

# INTERVIEW WITH VIETNAM WAR PARTICIPANT

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**NAME** LE QUOC CAN (PAVN)  
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**BACKGROUND** Platoon Leader, Rear Service, Company 7, NVA 5th Battalion,  
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(Tay Ninh Province)  
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Subject: The Infiltration trip (IV)

**SOURCE** SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES & ANALYSES LIMITED (For JUSPAO)  
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Rallier Report 27 - D - (72)

Interview of  
Rallier LE QUOC CAN  
Platoon Leader  
Rear Service Administrator  
Company 7, Battalion 5, Tay Ninh

IV. THE INFILTRATION TRIP

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Interviewer : Phan Thi Hue  
Date of Inter : 11 February 1972  
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Director  
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Assistant Secretary  
Accounts Officer  
Clerk

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#### IV. THE INFILTRATION TRIP

1. Did you know the names of the places you went by during your infiltration trip?

- Yes, we were told the name of every place we travelled by.

2. Who told you?

- People at the way stations.

3. While marching on the Trail, did you ever try to figure out how far you had already marched? If so, how?

- I knew every place we reached after hours of march. But I never tried to figure out how far we had already travelled.

4. Where did you set off for the trip? What route did you follow?

- We started off from Bac Giang by train. In Vinh, we changed to boats then to trucks to get to Quang Binh. Then we began the march on foot all the way down to SVN. We arrived in Tay Ninh in June.

5. How many trucks did your group have for part of your trip south?

- We were trucked all the way from Ha Tinh to Quang Binh. The trip by truck lasted one day and one night. The 350 men in our group were split up into small groups of 16 men for the ride on trucks.

6. Where did these vehicles come from? What type were they?

- They were trucks and passenger buses sent by the Defense

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REFERENCE

DESCRIPTION

DETAILS

REMARKS

CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATION

DATE

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REMARKS

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Ministry.

7. During the march, was your group ever bombed or shelled? If so, did it suffer any casualties?

- When we arrived at our assembly area in the South, our group was short of 50 men. These men had been left behind at various way stations. Along the Trail they had malaria, and couldn't continue the march.

8. Did anyone desert back to NVN?

- None in my unit did.

9. Before your departure, did you know how long the trip would take you?

- The cadres didn't inform us but we reckoned that the trip might take us six months. As it turned out, the trip did take us six months.

10. Before leaving for the South did you know the unit you would be assigned to as reinforcement? Did you know when you'd be operating in Laos, Cambodia or SVN?

- All I knew was I would be assigned as a reinforcement to a unit operating in SVN.

11. Who told you so?

- I learned of my future assignment in SVN in a study session

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on the war situation in general, and on policies in SVN.

12. Before the trip, did you know heavy fighting was going on in the South?

- I didn't know every detail. I knew, however, that heavy fighting was going on.

13. What were you told exactly about action in the South?

- We were told that as we would be fighting against US troops, we should expect heavy action. It was said we'd be exposed to strong military pressure and we'd undergo hardships. That was broadly what we'd been told.

14. Who told you?

- The unit's company cadres.

15. Who did you meet on the infiltration Trail?

- Nobody at all.

16. On the Trail, did you ever experience starvation?

- We would reach a supply station after every 3-to-5 days of march. At these stations our food supplies were replenished, and so, there was no question of running out of food on the Trail.

17. Which was the most difficult and dangerous part of the trip?

- The trip across Laos was the most arduous.

18. What did you fear most on the Trail?

The first part of the report is devoted to a general  
 description of the project and the objectives to be  
 achieved. It is followed by a detailed account of the  
 work done during the period covered by the report.  
 The results of the work are then presented and  
 discussed. Finally, a summary of the work is given  
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- Nothing in particular.

19. What made you feel so confident?

- Simply because there wasn't any reason to feel apprehensive since the trip went on smoothly. We were neither bombed nor shelled. The only time we felt our courage might have failed us was when we were marching in Laos. As I said, the march became really arduous. We had to climb up high slopes, go through thick jungles, march in a hot sun and suffer thirst because of low water supplies. This was the most difficult part of the trip. Apart from that, we were never threatened by air or artillery attacks.

20. What did your comrade-in-arms fear most during the infiltration trip?

- Nothing.

21. Was your unit ever detected and attacked by aircraft?

- No, never.

22. Was discipline very strict during the trip? Did anyone throw away his weapon, ammo supply or other things to alleviate his load?

- Some men got rid of their extra pair of shoes, and/or other unnecessary things. Nobody threw away his precious rice supply.

23. How much did a man carry on his back during the trip south?

- An average of 25 kilos.

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24. Please say how you felt before, during and after the trip?

- From the moment I left for the infiltration trip to the day I arrived in Tay Ninh, my morale remained unaltered. I didn't feel either overexcited or so frustrated as to think of evading my duties at the service of the revolution. I remained calm throughout the whole period. After we got to the frontline, my fighting spirit went very high up and I was looking forward to going to combat as soon as possible. I was convinced that I'd fight well, and indeed I did. However, after I caught malaria my physical condition quickly deteriorated and my morale was somewhat affected. Subsequently after two months of medical care in a hospital, I went back to my active duty morally recovered, although physically weakened. Indeed, back from the hospital my combat spirit was as high as could be. I was no less willing to endure hardships. Because of my good morale, I never failed to fulfill my assignments. It is true it hadn't been always easy for me to do so from one battlefield to another. Many a time, the harsh living conditions and the lack of supplies almost discouraged me. However, I never let those things get the better of me. In Rach Gia where I was subsequently assigned, I found living conditions in that area much better than in the places I had been before. Here, not only did we have low level of action, but



we also had more regular supplies. During that period, I felt as confident as I did when I left NVN for the trip south. My morale remained high until the time I made plans to come out to rally.

25. Now please tell me about the morale of the men in your infiltration unit before, during and after the trip?

- The long and exhausting march on the Trail through jungle and across mountains demoralized many a man. Moreover, the constant threat from the B-52s and, in particular, the prospect of heavy action on the battlefield in SVN. The men often expressed their longing for home, but never because of this did they fight and turn against their cadres.

26. What was the percentage of soldiers longing for home?

- My unit was composed uniquely of North Vietnamese. Everyman in the unit felt missing home at one time or another. It can be said about 80 percent of us were homesick.

27. Did your homesickness affect your combat spirit in any way?

- The men tended to open their hearts and confide in each other whenever they felt homesick. At those moments more than any other time they looked forward to the reunification of the country, so they could go back to their families.

28. Did the men's homesickness adversely affect their combat ability?





- No, it didn't.

29. Did anything adversely affect their combat spirit?

- No.

30. How could it be? Surely the hardships at the front, the death casualties must have had an impact on the men's mind, don't you think?

What adversely affected your morale the most?

- Personally, I eagerly carried out the job the Party and my unit entrusted me, and did it well. As for my combat spirit, it remained high from the beginning to the end.

31. How many men in your infiltration unit safely reached destination in SVN?

- Of the 350 men in my group, 300 arrived at destination. Fifty men had to be left behind because of malaria.

32. Did your unit get replacements to make up for its reduced strength?

- After your unit's arrival in the South, did you remain with your battalion, or were you assigned to another unit?

- Soon after we got to our assembly area in the South, a battalion operating in the South came to take us away to rebuild its numerical strength. We all were assigned to various units operating in various areas. Some of the cadres who had come with us returned to SVN to accompany other troops to the South.

1944

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country during the year 1944. It is noted that the economy has been severely affected by the war, and that the government has taken various measures to cope with the situation.

2. The second part of the report deals with the financial situation. It is noted that the government has incurred large losses during the year, and that the budget has been in deficit. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to reduce its expenditure and to increase its revenue.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation. It is noted that the war has caused a great deal of hardship for the people, and that the government has taken various measures to provide relief. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the living conditions of the people.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the foreign situation. It is noted that the country has been isolated by the war, and that the government has taken various measures to maintain its relations with the outside world. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its foreign trade.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the military situation. It is noted that the country has been attacked by the enemy, and that the government has taken various measures to defend itself. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its military forces.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the political situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its administration, and that it has taken various measures to increase its efficiency. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its relations with the people.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the economic situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the economy, and that it has taken various measures to increase its production. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its financial situation.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the social situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the living conditions of the people, and that it has taken various measures to provide relief. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the education of the people.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the foreign situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its relations with the outside world, and that it has taken various measures to increase its foreign trade. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its diplomatic position.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the military situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its military forces, and that it has taken various measures to defend itself. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its military equipment.

11. The eleventh part of the report deals with the political situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its administration, and that it has taken various measures to increase its efficiency. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its relations with the people.

12. The twelfth part of the report deals with the economic situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the economy, and that it has taken various measures to increase its production. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its financial situation.

13. The thirteenth part of the report deals with the social situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the living conditions of the people, and that it has taken various measures to provide relief. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve the education of the people.

14. The fourteenth part of the report deals with the foreign situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its relations with the outside world, and that it has taken various measures to increase its foreign trade. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its diplomatic position.

15. The fifteenth part of the report deals with the military situation. It is noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its military forces, and that it has taken various measures to defend itself. It is also noted that the government has taken various measures to improve its military equipment.

33. Where were you assigned to?

- To Infantry Battalion H. 5.

34. What did you think of your new unit after your arrival there?

- Soon after I got to my new unit I attended a battalion briefing on the unit's combat achievements since its activation. What I was told made me feel very proud of serving in its ranks.

35. How were you received by this new unit's veteran soldiers? Did they treat you well?

- I didn't feel the newcomers were discriminated against. In fact, we all were treated equally. Moreover, because we were newcomers we were given more attention than oldtimers.

36. What were you told about the unit's combat successes? What battles were you told the unit won?

- Among other things I was told that one of the battalion's companies once annihilated a ROK company, and that our whole battalion-sized unit once engaged in a battle which ended in our victory after we had killed an entire US battalion.

37. Were you told anything about the fierce battles your unit had fought and the hardships the men in the unit had gone through so as to give you an idea of their experiences and prepare you for the harsh realities of the war?



- Yes, I was told about the high level of action at the front our unit was in charge of. I was told a lot of things, but don't now remember them all.

38. Did the knowledge of the high level of action in your area and the heavy death toll caused by enemy bombing and shelling have any impact on your combat spirit?

- No.

39. Please tell me about the combat morale of the men in your new unit. Take them by their social background and age.

- The younger men went into combat with great enthusiasm. Older men with big families were more and more affected by homesickness. However, they still fought courageously.

40. Did the expansion of the war to Laos, Cambodia affect your fighting morale? Did it affect your comrades' morale?

- No. As the war has now expanded to three fronts -- Laos, Cambodia and SVN -- enemy troops are more thinly spread out instead of being concentrated in only a few areas as previously. This only makes things easier for us.

41. But with the war now raging on in Cambodia and Laos, the flow of supplies from NVN to COSVN is drastically reduced, and so this should adversely affect Communist units, shouldn't it?

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- The more the war expands, the more room NVN has for maneuver. As far as our unit was concerned, as I said, we were an independent outfit which received only orders from the high command. We carried out those orders by coordinating with region and zone units. The expansion of the war had no adverse effect on the morale of the men in my unit.

42. You were in charge of rear service, and therefore, didn't take part in fierce battles, and this is probably the reason why you and others in your outfit had high morale, isn't?

- We were a Main Force unit. I myself was in charge of the unit's rear service. Whenever an offensive drive was launched, we all were committed into action, and on many occasions, we fought to counter the enemy's sweep operations. When this happened, we fought as courageously as any other combat unit.

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