

APPENDIX II

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Gareth Porter Refuted.

EXPERT PUNCTURES 'NO BLOODBATH' MYTH

(By Robert F. Turner)

Mr. Turner, now at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace in Palo Alto, Calif., spent the last two years working for the North Vietnamese Affairs Division of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, a branch of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. While serving in this capacity, he closely followed the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong radio and press, read thousands of classified captured documents, interviewed scores of important North Vietnamese and Viet Cong defectors and traveled widely throughout the country investigating incidents of Viet Cong terror.

Until recently it was generally accepted that the Communist regime in the Democratic Republic of (North) Viet Nam had conducted a major purge—frequently characterized as a “bloodbath” following their takeover in 1954. The purge was thought to have taken the form of a “land reform,” and—depending upon which authority one accepted—resulted in between 50,000 and 500,000 deaths.

Because President Nixon and his supporters have cited this “bloodbath” as evidence of what might happen should the Viet Cong be victorious in South Viet Nam, a group of anti-Viet Nam war activists has now challenged the idea that a bloodbath in fact took place. They charge that the “bloodbath” is a myth perpetrated with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The specifications of the charge deal primarily with one book, Hoang Van Chi's *From Colonialism to Communism—A Case History of North Viet Nam*, which the revisionists assert is “based on a series of falsehoods, nonexistent documents and slanted translations which leave no doubt that [the author's] purpose was propaganda rather than accurate history.” The charges are set forth in a 59-page paper, “The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Viet Nam's Land Reform Reconsidered,” prepared by Mr. D. Gareth Porter a research associate at Cornell University's International Relations of East Asia Project.

Mr. Porter's conclusions have received considerable attention in American communications media, and certainly if his charges are valid the attention is warranted. In fact, however, few of Mr. Porter's accusations withstand analysis.

Rather than providing his readers with a scholarly refutation of a “myth,” Porter has produced an incredibly sloppy piece of propaganda which contributes little of value to the literature of the field. This admittedly harsh conclusion results from an examination of several of Porter's fundamental arguments.

Mr. Porter begins by noting the important role the book *From Colonialism to Communism* has played as a primary source on the North Vietnamese land reform, and then proceeds to attack its author as a liar in the pay of the CIA. He notes that a CIA official once identified Hoang Van Chi in a *Foreign Affairs* article as a “former Viet Minh cadre,” and charges “in fact he was never a party member.” The apparent conflict here is non-existent.

The brief biographical sketch of Mr. Chi on the dust-jacket of his book makes it clear that he was never a Communist party member, but notes his participation in the Viet Minh Administration. The Viet Minh, it should be recalled, was a front established by the Communists in May 1941 to unite as many elements of Vietnamese society as possible. Although it was from the beginning domi-

nated by Communists, many of its members supported it on purely nationalistic grounds. As the "Pentagon Papers" noted:

"The announced program of the Viet Minh called for a wide range of social and political reforms designed mainly to appeal to Viet patriotism.... The ICP [Indochinese Communist party] was during the war the hard core of the Viet Minh, but the bulk of the Viet Minh membership were no doubt quite unaware of that fact: they served the Viet Minh out of a patriotic fervor.¹

The biographical sketch in Chi's *From Colonialism to Communism* informs the reader:

"... In 1945, hoping that co-operation with Communists and nationalists would lead to a democratic independent Viet Nam, he joined the Viet Minh resistance. He was made director of the National Mint in Hanoi and, after the outbreak of hostilities, director of a paper-manufacturing plant. He was awarded a national citation by Ho Chi Minh in 1948 for designing and building a small hydroelectric plant which supplied the paper-works with power. After 1950, when all key posts in North Viet Nam were restricted to party members, he was employed successively as a member of a chemical research project and as a teacher in science and mathematics." [Emphasis added].

From this it is clear that Hoang Van Chi did not, as Porter implied, misrepresent himself. He *did* in fact work for the Viet Minh, but was not and did not claim to be a member of the Communist party.

Porter further charges "... he was not connected either with the Viet Minh government or the Lao Dong [Communist] party during the entire period of the land reform—a fact which appears nowhere in the book." Porter is again mistaken, as the last sentence quoted above indicates.

Mr. Porter also tries to discredit Hoang Van Chi by noting that Mr. Chi received a grant from the Congress for Cultural Freedom to write his book.

Porter continues: "For many years the Central Intelligence Agency channeled funds to the Congress for Cultural Freedom as part of its global program of supporting anti-Communist intellectual groups." He does not present any evidence or even charge that Chi was aware of this covert CIA involvement, or that Chi was required or expected to slant his writing as a condition of receiving the grant.

If Hoang Van Chi is to be discredited for accepting financial assistance from the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the same standards must be applied to others who receive similar support—including both Arthur Schlesinger and John Kenneth Galbraith. Certainly no serious reader would brand these gentlemen as "CIA agents" or suggest that their integrity was somehow suspect because of their having accepted CCF support, yet this is what Mr. Porter has attempted to do to Hoang Van Chi for the same offense.

PORTER'S CHARGES

Porter's final attempt to discredit Hoang Van Chi is so absurd as to deserve little comment. He charges that after the book was published, "Hoang Van Chi then came to the United States to work for the USIA and he now lectures at AID's Washington Training Center." How these activities could possibly influence the contents of a book which had already been published is difficult to comprehend.

Porter devotes considerable space to charges that Hoang Van Chi misrepresented some of the slogans used by the party during the land reform. At one point he writes:

"The central allegation in Chi's account is that the aim of the DRV leaders was the liquidation of the defenseless land-owning class. In support of this charge Chi quotes what he calls the 'famous slogan' of the Lao Dong party regarding rural classes: 'Depend completely on the poor, and landless peasants, unite with the middle-level peasants, seek an understanding with the rich peasants and liquidate the landlords.'

"The slogan in question was indeed 'famous,' since it represented the general policy of the party during the land reform, which every cadre was expected to understand thoroughly. But Mr. Chi misquotes the slogan and in the process

¹The New Grant Edition, *The Pentagon Papers, The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Viet Nam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), vol. I, p. 44.

completely misrepresents the DRV's policy toward the landlord class. The slogan actually said, 'abolish the feudal regime of land ownership in a manner that is discriminating, methodical and under sound leadership.'

Once again Porter is wrong. While there were several slogans in use in North Viet Nam during various stages of the land reform, the one quoted by Hoang Van Chi summarizes the general policy of the DRV and Lao Dong party. Three of the four elements can be attributed directly to Ho Chi Minh, who in a major speech to the third session of the North Vietnamese National Assembly (December 1953) said of the coming land reform:

"The general line and policy is entirely to rely on landless and land-poor peasants, closely to unite with the middle peasants, to rally with the rich peasants, to wipe out feudal exploitation step by step and with differentiation, to develop production, and to speed up the resistance war."²

The fourth element—concerning the liquidation of land owners—can be found in other North Vietnamese publications, including one cited by Mr. Porter. In an official North Vietnamese account of the land reform, Tran Phuong writes:

"Therefore a definitive and thorough liquidation of the feudal landlords' class—as a class—was imposed by the necessity of strengthening the rear, destroying the social basis for French imperialism and creating favourable conditions for implementing all necessary measures for carrying on the war and rebuilding the country later on."³

In light of these statements by Ho Chi Minh and Tran Phuong, it is evident that Mr. Porter is in error when he charged Hoang Van Chi "completely misrepresents the DRV's policy toward the landlord class."

Porter cites the party daily, *Nhan Dan*, to prove that the object of the land reform struggle was not all landlords but "only those who refuse to abide by the policy, who refuse to reduce rents and debts." Actually, the object of the campaign was not only all "landlords," but also those Vietnamese identified by the party as "traitors." As Ho Chi Minh explained on March 3, 1953:

"To agitate the masses is to struggle, and a struggle must have its objective. . . . I can declare that the objective of struggle of the masses is those who do not implement the policy of the party, government and Front, and do not reduce land rent and interest rates. As regards the traitors and cruel notables, the government and people will punish them outright."⁴

'DANGEROUS PEOPLE'

It should be noted that the Communists include under the label "traitors" many groups which would not qualify as such in this country. Jeffrey Race, a Harvard scholar with considerable experience in South Viet Nam and author of *War Comes to Long An*, quotes a senior Viet Cong defector's explanation of why apolitical school teachers are frequently executed by the Viet Cong as "traitors":

"Why were there assassinations of teachers, many of whom did not even work for the government? Because they were people . . . who were pure nationalists, who might be able to assume anti-Communist leadership in the area. Such people are very dangerous and hence are classed as traitors."⁵

Needless to say, people who had worked for the French were also included under this category.

When Porter concludes that not all landlords were targets of the land reform struggle, he is apparently the victim of the early propaganda used in the campaign. Both the *Nhan Dan* quote cited by Porter, and the March 3, 1953, Ho Chi Minh quote cited above, indicate that the program is primarily aimed at those landlords who fail to reduce land rent and interest rates.

If this were true, one might suppose that a cooperative landlord might be able to voluntarily give his land away and escape punishment. In fact, this

² Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961) vol. III, p. 422.

³ Tran Phuong, "The Land Reform" in Pages of History 1945-1954, Vietnamese Studies No. 7 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n. d.) p. 178. This source is quoted by Mr. Porter in footnote 31 on page 32.

⁴ Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol. III, p. 385.

⁵ Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) p. 83.

was impossible. Ho Chi Minh announced on Dec. 4, 1953, that: "The dispersion of land by landlords after the promulgation of the land rent reduction decree (July 14, 1949) is illegal. . . ."⁶

Ho and his associates planned from the start to include all landlords in the struggle, but for tactical reasons attacked them in successive stages. Ho was simply applying the basic principles set forth many years earlier by his mentor, Lenin, who warned of the necessity to fight one enemy at a time and to divide the enemy when possible to facilitate the struggle.⁷

As Ho explained to a group of land reform cadres in September 1954: "We must know how to discriminate between landlords. They are the peasants' enemies, but they are not united. If discrimination can be made, our work will be easier."⁸

NORTH'S LAND POLICY

Truong Chinh, who was party secretary-general and a key figure in the land reform, has noted that "from the [1945] August revolution we planned to carry out the land policy in three stages," explaining: "This was to divide the landlord class to the highest possible degree, to paralyze its resistance to a certain extent, and to win over landlords taking part in the resistance and their families."⁹

Tran Phuong, in an official DRV history of the land reform quoted by Mr. Porter, explains:

"As the agrarian revolution was carried out in Viet Nam in conditions that required constant consolidation and broadening of the anti-imperialist National United Front, the *tactical problem* is of particular importance.

"In order to isolate at any cost the imperialists and their agents, to win over to the revolutionary cause certain strata of land-owners and intellectuals, school-boys and students from feudal families, and to bring them into the Front, the anti-feudal task was fulfilled step by step; in other words, land reform was carried out in successive stages; at the same time, in everyday work, it is important to thoroughly grasp the principle 'less enemies, more friends' and to lay particular stress on the policy of differentiating among the feudal rank. This tactical suppleness was applied with the understanding that the feudal system of ownership and exploitation would later be totally abolished."¹⁰

Thus we again find Mr. Porter in error, and Mr. Chi exonerated.

Another slogan cited by Mr. Chi is challenged by Porter, who writes:

". . . Mr. Chi alleges the land reform campaign used the slogan 'Better kill 10 innocent people than let one enemy escape.' This alleged slogan, which bears no resemblance to any public statement by the DRV or the Lao Dong party, was first published in 1957, not in Hanoi, but in the official newspaper of Ngo Dinh Diem's National Revolutionary Movement: *Cach Manh Quoc Gia*."

To begin with, in light of his record thus far Mr. Porter might justly be termed presumptuous in claiming knowledge of every public statement by the DRV and the Lao Dong party. If this is in fact the case, the errors cited above must be attributed to flaws in his integrity rather than his scholarship.

Although this writer cannot at this time provide a citation to the writings of Ho Chi Minh or another senior party leader mentioning the slogan in question, he has several reasons for accepting Mr. Chi's word that it was used during the land reform.

First of all, he has been told by senior North Vietnamese Army defectors that it was used and did represent the party's policy during this period.

Secondly, Chi is not the only Vietnamese scholar to cite this slogan. For example, Le Chau—a Vietnamese living in France who is sympathetic to the Communist cause—quotes the slogan *mieux vaut dieu morts innocents qu'un ennemi survivant* in his *Le Viet Nam Socialiste*.¹¹

⁶ Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol. III, p. 423.

⁷ V. I. Lenin, "Left Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, "Books of Socialism," n.d.) p. 65 This is frequently quoted by North Vietnamese leaders, as for example by Le Duan, The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems, Essential Tasks (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1970) p. 39.

⁸ Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol. IV, n. 52.

⁹ Truong Chinh, Forward Along the Path Traced by K. Marx (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1969) p. 52.

¹⁰ Tran Phu, "The Land Reform," p. 196.

¹¹ Le Chau, Let Viet Nam Socialiste: Une Economie de Transition (Paris: François Maspéro, 1966), p. 143.

Porter notes that several authorities, including the late Bernard Fall, have written that the party established a "quota" of landlords to be executed in each village. Without presenting any evidence to disprove these reports he proceeds to brand them as a "legend" and asserts:

"No one who was familiar with the concepts and methods employed by the Lao Dong party or had studied the basic party and government documents of the land reform period could have seriously entertained the notion that Hanoi would call for the classification, arrest or execution of an arbitrarily high number of people."

In spite of Mr. Porter's belief to the contrary, there was in fact a quota of executions required of land reform teams and "people's courts" during the campaign. The reports of Bernard Fall, Hoang Van Chi, and others are confirmed by the personal investigations of this writer.

North Vietnamese Army Col. Huynh Cu, who served as a "people's court" judge during the land reform in Hai Duong Province of North Viet Nam, confirmed the existence of such quotas in a conversation with this writer in September 1970. Furthermore, this writer has personally seen many documents captured from the Viet Cong which provide quotas of "tyrants" and "reactionaries" to be killed in various villages during a given campaign.

'ELIMINATE TRAITORS'

Typical of these captured documents was a directive dated Jan. 31, 1969, from the Security Section of Que Son District. It spoke of the need to increase "our determination to annihilate tyrants and eliminate traitors," and termed the mission of annihilating tyrant as "urgent." As an immediate task it included a list of the 25 villages in the district, with a quota by each village giving the number of "tyrants" to be killed. The quotas ranged from a minimum of five to a maximum of 40, with an average of over 21 "tyrants" per village.¹²

The fact that Mr. Porter is surprised that Asian Communists would use a quota system in purging "landlords," "tyrants" or "reactionaries" suggests something about his understanding of their movements.

The North Vietnamese land reform was patterned after the Chinese experience, and even included Chinese advisers.¹³ In late 1953 Ho Chi Minh observed: "The experiences of other countries have taught that a successful land reform will help us overcome many difficulties and solve many problems."¹⁴ The Chinese Communists, to whom Ho was obviously referring, had made use of a quota in their own purges of landlords. As Mao Tse-tung explained:

"The execution of one such big landlord reverberates through a whole county and is very effective in eradicating the remaining evils of feudalism. Every county has these major tyrants, some as many as several dozen and others at least a few, and the only effective way of suppressing the reactionaries is to execute at least a few in each county who are guilty of the most heinous crimes."¹⁵

In a further attempt to discredit those scholars who have written about the land reform in years past, Mr. Porter accuses them of "gross mistranslation" of important documents:

"... [t]here is no documentary evidence that there had been the kind of indiscriminate execution of innocent people so often alleged. Hoang Van Chi and others have not, in fact, used the actual texts of documents relating to the terrors of the land reform campaign, but have used gross mistranslations and misrepresentations of these documents."

GIAP'S "ADMISSION"

To support this charge, Porter cites an Oct. 29, 1956, speech by North Vietnamese Defense Minister General Vo Nguyen Giap, which Mr. Chi had quoted as saying: "We . . . executed too many honest men." According to Mr. Porter this should have been translated "the unjust disciplining of innocent people."

¹² These quotations are taken from an unpublished draft manuscript, "The Viet Cong Tactic of Assassination," which this writer prepared for the U.S. Mission in Viet Nam in 1970, pp. 35-36. The documents cited have been declassified.

¹³ From an interview with North Vietnamese Army Col. Huynh Cu on Sept. 23, 1970, conducted by the author.

¹⁴ Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, vol. III, p. 425.

¹⁵ Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967) vol. I, p. 38.

Again Mr. Porter is wrong, but in this instance his error may be attributed to his inadequate understanding of Vietnamese Communist vocabulary. The Vietnamese version of the statement in question—which appears correctly in the Vietnamese language edition of Mr. Chi's book—goes like this:

“... *ou tri oan nhung nguoi ngay* . . .”

In normal use, the words would translate as follows:

ou tri—“to act” or “to arrange everything”¹⁶

oan—“to be condemned or punish unjustly”¹⁷

nhung—pluralizer modifying next term¹⁸

nguoi—“man, person, fellow . . .”¹⁹

ngay—“honest,” “straightforward, upright, honest”²⁰

Thus the phrase might be translated to mean “[we have] unjustly punished honest men” when used in everyday Vietnamese.

However, there are a number of terms which have a special and specific meaning when used by Vietnamese Communists. This writer first became aware of this special vocabulary in mid-1970 while writing a study on the Viet Cong tactic of assassination for the U.S. Mission in Viet Nam.

In researching the study—which was never released to the public because military authorities concluded that section should be classified—this writer read hundreds of captured Viet Cong documents dealing with security matters.

The documents considered most important were discussed with defectors who had once served in the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese security apparatus, and with non-Communist Vietnamese specialists on the Viet Cong. As a result of these conversations, a list of 16 terms commonly used by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Communists to mean “kill” was included in the study. The terms were followed by their common meaning, and then by their special meaning when used by the Communists. The last of the 16 terms in the list was *ou tri*, which was identified as follows:

Xu tri—To resolve, to arrange for everything, to take care of (to kill)

LANGUAGE PROBLEM

When this interpretation is given to the term as used by Gen. Giap, the phrase in question translates: “[we have] . . . unjustly killed honest men.” To translate it—as does Mr. Chi—“We . . . executed too many honest men,” does not appear to this writer to be either a mistranslation or misrepresentation of Giap's intent. Once again it is Mr. Porter, rather than Hoang Van Chi, who is in error.

Mr. Porter also attacks Chi's account of the “policy of isolation” through which families of condemned “landlords” and “tyrants” were excommunicated from society and in many cases forced to die of starvation.

Porter writes: “This is yet another of the many wholly unsubstantiated charges put forth by Mr. Chi, for there was no such policy of isolating families, even of those landlords sentenced for serious crimes during the land reform.”

Contrary to Porter's assertion, there is considerable evidence to substantiate the existence of the “isolation” policy. During the fall of 1956 North Viet Nam underwent a three-month period of relative intellectual freedom known as the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Several publications appeared which were critical of the Communist regime before the party brought things to a halt and sent the dissident intellectuals to labor camps for “thought reform.” Perhaps the best known of the opposition periodicals was *Nhan Van*, which featured in its fifth issue (Nov. 5, 1956) an article by Nguyen Huu Dang noting that the “agrarian reform” had “left innocent children to die of starvation.”

Another opposition publication was *Giai Pham Mua Thu*, which included a poem by Hoang Cam entitled “The Enemy's Child.” The poem told of a six-year-old girl whose father had been executed by “the people” for a “debt of blood,” and who was wandering the street crying and begging for food. A young girl saw the child and went to help her, but was warned by a nearby woman:

“The child is innocent. But daughter of a landlord vile. I was summoned before the Court for giving her a bowl of soup.”

This was the “policy of isolation” which Mr. Porter informs us did not exist.

¹⁶ Nguyen Dinh Hoa, Vietnamese-English Dictionary (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1966) p. 564; Nguyen Van Khon, Viet An Tu Dien (Saigon: Nha Sach Khai Tru, 1966) p. 1322.

¹⁷ Nguyen Dinh Hoa, p. 331.

¹⁸ Nguyen Dinh Hoa, p. 329.

¹⁹ Nguyen Van Khon, p. 813.

²⁰ Nguyen Dinh Hoa, p. 301; Nguyen Van Khon, p. 778.

STARVATION OF WIVES

On Aug. 26, 1971, this writer interviewed a North Vietnamese defector named To Van Xiem who had worked for the North Vietnamese government for 21 years and had been on the Thai Binh Province planning committee during the land reform. Mr. Xiem noted that when people convicted by the "people's courts" were in jail, their wives had "a very hard life." "Some of these women were forced to starve to death. Others committed suicide. The children were left to themselves in spite of their young ages."

Another defector who witnessed part of the land reform in North Viet Nam was Le Xuan Giao, who was from Ho Chi Minh's home province of Nghe An. Mr. Giao described the "policy of isolation" in this way:

"There was nothing worse than the starvation of the children in a family whose parents were under the control of a land reform team. They isolated the house, and the people who lived there would starve. The children were all innocent. Should the father be guilty, he could be executed. The children were all innocent. There was nothing worse than that. They wanted to see the whole family dead."

Mr. Porter is being less than honest if he denies knowing that children of landlords were frequent victims of Communist "justice" during Vietnamese Communist land reforms.

In March 1971 Mr. Porter asked this writer to arrange for an interview with a senior Viet Cong defector from Kien Hoa Province, Mr. Bui Cong Tuong. This was done, and at Mr. Porter's request no interpreter was provided. After only minutes of the "interview," the defector asked Mr. Porter to come back again—with an interpreter.

Mr. Tuong later told this writer that Mr. Porter's Vietnamese was totally inadequate for a serious political discussion. Again at Mr. Porter's request, a second interview was arranged. It took place in a JUSPAO recording studio in downtown Saigon on March 17, 1971, with Mr. Nguyen Van Quy—one of the most capable interpreters in Viet Nam—assisting Mr. Porter. The interview was tape-recorded, with copies of the tape going to Mr. Porter and to this writer.

Discussing an early stage of the Viet Minh land reform in Kien Hoa Province (known as Ben Tre to the Communists), Bui Cong Tuong noted: "I witnessed the deaths of four or five of them [landlords]. *Their children were also purged.* In 1945 or 1946, if you came to Ben Tre Province, you could see each day the corpse of a landlord in the river water, with a [death] sentence pinned to his chest [emphasis added]."

Thus, if Mr. Porter claims to have no knowledge that the victims of Communist land reform in Viet Nam included small children, he is suffering from either a lapse of memory or of integrity.

It should by this time be apparent to the reader that Mr. Porter's accusations do not—for the most part—withstand critical examination. No attempt has been made to refute all of his charges for the simple reason that this writer does not consider "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Viet Nam's Land Reform Reconsidered" to be worthy of the time required for a more detailed analysis. Certainly the fact that an accusation was not challenged in this short paper should not be construed by the reader as acceptance of the accusation by this writer.

On the other hand, the fact that Mr. Porter's attack on Hoang Van Chi's *From Colonialism to Communism* fails to survive our scrutiny does not imply that the book is free from error. Were that the case, it would probably make it unique in its field.

This writer has read over a hundred books dealing with Viet Nam, and would have great difficulty in naming one that appeared free from error. Indeed, when he first read *From Colonialism to Communism* he found it very difficult to accept the unusually high estimate that the North Vietnamese land reform had resulted in half-a-million deaths.

Writing about the period in late 1965, although he cited Mr. Chi's book, this writer relied on the more conservative estimate of Bernard Fall and gave the figure of 50,000 as the casualties of the campaign.

A couple of years later, however, this writer had the opportunity to meet Mr. Chi and to discuss his book and conclusions. In the years which followed, this writer went to Viet Nam three times and each time sought out defectors and refugees from North Viet Nam who might have knowledge of the land reform.

On the basis of all of the evidence he has accumulated, it is this writer's conclusion that Mr. Chi's account of the land reform is basically accurate. His estimate that half-a-million people died as a result of the campaign may be a little high—probably higher than this writer would put forth at this point—but it is not without support. Certainly the total casualties numbered in six digits, and estimates of from 300,000 to 500,000 have been made by other witnesses.

In closing, perhaps a final word should be said about the purpose of the land reform. Mr. Porter portrays it as a campaign to redistribute land to the peasants. While there were certainly economic implications, it is the conclusion of this writer that the primary goal was the elimination of "class enemies."

Party Secretary-General Truong Chinh, who played an instrumental role in the land reform, wrote in 1946 that not enough class enemies have been killed following the success of the 1945 August revolution. Chinh lamented:

"It is to be regretted that energetic, timely and necessary measures to counteract all possible dangers in the future were not taken immediately upon the seizing of power. . . . We regret only that the repression of the reactionaries during the August revolution was not carried out fully within the framework of its possibilities. . . . For a newborn revolutionary power to be lenient with counterrevolutionaries is tantamount to committing suicide."²¹

It is the conclusion of this writer that the 1954-56 land reform was conducted, in the words of Truong Chinh, "to counteract all possible dangers in the future."

²¹ Truong Chinh, *The August Revolution, republished in Primer for Revolt (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963) p. 41.*