

INTERVIEW WITH VIETNAM WAR PARTICIPANT

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Oct. 24, 66

NAME CH-96

BACKGROUND First Lieutenant, Quang Nam Province

SOURCE THE SIMULMATICS CORPORATION

Interview Number: CH-96

STUDIES OF THE CHIEU HOI PROGRAM:

INTERVIEWS WITH THE HOI CHANH

by

THE SIMULMATICS CORPORATION

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

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Advanced Research Projects Agency
Washington, D. C.
ARPA Order Number 177
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CONTENTS

INTERVIEW NO. 96

Index	i, ii
Data Sheet	1
Summary	2, 3
Interview	4 - 22
Interviewer's Comments	23

CONTENTS

1911-1912

1-50	1-50
1	1-50
1-50	1-50
1-50	1-50
1-50	1-50

INDEX

INTERVIEW NO. 96

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Birthplace	1
Age	1,5
Family's economic status	5,6
Relatives	4
Siblings	10
Childhood life	5,6
Schooling	5,14
Occupations	1,5,15
Marriage and children	1,5
Aspirations	4

VILLAGE LIFE

Size	10,11
Location	1,10
Economic life	11
Religion	11

LIFE IN VIET MINH

Training - Military	4,11 5,6
---------------------	-------------

LIFE IN VC

Recruitment	5
Training - Political	8,9
General education	14
Structure and Personnel	
Description of hierarchy	11,12,18
Career patterns	
Purged from the army	6,7,14,15,21
Reinstated	7,21
Economics	11-13,14-16
Operations-Military	7-9
Landlords	16
Morale -	
Sickness	8
Deserters	8-10
Bombing	8,20
Food	7,8,14
Family/marital relations	4,5,21
Preferential treatment for officers	6

INT - 1 & NO. 18

1	1957	1	1957
2	1957	2	1957
3	1957	3	1957
4	1957	4	1957
5	1957	5	1957
6	1957	6	1957
7	1957	7	1957
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50	1957	50	1957

51	1957	51	1957
52	1957	52	1957
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54	1957	54	1957
55	1957	55	1957
56	1957	56	1957
57	1957	57	1957
58	1957	58	1957
59	1957	59	1957
60	1957	60	1957

Continued on next page

Control - Censorship	17
Punishment/incentives	6,14,15
Self-criticism	6,17,18
RALLYING	
Reasons	20,21
GVN propaganda-Leaflets	22
Radio	16,17,19
Loudspeakers	19,20
Methods	20,21
Experiences on rallying	21
Criticism and suggestions to increase rallying	
Government policies	22
LIFE AT CHIEU HOI CENTER	
Conditions at Center	
Quarters	22
LIFE AFTER CHIEU HOI	
Job placement	4
Threats from VC	21
MISCELLANEOUS	
Effect of bombing on NVN	13,14
The march from NVN to SVN	7,8
INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS	23

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DATA SHEET

INTERVIEW NO. 96

Home Province:	Hanoi, NVN
Home District:	Tu Liem (Gia Lam Phu)
Date of Interview:	October 24, 1966
Place of Interview:	National Center, Saigon
Date of Rallying:	July 6, 1966
Place of Rallying:	Thang Binh District, Quang Nam Province
Subject's Category:	North Vietnamese Army, Main Force
Rank or Position:	First Lieutenant
Area of Operation:	Quang Nam Province
Period in NLF:	16 years
Age:	38
Marital Status:	Married; 3 children
Present Occupation:	Rallier
Previous Occupation:	Before 1954 - shopkeeper and tailor After 1954 - Professional Army Officer
Interview Team:	Grady/Loc

PERSONAL HISTORY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name: [Name] Date of Birth: [Date]
 Place of Birth: [Location] Present Address: [Address]
 Education: [Education] Occupation: [Occupation]
 Military Service: [Service] Previous Occupations: [Occupations]
 Family: [Family] Interview Date: [Date]

SUMMARY

INTERVIEW NO. 96

Mr. Cuong* was one of several children of a prosperous small businessman in Hanoi. Gia Lam Phu, the region of Hanoi where he grew up, was near Long Bien bridge about three kilometers from the railway station. It had about 600 residents, most of whom were businessmen engaged in commerce. He completed French lower school in 1943 and then worked in his parents' store as a bookkeeper for three years. He later went to Ha Nam Province for two years where he worked for his uncle as a school teacher.

In 1949 he went to the Viet Minh Infantry Training School and graduated a year later. Normally he would have been promoted to First Lieutenant after four years but because of his small capitalist background, he was not promoted until 1958. In 1962 he was expelled from the army for the same reasons of social origin and forced to work as a peasant on the reconstruction of the countryside.

At first, however, he was a training cadre for improving the economic life of the farmers and three months later he was recalled to district headquarters where he worked as a project officer to evaluate the plans for rural improvement. Mr. Cuong discussed plans in some detail in the interview.

In April 1965, because of the increasing intensity of the war he was called back into the army and his rank and privilege as an officer were restored. After he rejoined the army, he worked hard training and equipping his unit before it departed on its three month march to South Viet Nam. He first heard of the Chieu Hoi Program while stationed in Hoa Binh Province in North Viet Nam. He had rigged up an elaborate battery and loudspeaker system with a very tall antenna ostensibly to pick up the Communist broadcasts but after eleven at night he would secretly listen to Radio Saigon. During the long march south he was chief of a section and had the right to keep a radio. At that time he frequently and covertly used to listen to BBC, a station which he liked very much. He suggested that if the Government could persuade BBC to make propaganda about the Chieu Hoi Program it would be believed by many VC cadres. Although Mr. Cuong participated in self-criticism sessions, he apparently saw them as another detail in the larger picture of prejudice against him because of his petty bourgeois background.

*Respondent's name is a pseudonym.

He decided to rally after he heard the radio program in 1965, because he felt that neither he nor his family had ever gained anything from the Communists after all their years of hard work. He was dissatisfied because he had not been promoted and because he was later purged from the army. He felt he was recalled into the army because the VC needed someone to be killed.

It was only on the fourth attempt that he succeeded in rallying. He studied a map carefully and made out and signed some false papers which he handed to the VC guerrilla outposts. He covered his footsteps so the VC would think that he had been killed during an operation. He did this so he would be available for espionage in the North. However, the PsyWar officer convinced him to sign a leaflet thereby annulling his effectiveness as a saboteur. He was disappointed to have lost this opportunity. He resented rooming with enlisted men and Saigon cowboys and felt that officers should have separate quarters.

The interviewer felt the respondent was cooperative and intelligent even if overly impressed by his own importance. Because of demands on Mr. Cuong's time by PsyWar and Intelligence, the interview was never completed.

as desired to return after he had the right to return in 1965, he
 stated he felt that there was not any real reason why he should
 from the fact that he had spent all his years in the military and
 another reason of the fact that he had spent all his years in the
 army and that he felt he was not really in the army because
 that would mean he was not really in the army.

It was only when he was in the military that he succeeded in
 He finished a year in the military and made some money and
 when he finished the military he went back to his job at the
 as the military was not really in the military during an occupation. He
 and that he would be working for the government in the North. However,
 the way he was working for the government was not really in the
 his citizenship as a citizen, he was classified as a foreign citizen.
 however, he wanted to work for the government and he was not really
 but that he was not really in the military.

The interviewee said the respondent was concerned about his
 even if they were by his own government. Because of this he
 at that time by the respondent, the interviewee was never
 completed.

INTERVIEW

Q. What are your plans when you leave the National Center?

A. After I leave I would like to do anything within my capacity to assist the Government. My personal preference would be to work for Psychological Warfare. I would like also to work on research and planning because I was chief of the planning section of my unit.

2.2 Q. What do you think your main problems will be in readjusting to life in South Viet Nam?

A. I have great faith in the Government and I am certain that the Government will assist me when I leave the Center in getting a job and having enough money to establish a new life. I also hope that my relatives around Saigon will help me financially.

Q. Do you have very many relatives around Saigon?

A. Yes, I do and although I have not looked them up yet I am sure that I can find them. Between 1956 and 1960 when I was in North Viet Nam I would occasionally receive letters from Saigon from my cousins, my brother-in-law and my sister-in-law who came to SVN in 1954.

Q. Why did your relatives leave the North in 1954?

A. They left because my brother-in-law was formerly a Captain in the French army and married...I saw him on television the other night and now he is a Lt. Colonel in the Vietnamese army but I wonder if he would still recognize me. I also had a cousin who was a Captain in the French army. There is another cousin of mine who married a Frenchman and became a naturalized French citizen. And so these relatives worked for the French and left and came to the South.

Q. Why were you able to stay yourself?

A. Because I was a member of a Viet Minh security unit. By 1954 I was already a member of the Viet Minh. It was difficult for that reason for me to leave.

Q. At that time did you want to leave or did you want to stay in the North?

A. I didn't have much idea about anything because I didn't know very much but all my relatives left for South Viet Nam. When I was in

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Q. ... do you think ...

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A. ... Yes, ...

Q. ... do you ...

A. ... They ...

Q. ... why ...

A. ... Because ...

Q. ... do you ...

A. ... I ...

the VC unit I didn't have any news about my family because it was very difficult to get news under those circumstances.

2.4 INTERVIEWER's NOTE: Respondent is not living in his home village. His home is in North Viet Nam. He is not living in the same place as when he joined the VC and is not living at the same place as when he was in the VC. He is married.

2.6 Q. When did you get married?

A. 1956.

Q. Was that during the time you belonged to the VC?

A. During that time I was with my VC unit in Hanoi.

Q. Are your wife and children still in NVN?

A. Yes.

2.8 Q. How old were you when you joined the VC?

A. Nineteen.

2.9 Q. When was that?

A. 1949.

2.12 Q. Perhaps you can tell me about your life as a child, when you were young and before you joined the VC. What did you do with your time when you were a child?

A. I was born in 1928 and when I was six years old I started school. When I was twelve years old I became sick and had to stay home for two years. At fourteen I returned to school and continued my studies until 1943. Up to that time I had always stayed at my parents' home. From 1943-1946 I worked in my parents' store as a bookkeeper. In 1946 war broke out between the French and the Viet Minh in Hanoi and so my family moved to Bac Ninh Province. In 1947 I went back to Hanoi but my uncle who was my father's younger brother came to get me and took me to Yen Bai Province. In 1949 I was in Ha Nam Province and worked for my uncle-in-law as a schoolteacher. I stayed there until May of 1949 when I went into the Viet Minh Infantry Training school. This was a school for officers.

Q. When you were sick at the age of twelve to the age of fourteen what was wrong with you?

A. I remember very well that I had a fever but I cannot tell you exactly what the illness was that I had.

[Illegible text]

- 1. [Illegible]
- 2. [Illegible]
- 3. [Illegible]
- 4. [Illegible]
- 5. [Illegible]
- 6. [Illegible]
- 7. [Illegible]
- 8. [Illegible]
- 9. [Illegible]
- 10. [Illegible]

Perhaps you can tell us what you think of the above list of items. It is a list of items that we have collected over the past few years.

I am sure that you will find this list of items to be of great interest. It is a list of items that we have collected over the past few years. I am sure that you will find this list of items to be of great interest. It is a list of items that we have collected over the past few years.

[Illegible text]

2.13 Q. Would you say that your childhood was happy?

A. When I was a child I had everything I needed. We never lacked anything in my family. There were no poor people among my relatives.

Q. Because you came from a background like that, did you have any difficulty in your career as a VC officer?

A. My family had a shop where we did tailoring and also repaired bicycles and we hired several mechanics to work for us. For that reason the VC classified us as small capitalists. This differed from those who owned land. We did not own land; we just hired people to work for us. When I was in the VC I was occasionally criticized by the other members of my unit because I came from a small capitalist background. In 1955-56 the VC embarked on a land reform program and at that time I was criticized especially severely.

Q. In terms of your military career, did coming from a bourgeois background hold you back or did it make any difference?

A. I graduated from Officer's School in 1950 and normally after four years I would have been promoted to First Lieutenant but in my case I was not promoted until 1958. Many of my friends are now Sub-Captains and Captains. There are other men of my category who came from capitalist families or families who worked with the French who were thrown out of the army altogether. Many friends of mine who were Captains and Sub-Captains were thrown out at that time. That was in 1958 when the Government and the Party decided that all officials and officers would be pure Communists untainted by capitalism.

Q. Were there many men of capitalist families who were thrown out of the army at that time?

A. Yes, in my regiment alone there were fifty men. All officers who came from capitalist families or who had relatives who were capitalists were thrown out at that time.

Q. Why weren't you thrown out?

A. They carried out the process of expelling the fifty officers gradually, step by step. I was thrown out of the army myself in 1962. I knew a fellow who was the Emperor Bao Dai's nephew and he was a Captain, thrown out like me.

Q. Now you say that you had no idea...

A. That I was a little bit nervous, I wanted to see what was going on...

Q. Now you say that you had no idea...

A. I really had a long drive home, I was tired, I was not in the mood to go out...

Q. In terms of your activities, were you ever involved in any way...

A. I was not involved in any way, I was just a normal person, I was not...

Q. Now you say that you had no idea...

A. Yes, I was a little bit nervous, I wanted to see what was going on...

Q. Now you say that you had no idea...

A. They carried out the operation in a very professional manner, I was not...

- Q. How did you get back into the army after they threw you out in 1962?
- A. When we were expelled from the army the Party told us that we were going to work on the reconstruction of the countryside. But we recognized that we were being thrown out. The intention of the movement was to make us become, step by step, peasants and between 1962 and 1965 I lost all my privileges and payments as an officer and worked in the countryside as a peasant. The intention of the Party was to transform us into peasants by corrective labor. They did not succeed in this because of the war and in April 1965 they called us all into the army. When they called us back they told us that the war was going on in order to unify the country and that it was necessary for us to return to the army in order to help liberate South Viet Nam. We were given back our rank and our privileges as officers.
- Q. How long was it after that when you left for South Viet Nam?
- A. Between April and August we had to work very hard at training our units and being supplied with clothing, armaments and so forth. From August 1965 until January 1966 we completed all our preparations and in January we began to move to the South.
- Q. What route did you take to reach the South?
- A. I came through the South with my whole regiment--the 64th of the 320th division. We followed the Ho Chi Minh trail along the mountains.
- Q. Could you describe your trip from North to South Viet Nam for me?
- A. We started out in Thanh Hoa Province and passed through Nghe An Province and Ha Tinh Province, Quang Binh Province. From there we went to Saravane in Laos and from there we arrived at Thua Thien Province in SVN. From Thua Thien we went to Quang Nam. Quang Nam Province was our operations area.
- Q. How long did it take you to make the trip from North to South Viet Nam?
- A. It took three months.
- Q. What were the conditions on the march?
- A. During the march in NVN from Thanh Hoa to Quang Binh we had enough food to take care of us. We had sufficient rice for a Northerner,

although it was not up to Southern standards. We had enough rice, vegetables, eggs, beef to support us. We thought that this was a sufficient ration for the march but in comparison with what we had back at our base it was not very good. While we were still marching through North Viet Nam no one was killed or died. We did have deserters however and between the time we left Thanh Hoa and got to Quang Nam, there were perhaps one hundred to one hundred ten deserters. As far as sickness on the trip goes, between Thanh Hoa and Quang Binh there was no sickness because everyone had enough to eat. We had plenty of facilities in that area. Between Saravane and Quang Nam it was a different story and we had many people sick. Most of the sick had fever and after that was over had pains in their bodies. The affect of the fever was more and more serious and went from being a fever to affecting the internal organs. On the part of the journey between Laos and Quang Nam the rice ration was cut in half. Normally a man receives eight hundred grams of rice a day but on this part of the journey they were getting only four hundred. The sick were not getting enough to eat and had to carry heavy burdens and march night and day. This is why we had up to thirty per cent sick in the unit.

- Q. Was your unit ever attacked by airplanes or by ground forces?
- A. When I was at Saravane I was at the regimental headquarters which was divided into four different parts for security reasons. There was a US airstrike on the headquarters at Ban Dong in Laos. We think that the airplanes were F-105s and B-57s. The attack came right on the regimental headquarters but there were none killed, only some wounded. People were saved by the fact that we have underground trenches. That was the only time that we got attacked between there and Quang Nam. There were no contacts with enemy ground forces during that period either because the route we traveled was under our control.
- Q. Before you left North Viet Nam to come to the South, what were you told to expect in South Viet Nam?
- A. Before coming to the South we had many classes and long preparations. The classes were to explain to us the reasons for our coming to the South. They told us that we had a revolutionary mission and that since 1954 the Americans had come in to replace the French and to continue the domination of South Viet Nam, therefore it was our duty to liberate the South and to reunify all of Viet Nam. We were told that our primary mission in SVN

would be to search out and destroy the Americans because they are neo-colonialists. Our primary mission then was to destroy the Americans and our secondary was to fight against the ARVN if we couldn't find any Americans--not to consider the ARVN as a worthless force and to pay some attention to them. When we attacked an ARVN outpost our objective was to attract American reinforcements and then attack them. Before we left, in order to excite our patriotic spirit, they told us that in the South the Americans were holding the Vietnamese officers as prisoners and that they were mistreating the people and beating them up. They gave us many examples of this. They said that the people of the South were oppressed by the Americans. These were the reasons they gave us for sending our regiment to the South.

Q. What happened when you got to Quang Nam?

A. We arrived in April of 1966. During the month of May our mission was to improve and strengthen the unit. In June we prepared the battlefield to attract the Americans and had a big operation but we failed in doing so and the Americans didn't show up. We waited for the Americans, having made all the preparations at Thang Binh District. While we were waiting there the Americans made an amphibious landing at Phuoc Son Village, Quoi Son District. The regiment knew that the Americans were well organized at the landing area so they sent only one company to attack them rather than the whole regiment. This company was supposed to attack the Americans on the mountain of Vu. That word means breast because there are two small mountains which are like the breast of a girl. They found one US platoon on that mountain and according to the VC wiped out the platoon. But I know that among the VC there were at least fifty killed and wounded. I heard that because at that time I was with the rear service with the regimental headquarters and the regimental commander sent a message saying that they had wiped out the American platoon but lost fifty killed and wounded of the VC company. That was the only engagement the regiment had before I left but when I left I knew that they were still up there in the same place.

Q. Yesterday you told us that on your trip from NVN down the Ho Chi Minh trail to Quang Nam you had more than one hundred deserters. Do you have any idea what happened to these men? Did they go to Chieu Hoi or return to their homes?

A. Of the one hundred and ten deserters, I don't think any of them rallied. They all tried to make their way home to the North.

[Illegible text - extremely faded]

[Illegible text - extremely faded]

[Illegible text - extremely faded]

[Illegible text - extremely faded]

Among them I'm sure that some died and others were captured by the VC. On the route we followed into South Viet Nam, there were many rest stations set up for the troops moving south, so when these deserters tried to return to NVN they would probably be apprehended by the VC at these rest posts.

Q. Did anyone besides yourself rally from your unit?

A. I know that there were two others. One rallied before me. I was the second, and a third man is now here in the Center with me. He belonged to the headquarters staff of the regiment.

Q. These other men who rallied from your unit, could you tell me if they were men like yourself who had been thrown out of the army between 1958 and 1962 and later called back?

A. The other two men were simple soldiers. They were not officers like me. The fellow who worked in the regimental headquarters was a simple soldier, not an officer.

Q. Could you tell me whether or not the place you come from in Hanoi is a rural or an urban area?

A. The place is Gia Lam Phu and is an administrative unit which is larger than a district, which was in use at the time of the French regime. Under the French, Gia Lam belonged to Bac Ninh Province. After 1954 it had belonged to the Hanoi administrative area. The region is part of the city. It is urban.

Q. Are your parents still living in NVN?

A. My mother and father both died in 1950 or 1951. My older and younger sisters both went to South Viet Nam in 1954 but I don't know where they are now. I had another brother who worked with the Japanese at Gia Lam in 1945 but I don't know where he is now. This brother was an interpreter for the Japanese at that time.

Q. Where did your brother ever learn to speak Japanese?

A. I don't know where he learned it but when the Japanese arrived in Viet Nam, he was able to speak Japanese.

Q. Could you tell us about the Gia Lam area?

A. When I was younger, in the time of the French, Gia Lam was a Phu and my house was right near the Long Bien bridge. It was three kilometers from my house to the railway station. Gia Lam had about 600

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residences. Most of the population were businessmen who were engaged in commerce. When I was young most of the houses there were straw huts. Later, however, the French made the people tear down the straw huts and rebuild houses out of brick. I lived at Gia Lam until I was nine years old. When I was young there were a lot of cyclopushes or rickshaws near the railway, and this was the means of transportation. [Note: This type of cyclopush in the North has a man in front pulling.]

Q. What were the religious groups to which these people belonged?

A. Most of the population there were Buddhists but there were also some Protestants. There were also some French and Japanese families living in Gia Lam. They were businessmen engaged in commerce and trading.

Q. Where did you live after 1954 when the Communists took over?

A. I moved to Hanoi in 1954 because I was a member of the capital regiment. That year I was a member of regiment 308 which had participated in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. When the French evacuated Hanoi and left it to the Vietnamese my regiment moved in to take over the administration of the city.

Q. Were you at Dien Bien Phu yourself?

A. I did not participate directly in the battle but my unit was very near the front. I was working in the rear service. My regiment was stationed very near the Laotian border and on the other side of the river from Dien Bien Phu. [There has been some discussion here because Captain Loc was in Eliane 4 when he was attached to the Vietnamese units attached to the French army at Dien Bien Phu.]

Q. Can you tell me how living conditions were when you were in the army?

A. The standard of living for the Army was lower than that of the civilian population. Every month I would earn seventy-five piasters at my rank as lieutenant. Plus I would earn five piasters a month for my three children plus ten piasters a month bonus for having stayed a long time in the army. Very often I did not have enough money to buy rice. The rice ration for everyone, both soldiers and officers, was twenty-one kilograms of rice. Civilians who worked for the army received fifteen and one half kilograms of rice a month. Among the men who work as laborers, men who work at middle rank would receive fifteen kilograms of rice per month. We were required to pay for the rice we received out of the money we earned and it would cost me my seventy-five piasters a month just to pay for rice. Officers

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and men were also allowed to eat meat--usually pork--three times a week, but we also had to pay for that. Every day we were allowed to eat rice and other food to the value of seventy cents. This is 70% of one piaster. Thirty-five cents of this was for rice and thirty-five cents was for other food.

Q. What was the purchasing power of a North Vietnamese piaster? What could you buy for one piaster?

A. At the official rate 100 grams of gold was worth 350 piasters.

Q. The official price of gold in South Viet Nam is something in the vicinity of 9,700 piasters for 100 grams, so if that is indeed the case, then seventy-five piasters per month in the North would seem to be quite a bit of money.

A. This is what I hear, but one thing I can tell you is that the price of rice was forty piasters for 100 kilos.

(Note: 100 kilos of the best rice in South Viet Nam sells for about 1800 piasters to 2000. The rice the Government sells to officials and so forth is not quite so high quality, and that sells for about 1200 piasters for 100 kilos.)

The price of pork is fixed at three piasters a kilo in the North for medium quality. In the South this runs 140 to 150 piasters. All of this is in order to give some idea of the value of seventy-five North Vietnamese piasters in terms of living standards.

Q. Were you able to buy all the pork you wanted or was there a ration?

A. In the North you had to buy everything by a ration that was fixed by the Government. For example, the Government will allow a man who works at very hard labor eighteen kilograms of rice a month as a ration. This is not sufficient to sustain him, and although the prices are fixed, you are not free to buy as much as you want. The rice that each person was allowed to buy at the official price was not sufficient, although the Government sold it at a price of forty piasters per 100 kilo. Therefore, to get enough rice you had to go to the black market where it cost 150 piasters per 100 kilo. The black market was organized by civilians, but after awhile the Government found out that people were buying a good many things at the black market price, so the Government has organized a sort of black market association itself at the higher price to compete with the civilian black market. The Government has fixed the price of pork at three piasters a kilo, but the people buy it on the black

and were not allowed to be...
...the Government has fixed the price...
...but the people buy it at the black...

market for seven to eight piasters. The Government also has a ration of 300 grams of sugar per child each month, and also for infants under 18 months there was a ration of three bottles of milk per month. This is the same kind of condensed milk you have in South Viet Nam. It is imported from France. At the official rate a bottle of milk costs two piasters if you were buying the best quality. Inferior quality milk costs 1.7 piasters. The trouble with the milk was that it would spoil if you didn't use it quickly. But because of the ration we could only use a little bit each day; therefore the ration wasn't sufficient for us. The black market price for milk was five piasters for the best quality and 4.5 piasters for inferior quality. It was necessary to buy on the black market to have enough milk for the children.

Q. Has the war had any effect on black market prices? For example, in the past year and a half?

A. From 1964 to 1966 the official price established by the Government did not change despite the bombings and war. The Government economic administration is extremely capable. The black market price went up sharply in 1964. Before, a kilo of rice on the black market was four piasters; in 1965 it was five piasters; in 1966 it was up to six piasters a kilo.

Q. What effect has the bombing had on life in general in North Viet Nam?

A. I can give you four examples of the influence of the bombing on life in the North in general. One effect is that in many places there are industrial centers where there are people grouped around the area working in the plant, and there are also men selling merchandise to the workers. But when the industrial complex is destroyed, there is no more work for the men who used to work there and the men who used to sell things to workers, and so there is unemployment.

A second influence is that there used to be an industry in the North which employed women to make woolen shirts, but since the bombing started the Government has not imported any more wool and so this industry is closed up. These women used to make woolen goods for export but now since the bombing there is no more wool and no more work now. Another fact was that before the bombing started the Japanese used to buy coal in the Hon Gay mining area near Haiphong. But now the Japanese do not come any more to buy coal. Finally, before the war, the farmers were free to work in their fields, but since the bombing started the farmers have been called in to work for the army in constructing air defense sites. Instead of working their fields, they work at building artillery bases. They have

abandoned the rice fields. That is why there are only old women working in the rice fields. Production has gone down considerably. Before, it was possible to eat more than the ration fixed by the Government, but now that rice production has gone down it is possible only to get the Government ration.

Q. When you came to the South and established your base at Quang Nam, how were your rations there?

A. I was not with the unit very long at Quang Nam, but I noticed our ration was higher than it had been in the North. In Quang Nam we had a ration of twenty-four kilos a month whereas in the North it was twenty-one. Rations were better in the South.

Q. How much education have you had?

A. I have a French certificate for completing lower school. The French system was divided into lower school, middle school and university, and I completed the first part.

Q. How many years was that?

A. About eight years.

Q. What was the average level of schooling among your fellow officers?

A. Speaking only of my unit, about 80 per cent of the officers had a lower level of education than I did, but at the same time the Government had a program to improve the education of the officers, and they were allowed to study individually in order to raise their cultural level. Normally the Government would organize ten classes for high school subjects. If you could pass the examination you could receive a baccalaureate. The officers in my unit used to study all the time but they never had time to pass the examinations. We also had to spend a lot of time improving our professional proficiency.

Q. To go back to your earlier career in the army, could you tell us what happened in 1958 when they started to eject men of capitalist and bourgeois background out of the army. How did it start?

A. The officers who were thrown out of the army still received their salaries, seventy-five piasters and five piasters allowance for children, but they did not receive any longer their seniority allowance or their rice ration. The rice ration went down from twenty-one to fifteen kilos a month. They continued to receive a

...and the ... That is why there are only ... working in the ... Education has gone down ... before, it is ... than the ... of the ... has gone down it is possible ... only to ...

Q. When you came to ... and ... your ... how ...

A. I was not ... the ... and I ... the ... had a ... in the North it was ...

Q. How much about ... you ...

A. I ... for ... lower school. The French system was ... school and university, and I ...

Q. How many years ...

A. About ...

Q. What was the ... level ... your ...

A. ... only ... the ... had ... level ... that I did, but ... the ... had a ... the ... they were allowed to ... in ... a ... level. ... the ... used ... a ... unit used ... study all the ... to ... the ... also ... of ...

Q. To go back to your ... could you ... what happened in ... that ... and ...

A. The ... who were ... still receive ... 2000-2001 ... and ... children, but they ... any ... down from ... to ...

salary for only three months after being discharged from the army and after that the VC considered us as civilians. When we were sent out to the countryside we had to eat the same rations as the general population, which consisted of rice mixed with manioc and potatoes. We had to pay the usual prices for these things.

Q. What were you doing when you were sent out to the countryside?

A. During the first three months I was a training cadre for improving the economic life of the farmers. My job was to teach them new techniques and also about economic administration. After three months they called me back to the district headquarters where I worked as project officer to evaluate the plans for economic improvement for the farmers. I worked at the district until the day I returned to the army. During all that time my mission was to study the economic plan.

Q. Could you describe the economic plan for us?

A. Plan called for improving agricultural production, better government for the workers and farmers and better monetary administration. For production I studied methods of increasing production for that year and for the next three years. I also studied techniques for increasing production such as how to choose the correct crops to plant. We studied the different kinds of rice and different kinds of land. There are a lot of details but the major ones I'll give you. I'd like to make you better acquainted with our production plan. The first thing we would do would be to make a comparison between rice cultivation and the cultivation of other kinds of crops. We would also consider the nourishment of cattle and oxen and animals. We realized that because we were a poor country we do not have enough fertilizer and had only animal manure to use; one of our great needs was more fertilizer. It was necessary then to increase the collection of animal manure in order to have fertilizer. Chemical fertilizer imported from foreign countries was too expensive. We had to do it ourselves.

Q. What about the second point in your plan? Governing the farmers? How did that work?

A. We studied methods of governing the workers and of mobilizing skilled labor for the work. Laborers were classed into three types: good, medium and bad workers. They also classified many categories of buffaloes, cows and oxen and they classified the land for the rice fields. To give you an example, a man who was classified as a good worker would be working on land classified as Grade A. And he would

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also have a category A buffalo. He would work on 300 or 400 square meters every day. If a man works his 300 or 400 meters successfully and meets his quota, he will be awarded ten points, but if you are a medium worker who works with a medium buffalo and a medium piece of land you can still earn ten points if you accomplish as much as a class A farmer working a good piece of land with a good buffalo. But if you are only able to work less than 300 or 400 square meters a day with your medium land and your medium buffalo, you will only receive eight points. There is no distinction between men and women; they had the same quotas.

- Q. How were the people organized? Were these collective farms or communes?
- A. The men who were in the various categories received titles of ownership to their land. You couldn't say that the land belonged to the Government. You could say it was a collective farm. During the land reform between 1956 and 1958 the Government confiscated all the land and then made collective farms out of it.
- Q. You told us that the farm you administered was collective. Could you tell us what reaction there was among the people to having life organized in this manner? Why was it done between 1956 and 1958?
- A. The VC classified landlords into three different kinds: the first were the landlords who had committed many crimes against the people; these people were sent to trial before the people's court. Most of them were killed, or thrown in jail. The second category were landowners who had not committed crimes against the people. The VC considered them as ordinary landlords. The third category were landlords who helped the Viet Minh during the war against the French. That category had their land bought by the Government and the Government has given notes promising to pay later but no one has ever dared to ask for the money. The children of the landlord had to work as ordinary peasants. Ordinarily that category either had many children in the Viet Minh army or had given rice and money to the army during the war.
- Q. Could you tell me how you first came to hear about the Chieu Hoi Program?
- A. When I was in Hoa Binh Province in 1965 I had my first occasion to look into the Chieu Hoi Program. That was in September 1965. We had rigged up a system with the very tall antenna and batteries and loudspeaker so that we could hear these things. We had a small receiver. We knew that the Chieu Hoi broadcasts came from the South. We did not know whether it came from the Government or the Americans or whom, but we knew it came from South Viet Nam. Some-

also have a category of land... returns every day. It was... will... who works... still... working... only able to... your... points. There is no... they...

Q. How were the... organized? Were these... farms on... command?

A. The men who were in... category... to their... You... Government. You... 1955 and 1956 the Government... and... out of it.

Q. You told... you... there was... life... it was...

A. The... had... many... people... were... The... against... The... ordinary... The... the Viet... and the... he has... had to work... category... had... to the... and money to the... the war.

Q. Would you... you... the...?

A. When... Province... 1955... the very... We had... from the... it... from the Government of the... 50th...

times we could hear the stations well and other times we could not because the Government would use jamming to cut out the broadcast. The VC authorities would beat on drums and kettles so people could not hear the broadcasts on their receivers.

Q. Were there any rules against listening to Radio Saigon or foreign broadcasts?

A. Ordinarily the VC said we must not listen to the broadcasts of the nationalists who were the enemy. The method they had of controlling the family people was that each family would control a neighboring family.

Q. Who had the right to own radios?

A. It was difficult to buy radios but you could buy them. The Government had a limited supply and could divide them among various regions of the country. These were imported from foreign countries.

Q. Why would they let you build the antennas if you were not allowed to listen to radio broadcasts?

A. The Government allowed the people to build an antenna in order to pick up the Communist broadcasts but the people would wait until eleven at night and tune in the broadcast from the South.

Q. Were there any other broadcasts you used to listen to besides those from the South?

A. In 1958 we were allowed to listen to broadcasts from Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi. In 1960 the Sino-Soviet dispute broke out and after that we were not allowed to listen to the Moscow broadcasts. In 1961, because the people were able to listen to Peking and find out about the dispute, the Government cut off the privilege of listening to Peking.

Q. Did you ever get a chance to listen to the radio in your regiment?

A. Nobody had his own radio. Even the political cadre of the regiment were forbidden to listen to enemy radio broadcasts. There was one time when the assistant to the regiment commander listened to Radio Saigon on a radio they had for military operations and his neighbor found out and denounced him to the chief and to the political cadre. The assistant was criticized at the self-criticism session and he accepted his error.

... we could ... the station ... we could ... the Government ... the ... would ... not ...

Q. Now there are ... against ... to Radio ... of ...
A. ...

Q. ... we must not ... the ... of the ...
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Q. ... had the ...

Q. ... difficult ... could ...
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Q. ... would ... allow ...
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Q. ... the Government ...
A. ... the people ...

Q. ... the ...
A. ...

Q. ... in 1955 ...
A. ... we were not ... because the ... the ...

Q. ... the ...

Q. ... the ...
A. ... the ...

- Q. What were the self-criticism sessions like? How often were they held?
- A. Ordinarily there was one big criticism meeting a year to deal with political and ideological subjects. This meeting included all the cadre in the regiment, officers and troops as well. But every day during the evening there was a criticism session as well.
- Q. Were you ever criticized at a self-criticism session?
- A. In 1958 and thereafter when they were in the process of throwing out the bourgeois officers from the army, I was often criticized for being a petty capitalist and for having a bourgeois mentality, but after we returned to the army in 1965 we were criticized for not having good will toward the army because we were not as happy there as we had been before.
- Q. What was the relationship between the political cadre and the military cadre in your regiment?
- A. In theory, the military and political cadre are supposed to be equal. In reality, however, the high ranking cadre, both political and military, use their high position to oppress the lower ranking cadre quite a bit. They did not allow the lower ranking cadre to criticize them or to tell the truth.
- Q. Who had more power in the regiment, political or military?
- A. The military were responsible for military operations but ordinarily those operations were carried out in order to satisfy the political cadre. The political cadre always had the last word and always made the final decision. At one time the VC used to distinguish between people who are exploiters and who are exploited, but now they are in a new period and they are making a distinction between people who are leaders and people who are led.
- Q. Could you tell me when the new words came into style?
- A. Objectively the same things go on now as in the past, they have just changed the words. We appreciate that. According to doctrine, cadre are supposed to be equal but this is only on the surface and in fact I recognized that I was being oppressed by the leaders who had the power.

that was the only one that was often used.

ordinarily there was no objection to the political and ideological subjects in the regiment. The only objection was the evening class was a bit too long.

was very much criticized at a meeting.

in fact and therefore when the out of comparison of ideas from her being a petty capitalist but after we returned to the not having good relations with us as we had been.

was the whole idea of the military cadres in your regiment.

in fact, the military and political cadres, however, the high quality, and their high quality, they did not want to tell the truth.

the military and political cadres.

The military and political cadres are ordinary but ordinary. They are not making a bet on people and who is concerned, but they are the leaders who are led.

the military and political cadres.

Other than the same thing go to the political and ideological subjects in the regiment. The only objection was the evening class was a bit too long.

- Q. After you heard that radio broadcast in 1965 did you ever hear about the Chieu Hoi program again before you rallied?
- A. During the journey from North Viet Nam to Quang Nam south, I was the chief of a section and so I had the right to keep a radio. The radio belonged to the Government. It had the brand name National and was Japanese made. During that trip I had many occasions to hear of the Chieu Hoi Program secretly. I used to listen secretly when I was in my hammock, and I used a small earphone. I did not dare to discuss the program with anyone else.
- Q. Did you ever hear any loudspeaker broadcasts from airplanes?
- A. When I was in Quang Ngai Province I heard about the program from airplanes, and also, like many other of my comrades in the VC, I was very fond of listening to BBC radio broadcasts. And I think that if the Vietnamese Government could talk the BBC into making propaganda about the Chieu Hoi Program, many of the VC would believe it.
- Q. On that loudspeaker broadcast, did you understand what was said?
- A. When I heard the broadcast I believed it because at that time I already intended to rally.
- Q. Could you hear the broadcast clearly?
- A. Sometimes it was clear, sometimes not.
- Q. Do you remember what the broadcast said?
- A. It usually said that the people who are in the VC Main Force and NLF should rally to the Government because otherwise they would die shamefully and they would be attacked by the B-52s. If you do not rally to the Government you will die shamefully. If you return to the Government you would be received honestly and sincerely as you should be. Surrendering to the Government was a way to avoid death and stay alive. Sometimes I could hear the plane very well when it was over me but when it made a large circle I could only hear the first sentence and couldn't hear the rest. In my opinion the Government should use helicopters rather than fixed wing planes because the helicopter can fly high and use a long cord to avoid being shot at from the ground and it can stay stationary and broadcast to the soldiers on the ground. The L-19 planes they used to broadcast would fly too fast and you could not understand what they said.

After you hear... the Chief...

...the Chief... the Chief...

0. Did you... the Chief...

When I was... the Chief...

On that... the Chief...

I heard... the Chief...

0. Did you... the Chief...

...the Chief...

0. Did you... the Chief...

It was... the Chief... very... would only... very... would only... very... would only...

- Q. The broadcast threatened that you would be attacked by B-52s. In fact, did it ever happen to you?
- A. Personally I was attacked by air strikes on three occasions. One time the regiment was attacked by B-52s but only some peasants got killed, nobody from the regiment. The bombs fell off to the side of where the regiment was located. Another time the B-52s dropped bombs on our regiment but it was not effective because we had dug deep trenches. The tunnels we had had a cover of about 120 centimeters of earth to avoid blasts and anti-personnel effects of the bombing. We were aware that the B-52s were strategic bombers that were being used in Viet Nam for tactical purposes and we had trenches to protect ourselves, but of course if one of the heavy bombs fell on top of you, you were dead. When one of those bombs went off, the atmosphere or pressure of the shock wave was in itself enough to kill you.
- Q. What effects did such bombings have on the morale of your unit?
- A. The B-52s were never effective against my unit, but one night the B-57s came over and dropped a bomb which killed one person.
- Q. You told us before that at the time you heard the radio broadcast you had already decided to rally. When did you decide to rally?
- A. I intended to ever since I heard about the program in 1965 on the radio. I tried to defect from my unit three times but I did not succeed. Each time there were obstacles to prevent me. It was only on the fourth try that I was able to rally. The first time I attempted to desert I was unsuccessful because when I left the camp I ran into the political and military commanders of the regiment. The political cadre did not catch on that I had the idea of rallying. He thought that I had a mission to go out and look over the landscape. So he kept me there to help him study the lay of the land. A second time I was in Hiep Duc District and I was with the rear service and at that time two American helicopters came in and landed some troops very near where I was and I intended to go over to the helicopters to rally but on my way over two other helicopters came in and lifted out the troops. This is a tactic the Americans were using to try and draw our forces into one area toward the area where they had rallied so I didn't have a chance to rally that time either. At that time I was in Thang Binh District. I left the camp and tried to escape, but on the way I met some VC guerrillas and although they recognized that I was an officer they would not let me proceed without the proper papers. When it came around to try the fourth time I was a very experienced man. What I did was first to get a map and study the way to get out and made out some false papers which I signed myself and put a stamp on it and then I went to the same

The first thing I did was to try to get some information on the whereabouts of the other prisoners in the camp.

I asked the guard who was in charge of the kitchen for some information on this.

I was told that the prisoners who were in the kitchen were the only ones who were not killed. The others were all killed. I was told that the prisoners who were in the kitchen were the only ones who were not killed. The others were all killed. I was told that the prisoners who were in the kitchen were the only ones who were not killed. The others were all killed.

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guerrilla post where I had been apprehended before and said "Here, if you want a paper, here's your paper," and told them that they had to let me go.

Q. Were the guerrillas suspicious of your false papers?

A. No, they could not recognize that I had a false document.

Q. What were your reasons for deciding to rally in the first place?

A. I recognized that in my past the Communists had never given anything to my family although we had worked very hard and lost everything. As for myself I had been first lieutenant for a long time and they had never given me a promotion. I had been purged from the army and sent to the countryside and when they needed someone to go to the South and get killed, they sent for me.

Q. Did you ever discuss this idea you had of rallying with your wife or anyone else?

A. I never discussed it openly with my wife; I only told her one thing and that was that I will suddenly return. Perhaps now she recognizes I had the intention of rallying. In order to return I would have to leave the army and stay alive. I also told my wife I did not desire to return wounded having lost an arm or a leg. And I also had to avoid being wounded politically because if I refused to go to the South the political cadre would say I was a man who did not have good will so I would have been hurt badly politically.

Q. Do you think the Communists know that you have rallied?

A. I had a plan to cover this, because I left my unit during a bombardment and I left behind me my cap and knapsack in order to make the VC think I had been blown up by the bombs. I know that this was successful because another man came in as a rallier from my regiment and he is in the National Center. He told me they indeed thought I had been killed by the bombs, and this was fine for two months until a Government psychological officer asked me to write a leaflet to be dropped up there so perhaps they know now I am a rallier.

Q. Are you afraid that the Government might take some revenge on your family in the North because you wrote that leaflet?

A. Suddenly the VC will take some action. My wife will lose the pension she was getting and probably also lose her work and the children will be miserable as well.

1. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

2. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

3. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

4. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

5. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

6. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

7. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

8. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

9. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy.

- Q. Do you think that leaflet you wrote that was dropped will be effective in encouraging other men to rally?
- A. It should be, because once the VC troops, even the ordinary soldiers, see that a cadre of middle rank like myself has rallied, they will have some questions in their own minds. There was a VC medic in my regiment who I am certain would like to rally. He was a close friend. The third time I tried to escape I was going to invite him to come with me, but he was busy at the time. If he is still alive, he very well may rally as a result of this leaflet.
- Q. Did you write the leaflets voluntarily or did the Psywar people make you write them?
- A. I wanted to keep my whereabouts secret in order to protect my family and in order to do a lot of secret things for a long time, but a Psywar officer made me write the leaflet so now the plan is ruined. The officer did not force me physically into writing it, but I was kind of disappointed because I had hoped the Government might use me for special missions instead of letting the VC know that I was still alive and in Government hands. When I rallied I intended to protect my family and help the Government by making the VC think I was dead. If I had done this, I could have helped the South Vietnamese Government by doing intelligence work or even going into the North and doing sabotage and espionage work. I could have done a lot in the North because I could live there as a peasant. I am accustomed to the climate and the way of life--and no one would have recognized me. If they gave me some training and sent me to the North I could have lived in all the cities and provinces and no one would have ever recognized me. Therefore I have a few suggestions as to how the Government should behave in the future. Number one, the first question they should ask a rallier is what do the VC in his unit think - that he is dead or rallied? Secondly, the Government should not put the ralliers in the same place as they do prisoners as they do in Da Nang and at G2 in Saigon. Along the same lines, I think that in the Chieu Hoi Program they ought to distinguish between higher ranking and ordinary ralliers. I was an officer and now I am sleeping in the same room with men who were my subordinates. The National Center is supposed to be for higher level people but here you have a lot of ordinary ralliers, deserters from the Saigon Government army as well as Saigon cowboys as well as officers and squad leaders. I don't like this kind of living with all sorts of people mixed in together.
- Q. When you were at Da Nang and living with the prisoners, what kind of a Center was that?
- A. When I was there I stayed with the First Corps G2.

