unbound*, *Cold War in Germany*, *Kele Unscreened*, *North of the 17th Parallel*, *Mekong Upstream* and *The Furtive War* (background to the current conflict in Vietnam and available through the GUARDIAN). Burchett has in preparation a new book detailing the course of the war.



W. G. Burchett

ANOTHER BURCHETT EXCLUSIVE FROM SOUTH VIETNAM

Saigon puppets find the U. S. tune confusing

By Wilfred G. Burchett

Guardian staff correspondent
FROM A LIBERATION FRONT
BASE IN SOUTH VIETNAM

THE SAIGON junta generals are divided among themselves and are at odds with their puppet masters, while the masters themselves are divided in a cynical play for power, according to recent officer deserters from the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese forces. Now that the dust has had time to settle after the Nov. 1 coup against Ngo Dinh Diem, the line-up among junta generals is as follows:

1) Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh (who directed the coup) and Maj. Gen. Tran Van Don, both from southern South Vietnam, as opposed to persons from central South Vietnam, like the Diem family. These generals have the support of the South Vietnamese Marines, tank units, the Saigon police — and Ambassador Cabot Lodge.

2) Maj. Gen. Ton That Dinh, the third of the ruling group, from central South Vietnam (Ton That means "royal family," to show he is a member of the Nguyen dynasty from the Hue Court). He has virtually all nine South Vietnamese army divisions in his hands. As a ferocious anti-Communist, he has the support of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

3) Maj. Gens. Nguyen Khanh and Thai Quang Hoang. They opposed the coup against the Ngo brothers, proposing only that the army groups should unite against Premier Diem and force him to change his ways, but leave him in power. They were the last of the generals to rally to Minh, only when the coup was successful. They have the support of the head of the U.S. military command in Saigon, Gen. Paul Harkins. Until late in November Nguyen Khanh commanded the 2nd Army corps, which controlled the lower part of Central Vietnam.

PLAYING IT SAFE: No one can predict the future, but the U.S. has taken the precaution to have a foothold in every camp, and thus to be represented on the winning side whatever happens.

All of the generals are detested by the Vietnamese people. All served under the French as officers in Bao Dai's puppet army. All—without exception—have been responsible for ferocious repressions during the Diemist regime.

At the end of November a great dispute arose within the Saigon junta—starting from an unexpected quarter. For days on end tens of thousands of people had been demonstrating in the streets of Hue, demanding the dismissal of Maj. Gen. Do Cao Tri, who was responsible for the bloody massacre of Buddhists and students in Hue which precipitated the crisis with the Buddhists. The junta, pressured by the U.S. Embassy, gave in to the demand. But who was to replace Do Cao Tri? And where was he to be assigned, without upsetting the delicate balance of power between the junta generals?

Do Cao Tri commanded the First Corps, in the areas just south of the 17th Parallel dividing line with the North, down to south of Hue. It was a key command, but also it was far enough from Saigon to prevent the commander from exerting influence on coups in the capital. After a furious row, Minh and Don overruled Dinh and transferred one of the latter's most loyal commanders, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Huu Co, to replace Tri.

Nguyen Huu Co commanded the Fourth Corps, in the Mekong Delta area, conveniently placed to help his former commander Dinh stage a coup, or counter any made by Dinh's rivals. The "rele" of Co to the far north was a bitter blow to Dinh, as was also the appointment of Nguyen Khanh — the opponent of the coup against Diem — to replace Nguyen Huu Co as commander of Fourth Corps. Do Cao Tri was moved down one stage, by taking over Nguyen Khanh's Second Corps.

SHOWDOWN DUE: All this seems, and is, very complicated, but these are moves which are being watched with eagle at-



TOP U.S. BRASS ON A WORRIED VISIT TO SOUTH VIETNAM
Defense Sec. McNamara, and Gens. Taylor and Harkins check up

tention by western diplomats as indications of the line-up in the inevitable showdown and of which faction represents the best investment. The generals themselves are in a quandary. Each has tried to outdo the other in professions of anti-Communist zeal and loyalty to the U.S. But which U.S.? Cabot Lodge and the State Department? Gen. Harkins and the Pentagon? Or the CIA, which now as before plays its own separate game? There's a problem for even the most willing puppets!

Added to this merry-go-round among generals and masters, are the Buddhist-Catholic problem and the old Center-South contradiction. The cynicism with which the U.S. has now dropped the Catholic and taken up the Buddhist cause is obvious. The mad scheme to promote a mass exodus of Catholics from the North in 1954-55 was masterminded by the U.S. Psychological Warfare Department, and used such propaganda tricks as tales that God and the Virgin Mary had left North Vietnam, that the faithful must follow or be annihilated with the infidels when the U.S. dropped atom bombs on the north. The "infidels" at that time were of course the Buddhist population of North Vietnam.

U.S. plans then were to provide Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem with a vast army of loyal Catholics from whom his army could be officered and manned, his administration and police staffed. This worked only in part. Catholic officers—yes. But the masses of Catholic refugees had hardly arrived than they were clamoring to go back—and were being shot down in their mass demonstrations. By periodic visits of Cardinal Spellman and others, the U.S. gave moral—apart from political, military and financial—support to Diem's Catholic administration.

FOR A CHANGE: Diem's Catholic regime failed to kill enough Communists, so it had to be overthrown. Now it is the Catholics who are being persecuted and discriminated against—not by Buddhists, who are the most tolerant of people, but by the new military regime. They are being persecuted not because they were Diem supporters, but because they are Catholics. The fascist junta is at its wits' end to make some demagogic showing of being different from the Diem regime. Diem persecuted Buddhists; the junta

great headache for the Americans, desperately trying to pluck some sort of unity from the flower of discord and concentrate everybody's energies on the "noble" task of killing Communists.

As far as the ordinary people are concerned, the junta is just as bad as the Diemist regime. Law 10/59 still remains in force. Under it people can be condemned to death or life imprisonment for any act, or intent to commit an act, "endangering public security." Mopping-up operations still sweep people into "strategic hamlets." Despite assurances that this infamous concentration camp system was to be dropped, it is being retained. Air warfare is still total against the population outside the strategic hamlets; chemicals are still being air-sprayed to destroy rice crops in the Mekong Delta area; napalm is still being used to destroy maize and rice crops in the highland regions; any buffalo in the field or wisp of smoke that could indicate a cooking fire are targets for rockets and machine-guns from the U.S.-piloted air force.

MILITARY PROBLEMS: On the question of military strategy, the same wrangle is going on between the junta generals as went on between the Americans and Diem. How to accumulate mobile reserves for big sweeps into Liberation Front territory? Like the 800,000-strong French army in Algeria, the nine puppet divisions are largely pinned down in thousands of "mirador"-type block-houses scattered all over the country.

"According to American plans," a government regimental staff officer told me recently, "by now there should have been a general offensive, with all nine divisions taking part, into the western area [the vast plateaux which stretches from Central Vietnam to the Laos and Cambodian frontiers]. But all our divisions are bogged down in posts, guarding roads and railways and 'strategic hamlets' all over the country. The Americans wanted to hand the posts over to local troops and concentrate the regular army. But the minute we do that, the local troops walk over to the 'Viet Cong' with their arms. So the Americans want to close down a lot of the 'strategic hamlets' and the posts that guard them."

"Their plan was that with a general offensive, all territory lost by withdrawing the posts would be regained later. But our experience is that even with a big offensive into enemy territory, the 'Viet Cong' fade away to avoid any big engagements, but catch us in ambushes later. And going through their territory is like cutting a lump of butter with a hot knife; it's very easy, but the butter closes over the back of the knife as you push it through."

WRITING ON WALL: The U.S. puppet forces have not scored a single military success since the November coup. Instead, they have suffered the heaviest reverses since the fighting started. In terms of over-all losses, losses of U.S. personnel, planes and helicopters lost, posts overrun, strategic hamlets liberated, deserters to the NLF, the period between Nov. 1 and Dec. 20 (the third anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front) has been the most catastrophic for the Americans since their direct intervention started in December, 1961.

The "writing is on the wall" for this U.S. misadventure in South Vietnam. The struggle may be long-drawn, but this is a war the U.S. cannot win. The Americans can spill more blood, their own and others, destroy more villages, wipe out more rice fields and buffalo, but that is about all. The people are against them, organized, disciplined, courageous and experienced. No matter what combinations of puppets the U.S. may stick together and jerk into action, the end result cannot be changed.

ANOTHER BURCHETT EXCLUSIVE

How an old man sparked resistance in Vietnam

By Wilfred G. Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent
FROM A LIBERATION FRONT
BASE IN SOUTH VIETNAM

AGAINST the impressive array of planes and artillery, helicopters and amphibious tanks that the Americans have introduced into South Vietnam—in flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreements—the people are defending themselves with an amazing assortment of primitive weapons that have to be seen to be believed. I have walked through seemingly innocent villages where I would have been killed or horribly wounded a dozen times within 100 yards without a shot being fired, had it not been for an escort to guide me around the fearsome mantraps.

Devices used for centuries to protect villagers against tigers and other beasts have been modified for use against human tigers with machine-guns. There are pits with needle-sharp bamboo arrows arranged in such a tricky pattern that whoever trips the wire is inevitably hit. Had I been a squad of enemy troops, I would have received the charge of one or more "praying mantis" guns, which will wound up to 20 men in a single blast. Set on four legs, with a fearsome charge of homemade black powder and loaded with everything from bicycle ball-bearings to bits of chain links and scrap from enemy bullets, the locally made "praying mantis" is set up to aim at a fixed position on the road. It is discharged by jerking a long cord, after which the firer can flee into the jungle if necessary.

OTHER TRAPS: One has to revise one's conceptions of "strategic materials" when a bicycle frame can be cut up into barrels for the "praying mantis," and the ball-bearings used as shot, and when bats' dung—readily available in the caves of South Vietnam's mountains and sea-coast—is the raw material for gunpowder. If I had not been guided around a particular tree on the main path to one village, by brushing against the low-hanging bows I would have dislodged a clay nest, as big as a pumpkin, and full of a ferocious species of wasps which would have kept a whole company of troops busy. Peasants—peacefully working in the fields when I passed—would have pulled wires to explode mines and if the occasion warranted, the whole population would have manned a maze of trenches linked by underground tunnels and interspersed with secret hide-outs and systems that provided several lines of defense in every direction and escape routes back into the jungle.

Showing me over a formidable system of traps and defenses in one village, the leader of the local self-defense corps, a young peasant who had started fighting the French at the age of 15, said: "You see, our weapons don't have much range. They are not intended for committing aggression against the U.S. The enemy

A bit late, but . . .

TWO WEEKS after reports in the GUARDIAN from W. G. Burchett, revealing extensive guerrilla victories in South Vietnam, the New York Times reported Jan. 12 that 75% of the vital Mekong delta area—home of the majority of the nation's population—is under rebel control.

Times correspondent Hedrick Smith reported that despite U.S. and government efforts to "secure" the area, "bit by bit the people's allegiance has slipped away because of mismanagement and neglect of the peasants' needs and aspirations. Village governments have disappeared or fallen into disarray, and higher officials have abdicated their responsibilities."

reduces the range when he commits aggression against us. We place our weapons around our cultivated patches, around our orchards and poultry yards. If the enemy keeps away, he won't be hurt. But when he comes into our backyards to commit aggression against us he will be plenty hurt."

Showing me the excellently camouflaged trenches protected by clumps of giant bamboo and jungle, or even by the natural dikes of the rice terraces, he said: "This is our land, every bush and tree is our friend and their enemy."

IN THE BEGINNING: In the part of central Vietnam in which I was then traveling, I tried to find out just how, when and why the people took to armed resistance. Central Vietnam is—or was—the fief of the most bloodthirsty of the Ngo brothers, Ngo Dinh Can—a brutal sadist who took a delight in personally torturing and slowly putting to death some of his more prominent victims. This inquiry led to a fascinating discovery, which can be told only in briefest summary. The armed struggle was begun by a tiny, mountain-dwelling ethnic minority—the Core—at the time only about 4,700 in number, and led by their 90-year-old tribal chieftain, Pho Moc Gia. The armed struggle was generalized throughout South Vietnam at the end of 1959, but the first action was launched in the Tra Bong district of Quang Nam province, about half of which is jungle-covered mountain country and the rest, flat rice-lands that lead down to the sea.

Today the Core minority is still unconquered, and Pho Moc Gia, at 94 years, blind and half-paralyzed, is still a dignified figure who insists on being carried to the scene of every battle in which his tribe is engaged, his white hair tied in a bun on the back of his head, his fine white beard reaching down to his chest.

How did it all happen? First it must be understood that the Core took up arms against the French long before the August, 1945, uprising led by their old chieftain. Later, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the resistance fighters. They are a dignified, proud, hospitable people, small of stature but mighty in courage. The U.S.-Diemists, realising the great prestige of the old man, tried to win him over, but without success. As the years went by, oppression grew intolerable. Diemist hoodlums from a nearby military post at Teo-Reo made life impossible. Core buffalo and pigs were driven away without any compensation. Manpower raids took away able-bodied men and women for "corvee," the infamous system of unpaid labor introduced by the French; when the people resisted, they were shot down.

COUNCIL HEAD: Among the Core, as with all the mountain people, there are specific customs which should not be violated. There is a certain form of address to old people, another to women; there is a certain formality about entering a house—customs always respected punctiliously by the resistance cadres from the plains, but crudely violated by the Diemist troops. Girls were dragged off and raped. Core people were regarded as savages, treated like animals. Old Pho Moc Gia, his face wrinkled and brown like ripe walnut, his teeth filed down to half their size, shrunken in stature but clear in his head and outraged at what was happening, discussed the situation with some former cadres from the resistance years who had been forced to quit the coastal plains and seek shelter in the mountains.

When he said the only thing was to take to arms again, the cadres strongly advised him not to. There were only 4,700 Cores, the enemy was powerful; better that the minority shift to another district. This was impossible—the Core moved only if they were defeated in



(Associated Press Radiofoto)

Brought to Heel

South Viet Nam soldier uses dagger butt on Viet Namese farmer who gave wrong information about the Viet Cong to government troops. After knocking the farmer down, the soldier proceeded to work him over. See foto right . . .



Farmer is stomped on by soldier.

Some pictures for Americans to ponder

Six days after President Kennedy's assassination, the New York Daily News said: "We grow exceedingly weary of the current talk about how, in the wake of the Kennedy assassination, we've all got to drop hatred and extremism and get milksoppish and ever lovin' . . . Our reaction: Nonsense; also nerfs . . ." On Jan. 10, the News published the photos above with its no-nonsense gag caption. The photos were taken in South Vietnam. The boot to which the heel is affixed was supplied by U. S. government, most likely made in the U.S., and paid for by our tax money. On Jan. 12 Washington dispatched the flagship of its 7th Fleet to Saigon "to show the flag" of U.S. power in the area to give "moral aid" to the wobbly junta. The families of Vietnamese farmers beaten up like the one above are aware of the U.S. presence. Nor will they ever be likely to forgive it.

battle. Pho Moc Gia was saddened at the advice of the cadres, but it was still the period of political struggle for the fulfillment of the Geneva Agreements. On the other hand, more than 500 Core tribesmen had been killed in the previous four years without a hand being raised in defense.

THE FIRST BLOW: Shortly after the discussion with the cadres, the old man invited the Diemist garrison from Teo-Reo to his village to talk things over. The soldiers came—first looting the place for the alcohol which exists in most homes of the minority people. In the midst of their hooliganism, the villagers set upon them and killed every one—54 in all and the entire garrison of Teo-Reo post, providing the Core with at least 54 weapons and a supply of ammunition. This was the first blow struck in the struggle for the national liberation of South Vietnam.

The Diemists dispatched their No. 2 Division, plus 23 companies, to crush the Core. To reach Tra Bong district, they had to pass through the districts of Tra Mi and Son Ha. They burned villages and massacred the inhabitants as they went, with the result that people in these two districts also took up arms to protect themselves. Within the first three months, 65 attacks were launched against the Core people, with never less than a battalion engaged. Homes and villages were burned, livestock killed and pillaged, crops—even those just showing above the ground—destroyed, but the people had withdrawn into the jungle and mountain caves. Meanwhile traps and ambushes took a deadly toll and resistance centers sprang up wherever the Diemist troops passed.

"Our aim was to wound, not to kill," one tiny Core tribesman, naked except for a tiny loin cloth and same bracelets around his wrists, explained to me. "In our mountains it takes four men to carry one wounded. Each man wounded

meant five men out of action. The dead they don't care about. They throw them into ravines or rivers."

THE FIGHT SPREADS: Until the end of 1959, the Core people fought alone except for the support of those districts and villages which had taken up arms because of the atrocities of Diemist troops in transit. But at the end of 1959, armed resistance started in other areas as well. It spread from the mountains down to the plains. The U.S.-Diemists withdrew troops from neighboring Binh Dinh and Quang Nam provinces to concentrate them against Quang Ngai, but as the forces of repression were withdrawn, the people in those provinces also took to armed struggle. Former cadres of the anti-French resistance struggle quickly re-established contact and organized resistance in the neighboring provinces to take the pressure off Quang Ngai and also undertook relief measures to aid the Core minority.

The enemy has long given up its attempt to enter the Core minority area. In five years of resistance the Core has lost 200 tribespeople in combat, less than half the number of those who were killed in the four previous years. All the mountainous districts of Quang Ngai are now solidly liberated areas; also the plains immediately at the foot of the mountains. Most of the rest of the province is controlled by the enemy only in daytime and by the guerrillas at night, with a small coastal strip, the provincial capital and some villages along the main road fairly solidly controlled by heavy garrisons of U.S.-puppet troops.

After the National Liberation Front was set up at the end of 1960 to coordinate and to direct the combined military and political struggle, old Pho Moc Gia was unanimously elected a member of the Tra Bong district committee. He has to be carried to meetings, but his voice of experience is listened to with utmost respect.

A COMBAT-ZONE EXCLUSIVE

Vietnam rebels' terms for a U.S. settlement

By Wilfred G. Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent
A LIBERATION FRONT BASE
IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A NEW YEAR, a new president in the White House, new men at the top in Saigon and Bangkok—surely the time has come for a "New Deal" for the former states of Indo-China. The example of Cambodia in rejecting further U.S. aid is clear evidence of how U.S. policies are resented in this part of the world. (Prince Sihanouk, incidentally, has been generous in refraining until now from disclosing the extent of U.S. involvement in a plot to overthrow his government, following the Saigon coup.)

"Aid" at a price which gives high-level U.S. plotters cover for their activities is more than Prince Sihanouk will continue to pay. He prefers to do without the dollars, and see the 180 military advisers get out. U.S. policy in Cambodia has come a-cropper indeed, the end-of-the-road sequel to nine years of machinations against the neutral road chosen by the Cambodian people and defended by Norodom Sihanouk. No U.S. policy based on attempted coups and support for rebel groups outside the country can be effective.

And what about U.S. policy in South Vietnam? It has been restated a score of times since the Saigon coup and the assassination of President Kennedy: "Win the war against the Communists." This is an absurdity, a policy even more bankrupt than that which has led to political setbacks in Cambodia. The end of the road for the policy for South Vietnam will be military defeat. There is no possibility of the U.S.-puppet forces achieving a victory against the Liberation Front forces in South Vietnam. And probably every U.S. military "adviser" recognizes this. There is no possibility of military victory because they have lost the battle for the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese people.

BALANCE TURNING: The only type of military "victory" possible is a military withdrawal with the best grace possible, and fairly soon at that. The balance is turning against the U.S.-puppet forces in every sector, and this process will continue at an intensified tempo.

A Liberation Front leader told me that when resistance to the U.S.-Diemist forces started, the guerrillas had fewer than 1,000 firearms in the whole of South Vietnam. "We have over 100,000 now," he said. Deserters from the regular forces at the rate of several battalions a month have been a major source for small arms; ambushed trains and convoys and actions such as the recent one at Hiep Hoa have been another main source of arms, but these have been reinforced by an amazing collection of jungle-made firearms with sufficient range and accuracy for the type of close-range actions the guerrillas prefer. As for recruits—from my own observation I would conclude that almost every Vietnamese peasant and member of an ethnic minority would be in the armed forces if the Front could accommodate them.

I have walked through villages and been received with hospitality in every hut because I was accompanied by cadres of the Front. No agent of Saigon, no American could set foot in such villages—and in their time no Frenchman dared set foot there. These are people to whom the Vietminh in its time brought public health and education and fraternal relations based on absolute equality and grass-roots democracy. Fascism is not an abstraction for these people. It is a system which takes back the land distributed to them in the resistance years, that destroys their forests, that drives them off tribal lands,

that herds them into slave compounds.

ONE INCIDENT: In one village I heard a grim but illustrative story. It was told me by H'Blong, a young Rhade tribes-girl who is now a leading political cadre of the NLF in Dac Lac province. She told me of a "mopping up" operation in the Lac Lac district, where villages border on the Krong Kno river. "The Diemist troops came in very large numbers," she said, "and there were lots of U.S. advisers. They killed anyone they found in the villages, robbed the houses; then burned them and killed the livestock, as they always do. Our people set lots of spike traps around the houses and trees and the young men organized a defense corps with their crossbows. There were no firearms at all in that district. The Diemists came to one village unexpectedly when all the defense corps were at the cultivation patch on the mountain side. But there were two boys who were too young to be in the defense corps.

"They saw the enemy approaching and prepared to ambush them as they crossed the stream to get to the village. When the enemy was in the middle of the stream, they opened up with their poisoned arrows. They hit two Americans and four Diemists. The rest went back to the other bank and started furious fire with machine-guns at the village side of the bank. But the boys kept their heads down.

"The enemy started to cross again and at the same spot the boys fired their poisoned arrows and eight more Diemists dropped into the water. The rest thought it must be a big ambush and they fled. When they were out of sight, the boys carried the enemy weapons back to the village and hurried off to the cultivation patch to tell what had happened. Everybody went back and there were the 14 bodies. But the two Americans had been stabbed through the heart.

"Why did you do that?" the head of the defense unit asked. "They were already dead from the arrows. And why did you stab only the Americans?"

"Because the Vietnamese are only misled," one of the boys replied. "These two are foreigners who have crossed the oceans and come from very far away with the clear intention of harming us. It is these 'big noses' that put the Diemist troops up to harming us."

This opinion of semi-savage, loin-cloth-clad tribal boys is a universal opinion in South Vietnam today and Washington would do well to note it. (The poisoned arrows incidentally are deadly weapons; the merest scratch is inevitably fatal within five minutes. Preparation of the poison is kept a close secret, fathers handing it on to certain of their sons before they die. Part of the components is a sap from certain trees, mixed with buffalo urine. It paralyzes and then kills. As close a secret as the preparation of the poison is that of an antidote with which an accidental wound may be washed, the preparation of which is known only within the tribe.)

REBEL MORALE HIGH: The ratio of forces in South Vietnam is still much in favor of the U.S.-puppet troops in terms of soldiers and arms, but it is changing in favor of the Front. And as far as quality and morale are concerned, there is no comparison. The morale of the Front forces is that of people who know exactly what they are fighting for, in defense of homes and families, to get rid of foreign interventionists, to avoid a life of slavery in concentration-camp villages, to complete the struggle for national independence.

The puppet forces see more and more clearly that they are being driven to their deaths by foreign officers and in

A South Vietnamese mother and her children gaze upon the smoking ruins of their home at Ca Mau, destroyed by rocket fire from a U.S. helicopter during a raid by Saigon government forces. Actions such as this, perpetrated on a vast scale by puppet soldiery under American advisers, help explain why the South Vietnamese people as a whole are aiding the guerrilla forces in their increasingly effective resistance to Saigon rule.



the "best" of circumstances are forced to slaughter peasants like themselves in the interminable "mopping up" operations. In the beginning these were carried out at little risk to the troops taking part, but now they usually end with heavy losses.

The NLF leaders have followed closely the speculation about a negotiated settlement which has arisen in the U.S. press recently, particularly in connection with Cambodia's insistence on neutrality and her proposal of an international conference. France, which has offered Cambodia aid to replace that of the U.S., also favors a settlement for a neutral Vietnam, North and South.

The NLF notes that Washington has put down talk of South Vietnam negotiations now. It also notes that there has been little reality in the ideas advanced so far—predicated on the assumption that the war in South Vietnam is an "invasion" from North Vietnam. The NLF now controls much of the territory and half of the population of South Vietnam. It is manifest that the large-scale battles going on in the Mekong Delta and the Ca Mau Peninsula in the extreme south could not be mounted, supplied or directed from North Vietnam. To guerrilla leaders, the idea that the U.S. "will withdraw when [North Vietnam Premier] Ho Chi Minh withdraws" is an absurd, bankrupt formula that closes the door to negotiations.

TRIAL BALLOONS: As to a negotiated settlement NLF leaders doubt that the U.S. is really interested. One leader responsible for political questions told me: "The U.S. has limited itself to sending out a few trial balloons about a negotiated settlement, but they are not yet sincere even in the soundings they are making through their allies.

BASIC APPROACH: As to what could be the basis for eventual negotiations, it boiled down to something like this: The independence and sovereignty of South Vietnam must be recognized. There must be no more foreign intervention, no more aggression. De jure, Vietnam must be considered as a single united state, as provided for in the Geneva Agreements. But de facto South Vietnam will become a separate state.

The NLF spokesman said: "There is nothing hypocritical in our program for a natural and independent South Vietnam. We will not change our position on that in case of negotiations. We are willing to accept a neutral status and that of a separate state, but we also state that the question of reunification is an internal question for the Viet-

namese people alone. This is a question that does not concern outsiders. The questions of independence and the internal nature of the question of reunification are both matters of sovereignty and must not be confused with such questions as neutrality and separate status.

"Another question that concerns only the people of Vietnam is the nature of the political regime in the South—as also that of the North. It is obvious that no international conference could impose a socialist regime on the South any more than it could demand that the North dissolve its socialist regime. These are questions of principle—not negotiating points . . . Only within this framework of principles can compromises be worked out."

THE WAY OUT: If Washington wants the basis for a "new deal" for South Vietnam—there it is. If one adds to this clear policy statement the remarks of the NLF President Nguyen Huu Tho in an earlier interview that the Front is prepared "to unite on an equal footing with all patriotic forces and individuals either organized in a Front or taking united action . . . The united bloc would serve as a basis for the establishment . . . of a coalition government," then the way out is clear.

As things stand, however, Washington seems intent on repeating the costly and disastrous process that it tried to effect with Chiang Kai-shek and indirectly through the French with Bao Dai. Instead of getting off the tiger's back while there is still time, U.S. policy makers seem intent on riding it over a cliff.

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THE WAR IS WITH SOUTHERN GUERRILLAS, NOT NORTHERN INVADERS

The U.S. myth about Vietnam

By Wilfred G. Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent

LIBERATION FRONT BASE
IN SOUTH VIETNAM

OUTSTANDING among the Voice of America idiocies brought to me almost daily by my Japanese translator set is this one: "If North Vietnam would cease its aggression . . . or invasion . . . or guerrilla, etc., activity against the South . . . all would be well. The U.S. could pull out its troops and the fighting would end . . ." etc. This is a dangerous idiosyncrasy because it implies that unless the North Vietnam government states that the guerrillas are in fact invaders from the North and agrees to withdraw them, there can be no settlement. And as in fact the guerrillas, as always, belong to the soil and villages they are defending, this poses an impossible pre-condition to any settlement.

Members of the present U.S. administration have shown themselves more realistic in the past—when they were in the political opposition, out of office. Take, for instance, Adlai Stevenson's impressions of France's "dirty war" in Vietnam, published in the Paris paper *L'Intransigeant*, (May 21, 1953) after a visit to the area. After some correctly pessimistic appraisals of the military situation, Stevenson commented: "One sees here in a startling way one of the major difficulties the French are up against. How to persuade the peasants in their rage, that these Germans, these French, these Senegalese and these Moroccans are fighting for them against the Vietminh, who after all are of their race and their country?"

It was a good question then and it is a good question today for Stevenson and Dean Rusk and President Johnson. How to persuade the peasants in their rage that these Americans, the Kuomintang Chinese and Philippine and Australian troops, etc., are fighting for them against the "Viet Cong," who after all are of their race and their country? It would still be a good question even if there were Vietnamese from north of the 17th Parallel fighting side by side with their brothers in the south. I am convinced that there are none at all and that no aid from the North, short of a full-fledged military invasion, could change the situation one way or the other by one iota. It is not difficult to prove this point.

NO ROADS OPEN: If the main National Liberation Front activity in South Vietnam were near the 17th Parallel or even close to the frontier regions of Laos controlled by the Pathet Lao, some suspicion could be justified. Such a situation would be shown by military action in those areas and in liberated areas gradually spreading south. In fact, there are only two roads leading south and the American-South Vietnam government forces control both of them. And the main military activity in recent months has been in the extreme southernmost tip of South Vietnam, in the Ca Mau Peninsula, and in the rest of the Mekong Delta. U.S.-officered planes and warships have complete mastery of the skies and waters of South Vietnam.

There are no roads except those in U.S.-puppet hands which link North Vietnam with the Mekong Delta. The Delta lies south of Saigon; it is the area closest to the greatest concentrations of U.S. military power. But it is here also that the first announced withdrawals from military posts have been ordered by U.S. commander Gen. Paul Harkins.

One does not have to be a military expert to draw the conclusions from any communications map of South Vietnam that, with all strategic roads either under U.S.-puppet control or torn up by the guerrillas, it would be impossible to direct or support such military operations as have been taking place recently in the Mekong Delta from more than 1,000 miles away in the North. And if the



A WOUNDED SOLDIER IS CARRIED FROM A HELICOPTER IN SOUTH VIETNAM
The toll of American casualties is mounting in the 'dirty war'

guerrillas really depended on outside supplies, why would one of their major activities be that of road destruction? One of their main aims is severance of all means of communications with their areas, since their operations are essentially defensive—defending their own homes and fields.

SOURCE OF ARMS. As for manpower—Mekong Delta is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with a population of about 5,700,000 excluding Saigon-Cholon. Arms? All Western press reports agree that at first the arms were of a most primitive type—the Diemist government organized a special exhibition of "Viet Cong" home-made arms to bolster the morale of its own superbly armed troops. And all Western press reports also agree that those "superbly armed troops" have either voluntarily or involuntarily been parting with their arms at an increasingly rapid tempo, to the guerrillas. This is happening to such an extent that garrisons of the hundreds of forts that litter the Delta are popularly known as "gun-runners" and the U.S. Saigon command has recently ordered evacuation of scores of these forts just because they are a major source of arms supply for the NLF forces.

But the inspiration and technical know-how of the armed struggle—surely they come from the North? This is the only point that can be argued, because the flow of manpower, arms and supplies from the North in this most active area of the military struggle is either impossible or, in the case of manpower, manifestly unnecessary. On the question of leadership and know-how, one must delve a little into the history of the region.

• One should know that the first major revolt against the French started in the Mekong Delta Nov. 23, 1940 (long before there was a Vietminh or a Viet Cong or an Uncle Ho in the North).

It was a peasant uprising against conscription and unbearable taxes launched when the French transferred troops to Cambodia to counter a Japanese-Thai invasion. The villages that were the storm center of that revolt are today the vanguard villages in the fight against the U.S.-Saigon puppets.

• The first armed resistance against France's attempt to reconquer Vietnam after World War II also started in the Mekong Delta area in September, 1945. (It started only a year later in the North.)

• The first armed clashes with the Diemist dictatorship spread to this area after Premier Diem sent his regular army against the armed forces of the Binh

Xuyen, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects in March, 1955. The latter withdrew to the Mekong Delta area and continued to wage sporadic guerrilla warfare until their forces merged with those of the NLF at the end of 1960.

• Concerning the know-how of military technique, by my personal observations I am convinced that every guerrilla unit is able to handle every type of weapon that is likely to fall into its hands.

PUPILS OF U.S.: This question of know-how involves other more fundamental questions. A "Viet Cong" guerrilla unit is an infinitely more sophisticated one than its "Viet Minh" predecessor, infinitely superior in technical know-how. Because of technical instructors from North Vietnam? Not at all. It is because of the U.S. theory of "special warfare," the essence of which is that in the days of neo-colonialism one no longer uses an expeditionary force to impose policies. One imposes them through a local force, officered or "advised" by the neo-colonial power. The cannon-fodder and most of the military technicians are provided by the target country. So as distinct from the days of French rule, the Americans in South Vietnam have trained thousands of local military technicians, taught them how to use automatic weapons, mortars, artillery, recoilless rifles. And as time goes on an ever-increasing proportion of such trained soldiers pass over to the NLF ranks. Those trained under the Americans become instructors to the NLF forces and within a surprisingly short time,

BASIC REASON: The single greatest reason for the U.S.-Saigon reverses in the Mekong Delta is not military. It is the violation of a well-established historic law: Never try to reverse the process of land reform; never try to repossess land once distributed to the peasantry. The other compelling reasons for the reverses—the ferocious repression and hounding down of former resistance workers—were subsidiary to the main one concerning the land.

It was inevitable that the Diem regime should try to reverse land reform. State power must be based on a class. There is no significant capitalist class in South Vietnam; the French were the capitalists. But there is a significant landlord class of which the Ngo family was the supreme representative, and the families of the new ruling junta and the new premier, Nguyen Ngo Tho, run close second.

The Mekong Delta is fabulously rich. Its 3,750,000 acres of ricefields used to feed all of Cochinchina and a good part of Central and North Vietnam and provide up to a million tons of rice a

year for export. It abounds in river and sea fish; in fruits and coconuts. But until the resistance war against the French started, 90% of the peasants owned no land. They worked as agricultural laborers or sharecroppers for the big landowners. Most of the latter lived in luxury in Saigon or France. Some of the biggest holdings of the choicest land were those of French plantation owners, who fled before the Japanese or the resistance fighters.

During the resistance years, much of the fertile Delta land was divided up among the landless peasants. First to be distributed was that of the abandoned French plantations and that held by Vietnamese absentee landlords. On most of the remaining land, rents were reduced and back debts canceled. Diem, with his American adviser on "land reform" Wolf Ladejinsky, tried by various "land reform" schemes to get the distributed lands back into landlord hands. Where this happened, the landlords started squeezing the peasants again for "rents" unpaid during the resistance years. The peasants resisted. Troops were sent to back up the rent and tax collectors but the peasants started to meet force with force. The armed resistance movement reached considerable proportions during 1961.

1962 was the year in which an all-out effort was made to herd the Delta peasants into "strategic villages" to "isolate them from the Viet Cong." To tear peasants away from their 20 or so coconut palms and bits of orchards and herd them into concentration camp villages was to challenge them to a life-or-death struggle. The Delta peasants were determined to fight. Under U.S.-Diemist guns, many were herded into the "strategic hamlets." At gunpoint they sullenly dug moats and built the spike-protected rows of palisades—sullenly, that is, up to a point. At one stage the "word" was passed around, and almost overnight the "strategic hamlet" inmates started working zealously in improving defenses and fortifications to make the hamlets as impregnable as possible.

NOT ISOLATED: The point the U.S.-Saigon leaders failed to grasp was that in putting the peasants inside the villages, they were not isolating them from the "Viet Cong," because "Viet Cong" and peasants are one and the same thing. And often, in putting arms into the hands of the hamlet self-defense corps, they were putting them into the hands of those they call the "Viet Cong."

After the Nov. 1 Saigon coup, the new junta launched repeated large-scale operations in the Delta region, but they halted before they got really started. Major roads had been cut, and in some places for miles on end just disappeared into the ricefield mud. Solid dams had been thrown across the canals and rivers used to transport troops. "Strategic hamlets" had been converted into "fighting hamlets," and Saigon troops were caught under crossfire wherever they turned.

NO WAY OUT? To pretend that all this is the result of "intervention" or "aggression" from North Vietnam is to lose all sense of reason. The U.S.-puppet regime is caught up in a situation brought about by U.S. intervention in Southeast Asian affairs. The NLF has its own regular armed forces, reinforced daily by desertions from the puppet forces and recruits from the liberated villages. The ratio of 10 to 1 which the Americans claimed in favor of the Saigon forces at the end of 1961 had been whittled away steadily; it changed drastically in 1963. U.S. military experts say they need a superiority of between 10 and 20 to 1 to win a guerrilla war. Where are they going to get them from—an army of several millions?

Signs now are that, having lost millions of acres of the finest rice land in the country, the Americans will intensify the chemical warfare to destroy the growing rice crops. Increased air spraying of chemicals to kill rice plants is reported in Ben Tre and My Tho provinces, in the hopes of starving the peasants into submission.

Vietnam coup

By Wilfred G. Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent
FROM A LIBERATION FRONT
BASE IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(By cable, Feb. 2)

THE NEW MILITARY coup in South Vietnam means a return to Diemism and personal dictatorship instead of dictatorship by a junta whose three-month rule took military control of a major part of the vital Mekong Delta and brought the war knocking at the gates of Saigon itself.

It is also a personal victory for Gen. Paul Harkins, commander in chief of the U.S. forces in South Vietnam who, with the new dictator, Nguyen Khanh, was against the anti-Diem coup, opposing U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and the triumvirate of puppet generals who organized it.

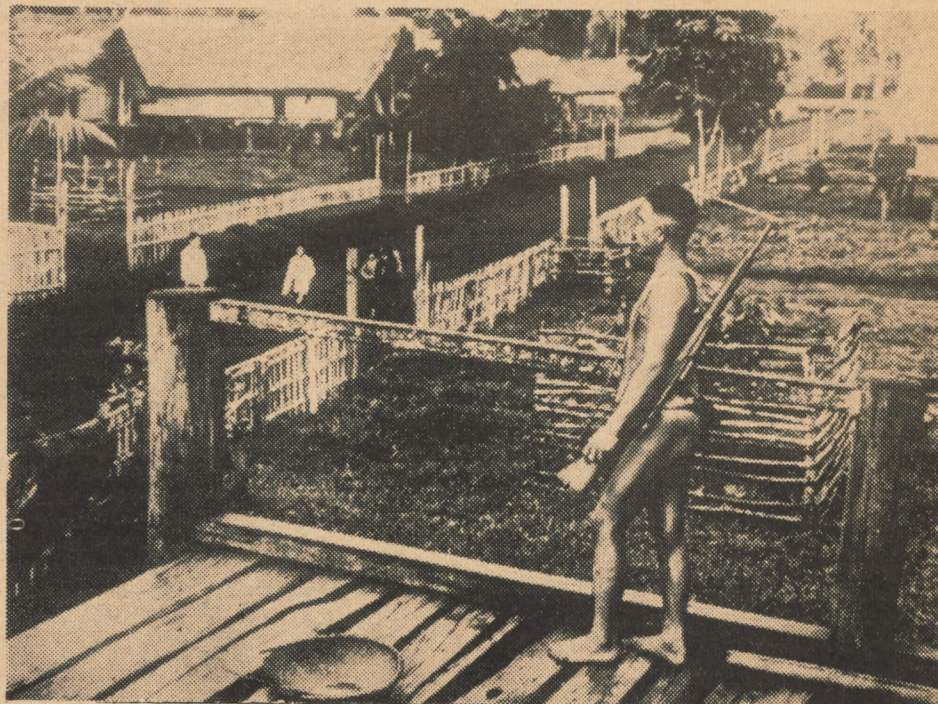
The new coup and others that surely will follow cannot change the general trend here of endless defeats for a demoralized puppet army and of extraordinary growth of neutralist sentiment not only among the population generally but at all levels in the puppet army and the Saigon administration.

MILITARY DEFEAT: Observers here believe the coup was organized by Harkins, who was absent from Saigon at the actual period of the operation. Khanh arrived in the capital from the extreme

north two days earlier, an impossibly short time in which to make the complicated arrangements and complete the troop movements necessary for the coup. The fate of the junta generals probably was sealed by the decisive defeat of the U.S. forces and the Saigon puppet troops in a two-day action beginning Jan. 18 with 3,000 troops and 50 helicopters engaged in the Mekong Delta about 40 miles south of Saigon. This was to be a major test for the new "mobile strike force" tactics. It was a disastrous failure, with heavy losses in men, "copters," and amphibious tanks. It was also a supreme effort by the junta and the last chance for the junta generals to justify themselves.

Young officers who deserted and captives assure me that no one in the puppet army, from the rank and file to the generals, believes there is any chance of victory for the South Vietnam army. Only the U.S. presence and pressures from the top echelons to the officers who try to prod the troops into action, keep the war going. There is widespread sentiment for negotiation based on the National Liberation Front's policy of peace, independence and neutrality.

NO RESISTANCE: More than 48 hours before the coup, Secretary of Defense McNamara was emphasizing the junta's political "popularity" to offset the grim military picture. The extent of the



WHO'S THE ENEMY? REBELS WITHOUT OR PEASANTS WITHIN?
Vietnamese tribesmen are resisting concentration into villages

"popularity" was made clear by the fact that the junta was swept aside without a shot being fired or a single demonstration in its support.

The U.S. hope that it finally has found a "strong man" in Khanh is futile. No one is strong enough to halt the tide of military successes by the NLF or the political successes of its peace-independence-neutrality policies. This tide was

already powerful before President de Gaulle of France threw in his support for a policy of neutrality and for the recognition of China.

U.S. attempts to hold back the tide for peace and neutrality in the South and for minimum normalization of relations with the North are heading for a catastrophic defeat.

one-priest.

"We were all very depressed," the "elder" said. "Many of us had passed through the smoking ruins of villages, others had been made homeless or had lost relatives. It seemed there was nothing to do but agree. But then the old man, I Bru of Buon Dju village, climbed up on a house platform and demanded to speak. He was nearly 70.

"We ethnic minorities always lived with our ray (cultivation patches), our forests and brooks and trees. Now you are going to concentrate us. In that case we will die out slowly. You have your troops around us. Better pull the triggers and kill us all together now." The district chief strode up to him. "If you disagree with the government and the Americans, you will all be killed, foolish old man. And if you continue to speak like that you will be killed on the spot."

"If you are killed," cried I Bru, "you lose your villa, your plantation, your car, your beautiful women. If I am killed, I lose this only, and he snatched off his loin cloth and threw it at the chief of district.

"There was tremendous excitement, everyone rushed forward to save the old man, shouting 'No concentration.' Officials were swept off their feet. Then 'Eay Teo' climbed up on the platform and said: 'Why all this noise. We only asked you here to have your opinions. Now you may go home.'"

The "elder" with whom I spoke went on to tell the NLF cadres in the area what had happened. "There were tears in their eyes when we told them of the heroism of old I Bru," he said, "and they sent an armed unit back with me to bring the old man to safety. But we arrived too late. Troops had come from a nearby post and dragged the old man away. He was killed the same night.

"Next day people from over 20 villages met to honor the old man. The enemy also came and said: 'Why this big meeting? How do you know the old man is dead?' We replied: 'He was a man who always did good for our people. But last night a tiger took him, so we pay him our last respects.'"

At the meeting the tribespeople unanimously took a pledge that they would carry on the fight as the old man had done. The tribespeople won their battle against being concentrated, but later those of their villages that were near Buon Mé Thuot were turned into "strategic hamlets."

The 'new' Americans

By Wilfred G. Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent

INSIDE LIBERATED ZONE
OF SOUTH VIETNAM

A HORRIFYING aspect of the "special war" being waged in South Vietnam is the massive attempt to wipe out the ethnic minorities. The "quick" method of physical annihilation having failed because the tribespeople finally took to arms to defend their homes and families, the "slow" method of "reservations", is now being tried.



I have talked with scores of tribesmen in widely separated parts of the country and their stories bear a horrible similarity. The attempts to destroy them swiftly, or kill them slowly in concentration camps are combined with a macabre plan of reshuffling vast masses of the population. People from the plains are forced to emigrate to the mountains; mountain tribespeople are forced to move down to the plains. This process was started immediately after the ceasefire agreements in the resistance war against the French went into effect.

The ethnic minorities in Central Vietnam played a vital role in the war against the French. This was sufficient for the Diemist regime to launch a drive against them the moment the armed units of the resistance had withdrawn to the North according to the Geneva Agreements. Le Quang Binh, a member of the Quang Ngai provincial executive of the National Liberation Front, told me that in one small district of his province, Son Ha, 4,000 former resistance members from the Hre minority were arrested in December, 1954, alone. "Important suspects were dragged to death behind automobiles," he said. "Others were buried alive in batches of 20 and

30. They would tie them together in groups of three and four, kick them into a ditch and start shoveling the earth over them. There were terrible, muffled cries as from buffaloes or cows; the earth heaved for a while, then all was quiet. We knew of this and rushed to the spot as soon as the execution squads had left, and by tearing the earth away, we managed to save some before they suffocated. All the lands distributed to the minority peoples during the resistance war were grabbed back and divided up among Diemist agents.

YOUTHS FLEE: Ama Tien, a slim young man, with his teeth filed at the edges to make a straight line, as is the custom of his people, said that in May, 1962, "the Diemists used all means, infantry attacks, more bombings and strafings, helicopter-borne troops to herd our people into the 'strategic hamlets.' At gun and bayonet point and by burning the houses, they did force a few people in. But most of the younger ones fled to the forest to take up arms."

In the district of Buon Mé Thuot, the tribal people in the late 1950s had been driven from their villages in a Diemist scheme to set up "agricultural settlements," glorified concentration camps in which about 25,000 Vietnamese political "suspects" had been herded from the plains. Tribal lands were seized to provide coffee and rubber plantations on which the "suspects" were to slave; villages were bulldozed out of existence. But the minority people later built up new villages and were working new cultivation patches.

At the end of 1961, it was decided to concentrate them in a "model" strategic hamlet area at Buon Ea Nao. The minority people hated the whole idea, distrusting Diemists and Americans alike. Every village in the district was supposed to send 10 "elders" and other persons to a training center to receive instruction in a "new" religion and also in the use of firearms. The chief instructor was an American colonel in pastor's clothing, who called himself simply: "Eay Teo" or Grandfather Teo. He described himself as a "new" American and had a smooth line. (I was informed about all this by a local village "elder," whose name and village may not be revealed because he is still in the area.)

"We are 'new' Americans," the instructor assured them. "We are against

SOME CONFUSION: For a while the tribespeople were confused. Some Americans helped Diem, others said they opposed him. And these "new" Americans looked just like the "old" ones. They seemed to be military men, but they dressed like priests. "We are not priests," insisted the instructor, knowing that priests would be identified with French colonialism. "We are sent by Christ to help you, but ours is a 'new' religion, the religion of the 'new' Americans."

The tribespeople argued back: "But you look just like the 'old' Americans that even now help the Diemists kill our people."

"You see," said Eay Teo (whom I suspect was from the U.S. Psychological Warfare Department), "it is this way. The 'old' Americans and the Diemists are like a cat. The Viet Cong is the mouse. You minority people are the paddy (rice). The mouse smuggled himself into your paddy, so the cats came to kill the mice. But in doing so they also harmed your paddy. But if the mice does not come to the paddy, the cat will also not come. No harm will be done to the paddy either by the mice or the cats."

The tribespeople talked this over, but were still suspicious. They gave their answer—no concentration and no arms.

"If you refuse to carry arms to protect yourselves, the 'old' Americans and Diemists come to kill you—we will not be responsible," said the "new" Americans. And within a few days of the final refusal, a regiment was sent into the area, five villages were burned to the ground and about 20 tribespeople were killed. The villages were now ordered to send representatives again to Buon Mé Thuot.

THE MEETING: More than 1,000 tribespeople assembled at the meeting place. They were ringed by a battalion of Diemist troops. "Eay Teo" was there, together with the provincial governor and chiefs of districts. Formalities were minimal: "Either you agree to concentrate or military operations start against all villages in the district tomorrow," said the col-

The 'Free World' of Vietnam

By Wilfred G. Burchett

Guardian staff correspondent
INSIDE LIBERATED ZONE
OF SOUTH VIETNAM

THERE ARE depths of frightfulness that almost defy the imagination, deeds of human bestiality that are dark blotches on history. Such frightfulness is found in concentrated essence here in South Vietnam, the evil flower of policies initiated, approved and enforced by the agencies of the United States government.

I am not referring so much to physical torture—applied today by the junta generals with the same ferocity as under the regime of the late Ngo Dinh Diem—except to remark that I doubt if any people in history have suffered torture on such a scale as the people of South Vietnam in the last few years. Arrest is synonymous with torture; suspects—even those who may be willing "to talk" immediately, are automatically given preliminary rounds of torture as part of the "softening up" process before interrogation. That the questioning itself takes place under torture is a matter of course.

The extent of human suffering cannot be presented statistically; there are no Geiger counters to register physical and mental anguish. But the methods and extent of torture in South Vietnam surpass those of the darkest days of the "Dark Ages," even if only because to the medieval techniques of red hot pincers, sawing off of members and limbs, etc., have been added the refinements of 20th Century techniques, electricity applied to breasts and genitals among others. And, above all, victims these days are hunted down en masse with planes and helicopters to help; they are fed into the torture chambers on an assembly line basis. At least one in ten of the entire population has been tortured in the last 9½ years.

HORROR STORIES: Just as arrest for anyone at all means immediate torture, arrest of any woman between the age of 15 and 50 is synonymous with rape and torture of the genitals—"to prevent your spawning Viet Cong," as the torturers express it. During my travels I have interviewed hundreds of people, and in a score of more cases these interviews have lasted from half a day to several days. I have 150,000 words of closely typed notes based on interviews alone. I have listened while my blood froze to simple, factual accounts of what has become commonplace over that gigantic concentration camp which represents the "free world" of South Vietnam. I have seen, touched, photographed the results of these barbarous tortures and felt as if my head would burst, as some quiet, gentle voice described how her baby had been torn from her arms and dashed to death on the prison paving stones before she herself was led into the torture chamber.

I have been told of many cases of direct American participation in tortures, of U.S. officers directing the proceedings, especially in Central Vietnam, when the importance of the prisoner "warranted" it. Especially in the case of puppet officials who had relinquished their posts, U.S. officers were on hand to direct the torture and bring forth the reasons, my informants said.

I have talked to people who tried to hide the mangled, purple mass of flesh to which the palms of their hands had been reduced after clutching white-hot iron rods; who covered their fingers to hide the scars where bamboo slivers had been thrust down behind the nails; who were embarrassed when I wanted to photograph shoulders and legs from which chunks of flesh had been torn out with red hot pincers. They were embarrassed lest I think Vietnamese are barbarians, and it often required gentle explanations that fascism is not a question of race or civilization.

One knows that all Germans are not



THE CHURCH HAD NO MORAL SERMONS FOR THE RULERS
One reason: The rulers' brother was Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc

SS monsters; that the torture experts in Algeria did not represent all of France or the British in Kenya and Malaya, all of England. One knows that there are depraved elements in every country.

MENTAL TORTURE: In the case of Vietnam, the depraved elements are sons of landlords dispossessed in the North; dregs from criminal prisons drafted into the police; underworld criminals put into uniform, with power of life and death over unfortunates placed in their hands. Facts about physical torture used in South Vietnam are known, although the Western press only "discovered" this when a handful of Buddhist monks and sons of some well known Saigon families returned from prison after the Ngo brothers were overthrown. More atrocious still are the types of mental torture employed. A glaring example of this was the breaking up of thousands of families, forcing wives in South Vietnam to divorce their husbands who had been temporarily regrouped to North Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

I have heard of this before in visits to the frontier areas, but had assumed it was frightfulness applied only in those provinces in central Vietnam ruled by the most bloodthirsty of the Ngo brothers, Ngo Dinh Can. But now I know this was enforced throughout the entire country. Almost every wife of a man sent to North Vietnam has been tortured into putting her thumbprint on a document which serves as the official divorce paper. Having taken this step, she was then forced, under pain of re-arrest with all it implies, to remarry. Only then had she purged herself of the suspicion of retaining "Viet Cong sympathies." Few wives escaped this—except for rare cases in which the marriage was kept secret, or in which death or indefinite imprisonment was preferred.

To separate the combatants and effect the cease-fire, the 1954 Geneva Agreements provided for the Vietnam People's Army and administrative personnel to withdraw north of the 17th parallel. The French were moving nearer their homes and families; the Vietnamese were moving away from theirs. But, according to the Geneva Agreements, this was to be for a strictly limited period. Elections were to be held within two years, in July, 1956, for a government of a united Vietnam, the temporary demarcation line along the 17th parallel would cease to exist and those regrouped would return to their families. The U.S.-backed Diemist regime repudiated the Geneva Agreements; the line drawn to separate the combatants remains to cut the country in two. But no line ever drawn in history, that I can recall, was used as a legal pretext to cut families in two; to divide man and wife, father and children.

'ILLEGAL' DIVORCE To underline the cynicism of this monstrous affair, it is worth recalling that the Diemist regime which the U.S. implanted in Saigon, was

an ultra-Catholic one. Diem was a graduate of a U.S. Catholic seminary; his brother was an archbishop; the regime was officially blessed on frequent visits by Cardinal Spellman. As a Catholic regime it could not but be opposed to divorce. And Madame Nhu railroaded a bill through the National Assembly to make divorce "illegal," except where enforced in the jail torture chambers.

As an example of "free world" morality this is hard to beat: and the U.S. must bear responsibility. The enforced divorce was just as much a part of CIA and U.S. Psychological Warfare tactics as was the trickery by which hundreds of thousands of ignorant fishermen and peasants were deluded into leaving North Vietnam for South Vietnam, clutching in their hands CIA leaflets assuring them that the Virgin Mary had left for the South and the "infidels" who remained would be destroyed by atom bombs.

Unless one understands something of the profound Old World attachment to marriage and family ties that exists in this country, the Confucian-type concepts of moral virtues, it is difficult to grasp what this enforced break-up of families meant in terms of human tragedies. Mothers often had to choose between remaining faithful in prison and thus abandoning their children or agreeing to the divorce. In a number of cases I know of, mothers went through divorce and "remarriage" of an authenticity sufficient only to deceive the authorities. When the time comes, they will be reunited with their real husbands.

POLICE VISITS: The enforced divorce was only one form of mental torture: A refinement I encountered in several provinces is the persecution of girls of marriageable age who for any one of a hundred reasons remain single. They are subject to secret police visits and accusations that they are "waiting for their 'Viet Cong' lovers to return" as the reason for their non-marriage. They are then given a time limit within which to get married, and if they do not marry, they are arrested. A favorite trick is for the police agent to say: "There is probably a letter here somewhere from your 'Viet Cong' lover," and pretending to search the room, he will produce a fabricated letter, which is sufficient evidence to condemn the girl to death.

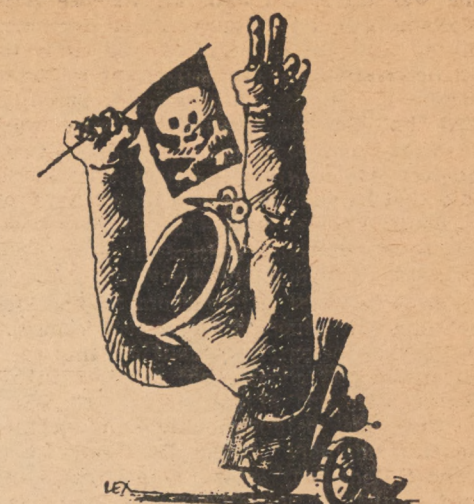
Huynh Thanh, a medical worker and member of the Liberation Front Executive Committee of Quang Nam province, told me about repression in his area. "As ours had been a liberated province during the anti-French resistance war," he said, "repression was even more severe than elsewhere. Ironically for us, we lived in peace during the war, except for air raids. But when peace came, it brought with it a war against the people by the Diemists. Their first great drive was to find out who were 'Viet Cong,' and to stamp out every scrap of political thought. Not only was it forbidden to speak about peace, re-

unification, elections and so on, but you were carefully watched for other attitudes. If you reproached your son or daughter for some immoral act, for instance, this was proof that you were 'Viet Cong.' If your daughter wore home-spun clothes instead of the nylon available in the shops and in reply to a question says, 'My father prefers homespun,'—that was proof that you are 'Viet Cong.' The people had spent years under the resistance administration; they were used to a moral way of life, to working hard and living simply. But 'simple life and hard work' are characteristics of the Viet Cong, said the Diemists, and warned people to watch their steps.

"There was a deliberate campaign to drive any decent, moral thoughts out of people's minds. People came to the conclusion that Diemist policy was to produce another kind of people. We saw that those whom the authorities approved of as 'real nationalists' were those who drank and gambled, beat their own mothers and fathers, to say nothing of wives, who indulged in every type of hooliganism and debauchery. The further you went on a criminal, hooligan and immoral road, the more convincingly you demonstrated that you were not 'Viet Cong' but a 'first-class' citizen."

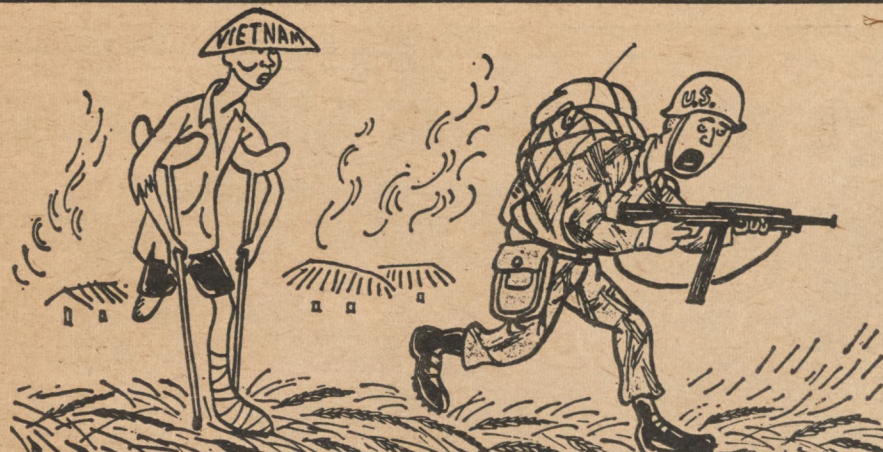
By all I have seen and heard, I would go further than Huynh Thanh. There seems to be a deliberate policy of debasement all over South Vietnam. All the virtues which are pumped into a Westerner in school and church, are taken here as signs of "Viet Cong" leanings. Honesty, chastity, good neighborliness, charity, family love, marital fidelity, loyalty to one's friends—all these are listed as pointers to the "Viet Cong" sympathizer. On the other hand, debauchery, cruelty, spying, brutality, lying—all these are the hallmarks of the trusted citizen in the "free world" quarter of South Vietnam.

If anyone thinks all this belongs to the past, to the "bad old days of Ngo Dinh Diem," and that American responsibility ended when the Diem regime



was overthrown, or that all this went on unknown to U.S. authorities in Saigon, then he is wrong. Diemist policies, except for the direct suppression of the Buddhists, continue unchanged under the junta regime. The same torturers are at work in same prisons, torturing the same sort of people under the same laws and directives as under Diem. All the November coup did was to change the team of torturers at the top level because the others were not producing results that American policy requirements demanded. U.S. political, military and moral support for the Diemist regime never wavered during his nine years of power. During the worst periods of repression, a special U.S. mission was in Saigon giving instructions on police methods; U.S. political "advisers" were spread over the country, stationed in each province. There is no escaping direct U.S. responsibility in these terrible crimes which have been permitted and are still being committed daily. All this takes place within the framework of policies approved by the U.S. government.

The story of this inhuman machine set up with U.S. guns and dollars in South Vietnam leaves a terrible stain on the honor of what the West calls the "free world." It is a story that will not soon be forgotten in Asia.



"Company, advance!"

Abu in the Observer, London

REPORT TO READERS

Get out of Vietnam!

TEN YEARS AGO this spring, in April of 1954, the liberation forces of Vietnam laid siege to the French fortress at Dienbienphu and signaled the end of French imperialist rule in Southeast Asia. President Eisenhower, faced with a moment of truth for the nation, restrained the Administration's dogs of war ("We must take the risk now by putting our boys in," said Vice President Nixon as CIA director Allen Dulles applauded) and may have saved the world from extinction: According to Chalmers Roberts in the Washington Post (Feb. 2), the U.S. "came close to using nuclear weapons there."

Ten years and two Presidents later, the U.S., having learned less than nothing from the French experience, stands at the brink of an American Dienbienphu. Washington's policy since April, 1954, beginning with a cynical betrayal of the Geneva agreement of 1954 to set up a neutral, united Vietnam, has gone steadily downhill toward disaster. Today there are 15,500 U.S. troops in South Vietnam, not counting the 275 American GIs in cemeteries.

As one government after another is toppled in South Vietnam, our officials have been making contradictory statements about the progress of the war there. On Jan. 27, Defense Secretary McNamara told the House Armed Services Committee that this country must be ready to take all necessary measures to prevent a Communist victory in Vietnam. On Jan. 28, apparently worried that his "strong medicine" (the words are those of Rep. John V. Lindsay—R., N.Y.) might produce side reactions in the country, McNamara said that he was encouraged by recent "progress" in South Vietnam and that the press had written some "overly pessimistic" stories about his remarks of the day before.

Our letter-writing, telephone-talking President Johnson, who seems hell-bent on becoming a Do-It-Yourself President (even to putting the lights out in the White House) has informed the ten-pin South Vietnam generals that "we" will never let them down. In a memorable press conference, he also notified President De Gaulle of France (who HAS learned a few lessons) that a neutralized South Vietnam has always been our long-range goal but is not our policy. No one has yet unraveled that double-talk.

THE PENTAGON'S "official statements" on Vietnam, said James Reston in the New York Times Jan. 28, "are still so confusing that nobody can quite make out what the official view of the war actually is." And the Washington Post (Jan. 30) said: "Verbal ambiguity is an old story on Vietnam... Isn't it time for the Administration to show more faith in the intelligence and good sense of the American people?"

What would such a plea for truth entail? It would mean telling the American people (and here the press itself stands indicted with the Administration it rebukes) exactly what Wilfred Burchett, in his brilliant series on the war in Vietnam, has been telling GUARDIAN readers for ten weeks. It is this:

"The writing is on the wall for this U.S. misadventure in South Vietnam. The struggle may be long-drawn, but this is a war the U.S. cannot win. The Americans will spill more blood, their own and others, destroy more villages, wipe out more rice fields and buffalo, but that is about all. The people are against them, disciplined, organized, courageous and experienced. No matter what combination of puppets the U.S. may stick together and jerk into action, the end result cannot be changed."

The State Department and every propaganda arm of government (which includes almost the

entire press) for ten years has been briefing the nation with falsehoods. The crumbling foundation of the Big Lie on Vietnam is that the Chinese Communists and the government of North Vietnam are seeking to subvert South Vietnam into becoming a Communist state by infiltrating men and arms. In what can only be described as a criminal act of brainwashing, a high State Department official ("who could not be identified," according to the Washington Post Feb. 4), peddled this falsehood to 350 college newspaper editors at a "top-level" foreign policy briefing in Washington Feb. 3. For good measure the official described the French proposal for neutralizing the entire area of former French Indo-China as a "phony."

THE TRUTH IS that there is no evidence of Chinese or North Vietnamese arms or men in South Vietnam; there ARE 15,500 American troops. The French proposal is not new: it is based on the 1954 Geneva accord and seeks only to get the U.S. to live up to its agreement.

The writing on the wall is so clear to the French, as the New York Times reported Feb. 10, that "France has quietly taken steps toward a revival of her influence in Laos... French policy appears to be based on the assumption that the U.S. will eventually be compelled by the deterioration of the military situation to withdraw from Vietnam."

This conclusion, the GUARDIAN believes, is a valid one—unless the course we are pursuing is permitted to escalate into another Korea and the risk of engaging the Chinese in a battle for North Vietnam. This is a course that has been put forward increasingly in Washington and apparently was behind McNamara's quickly withdrawn trial balloon. It is a course which will collide not only with the Chinese, but with the Soviet Union as well.

Some lickspittle liberals, who will buy anything that will keep them from being cured of the anti-Communist rabies, have spelled out this line of thinking. Last Sept. 30, in the New Leader, Irving Kristol wrote:

"The most we can hope for in South Vietnam is what we have achieved in South Korea; that is to remove this little backward nation from the front line of the cold war so that it can stew quietly in its own political juice... We should consider the possibility that there may be no other way to accomplish this in Vietnam than—as in Korea—by putting sufficient military pressure on the Communist regime in the north to cause it to cease from provoking, organizing, supplying and participating in armed rebellion in the South."

THIS IS THE HIGH ROAD to oblivion. It starts from the blind premise that the people of South Vietnam (read Cuba, Panama, South Korea, the Dominican Republic and a host more) prefer our invitation to death to the opportunity to build their own lives in their own land under governments of their own choosing.

Until the people of this country are made aware of the utter falsity of Washington's line, there will be no change. Until the peace groups, the churches, the progressive press—until every organization and institution which hopes for peace in a sane world comes to a full realization that the U.S. must get out and stay out of Vietnam, and starts immediately to see that this is done, our nation faces a grave threat. Stated simply, it is that the mindless men who sit in positions of power may yet succeed in blowing us all to Kingdom Come for an evil crusade in a tiny country 7,000 miles from our shores.

—THE GUARDIAN

On the Brink in Vietnam

PLAN SIX

The following was excerpted from an article by James Cameron, a veteran correspondent who has served in Southeast Asia, in the London Daily Herald of March 4.

THE PENTAGON talks more and more openly of the need to carry the war into North Vietnam itself. There is serious consideration of the bombing of Hanoi itself, if necessary with tactical nuclear bombs. As in the Cuba days, there is ominous talk of "hawks" and "doves."

Now arises Walter W. Rostow and his "Plan Six."

Mr. Rostow is the former professor of economic history who now plans policy at the State Department. Arguing that the U.S. can never beat the guerrillas on the ground, he says the U.S. should change the rules and escalate the war as an act of policy.

"Plan Six" provides initially for a naval blockade of Haiphong, the port of Hanoi. If Hanoi still refuses to call off its support for the guerrillas in the south, the northern ports should be bombed from the sea, and finally Hanoi itself should be attacked by U.S. strategic bombers, if necessary flying the South Vietnam flag.

In this calculated gamble, Mr. Rostow believes that the Russian-Chinese split would prevent serious retaliation from the Communists, and indeed might be widened.

One is relieved to know that the "Plan Six" group is not yet running the State Department, let alone the White House, where such a grim decision would have to be made.

Mr. Rostow's opponents claim that carrying the campaign over the 17th parallel would instantly bring 300,000 North Vietnamese soldiers into the war, and possibly drive Moscow and Peking back into each other's arms.

But the possibility of great danger grows.

A powerful U.S. military machine is being pushed around the paddyfields by peasants, and the U.S. is wounded and angry. And when that comes about, as we saw in the days of General MacArthur, anything can happen.

The man most committed of all is the Defense Secretary, to Robert McNamara, on whom is focused the major responsibility. He is to decide once and for all if there is any way left of avoiding the perils of "Plan Six." In a few days, we should know.

There are now only two chances.

One is to accept the impossibility of military victory over the guerrillas, to concede a stalemate and argue it out from there. But that would mean somehow recognizing President de Gaulle's plan for a "neutralized" Vietnam; and since the dire days of Dulles, "neutralism" has been a dirty word in the U.S.

The other is "Plan Six." The apparent madness of "Plan Six" should not conceal that it is informed by serious reasoning.



Map from the London Daily Herald

It is claimed that since the Russians did not intervene in Korea they would not intervene in Vietnam. If the Chinese intervened, that would merely confirm the U.S. belief that they are determined to conquer South-East Asia, and the show-down is better now than later.

The grim thing about "Plan Six" thinking is that it has no end. If Hanoi must be bombed to stop North Vietnamese help all is the Defense Secretary, to the guerrillas, must not Robert McNamara, on whom is Shanghai be bombed to stop focused the major responsibility. Chinese help to North Vietnam? He is to decide once and for all treaty obligations — must not if there is any way left of avoiding the perils of "Plan Six." In Moscow be bombed to stop So. viet help to China?

IN ITS ISSUE of April 25, 1964, NATIONAL GUARDIAN began a new series of articles by Wilfred G. Burchett—"The War in South Vietnam from the 'Other Side.'" With this pamphlet as background, you will find Burchett's new material a revelation of the developing situation there. He himself describes his new tour of duty as a "perhaps the most important of my career... I am a thinner and much more informed man than when I set out." Accompanying the articles will be photographs—published for the first time—of the Liberation Front forces.

BURCHETT's articles and photographs are carried exclusively in the U.S. in the GUARDIAN. If you are not now a subscriber to this unique newsweekly, use the coupon on page 12 to enter your subscription beginning with the new series by Burchett.

Vietnam: A deeply dangerous game in the making

IN A SPEECH in Los Angeles Feb. 21, President Johnson included a paragraph on the war in Vietnam which official Washington termed "deliberately pregnant with meaning," first for the regime in North Vietnam and eventually for China. Johnson said:

"The contest in which South Vietnam is now engaged is first and foremost a contest to be won by the government and the people of that country for themselves. But those engaged in external direction and supply would do well to remember that this type of aggression is a deeply dangerous game."

There is indeed a deeply dangerous game being played; but the players are in Washington, not Hanoi. If the phrase is pregnant with meaning, as almost every Washington correspondent seeks to establish, then the alarm ought to be sounded all over America during the gestation period to prevent the birth of a monster which can do us all in.

Was the phrase deliberate? In the Washington Post (Feb. 22) Chalmers Roberts wrote: "Mr. Johnson's exact phraseology was the product of the most serious consideration here [in Washington] before he flew to California. It was intended to have meaning in South Vietnam as well as in the North. The rash of neutralization talk, first from Gen. Charles de Gaulle in Paris and then [on Feb. 19] from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in Washington has deeply disturbed those running the war from Saigon, both Americans and South Vietnamese."

"[The] single sentence in the speech represents a carefully prepared signal of a new American initiative in the war in South Vietnam."

THIS NEW INITIATIVE was spelled out by Richard Hughes in the London Sunday Times, Feb. 23, and by a whole spate of briefed correspondents in Washington and Saigon. Hughes wrote from Saigon:

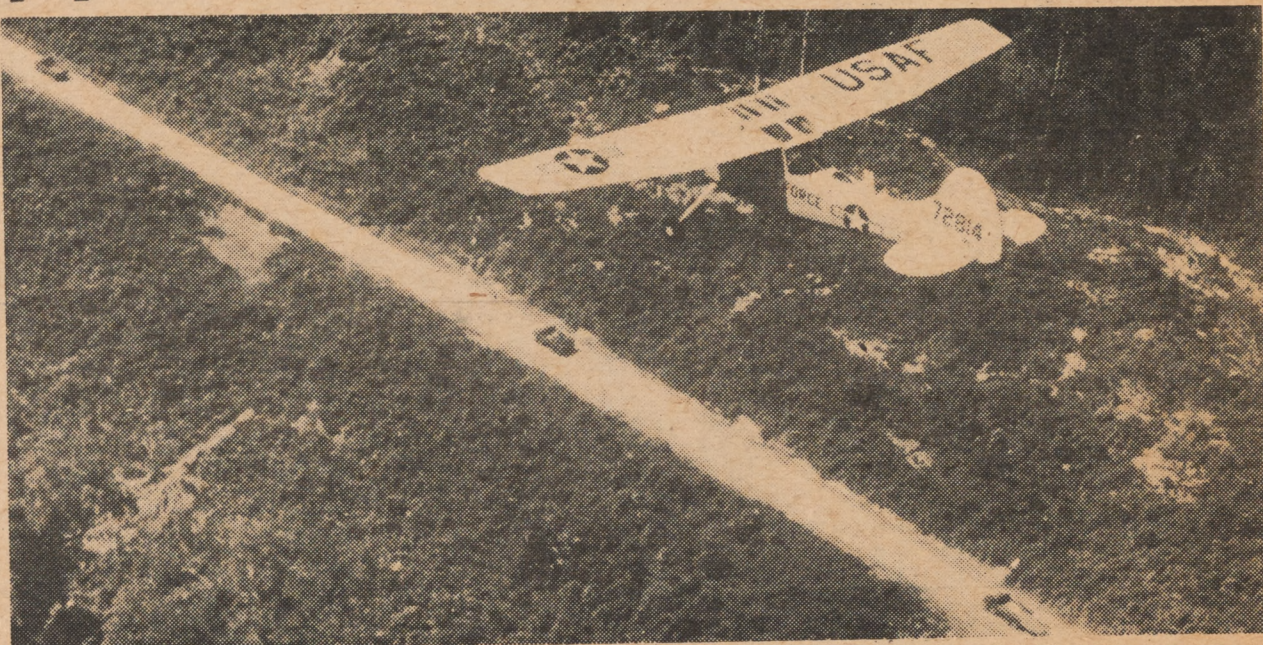
"Against [a] background of collapse, now darkened by cynical speculation of the dates of succeeding coups, frustrated U.S. military advisers are insisting that the war must be carried with U.S. participation and under U.S. direction into North Vietnam, and that counter-strokes by North Vietnam's army must be invited because then the United States Seventh Fleet will be able to unleash air attacks on Hanoi."

Shades of Dr. Strangelove! The same Washington officials who have been denouncing this brilliant film "as an outrageous effort to deal in satire with nuclear war in a way that maligns both the United States Air Force and the American government" (Chalmers Roberts, Washington Post, Feb. 21) seem determined to prove that this cinematic fiction is in reality taken from life. Dr. Strangelove assumes that an American madman could set off a nuclear war; the Washington



policy makers seem to insist that it can be set off by apparently sane men.

The new strategy was spelled out also in the lead story in the New York Times, Feb. 23, making it clear—if further clarification were needed—that the Washington corps of correspondents has once again lined up as a willing elite brigade to serve as a propaganda arm of the U.S. government. All the stories, Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and many more



LOOKING FOR TROUBLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM: A U.S. PLANE GUARDS A TRUCK CONVOY
The American casualty list is mounting as the National Liberation Front presses the fight

bear the mark of the same briefing at the highest level, although none of the stories says so. The management of the news is complete and uncontested.

IT IS THIS VOLUNTARY collusion by the press with government that has kept the full story of the U.S. debacle from reaching Americans. Of course, there have been hints and generalized statements, but nothing like the penetrating reports that have been sent from inside the liberated areas of South Vietnam by the GUARDIAN's Wilfred G. Burchett.

The facts are that the South Vietnam army is a state of collapse, and the next coup is only a matter of time. The "strategic hamlets" are a farce; they are almost entirely in the control of the national liberation forces. The American "advisers" in South Vietnam are helpless in the face of an army of soldiers who refuse to kill their fellow countrymen to build up a record for Washington.

In such a situation, rather than face up to reality and accept the only honorable course of action—an orderly withdrawal from South Vietnam with the best possible face—Dr. Strangelove's real-life bosses in the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department are preparing a new Korea, or worse.

From Saigon, Keyes Beech reported to the Chicago Daily News (Feb. 22): "A plan to carry the war to Communist North Vietnam through a campaign of terror, sabotage and subversion is under consideration here. A reliable source said the plan was discussed in detail with Admiral Harry D. Felt, U.S. Pacific Commander, during his visit this week."

"In Washington U.S. officials confirmed that this and other plans to step up the war are under consideration but said no decision had yet been made. The plan to take the war to the North goes beyond the conventional pattern of counter-guerrilla warfare. Instead, it contemplates a series of strikes—by ground, sea or air—against industrial targets, oil refineries, ports and major bridges."

"The raids would be carried out by the South Vietnamese forces with U.S. support, but U.S. servicemen would not physically set foot on Communist territory. Only by making the war too costly for Hanoi can the Communists be persuaded to call off their insurrection in South Vietnam, advocates of the plan argue."

HERE AGAIN IS THE BIG LIE that the fight for national liberation in South Vietnam is a war foisted on an unwilling people from the outside. It was a lie sustained throughout the Kennedy Administration and repeated by President Johnson in his State of the Union message.

Washington says the liberation forces are being supplied from the North with arms and men down through South Vietnam and through Laos and Cambodia. The fact is that the greatest area of concentrated strength and success of the liberation forces is in the Mekong Delta, south of Saigon, and at least 500 miles from North Vietnam. It would take a miracle of supply to achieve what Washington says is being achieved.

Washington says a change in policy and tactics would hearten the demoralized South Vietnam army. The fact is that the most heartening thing Washington could do for the troops would be to get all U.S. personnel out of Vietnam. Further, if the troops are refusing to carry on the war in their own half of Vietnam, how can Washington expect them to show any enthusiasm for fighting in the North, in a country which they know to be well organized, well equipped and united in its devotion to its leadership? The troops know well that similar raids were attempted during

the Diem regime. The result: 85% casualties, according to Keyes Beech (Feb. 23), and a high rate of defections to North Vietnam.

A NON-STRANGELOVE FIGURE raised a tentative voice in the U.S. Senate Feb. 19. It was Sen. Mike Mansfield, obviously disturbed by the dangerous Washington game. He said:

"We have teetered too long on the brink of turning the war in Vietnam which is still a Vietnamese war into an American war to be paid for primarily with American lives. There is no national interest at this time . . . which would appear to justify this conversion . . . It seems to me that President de Gaulle has done well to speak out on Southeast Asia. He has again demonstrated a sense of history and statesmanship in seeking new ways for dealing with the continuing instability and insecurity which prevails in Vietnam and Southeast Asia." This latter, of course, was a reference to de Gaulle's proposal for neutralizing all Southeast Asia.

In Saigon, reaction to the Mansfield statement, the Washington Post reported (Feb. 22), "ran the gamut of clichés from shock to dismay to anger." The statement "strengthened a growing body of opinion" among the American colonials in South Vietnam that the U.S. "is sick of this war and looking for a way out." One top official said of Mansfield: "He couldn't have done a better job if his speech had been written in Hanoi."

In the opinion of the GUARDIAN—wherever the speech was written—it is the first sane note sounded on the Senate floor (Mansfield got an assist from Sen. Bartlett) in years. The GUARDIAN believes that Mansfield ought to be encouraged to go beyond his first timid approach (he made the usual obeisances to Diem and noted his opposition to recognizing China), and that every able penman in the nation ought to write or wire Mansfield and his own senators and congressmen to halt the madness. As the GUARDIAN said Feb. 13, we are fixed on a collision course with both China and the Soviet Union if the madness is pursued. Korea was clear warning; and any Washington hopeful who counts on the Sino-Soviet ideological differences to pave way for U.S. recklessness is whistling in a cold wind.

The time for public protest is short. On Feb. 24, it was announced in Washington that Defense Secretary McNamara would be off again in a matter of days to Saigon to "review" the war and to discuss its extension. At the same time, a top-level inter-agency committee was named to concentrate on and coordinate operations in the war in South Vietnam. A new head man was reported selected for the CIA in South Vietnam, and a replacement for Gen. Paul Harkins, U.S. commander there. There were also rumors that another inspired coup was in the works to replace Gen. Nguyen Khanh, Washington's one-month-old puppet "strongman." Accompanying all these moves was a transparent pacifier assuring the nation that no "immediate action" was being contemplated.

The New Republic, in a devastating review of Johnson's first three months (Feb. 22), said the general effect of his "gray skies" speech to the tax collectors Feb. 11 was "one of brassy confidence, abounding goodwill, the glad hand and the resounding platitude. Foreigners may not have one word that sums all this up. Americans do. Our word for it is corn."

Corn it is, and tall corn. But the platitudes that wave in the stalks can divert attention from the deeply dangerous game that is being played down in the Washington furrows where the tall corn grows.

If we don't flush the players out, we could choke on the kernels.

—THE GUARDIAN

A WAR U.S. CAN'T WIN

By Wilfred G. Burchett
IN SOUTH VIETNAM

IN SCRAPING the bottom of the Saigon barrel to produce a new dictator of the caliber of Nguyen Khanh, U.S. policy-makers in South Vietnam have taken another slide into the mire of futility. They are in up to the neck. They cannot find any social or political force on which to base the criminal war they are forcing on the South Vietnamese people, and they are having increasing difficulty in finding even a single person.

Nothing illustrates this move more perfectly than the new "back-to-Diemism" policy which the choice of Nguyen Khanh implies. This is a return to the policy of maximum war effort and personal dictatorship, with more American direct control of combat operations down to company level. If South Vietnamese officers, from lieutenants to major generals, refuse to fight; then American officers from lieutenants to major generals will replace them in the battlefield.

This is the meaning of the "experiment" in which U.S. officers will take over combat command in 28 districts; they will throw off the camouflage cloak of "advisers" and will direct military operations without any reference to the puppet command at any level. And if the South Vietnamese rank-and-file troops still refuse to fight—even with an American machinegun in American hands behind them—does the U.S. intend to replace them also with American rank-and-file troops?

KHANH'S 'VIRTUES': The "win with Diem" school, of which Gen. Paul Harkins, U.S. commander in Saigon, was a fervent adherent, lamented the overthrow of the Diem regime and blamed the military debacles which followed on the absence of that "strong hand" at the center, and the squabbles for personal power among the junta generals. The merit of Khanh from the new U.S. viewpoint is that he was also of the "win with Diem" school; is a close personal friend of Harkins and with the latter opposed the overthrow of Diem; he was the last of the senior officers to rally to the deposed junta; he is prepared to be a bloodthirsty dictator as was Diem and a more perfectly compliant puppet.

Militarily Khanh is a mediocrity, with no prestige within the country. A paratrooper commander in the French army, in which he helped with the other puppet generals to slaughter his own countrymen, he returned from France to serve Diem. He received his first "star" for gratitude when he moved his troops to save Diem during the November, 1960, officers' coup; his second star for treachery, when he finally joined the junta generals in November, 1963.

Even U.S. correspondents in Saigon admit that politically Khanh is a "zero." His first move to win "popularity" in the countryside was to visit the provincial town of Ben Cat and—with a posse of U.S. correspondents and photographers to record the event—distributed bonuses to children and talked with old women in the market place. The fact that he is a political nonentity is also a "merit" in U.S. eyes at the moment. They think that as they now have a complete puppet, it will be easier for Harkins to push on with the job of "winning the war."

Gen. Duong Van Minh and Tran Van Don in the end—like Diem—objected to the U.S. having complete control of military affairs; they objected to the U.S. control of 28 districts. In addition, they were ineffective militarily and finally unwilling to continue the war. Their fate was sealed after the debacle at Thanh Phu Jan. 17, "the greatest heli-

Coups futile in Vietnam



A SIGN OF THE TIMES: LIBERTY BLACKED OUT BY THE SYMBOLS OF AMERICA'S MILITARY MIGHT
This picture is a Pentagon release—along with all the leaks about plans to extend the war in Vietnam

borne assault in military history," as UPI described it. If anyone should have been sacked after that defeat, it was Harkins and his advisers. This was the first great demonstration of the strategy and tactics Harkins had been trying to force on Diem for months prior to the latter's overthrow. It was to be the great triumph of the junta generals. But it was a costly fiasco—and the last chance for the junta generals.

Is it an exaggeration to link the Thanh Phu rout with the fate of the junta? The Jan. 5 issue of Newsweek quoted Defense Secretary McNamara as having told the junta generals a few days previously: "The dry season has started and pursuit of the enemy is easier than ever; forget your concern for casualties and fight the war as if it were your last chance—for well it might be." And well it was!

THANH PHU PLAN: What was the essence of the Thanh Phu operation? For one thing it was to be the supreme justification of the abandonment of almost 300 military posts in the Mekong Delta and vast tracts of the richest land in the country, areas populated by several hundreds of thousands of peasants. All posts with garrisons of less than 150 were to be evacuated; the troops concerned were to be reformed into mobile "strike forces" which would undertake large-scale operations to "seek out and destroy" the main forces and bases of the Liberation Front.

Diem opposed any abandonment of territory or population and this was the single point of disagreement between him and Harkins. After the overthrow of Diem, Harkins had little choice in any case but to withdraw from the posts in the Mekong Delta. They were mostly surrounded by guerrillas who attacked or—as often happened—"took them from within" whenever they needed to replenish their arms and ammunition. The isolated posts, mostly supplied by air drops or helicopters, had become a major source of arms supplies for the guerrillas. (In the weeks that followed the November coup, the guerrillas liberated territory in the Mekong Delta alone populated by about one million peasants, so that by far the major part of this fertile "rice bowl" is now liberated.)

By supplementing the troops withdrawn from the 300 posts with one battalion from each of the four divisions stationed in the southern half of the

country, Harkins planned to set up four heavy and six light "mobile groups" of about 3,000 troops each. Four groups were to be assigned to the Mekong Delta. The first test was on Jan. 17 at Thanh Phu, in Ben Tre province, due south of Saigon. Three thousand troops, 50 helicopters, 26 amphibious tanks and 26 naval craft were employed against a "guerrilla base." Fighter and bomber planes supplemented heavy artillery in "softening up" attacks before the assault.

The guerrillas let four waves of helicopters dump their loads, but opened up on the fifth wave, downing two craft and damaging 15.

As the assault moved up, the guerrillas again held their fire until the officers, urging troops on with their automatic weapons behind the first wave, were within range. They opened up and the line crumbled. The puppet troops retreated. More artillery barrages, bombs, napalm, rockets and strafing, then assaults in the center; the left flank, right flank. All the attacks were beaten back.

"One of the worst days of the war in U.S. helicopter operations," reported AP. It was also one of the worst, perhaps the worst in terms not only of U.S.-puppet losses, but in terms of lost hopes. In two days of combat, according to reports at NLF headquarters, the attackers had lost 600 killed and wounded, including a dozen Americans. After a terrific propaganda barrage over Western radios on the first day, the "greatest helicopter assault in military history" faded out on the air waves as if it had never been. And Gens. Minh, Don and Kim (the latter personally commanded the operation) gathered in Saigon to discuss the inevitability of a negotiated peace with the NLF. The promising coup had failed. They had obeyed instructions and "forgotten their concern for casualties" but their "last chance" had resulted in just one more military debacle. So they were kicked out and four of the top junta generals, Linn, Dom, Kim and Xuan, were arrested.

FURTHER LOSSES: U.S.-puppet military operations in January not only failed to regain the extensive areas lost in November and December, but resulted in forced withdrawals from more territory, especially in the Mekong Delta.

As it has been impossible to cover up the defeats in the Mekong Delta area, there have been several official U.S. statements that the situation in Central Vietnam at least is "much brighter."

This is a deliberate deception. The situation in Central Vietnam also turned against the U.S.-puppets in the three months between coup and counter-coup.

In Quang Ngai province, for instance, all of the "strategic hamlets" in Duc Pho and Ba To districts and most of those in Binh Son were liberated by the NLF.

RELUCTANT ARMY: Khanh can promise McNamara and Harkins to ignore casualties, or to "step up the war," but he does not have the final word. The puppet troops are beginning to vote with their feet and they are dragging them badly. A significant new pointer is the high proportion of prisoners-of-war to total casualties in recent engagements and the innumerable cases when the garrison troops in isolated outposts have killed their officers and come over with their weapons to the NLF.

How long does Khanh have? His main support today is his "personal friendship" with Harkins. But how much long-term does Harkins have to prove himself? Top-ranking French generals were pulled out long before they had suffered as many defeats as Harkins. If Khanh does not believe the CIA experts are thumbing through the dossiers of generals and colonels to see "who next," then he is incredibly naive.

It is clear that the idea of peace, independence, neutrality and an end to U.S. intervention has gained ground everywhere in South Vietnam. From conversations with junior officers who deserted or were captured, I have learned that the feelings for a negotiated peace based on the NLF program is the major topic at virtually all levels within the puppet army and administration.

In the mountainous part of Quang Ngai, all districts were liberated before the November coup. The importance of the actions in the Duc Pho and Binh Son districts is that these are on the coast. Just as in the Mekong Delta the war has now crept to the gates of Saigon, so in the central coastal provinces it has come down from the western highlands and advanced to the coast and the very perimeter of the provincial capitals. This is a general situation all over the country and is developing every day. With every hamlet a fortified point manned by troops determined to defend their homes and fields, with approaches to the hamlets "mined" with spiked traps, even Harkins's new "mobile groups" can make no impression.

Speak out now on Vietnam

FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, in its news columns and in editorial statements, the NATIONAL GUARDIAN has detailed the origins and progression of the war in South Vietnam and the ever-increasing involvement of the U.S. government in that war. These things are clear:

- Each succeeding South Vietnamese government has become just as discredited as its predecessor because it is just as unrepresentative of the needs and as repressive of the will of the people.

- The war has become an American war for the purpose of preserving South Vietnam as a laboratory for weapons of war and a base of possible action against China.

- Each day increases the danger that Washington's callous policies will stretch into endless years of death and destruction—for Asians and Americans—as in the Korean conflict, or that desperate brinkmanship will escalate the conflict into a nuclear war.

- There can be no solution unless and until Washington withdraws its military forces and agrees to ne-

gotiations, similar to those which brought a temporary end to the French war in Indo-China in 1954, and agrees to permit the people of Vietnam—north and south—to work out their own destiny without regard for the requirements of western imperialism.

DESPITE THESE INDISPUTABLE facts—acknowledged by almost every concerned government—the U.S. is proceeding with a military and psychological campaign to prepare the nation for the worst. Despite repeated warnings from Hanoi, Peking, Moscow and Paris, our computer-minded officialdom is moving steadily toward enlarging the war immediately to include North Vietnam. The U.S. argument that the action is designed to destroy a "privileged sanctuary" for the South Vietnam liberation forces is a criminal fraud, as every honest U.S. reporter in Vietnam concedes. The only privileged sanctuary in southeast Asia is the U.S. preserve in South Vietnam, held by force.

A formidable delegation of top U.S. brass—headed by Secretary of Defense McNamara, promising all-out help to the latest puppet government even before he has begun his "inquiry"—at this writing is in South

Vietnam on a monster scouting expedition. The next days could be days of irrevocable decision. (see David Wesley's story below.)

THE TIME IS NOW for every concerned American to raise his voice to demand that the U.S. government withdraw its forces from South Vietnam and agree to negotiations for a true peace in Vietnam and all southeast Asia.

The time is now to wire or write your representatives in Congress, to speak out in your community and your organizations, to urge your peace and civic groups, union locals, churches, schoolmates and friends to join your call. You can spark the organization of public meetings of protest, of letter-writing campaigns to your local newspapers, of delegations to your congressmen home for week ends.

The only deterrent to the course of madness in Vietnam is a national outcry which will shake our leaders to the core, and demonstrate to them that they cannot play a dirty game with the fate of mankind.

—THE GUARDIAN

Morse: 'Get out of Vietnam'

WHAT APPEARS to be the first unequivocal call in Congress for U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam was made March 4. Sen. Wayne Morse (D-Ore.) revealed he had told Secretary of State Rusk the day before: "Those [15,000 U.S. troops] should be brought home. They ~~never~~ should have been sent there in the first place. American unilateral participation in the war of South Vietnam cannot be justified, and will not be justified in U.S. history."

Morse said in addition: "As I have made clear to the State Department, this Administration had better be warned now that when the casualty lists of American boys in South Vietnam increase until the mothers and fathers of those boys—and, yes, the American people generally—start crying 'Murder,' no administration will stand."

In the course of a speech on U.S. military and foreign aid in Asia that stressed the need to recognize the power of China, Morse said:

"I am flatly and completely opposed to any expansion of our commitment there, and to increasing the scale of our participation in the Vietnamese

war . . . I cannot think of a greater mistake that this country could make than to seek to escalate the war in South Vietnam by using conventional American forces in North Vietnam or in any other areas to the north of South Vietnam. Therefore, I say to the American people from the floor of the Senate this afternoon, 'You have the right to ask your government now: Do you have plans for sending American boys to their deaths by the tens of thousands in escalating the South Vietnam war above South Vietnam?' I say to the American people, 'Get that answer from your government now. You have a right to it.'"

Sen. Allen Ellender (D-La.) asked Morse: "What would the Senator advise that we do as to South Vietnam? Withdraw?" Morse replied: "We should never have gone in. We should never have stayed in. We should get out." Ellender then declared, "I have been saying that for many years, in fact, after each trip I made there."

Morse also noted that his mail reflects a growing discontent with U.S. policy and that the number calling for withdrawal from Vietnam is increasing both in Congress and "by the millions from coast to coast."

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Vietnam: A deeply dangerous game in the making

IN A SPEECH in Los Angeles Feb. 21, President Johnson included a paragraph on the war in Vietnam which official Washington termed "deliberately pregnant with meaning," first for the regime in North Vietnam and eventually for China. Johnson said:

"The contest in which South Vietnam is now engaged is first and foremost a contest to be won by the government and the people of that country for themselves. But those engaged in external direction and supply would do well to remember that this type of aggression is a deeply dangerous game."

There is indeed a deeply dangerous game being played; but the players are in Washington, not Hanoi. If the phrase is pregnant with meaning, as almost every Washington correspondent seeks to establish, then the alarm ought to be sounded all over America during the gestation period to prevent the birth of a monster which can do us all in.

Was the phrase deliberate? In the *Washington Post* (Feb. 22) Chalmers Roberts wrote: "Mr. Johnson's exact phraseology was the product of the most serious consideration here [in Washington] before he flew to California. It was intended to have meaning in South Vietnam as well as in the North. The rash of neutralization talk, first from Gen. Charles de Gaulle in Paris and then [on Feb. 19] from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in Washington has deeply disturbed those running the war from Saigon, both Americans and South Vietnamese.

"[The] single sentence in the speech represents a carefully prepared signal of a new American initiative in the war in South Vietnam."

THIS NEW INITIATIVE was spelled out by Richard Hughes in the *London Sunday Times*, Feb. 23, and by a whole spate of briefed correspondents in Washington and Saigon. Hughes wrote from Saigon:

"Against [a] background of collapse, now darkened by cynical speculation of the dates of succeeding coups, frustrated U.S. military advisers are insisting that the war must be carried with U.S. participation and under U.S. direction into North Vietnam, and that counter-strokes by North Vietnam's army must be invited because then the United States Seventh Fleet will be able to unleash air attacks on Hanoi."

Shades of *Dr. Strangelove*! The same Washington officials who have been denouncing this brilliant film "as an outrageous effort to deal in satire with nuclear war in a way that maligns both the United States Air Force and the American government" (Chalmers Roberts, *Washington Post*, Feb. 21) seem determined to prove that this cinematic fiction is in reality taken from life. *Dr. Strangelove* assumes that an American madman could set off a nuclear war; the Washington

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James Aronson, editor

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THE LONG STRETCH IN VIETNAM
The major fighting is in the Mekong
Delta, a long way from Hanoi

policy makers seem to insist that it can be set off by apparently sane men.

The new strategy was spelled out also in the lead story in the *New York Times*, Feb. 23, making it clear—if further clarification were needed—that the Washington corps of correspondents has once again lined up as a willing elite brigade to serve as a propaganda arm of the U.S. government. All the stories, *Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and many more bear the mark of the same briefing at the highest level, although none of the stories says this. The management of the news is complete and uncontested.

IT IS THIS VOLUNTARY collusion by the press with government that has kept the full story of the U.S. debacle from reaching Americans. Of course, there have been hints and generalized statements, but nothing like the penetrating reports that have been sent from inside the liberated areas of South Vietnam by the *GUARDIAN*'s Wilfred Burchett.

The facts are that the South Vietnam army is in a state of collapse, and the next coup is only a matter of time. The "strategic hamlets" are a farce: they are almost entirely in the control of the national liberation forces. The American "advisers" in South Vietnam are helpless in the face of an army of soldiers who refuse to kill their fellow countrymen to build up a record for Washington.

In such a situation, rather than face up to reality and accept the only honorable course of action—an orderly withdrawal from South Vietnam with the best possible face—Dr. Strange-love's real-life bosses in the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department are preparing a new Korea, or worse.

From Saigon, Keyes Beech reported to the *Chicago Daily News* (Feb. 22): "A plan to carry the war to Communist North Vietnam through a campaign of terror, sabotage and subversion is under consideration here. A reliable source said the plan was discussed in detail with Admiral Harry D. Felt, U.S. Pacific Commander, during his visit this week.

"In Washington U.S. officials confirmed that this and other plans to step up the war are under consideration but said no decision had yet been made. The plan to take the war to the North goes beyond the conventional pattern of counter-guerilla warfare. Instead, it contemplates a series of strikes—by ground, sea or air—against industrial targets, oil refineries, ports and major bridges.

"The raids would be carried out by the South Vietnamese forces with U.S. support, but U.S. servicemen would not physically set foot on Communist territory. Only by making the war too costly for Hanoi can the Communists be persuaded to call off their insurrection in South Vietnam, advocates of the plan argue."

HERE AGAIN IS THE BIG LIE that the fight for national liberation in South Vietnam is a war foisted on an unwilling people from the outside. It was a lie sustained throughout the Kennedy Administration and repeated by President Johnson in his State of the Union message.

Washington says the liberation forces are being supplied from the North with arms and men down through South Vietnam and through Laos and Cambodia. The fact is that the greatest area of concentrated strength and success of the liberation forces is in the Mekong Delta, south of Saigon (see map) and at least 600 miles from North Vietnam. It would take a miracle of supply to achieve what Washington says is being achieved.

Washington says a change in policy and tactic would hearten the demoralized South Vietnam army. The fact is that the most heartening thing Washington could do for the troops would be to get all U.S. personnel out of Vietnam. Further, if the troops are refusing to carry on the war in their own half of Vietnam, how can Washington

expect them to show any enthusiasm for fighting in the North, in a country which they know to be well organized, well equipped and united in its devotion to its leadership? The troops know well that similar raids were attempted during the Diem regime. The result: 85% casualties, according to Keyes Beech (Feb. 23), and a high rate of defections to North Vietnam.

A NON-STRANGELOVE FIGURE raised a tentative voice in the U.S. Senate Feb. 19. It was Sen. Mike Mansfield, obviously disturbed by the dangerous Washington game. He said:

"We have teetered too long on the brink of turning the war in Vietnam which is still a Vietnamese war into an American war to be paid for primarily with American lives. There is no national interest at this time... which would appear to justify this conversion... It seems to me that President de Gaulle has done well to speak out on Southeast Asia. He has again demonstrated a sense of history and statesmanship in seeking new ways for dealing with the continuing instability and insecurity which prevails in Vietnam and Southeast Asia." This latter, of course, was a reference to de Gaulle's proposal for neutralizing all Southeast Asia.

In Saigon, reaction to the Mansfield statement, the *Washington Post* reported (Feb. 22), "ran the gamut of cliches from shock to dismay to anger." The statement "strengthened a growing body of opinion" among the American colonials in South Vietnam that the U.S. "is sick of this war and looking for a way out." One top official said of Mansfield: "He couldn't have done a better job if his speech had been written in Hanoi."

In the opinion of the *GUARDIAN*—wherever the speech was written—it is the first sane note sounded on the Senate floor (Mansfield got an assist from Sen. Bartlett) in years. The *GUARDIAN* believes that Mansfield ought to be encouraged to go beyond his first timorous approach (he made the usual obeisances to Diem and noted his opposition to recognizing China), and that every able penman in the nation ought to write or wire Mansfield and his own senators and congressmen to halt the madness. As the *GUARDIAN* said Feb. 13, we are fixed on a collision course with both China and the Soviet Union if the madness is pursued. Korea was clear warning; any Washington hopeful who counts on the Sino-Soviet ideological differences to pave the way for U.S. recklessness is whistling in a cold wind.

The time for public protest is short. On Feb. 24, it was announced in Washington that Defense Secretary McNamara would be off again in a matter of days to Saigon to "review" the war and to discuss its extension. At the same time, a top-level inter-agency committee was named to concentrate on and coordinate operations in the war in South Vietnam. A new head man was reported selected for the CIA in South Vietnam, and a replacement for Gen. Paul Harkins, U.S. commander there. There were also rumors that another inspired coup was in the works to replace Gen. Nguyen Khanh, Washington's one-month-old puppet "strongman." Accompanying all these moves was a transparent pacifier assuring the nation that no "immediate action" was being contemplated.

The *New Republic*, in a devastating review of Johnson's first three months (Feb. 22) said the general effect of his "gray skies" speech to the tax collectors Feb. 11 was "one of brassy confidence, abounding goodwill, the glad hand and the re-sounding platitude. Foreigners may not have one word that sums all this up. Americans do. Our word for it is corn."

Corn it is, and tall corn. But the platitudes that wave in the stalks can divert attention from the deeply dangerous game that is being played down in the Washington furrows where the tall corn grows.

If we don't flush the players out, we could choke on the kernels.

—THE *GUARDIAN*

Expert explodes test detection stand

By Robert E. Light

ONE OF THE WORLD'S foremost seismologists has charged that the U.S. position at test-ban talks on the difficulty of detecting underground nuclear explosions is "scientifically invalid." Dr. Lewis Don Leet, professor of geology at Harvard University, further stated that given the full story, U.S. and Soviet negotiators could reach agreement on a test-ban in a week. Despite the eminence of his academic standing, Leet has been denied a full hearing in Washington.

Leet's views were reported in the *Harvard Crimson* when he unburdened his frustration to an undergraduate class after getting the brush-off in Washington. The *Crimson* stories appeared on March 16 and March 24; thus far no other publication has reported it and no government official has asked for Leet's views.

MISUSE OF MATERIAL: Leet charged the Defense Department with taking an "overly pessimistic" view on the detection of underground blasts and of "ignoring the opinion of professional seismologists." He said the government is misusing technical material to support a political position. "Perhaps they only want an excuse to call for inspection in Russia," he said, "but they cannot correctly use seismology as justification."

The bugaboo of possible clandestine underground tests was raised by the U.S. in January, 1959, when negotiators were close to concluding a test-ban treaty. A panel of East-West scientists had drafted an inspection system in the summer of 1958 and the negotiators were trying to incorporate the system into a treaty. But a panel of scientists under the chairmanship of Dr. Lloyd Berkner, appointed by President Eisenhower, reported that underground nuclear explosions did not create seismic signals as large as expected, and therefore many earthquakes could not be distinguished from nuclear explosions by seismic means alone. Dr. Edward Teller offered the theory that the Russians could cheat on a test-ban by exploding nuclear devices in large holes.

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PROJECT VELA: Test-ban negotiations became deadlocked on this issue for two years. Although the recent Soviet and U.S. underground tests were detected thousands of miles away, the *New York Times* reported on March 5 that new detection studies, called Project Vela, "confirmed the conclusions of U.S. scientists on the difficulties of detecting clandestine underground explosions of nuclear weapons."

Leet challenged the findings of the Berkner panel and Project Vela. He questioned both groups' scientific competence and insisted that "no adequate scientific inquiry into the area of underground nuclear tests detection has yet been made."

Of the Berkner panel, Leet said: "They had data so insufficient that they shouldn't have made any claims, but they swore by their findings. The Russians took one look at the stuff, and laughed. And by God they were right. Any good seismologist would have laughed."

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'DOODLEBUGGERS': Leet said the Berkner and Vela studies excluded professional seismologists. The only members of the Berkner panel with seismological experience were "doodlebuggers" — electronic engineers with a smattering of knowledge of seismology. "Not using earthquake station seismologists on a project like this," he said, "is like revising our measurement system without consulting the Bureau of Standards."

The Berkner panel included representatives of instrument companies and a man who, according to Leet, "never took the equivalent of Natural Science 10"—a Harvard undergraduate course. Leet said that Berkner and Dr. Hans Bethe of Cornell were the only members of the panel not associated with companies awarded grants by the panel for "further research."

Leet applied for work on the Vela project but was rejected on the grounds that Harvard does not have instrument manufacturing facilities. Leet called this a "thin lie" because, he said, he showed that he could get needed instruments from a firm a few minutes away in Boston.

THE BRUSH-OFF: Leet made two trips to Washington at his own expense to offer his views to the government. At the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency he was asked: "If your theories prove correct does it mean that we'll need more or less inspection in the Soviet Union?" When Leet answered "Less," he was told the agency would call him if they wanted him. At the Defense Department he got a similar brush-off.

His experiences in Washington touched off Leet's anger. He explained: "I was naive enough to believe that science was objective in anyone's hands, but that Vela data was as full of holes as Swiss cheese. Three months ago I wasn't aware that it would be carried over and used at Geneva. How the hell can a thing like this go on? When I found out I was mad enough to do some digging."

A LOT OF DOUGH: "The forces that I now realize are operating here are financially powerful. Twenty-four million dollars' worth of contracts was awarded to seismology in one year, but not to seismologists . . . I think I know who is responsible for the composition of the Berkner panel. I know the background and the corporate entanglements. But my personal certainty isn't proof. I'm still digging."

Leet's discovery of shenanigans in high places is new for him. He is described by students as apolitical. He has never associated with peace groups or ventured publicly beyond his own field. He has confined his activities to Harvard, where

he has been in charge of the seismograph station since 1931.

BRITISH PROOF: Leet's views on the relative ease of detecting underground explosions, are however, not unique. Two top British scientists, Sir Solly Zuckerman, chief scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defense, and Sir William Penney, research chief of the British Atomic Energy Authority, met secretly in Washington with Administration scientists from March 16 to March 20. They offered evidence that the British had detected all recent U.S. underground tests.

Their findings may explain why Britain argued at Geneva for less stringent inspection. Among those who met with the British scientists were Atomic Energy Commission chairman Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg; Harold Brown, Defense Dept. research chief; Jerome Wiesner, scientific adviser to President Kennedy; and Dr. George Kistiakowsky, former scientific adviser to President Eisenhower.

MR. K'S SECRET: The British arguments failed to change the U.S. position, as did Premier Khrushchev's announcement that he had tricked the U.S. into acknowledging the Soviet position that tests are easily detected. At a meeting in Moscow, on March 16, Khrushchev said:

"I am going to divulge a secret to you, comrades. We knew that science makes it possible to detect underground nuclear explosions by national means of control. The underground tests carried out, for instance, in the United States were recorded by Soviet scientists and by scientists in other countries. And we decided to prove that when representatives of the Western powers harp on the impossibility of detecting underground explosions, they lie . . ."

"Recently an underground nuclear explosion was carried out in the Soviet Union, although formerly we did not stage such explosions. And what was the results? Almost on the very day the Atomic Energy Commission of the United States declared that the U.S. detected an underground explosion in the Soviet Union."

SALT AND TURF: Data to corroborate the view that even small tests can be detected was uncovered in unclassified Coast and Geodetic Survey reports by I. F. Stone and reported in his *Weekly* on March 19. Findings from Project Gnome—explosions in a big salt cavern to test Teller's theory that blasts would be muffled or diminished if made in salt—showed that the salt blasts in many ways are more easily detected than explosions in turf.

The most revealing discovery was that a 5-kiloton underground explosion (one-fourth the size of the Hiroshima bomb) could be detected and located as far as 7,200 miles away.