

Interview Number CH-47

Studies of the Chieu Hoi Program:

Interviews with the Hoi Chanh

by

THE SIMULMATIC CORPORATION

16 East 41st Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

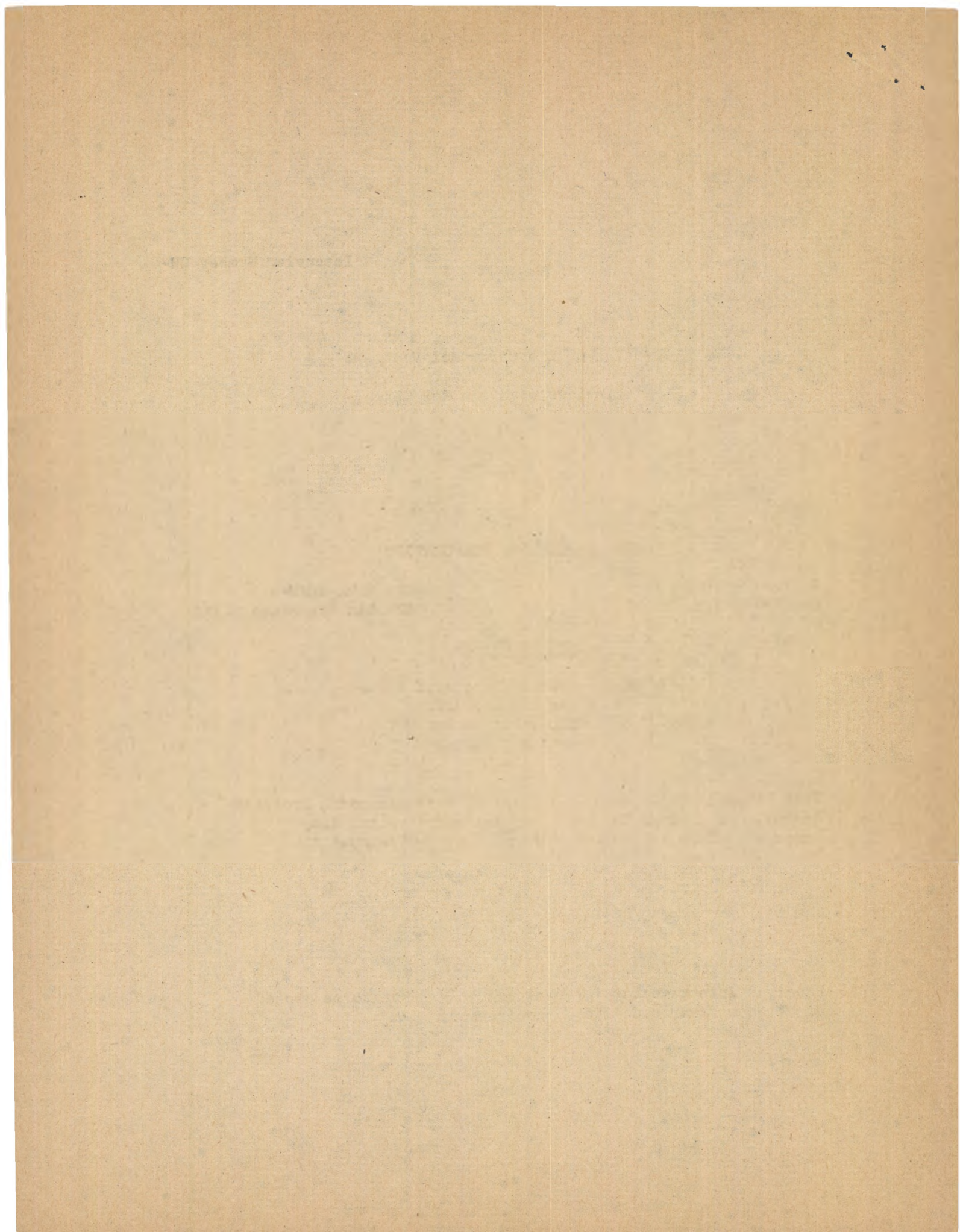
OSD/ARPA RDFU-V
APO San Francisco 96222

SPONSORED BY:

Advanced Research Projects Agency
Washington, D.C.
ARPA Order Number 377
(Project AGILE)

This research was supported by the Advanced Research Projects Agency, Washington, D.C. and was monitored by the Army Research Office under Contract No. DA 49-092-ARO-152.

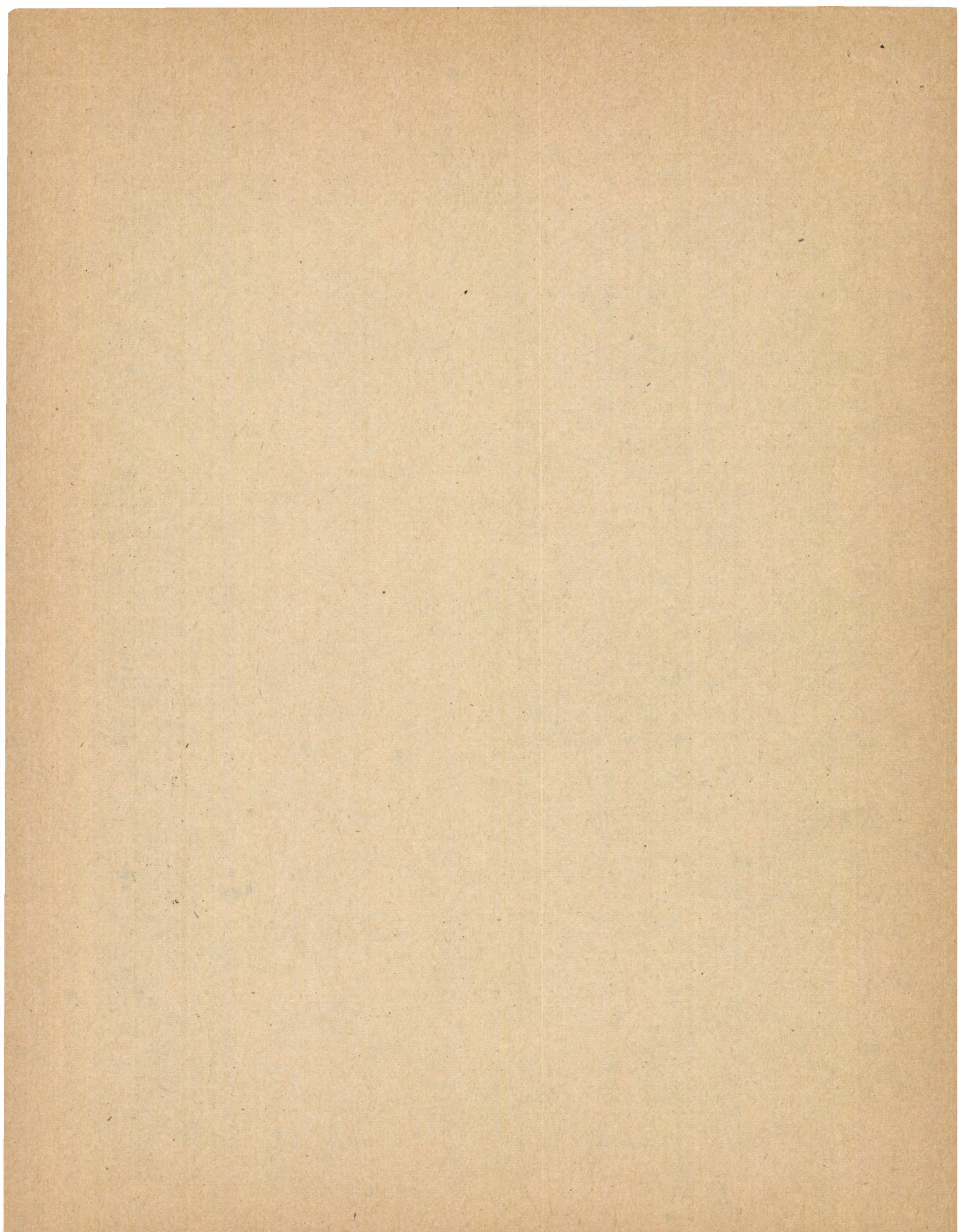
Unedited interview for internal use only. Not to be quoted or cited without specific authorization.



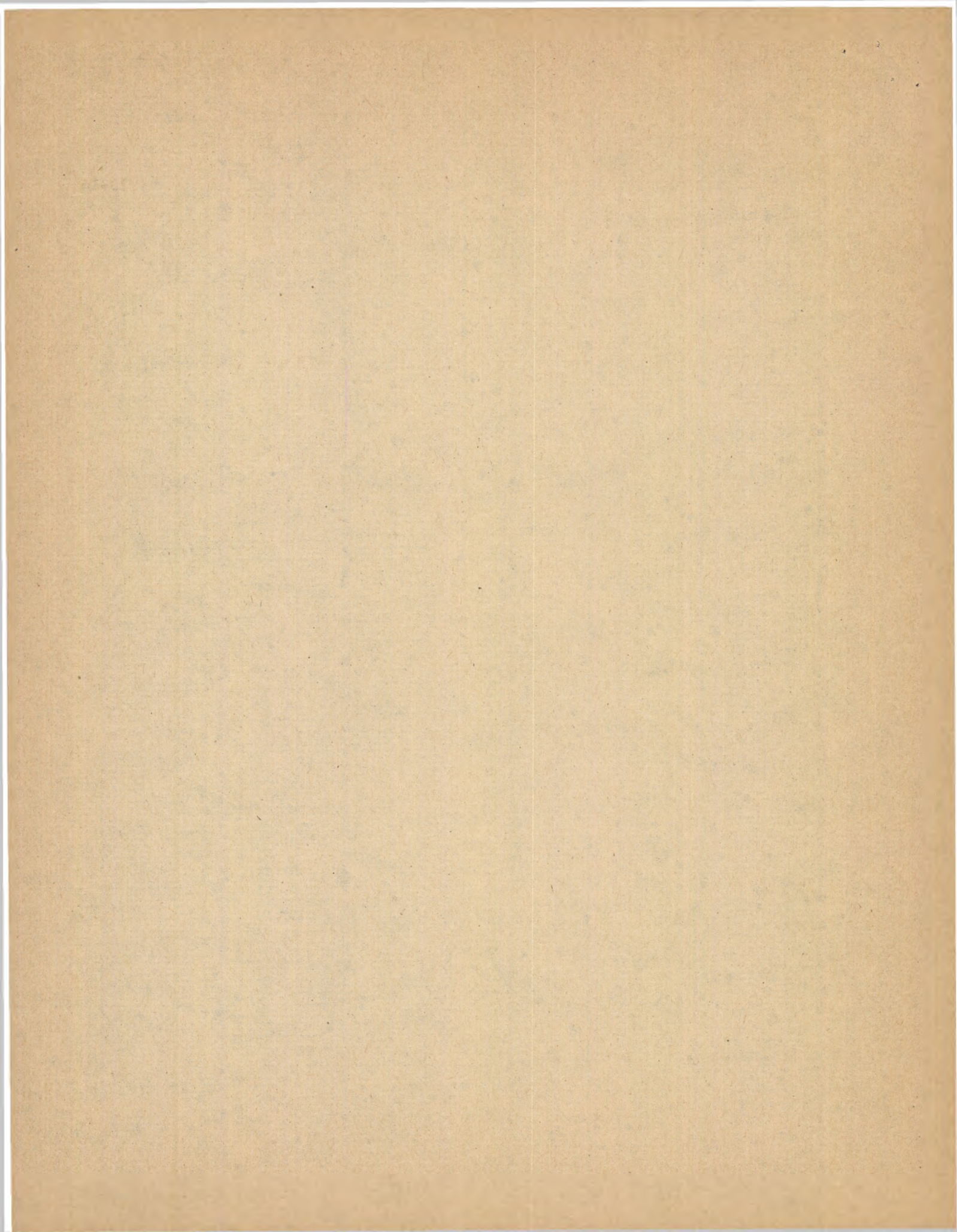
CONTENTS

INTERVIEW NO. 47

	Page
Data	1
Summary	2-3
Interview	
Chieu Hoi Program	
How I rallied	9
Security service at center	6-8
Mistreatment of Hoi Chanh	8
Complaints about center administration	8
Political indoctrination	10-11
NVA vs. Chieu Hoi indoctrination	10-11
Expectations of NVA ralliers	8
NVA	
Ho Chi Minh	
Land reform	5
Election as president	12
As hero	12
Visit to village	12
Contrasted with Nguyen Cao Ky	13
Why won't negotiate	13-14
Social class policies	5-6
Land reform	3-4, 5-6
Morale	4, 7-10
Reactions to bombing in NVN	7-8
Instructions to NVA troops	7
Communist bloc assistance	8-9
Controls on listening to radio broadcasts	9
Awareness of Sino-Soviet differences	9-10
NVA vs. Chieu Hoi indoctrination	10-11
Methods of mobilizing population	11
War in the South	
Route to the South	6
Instructions to NVA troops	7



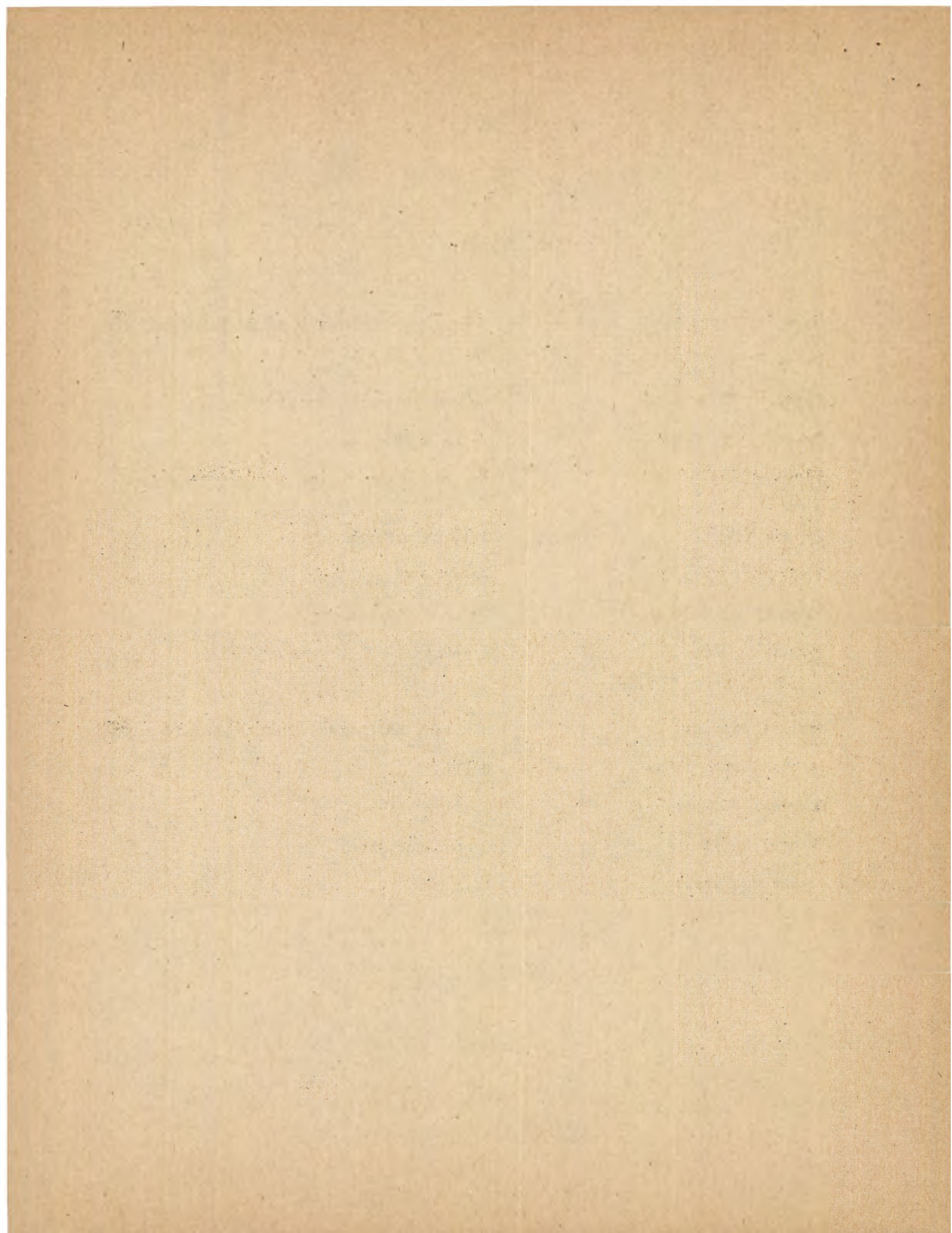
Respondent's opinion on war	13-14
Miscellaneous	
Vietnamese regionalism	4
Interviewer's Comments	15



DATA

INTERVIEW NO. 47

Home Province:	Nghi Loc district, Nghe An province, NVN
Dates & Times of Interview:	27 September 1966
Place of Interview:	National Center, Saigon
Date of Rallying:	13 May, 1966
Place of Rallying:	Dau Mao Post, Ba Long district, Quang Tri province
Subject's Category:	NVA, Main Force
Rank or Position:	Private First Class
Area of Operation:	Quang Tri province
Period in NLF:	3 years
Age:	24-
Marital Status:	Married, no children, married only 5 days
Present Occupation:	Rallier
Previous Occupation:	Soldier
Interview Team:	Grady, Cuc, Loc
Number of Tapes:	1



SUMMARY

INTERVIEW NO. 47

A 24-year-old private in the NVA main force, Chuan* rallied only two days after he had infiltrated across the DMZ. Nearly five months later he disappeared from his Chieu Hoi village, and it is now rumored that he was part of a spy-sabotage ring; the Chieu Hoi center will neither confirm nor deny this. It is worthy of note that he was originally pointed out to the interview team as a suspected spy. His interview was shorter than desired because he was in the process of moving at the time.

Chuan, a native of Nghe An province in North Vietnam, was the son of a well-to-do land-owning family. His father died when he was young. During the Communists' land-reform campaign in 1956, Chuan's mother was accused before the People's Tribunal of being rich because she had exploited the poor people, and her land was expropriated. Later, during the Rectification of Errors campaign, she was given back just enough land to support the family.

Chuan married only five days before his main-force unit crossed the Ben Hai River and marched across the border into Quang Tri province. He says he volunteered to go South with the idea of surrendering because he was "unhappy with the policies of the North Vietnamese Government. My family is a landlord family, so they were always criticizing my family and myself."

Chuan's superiors directed his unit to avoid Vietnamese troops but to strike hard against Americans and their allies. He emphasizes how deeply the people of the North detest Americans, primarily because of the incessant bombing which frequently kills civilians and hits hospitals and other civilian buildings.

In the North Chuan saw Russian textile-engineer advisors but no Chinese. He recalls that in 1954 the Hanoi Government forbid people to continue listening to Radio Peking, afraid that discussions of the Sino-Soviet dispute would dishearten them. Chuan's political commissar blamed the problems on Zhdanov and his coterie.

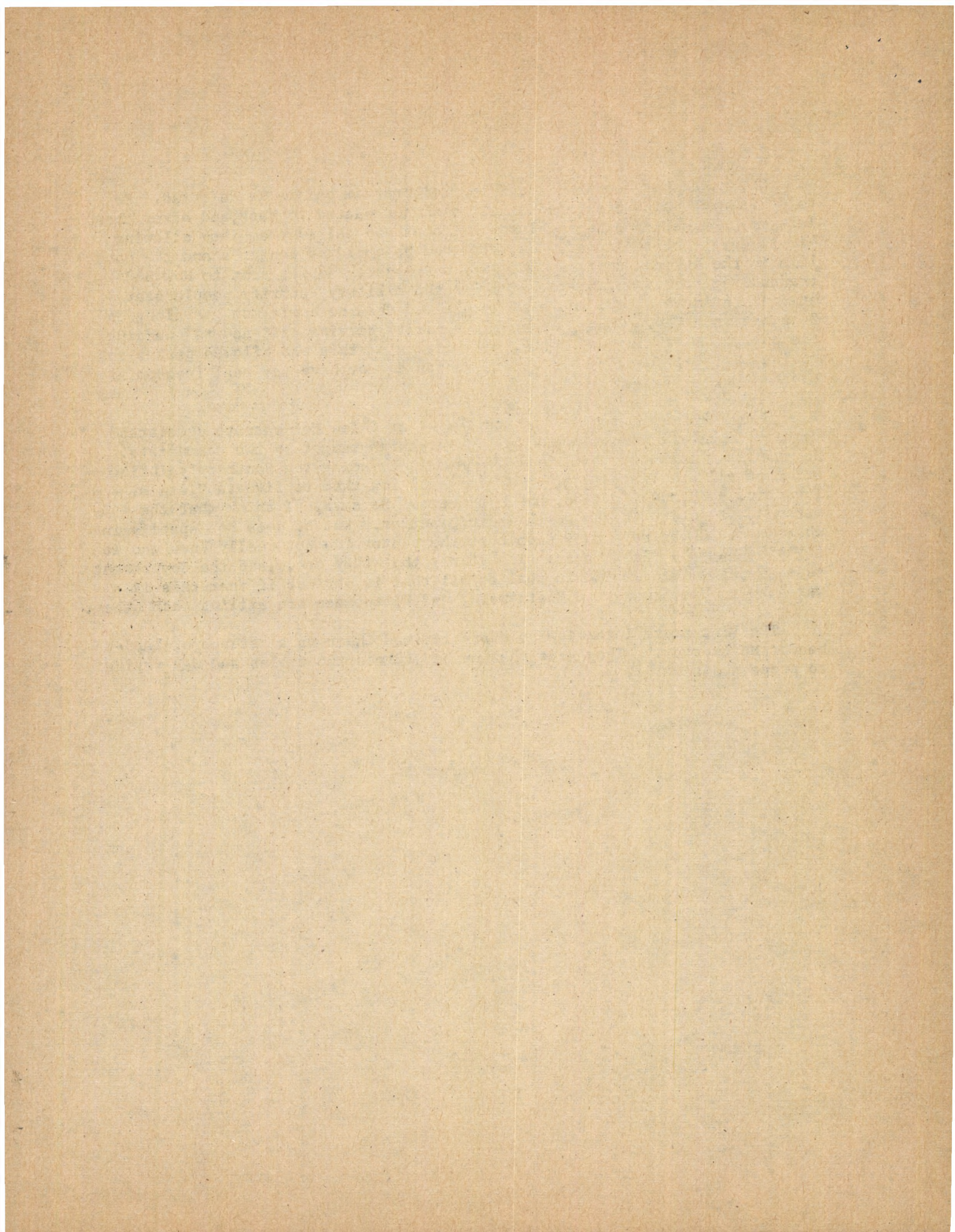
Chuan speaks of Uncle Ho in glowing terms. He witnessed his election, when he won 99.5% of the votes. "It was necessary to realize," he says, "that Uncle Ho was the only one who deserved that honor because he had sacrificed so much for his country. He had no home, no wife, no family. My own idea is that you too should recognize his work because he has sacrificed so much and has succeeded in opposing the French."

Chuan thinks Pham Van Dong will succeed Ho Chi Minh, but is not sure he merits the position. He views the war "not so much a battlefield but a testing ground for all countries...who want to try out their weapons. It includes everyone from the Russians to the Koreans to the Americans to the Chinese." He sees no end except negotiation, but defends Ho's refusal to negotiate by pointing out the South's violation of the Geneva Agreement.

Chuan had not heard of the Chieu Hoi program before he defected. He told his reconnaissance unit he felt sick and wanted to rest, and after they left him, he met some Regional Force troops and talked them into allowing him to enter their outpost. He told them he could no longer stand the hard life in the NLF and that he wanted to surrender. He was sent to Hué and transported to Saigon, where he claims the military security people beat him with a large stick. He also complained that he could not get along on 24 piasters a day. Chuan joined the security service assigned to guarding the post and watching for spies, and because of this was allowed passes to go into Saigon. He says his other buddies do not have any real freedom at the center.

Cowan found the subject matter taught at Chieu Hoi easy to understand because it is the direct opposite of everything taught by the Communists. He refutes the theory that North Vietnam is invading the South by pointing out that all are Vietnamese, so it is legal for them to live in Vietnam. Invaders, by his definition, are foreigners. He says, "I think that the method of teaching in the North is much better," but he does not specify in what ways. Chuan says many people at the center "do not really know who is fighting for the right cause. The VC say that they are...and the Government says the same thing. But in reality all that is obvious is that this is a war between Vietnamese and Vietnamese, and Vietnamese are killing each other."

The Vietnamese interviewers characterized Chuan as a "stubborn, hard-headed Northerner." They said that he had turned the tables and was trying to propagandize them.

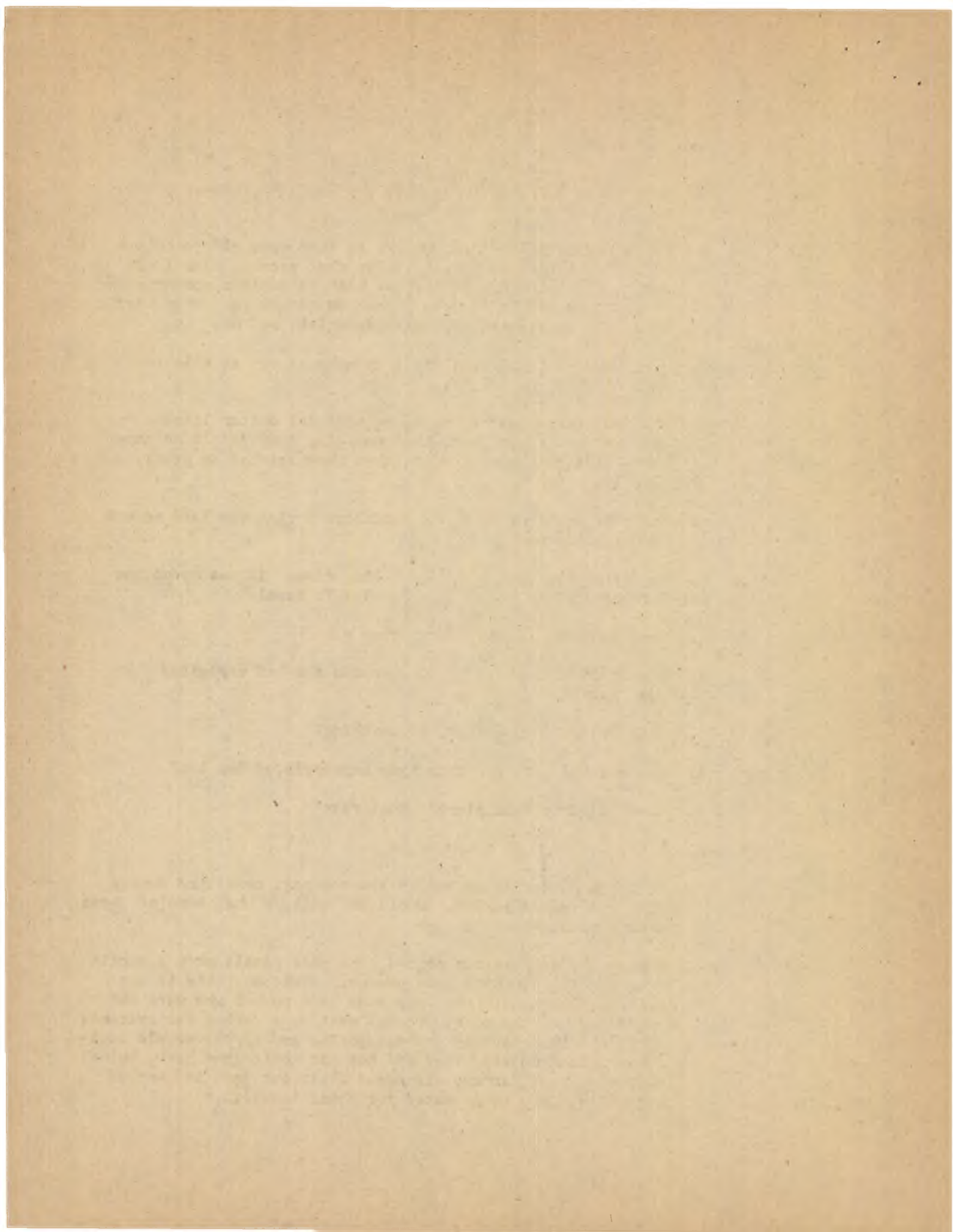


- Q. Was it difficult to leave your wife after only 5 days? Did you have to leave in secret?
- A. No. Everyone in the North knew we were going because people in the North are very anxious to volunteer to come and fight against the American invasion in the South. They have enough men to go to the South. The women, at this time, are not allowed to go, so this is why I had to leave after 5 days and she could not come with me.
- Q. Have you thought of taking another wife in the South?
- A. No, because in the North it is not very expensive to get married. All you need to have is about 100 piastres for the ceremony, but in the South, people still have all the traditional ceremonies, so it is very expensive and I don't have that much money. Every Sunday, they let me out of the Center to take a walk in Saigon and I walk around and look things over and it is obvious to me that it takes a lot of money around here to get married.
- Q. We have been told that it's very difficult to get a pass. Why is it that you are allowed to go out everyweek end?
- A. I received this privilege because I am a member of the security service in the Chieu Hoi Center.

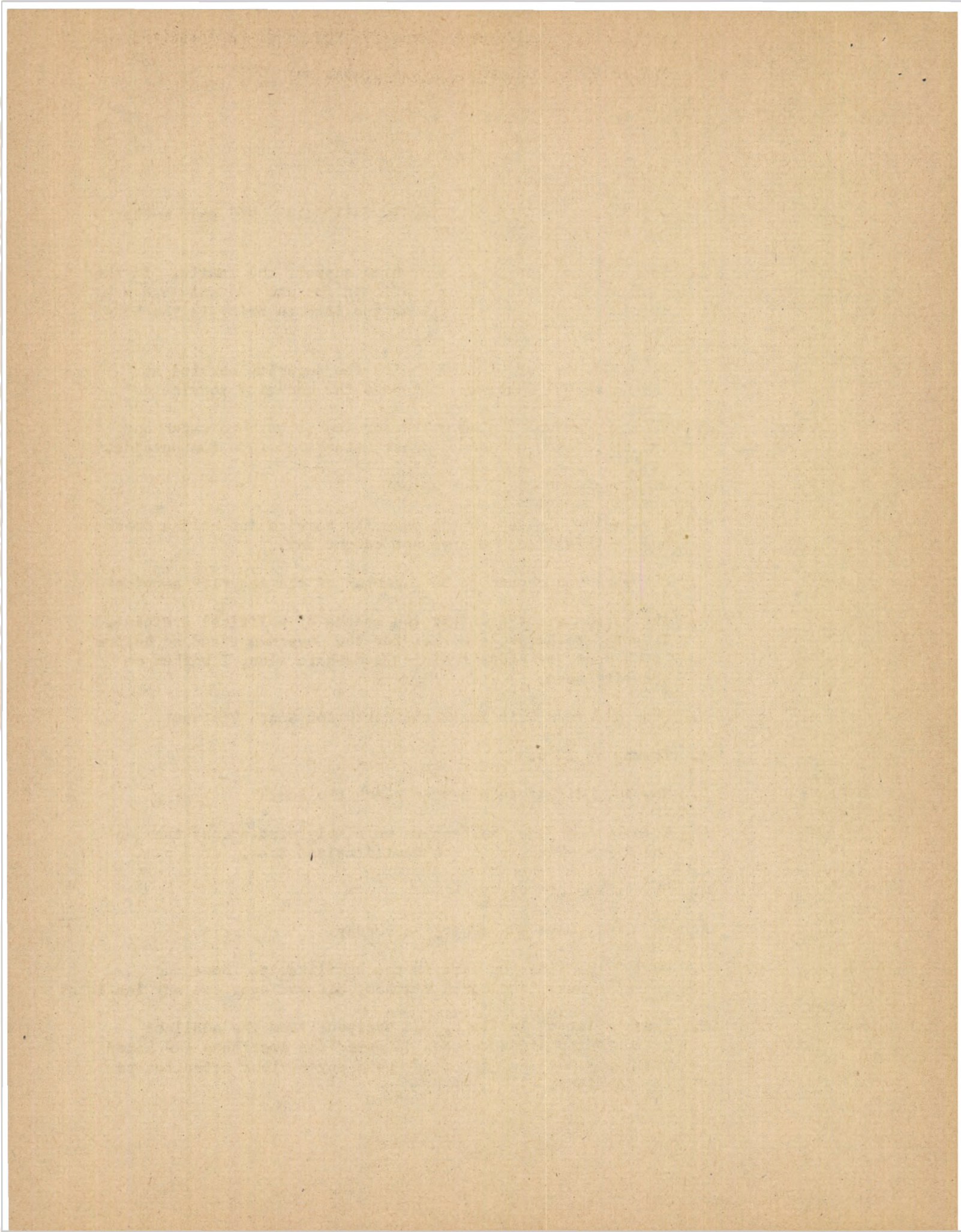
Interviewer's Note: There is now a large Vietnamese altercation going on because Miss Cuc, our female interviewer, has risen to the defense of Southern womanhood. She says that the girls in the North demand that their husbands provide all kinds of material things for them and that the girls in the South are much nicer and don't demand anything except their husband. She says that she is telling the truth and is not making propoganda. Miss Cuc also says that the Southern people are much more open than the Northern people. If you know them for a month and if you are a good fellow, you can get along with them. But if you are not a good fellow, you could not get along with them even after a year.

- Q. If you were anxious to volunteer to fight in the South, why is it that you rallied to the Chieu Hoi program after only two days here?
- A. I had to say that I was a volunteer in order to be allowed to go to the South. I wanted to go to the South and rally because I was unhappy with the policies of the North Vietnamese Government so in order to get to the South, I had to pretend to be a volunteer.

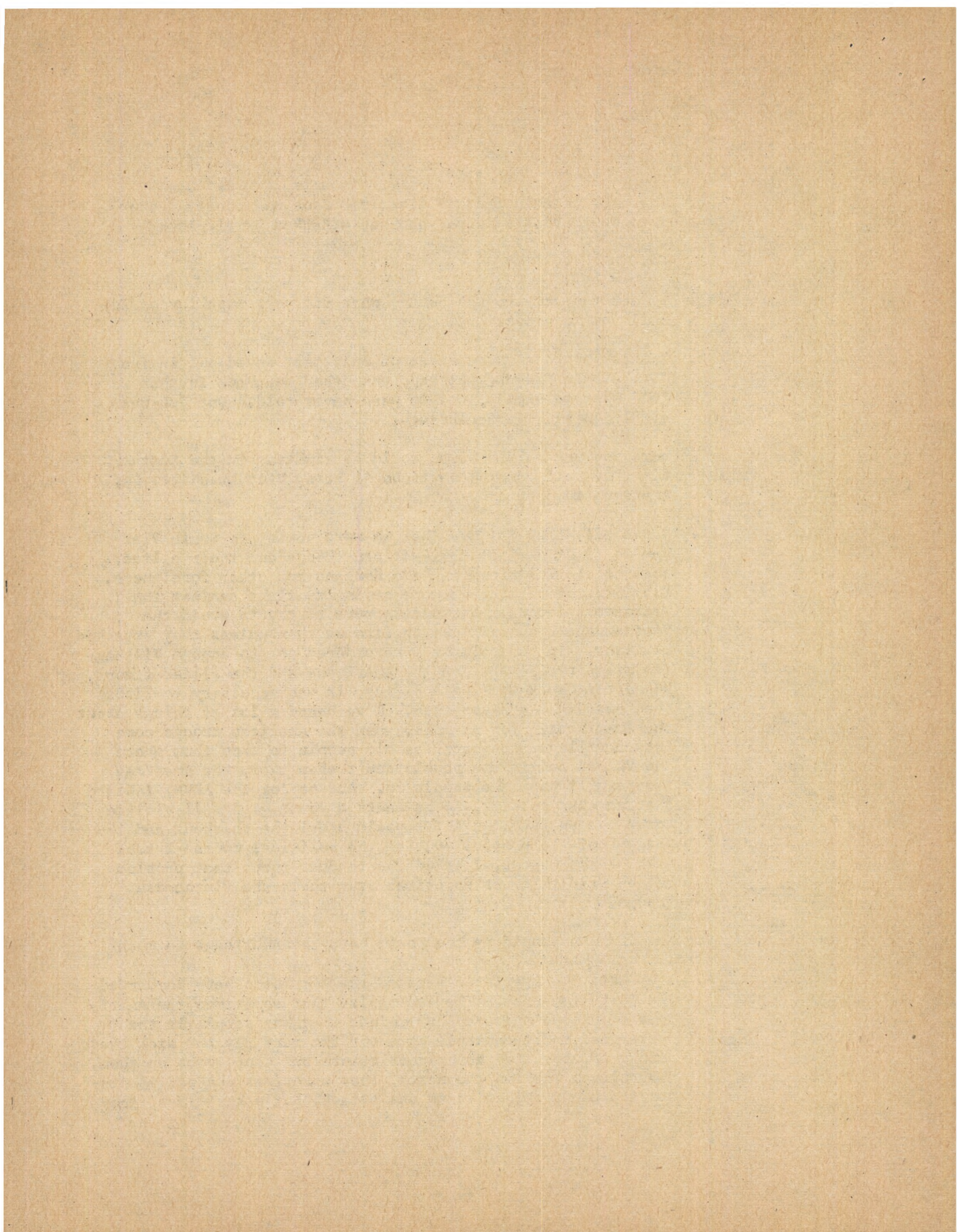
- Q. What were your grievances with the North Vietnamese Government?
- A. My family is a landlord family, so they were always criticizing my family and myself. For that reason, when I was drafted into the Army I did not wish to go into combat with my regiment and I hid when I went on maneuvers. When they came back they found me, everyone criticized me.
- Q. What kind of criticisms did they make of you at this time? What did they do to you?
- A. They criticized me and wrote an official letter listing my errors and after that, that was all, they didn't do anything else to me. But after that they watched me pretty closely.
- Q. Did your family suffer any hardships during the land reform in North Vietnam?
- A. My father has been dead for a long time. It was my mother who was accused before the Peoples Tribunal.
- Q. What did they accuse your mother of?
- A. They said that she was rich because she had exploited the poor people.
- Q. What did they do to her, if anything?
- A. They accused her and then they expropriated her land.
- Q. When did this take place? What year?
- A. 1956.
- Q. Ho Chi Minh has later talked about errors committed during the land reform period. Could you tell us what some of those errors were?
- A. During the land reform period, the poor people made a profit from putting down the land owners. Sometimes this is not very just because there were some land owners who were not exploiters of the poor. Things went to a rather far extreme. So Ho Chi Minh revised the categories and if the people really were land owners, they did not get their land back, but if they were just farmers who owned their own land and worked hard, they were compensated for their losses.



- Q. Which category did your family fall into? Did your mother get any of her land back?
- A. Yes, she got back just enough to support the family. In the beginning, it was rather difficult for us. We only had a little bit of rice and it was too late to bring in the harvest.
- Q. You said you were involved with the security service at the China Hot Center. What does the security service do?
- A. The function of the security service is both to watch out for spies and to guard against attacks coming from outside.
- Q. Have you ever found any spies?
- A. I've only belonged to the security service for half a month and in this time, we have not caught any.
- Q. Why were you chosen to be a member of the security service?
- A. The reason was that after two months of political training, I wanted to become a worker for the Government and so before being sent for cadre training somewhere else, I worked on security here.
- Q. When did your unit leave the North for South Vietnam?
- A. In May of 1966.
- Q. How long did it take you to reach the South?
- A. It only took one day because we simply went across the Ben Hai River which is in the Demilitarized Zone.
- Q. What route did you take?
- A. We simply marched across the border.
- Q. During the time you were in the Demilitarized Zone and crossing over into South Vietnam, did you ever see any leaflets?
- A. I saw a lot of leaflets, but everyone from the smallest child to the oldest person detested the Americans and hated them very much and so nobody paid any serious attention to the leaflets.



- Q. When you were in the Demilitarized Zone and crossing over into South Vietnam were you ever attacked by airplanes?
- A. No.
- Q. Before you came to the South, what did your superior officers tell you to expect?
- A. I belonged to a reconnaissance unit that moved out in front of the main forces. Perhaps the other men back further were told what to expect, but we were never told. Our job was simply to run reconnaissance.
- Q. Were you not told who you would be fighting in the South? Did they tell you you would be fighting Vietnamese troops, American troops, or both?
- A. Above all, they told us that we were coming to South Vietnam to fight against the American troops and their allies, such as the Filipinos and the Koreans and other foreigners. They did not tell us we were coming to fight against the Vietnamese forces. Our orders were to try to avoid the Vietnamese troops and not to fire on them unless they attacked us first. In general, we were ordered not to engage Vietnamese military, but as for the Americans and the allied troops, no matter where they were hiding, it was necessary to find them and fight against them. I've heard a lot of things about the Americans. For example, when the American troops come into a village, they ask the old people to show them where the VC are and if the people don't show them, the American troops will beat the people up. And as for the ARVN, I heard that an ARVN soldier, if he meets a young girl will violate her and also that the ARVNs would steal the chickens and the rations of the people. During the political course I took here at the Center, I asked the teacher about that problem and he said this was sometimes true about the Vietnamese troops.
- Q. Why did the people in the North hate the Americans so much?
- A. They hate the Americans because the Americans have bombarded the North too much. They recognize that sometimes the Americans drop toys and soap and things that the people in the North need and the people come out the next day and pick these things up, but then the planes return and drop bombs on them. When planes bomb in the North, they sometimes succeed in destroying their objective in one attack, but other times, they



will attack as many as 20 times and cause very minor damage to the target. And in these latter cases, the planes succeed in killing more people and have even bombed hospitals. The people don't know if the planes are doing this on purpose or if it occurs by accident.

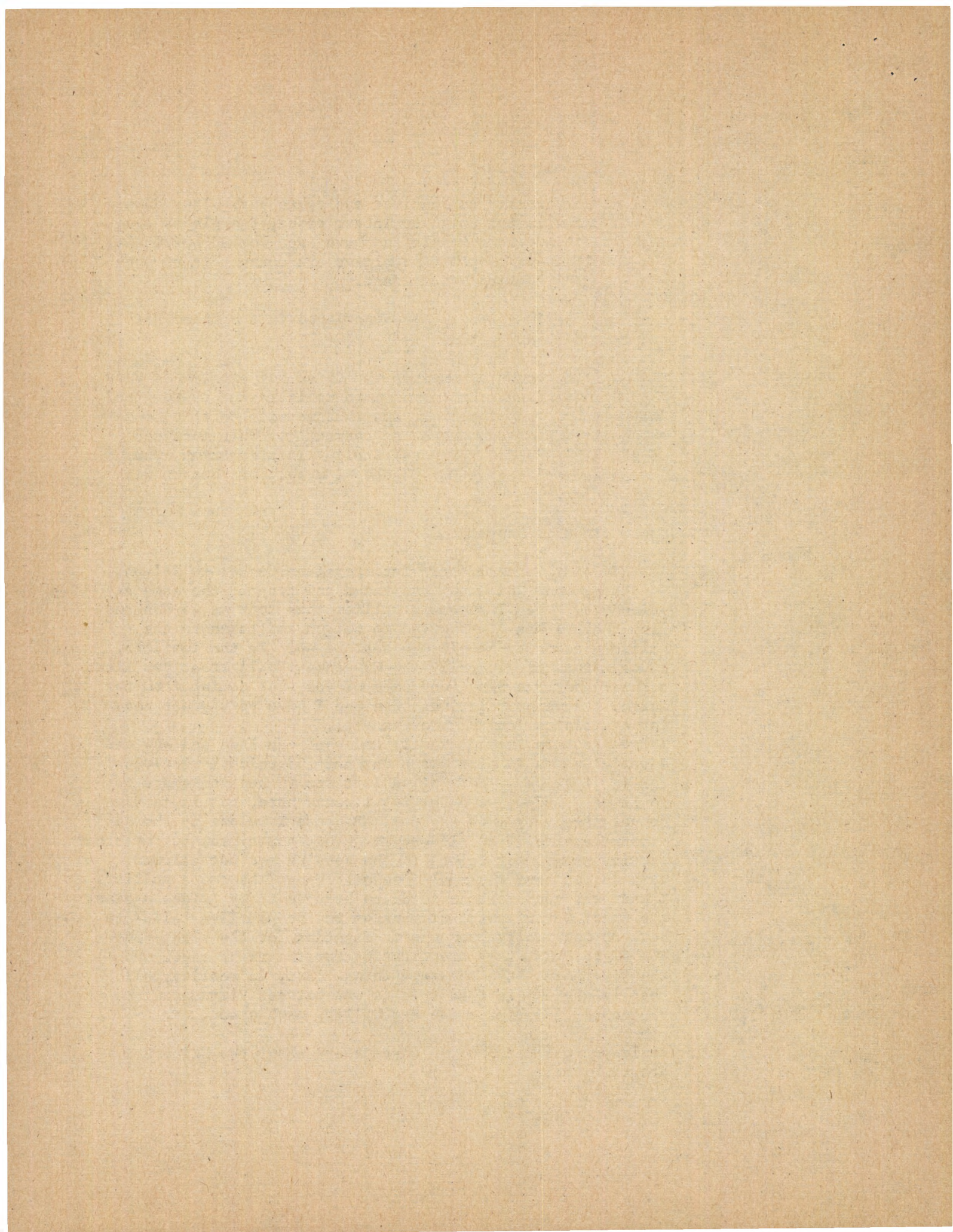
Q. Could you tell us about your experience in the Chieu Hoi program and your opinions?

A. The goal of the Government in the Chieu Hoi program is very good because they want to get more ralliers and thereby end the war, but the people who are charged with carrying out the policy do not always do so correctly. This includes people like the Joint General Staff Interrogation, who have often maltreated Hoi Chanh. I myself was beaten with a big stick.

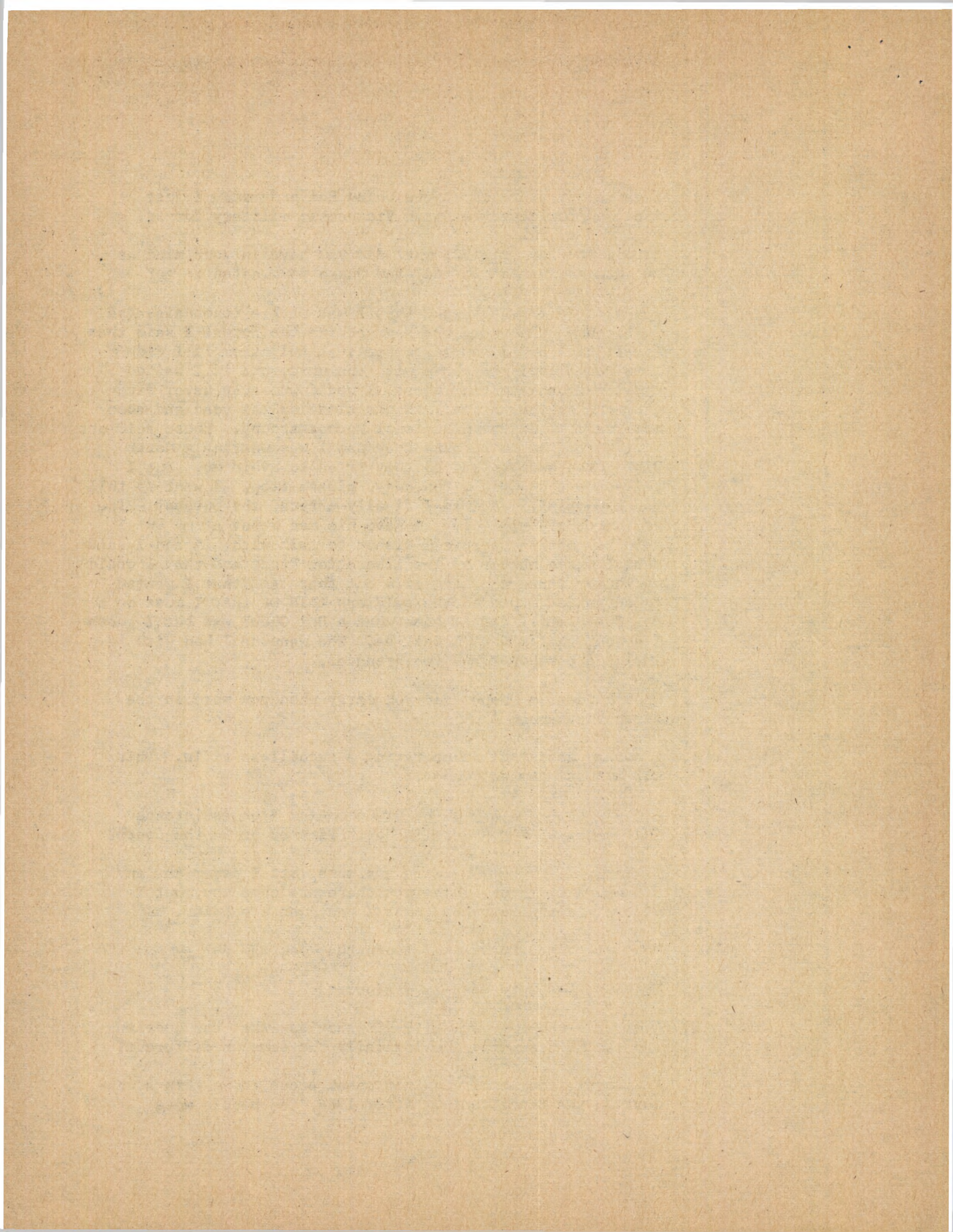
Q. Where did this happen?

A. At the Joint General Staff Interrogation Center in Saigon. In there, many Hoi Chanh are taken and treated the same as prisoners. When I became a rallier they took me to Hue and from there I was transported to Saigon and taken to the military security people who beat me up. In the leaflets, it says that if you rally the Government will treat you like a child and take very good care of you, but coming from the North, I have no relatives here and I have very great need for assistance from the Government. I have no help from my family and what can I do and how can I get along on 24 piasters a day and 500 which I received for my first pay. Many of us left the VC because there was no liberty and we were seeking liberty here, but in fact we do not have very much freedom. Because I belong to the security service, I am allowed to go out sometimes, but my other buddies who do not belong to the service are not allowed. They do not have any real freedom. When I became a rallier, I had very good reasons to do so because of my gripes against the Hanoi Government, but many of the people I've talked to here do not really know who is fighting for the right cause. The VC say that they are fighting for the right cause and the Government says the same thing. But, in reality, all that is obvious is that this is war between Vietnamese and Vietnamese, and Vietnamese are killing each other.

Q. Could you tell me how you first heard about the Chieu Hoi program?

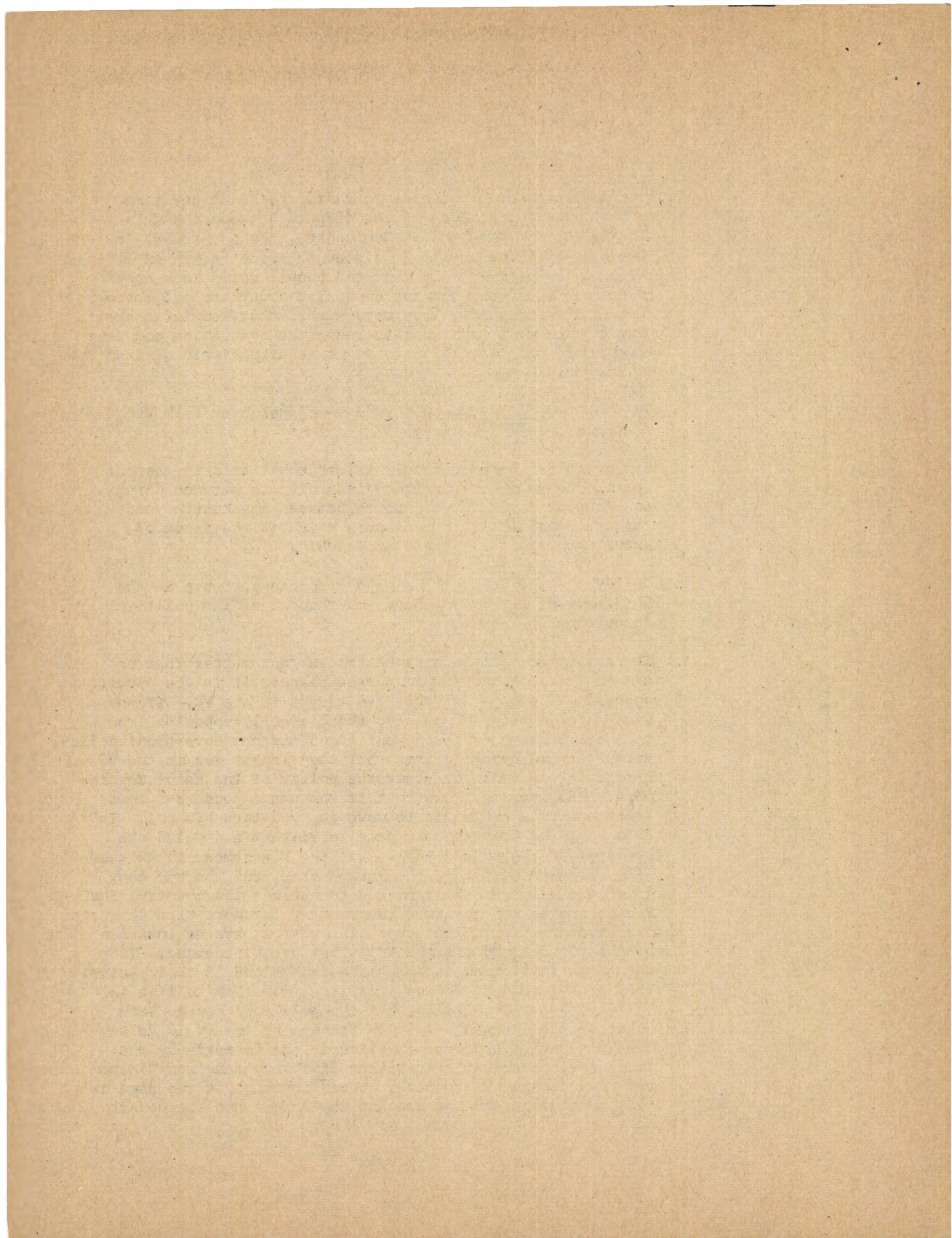


- A. I had never heard about the Chieu Hoi program. I just intended to leave the North Vietnamese military forces.
- Q. Before you left the VC, what did you have in your mind as to whom you wanted to meet and where you wanted to go?
- A. I profitted from the fact that I was with a reconnaissance unit. When that unit was approaching the forest I said that I felt sick and I wanted to rest. I told them if I did this now I could catch up with the unit, but if I waited until we got into the forest, I would probably never find them and so they agreed. I was alone on the road and soon afterward, I met some Regional Forces troops. These soldiers were afraid of me because they saw I was wearing a North Vietnamese uniform and so they tried to avoid me. But I yelled to them "don't run away, please stop, I want to tell you something." And so I finally entered the outpost. The officer there was going to have his men shoot at me but I told him not to because I wished to talk with him and I said that I was a member of the Liberation Front and that I could no longer stand the hard life out there and that I wanted to surrender. One of the soldiers told me that I must be a Hoi Chanh and I didn't know what a Hoi Chanh was but I guess I agreed that's what I must be. The weapons I had with me included a bayonet and two grenades.
- Q. What kind of a weapon did you carry when you were in the North Vietnamese Army?
- A. I was an assistant in operating a recoilless rifle. This was a Russian-made weapon.
- Q. Did you ever see any signs of Communist Bloc assistance during the time you were in North Vietnam or in the South?
- A. In 1964, I saw some Russian advisors, but I never saw any Chinese. It is possible that there are some now, but I didn't see any before because I was just a soldier.
- Q. What did these Russian advisors that you saw do?
- A. The Russians were textile engineers.
- Q. Among the men in your unit, did they say that the Russians and the Chinese were ideologically the same or different?
- A. In general, the people did not speak about those things, except on the Hanoi radio. After 1964, the people were



authorized to freely listen to Peking radio at any time, but after 1964, because of the dispute between the Chinese Communists and the Russian Communists, the Government in Hanoi forbade the people to listen to Radio Peking anymore because they were afraid that the people would hear about the dispute between the two Communist countries and thereby become disheartened. They were afraid that knowledge about the dispute would hurt morale among the population and that they would not be willing to fight as effectively against the Americans.

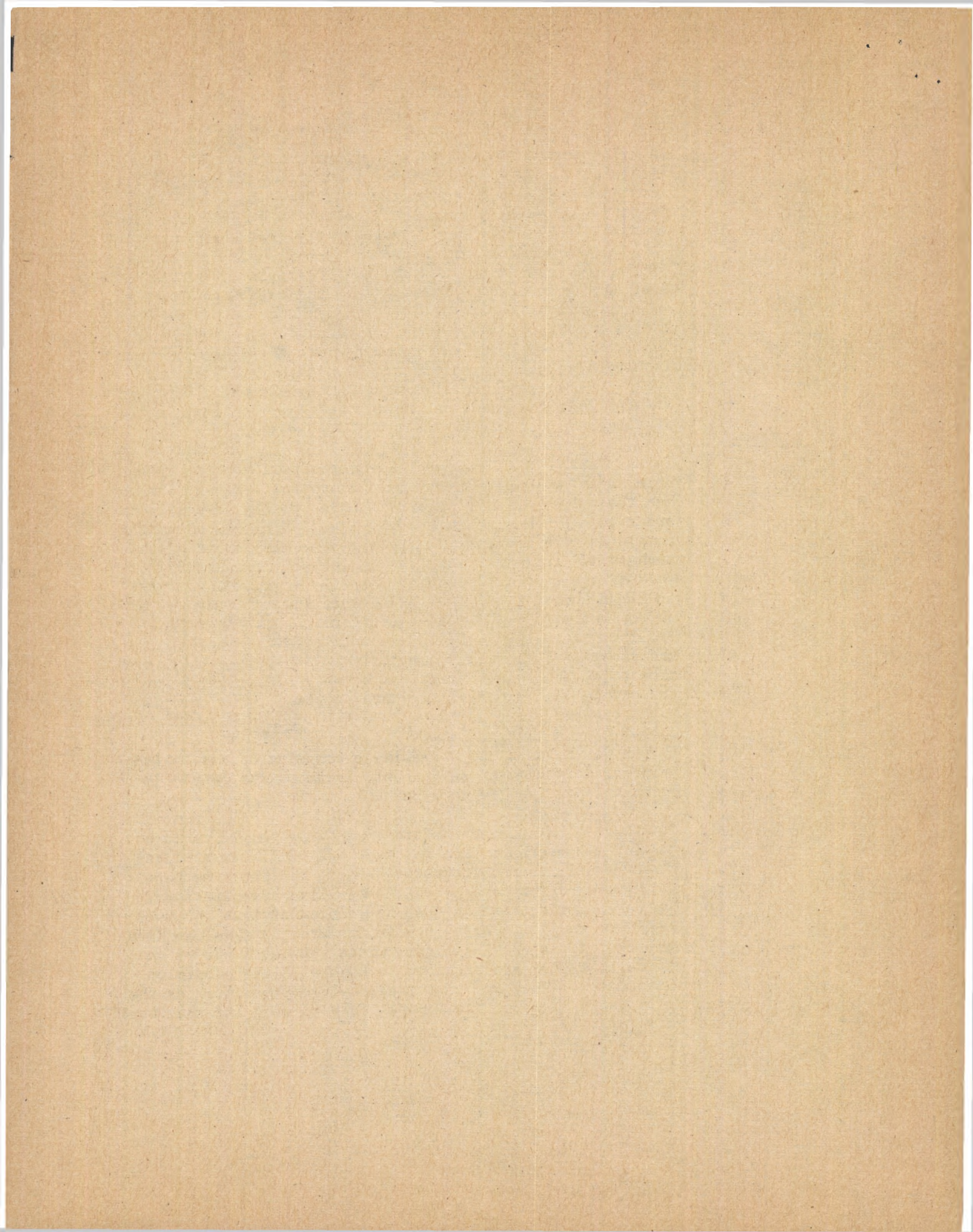
- Q. In the Army, did your political commissar ever talk about these matters of ideology?
- A. The political commissar only talked about this in general terms. He said that if there is a dispute between China and Russia, it is not a dispute between the Russian and Chinese people. It is a dispute which is the fault of Khrushchev and the coterie around him.
- Q. Could you tell us something about your experience in the Chieu Hoi Center? What have you thought of the political indoctrination courses?
- A. It is very easy to understand the subject matter that is taught in the educational courses because it is the direct opposite of everything that was taught in the VC. If you want to understand VC policy, think exactly opposite from the Government and if you want to understand Government policy, think exactly opposite from what they taught you in the VC. First, let me tell you about the policy of the Hanoi Government. They say up there that if you own a house and some stranger comes and wants to move in, you turn him out. In this way, the Chinese once came to Vietnam and ruled the country for a thousand years, but the Vietnamese threw them out. Then, afterwards, the French came, and the way they lived was to govern Vietnam and to exploit the country. The French stayed and governed the country for more than 80 years. The Government of Saigon says that now we have an invasion by the VC, but who are the VC? They are Vietnamese. They were born in Vietnam and have the same blood in their veins. They are Vietnamese and so it's legal for them to live in Vietnam, so the criticism that the political course here makes of the invasion of South Vietnam by the VC is false. The VC say that the real invasion is the invasion by the Americans, because the Americans live very far from Vietnam and they are not Vietnamese. Their invasion is the same as the invasion by the Chinese and the French and the country



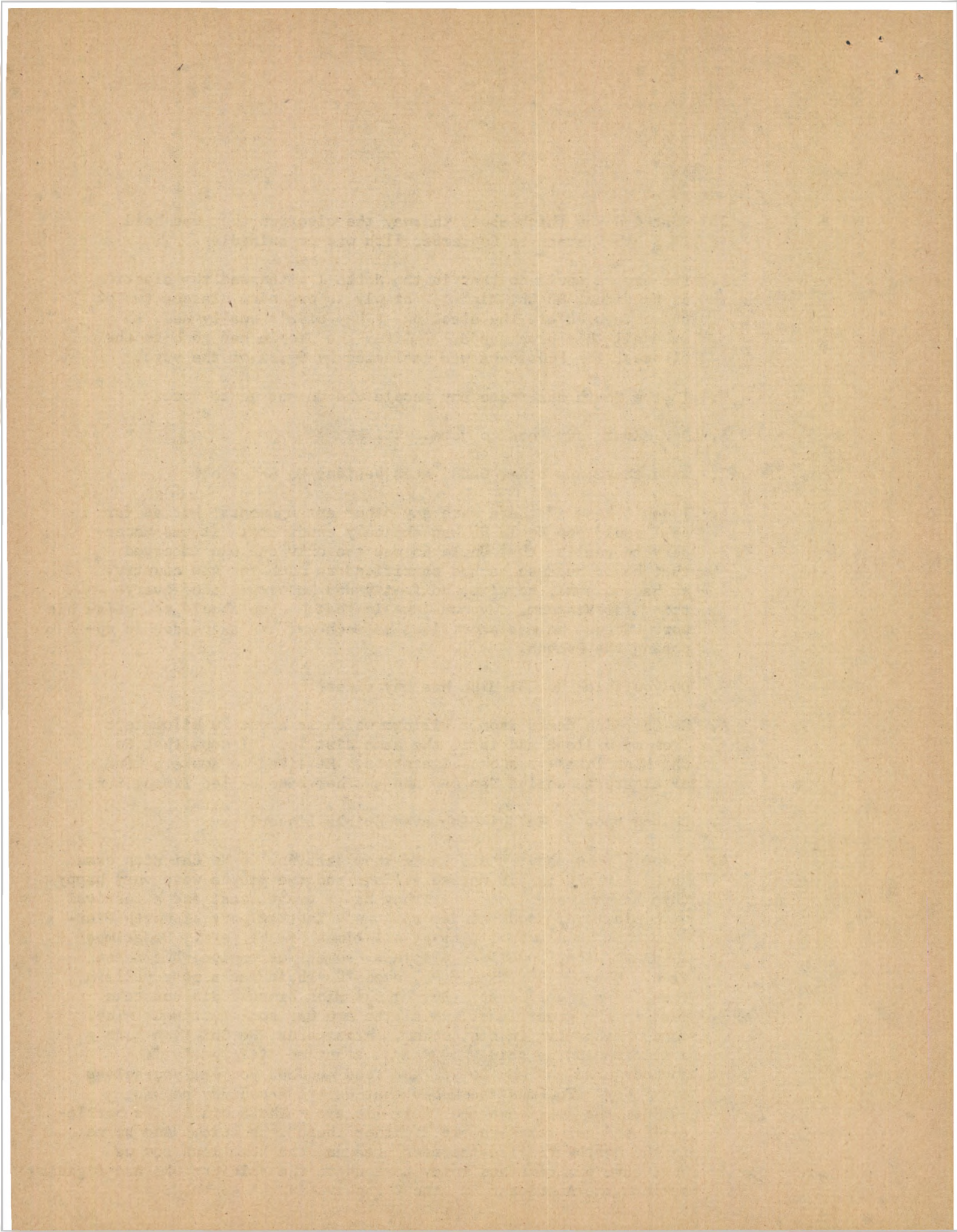
is being invaded by not only the Americans, but also the allies such as the Koreans, the Filipinos, the Australians and the New Zealanders. In the policy of the Chieu Hoi Center, they consider the Americans as something like big brothers in the free world and they say that when there is an invasion of a country by another country it is the duty of the big brother to come and help his small brother in resisting the invasion. I think that the method of teaching in the North is much better for implanting in your head the things they want you to know. I think it is much better done than it is here, not talking about the contents. But I do realize that South Vietnam is a country of the free world. I can speak freely and I can think what I want and I think that the Americans have treated me better than the Vietnamese.

In the North, the Government has methods of getting things done, such as whenever they have an objective, they always ask the people to produce more than is really necessary in order to over fulfill quotas and in order to encourage the people to work harder. The people are quite aware of this technique. What things are accomplished, it is the work of the people and not necessarily of the Government. At times however, they do not succeed in realizing their objectives such as in the land reform, which was false. But the Northern Government makes an effort to explain to the people and to teach them their policy before they want them to do something. This can be very effective, because the people then know why they are supposed to be carrying out a project.

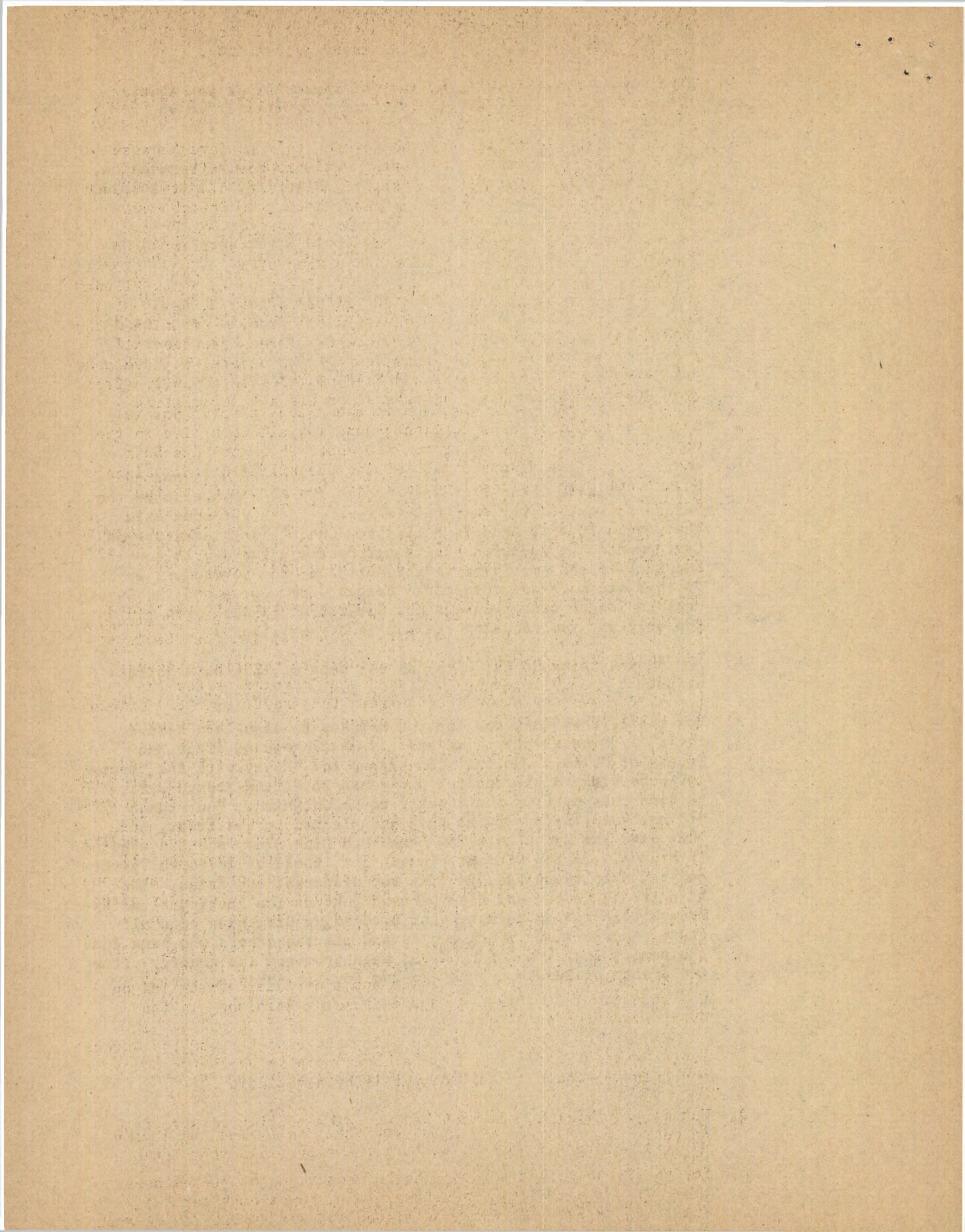
- Q. In the North, when they organize a campaign to accomplish a project, do they ever send agents in among the people in order to spur them to work harder?
- A. The first thing they do before organizing people to do a job is to explain to them why they must do it in a class. First of all, there are meetings among the Party members and afterward the members of the civilian organizations. The next meetings are held among the technicians who work among the people. These technicians are the ones who have to work. It is not like here, where they work out of an office, but they are required to work with the people on the project. They see that the people work as much as the Party wants them to. The people like to work and they work very joyfully.



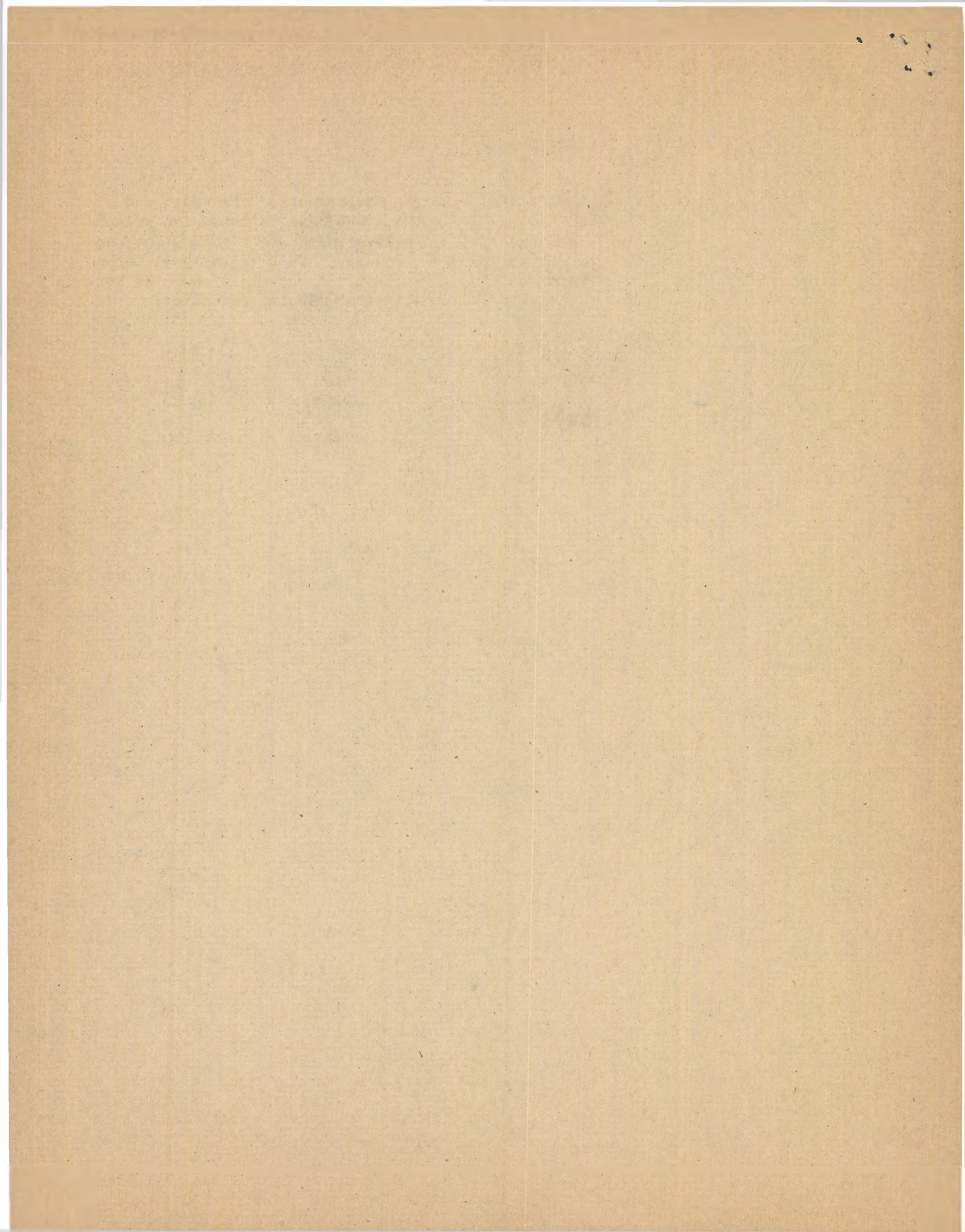
- Q. What did you think about the way the election that was held in South Vietnam on September 11th was organized?
- A. The way we would do that in the North-I witnessed the election of President Ho Chi Minh-is simply to organize classes two or three days before the election. They didn't really need to make all this propoganda. After the people had gone to the classes, the President was reelected by 99.5% of the vote.
- Q. In thw North are there any people who do not go to vote?
- A. No. Everybody goes to vote.
- Q. Were there any other candidates besides Ho Chi Minh?
- A. I don't know if there were any other arrangements, but as far as I could see Uncle Ho was the only candidate. It was necessary to realize that Uncle Ho was the only one who deserved that honor because he had sacrificed so much for his country. He had no home, no wife, no family and had sacrificed everything for Vietnam. My own idea is that you too should recognize his work because he has sacrificed so much and has succeeded in opposing the French.
- Q. Do you think Ho Chi Minh has any vices?
- A. Ho Chi Minh comes from a village which is about 20 kilometers from my village and is in the same district. I know that Ho Chi Minh likes to smoke cigarettes. He likes to smoke a kind of cigarette called Tan Dao and another kind called Truong Son.
- Q. Do you know if Ho Chi Minh ever drinks liquor?
- A. I don't know about that, but I know that in '58 Ho Chi Minh came back to visit in his native village and the people were very happy that he had come. They had a great feast and a festival with plenty of food and decorations. In that part of North Vietnam, they do not have rice at all times of the year. Sometimes they eat rice, sometimes potatoes, sometimes manioc, but maize also. When Ho Chi Minh came, even though it was a poor village, they had a great feast. But Ho Chi Minh himself did not take part in the great feast and all he ate was some glutinous rice, which he carried in his pocket. Afterwards, Ho Chi Minh made a criticism and he said "Why do you treat me differently from anybody else and why do you not feed me what you eat yourselves every day? You must remember that we are a country at war against the Americans and their lackeys. The South is the battlefield and our soldiers are fighting there", he said, "And so we in the North are like the rear area and the home land and we must save our rice and money to send to the soldiers who are fighting against the Americans and their lackeys in the South."



- Q. After the inevitable passing away of Uncle Ho, do you think there is anyone else in North Vietnam who deserves to be president?
- A. Phan Van Dong will probably succeed Uncle Ho by the regulation, but I don't really know if he merits the position that Uncle Ho holds.
- Q. Do you know about any other man who could be successors to Ho Chi Minh?
- A. No. I don't know of any other man aside from Phan Van Dong. Another thing is that Ho Chi Minh does not need to have guards around him like they do down here. Every time that General Ky goes out, he has guards around him to prevent him from being assassinated, but Ho Chi Minh goes out by himself and does not have any fear of anyone.
- Q. How long do you think the war will continue?
- A. This is very hard to say because it seems that this is not so much a battlefield as a testing ground for all countries in the world who want to try out their weapons. This includes both the Governments of Hanoi's allies and the allies of the Saigon Government. It includes everyone from the Russians, to the Koreans, to the Americans, to the Chinese. The Government in North Vietnam cannot defeat the Saigon Government and the Government in Saigon cannot defeat the Government in the North, so the only way you can stop the war is by negotiation.
- Q. Why do you think Ho Chi Minh has not been willing to negotiate as yet?
- A. You really shouldn't say that he refuses to negotiate because it is first necessary to understand what happened after the Treaty of Geneva. Ho Chi Minh signed the treaty with the French and according to the treaty, two years later the French were to give this part of the country to Ho Chi Minh. The French did not keep their word as they had pledged in the treaty, and they gave the South to a man named Ngo Dinh Diem, who had studied in France. So the Diem Government set itself up in South Vietnam and began to treat Vietnam like two different countries. But this is not true. And Diem behaved just as the Americans and the French told him to behave. And succeeding Diem have been all these other regimes, Khanh and Ky and all the others, who have done the same thing. Ho Chi Minh had been promised the country after the Treaty of Geneva, so the reason for his not negotiating



is that the fault lies with the Government of the South, and with the Americans, and the others who have followed the French. Both the VC and the Vietnamese Government are fighting for one goal and that is to unify the country. This is the goal whether it be Communist or Free World. But the way it is now, the North and the South of Vietnam are like two foreign countries.



INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

The respondent was characterized by the South Vietnamese interviewers as a "stubborn, hard headed Northerner." They said that he had turned the tables and was trying to propagandize them.

In any case, he was quite frank after an initial period of suspicion and some hostility toward the interview team.

We later learned that the respondent escaped from the Chieu Hoi village and has not returned. A H. J. Chan at the National Center informs us that he was part of a spy-sabotage ring which was exposed, but the Center officials would not confirm this, though they would not deny it either. It is worthy of note that the respondent was originally pointed out to us as a suspected spy.

