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COPY

445 Riverside Drive
N.Y., N.Y. 10027 26 May 66

Dear Sherman:

I am enclosing three items:

I. The abridged version of the article on Vietnam, as published in Look.

II. The much fuller version of the article on Vietnam (which ran considerably beyond the number of words that the editors set for me, when they ordered the article written).

III. An article on the land problem in Latin America and its bearings on the development of Communist revolutions in that region.

I. I wonder whether you would be willing to go through the printed article again? (a) In this article I suggested a method of dealing promptly with peasant land-hunger (by issuing official certificates) in the very region where the Buddhists are strongest? /in % of the local population?/; and certainly it is in this region that the Buddhists have been most agressive. These certificates might do a good deal to reconcile the Buddhist peasants to the Saigon Government -- but they (the certificates) would have little or no effect unless the government were demonstrating its good faith by pushing rapidly a wide and deep land reform in other areas of the country where ample arable land is immediately available for distribution. (b) So far as I know, the latest more-or-less detailed promise of land reform by Ky's government was made when my article was already on the press; I managed to insert an evaluation of this government statement (a very unpromising one) into the final page proof. The press reports on the Honolulu Conference (President Johnson, Mr. Ky, etc. etc.) mentioned land reform once or twice, but certainly gave it no special emphasis. The same is true of the accounts that I have seen of "the rural pacification plan"; one report that I saw provided a "table of organization" for each pacification team; each team is to have one member (out of three dozen or so) who will devote himself to "agriculture" -- but that term

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is so vague that it may not cover land reform at all. My impression, from such scrappy press reports as I have, is that land reform is moving only very slowly, if at all -- and this seemed to be true even before the Buddhist trouble required a great deal of the government's attention.
(c) The published article foresaw a grave danger that the Saigon Government would lose the first general election /even if the election were conducted with adequate policing and complete fairness/ unless the Saigon Government put into effect a wide and deep land reform before the election. Yet that government seems to be expending far more effort on technical preparations for the election than on trying to win peasant votes by pre-election land reform.

II. The typed text of the Vietnam article, before cutting, covers in more detail than the printed text a good many subjects that got into Look's print; also the typed text deals with some matters that are not even mentioned in the printed article. It would be a great favor if you would read the typed text. I should think Gardner Cowls would give permission for the reproduction of the full typed text if it were marked "For Official Use Only." (This is just in case you should want it reproduced.)

III. The second typed article entitled "Agrarian Reform or Communist Revolution," has not been published; I intend to revise it to some extent, especially by expanding the treatment of Santo Domingo and by mentioning that country's land problem very near the beginning of the piece. I have no objection to your having this second article reproduced if marked "For Official Use Only," if you so desire. This second typed article is concerned very largely with Latin America, but it gives more time than the Vietnam article does to land reform as a major question in all, or nearly all backward countries -- and perhaps as the major question in a large majority of such countries.

I should be very glad to come down later for discussions of both the Vietnam paper and the Latin American paper, if you feel that this might be useful to you and to some of your colleagues. Without any question, such a discussion would be useful to me.

Faithfully yours,
/s/ Jerry

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C O P Y

This memo was written in very great haste, because of the pressure of many other things that must be done before I go.

(G.T.R.)

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AN AMENDED STRATEGY

FOR

SOUTH VIETNAM

Non-Military Measures

that might have

A Major Military Result

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By Geroid Tanquary Robinson

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The Communists are past masters of the grand strategy of revolution - their kind of revolution; and with keen foresight, they have selected the under-developed countries as their chief target for years to come. The Communists count on stimulating agrarian revolts that will smash up the economic, social and political structure of these under-developed countries, one after another, and will enable the Communists to climb to power on the ruins.

There is one form of non-violent counter-strategy that gives good promise of preventing this kind of revolution from developing - if the counter-strategy here proposed is put into effect with speed and thoroughness, in a given country, well before agrarian violence breaks out on any considerable scale. If this precious opportunity is missed, and a Communist-led agrarian revolt, supported in part from abroad, gets into full swing in a given country (as is now the case in South Vietnam), this revolution cannot be checked without the use of armed force - but a vigorous application, at the same time, of the non-violent strategy proposed below could be counted on to reduce substantially the cost, in dead and wounded, of turning back the Communist advance.

In South Vietnam the revolutionary crisis has persisted for twenty years and is now in its period of maximum intensity. In Russia, and subsequently in China, the Communists could not have come to power without the help of peasant land-hunger and a massive peasant drive for the possession of the land. One of the most fundamental principles of Communist strategy

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is to promise the land to the peasants; but neither in Russia, nor China, nor South Vietnam nor any other under-developed country do the peasants know in advance that when the Communists have established their control this promise is broken.

Between 1859 and 1883, China's ancient and rather shadowy overlordship, in the area now called Vietnam (North and South), was replaced by a more effective control by France. In the rich alluvial plain of the lower Mekong River, in South Vietnam, great reclamation projects were carried out under French direction, the amount of cultivated land in this rice plain was increased more than five times over in seventy years, and this river basin became one of the great rice-exporting regions of the world. Throughout the remainder of South Vietnam most land-holdings were 5-10 hectares in size, but in the great Mekong plain, the large holdings of native and French landlords predominated. Here "approximately 2.5 per cent of the owners, with more than fifty hectares each, possessed roughly one half of the cultivated land." At the other end of the scale, 70 per cent of all the owners in this southern pla[illegible] less than five hectares each, while two-thirds of the peasant families in this region owned no land at all, but cultivated rented plots, or worked in the fields of others as hired laborers. When the landowners provided the land and nothing more, "the rentals were as heavy as any to be found in Asia - 50 per cent of the crop," and almost all the tenants and landless laborers were deeply and perennially in debt. This was the explosive situation that the Communists

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found ready for them in the richest section of South Vietnam.

In 1930, several Communist groups were combined to form the Indochinese Communist Party. This merger was arranged by the Comintern representative in Southeast Asia, later to be well enough known as Ho Chi Minh. During World War II and the Japanese occupation of Vietnam, the Communist leaders formed a sort of "national front" (the Viet Minh) designed to draw people of many different political opinions into a united movement for liberation from France. Here, as in many "fronts" in other countries, the Communists played the leading role, but their Party always preserved its own identity within such conglomerate groups. Shortly after the Japanese surrender in 1945, Ho Chi Minh and his supporters announced (in Hanoi, near the Chinese frontier) the formation of the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam," with Minh at its head; but the French soon initiated attempts to reestablish their control in Vietnam, and presently there developed a so-called "People's War of Liberation" which dragged on for nearly eight bitter and bloody years. To secure wider support against the French, the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" disavowed its Communist character, but after the Communist Chinese reached the Vietnamese border late in 1949, and Chinese military supplies for the Viet Minh army began to roll into Vietnam, the government at Hanoi publicly affirmed the leadership of the Communist Party, now called the "Vietnam Workers' Party"; and Communist this government has remained ever since.

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In the hope of eventually replacing the Communist-controlled government at Hanoi, the French set up at Saigon

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in 1949, any independent non-Communist government of "unified Vietnam"; but not until Vietnam was provisionally cut in half by the cease-fire agreement of July 21, 1954, did the government at Saigon begin to build up any real authority - and then only in the southern half of the country, of course. In the meantime the rural areas of South Vietnam were governed only nominally, or not at all, by the government in Saigon. Land-hunger, anti-colonialism, and the disintegration of authority might well have been enough to stir many of the peasants of South Vietnam to action against the landlords, but Communism, strongest in North Vietnam, had its missionaries and its local adherents in the south also, and these zealots told the peasants they would get all the landlords' land for nothing, and did all that they could to bring on a general jacquerie in South Vietnam. As a result of all this, rents were very rarely paid, the old records of landholdings were burned in many villages, some of the landlords were killed while many fled in a panic to the towns, and much of the landlords' acreage was occupied by the peasants, sometimes with the confirmation of documents issued by the Comm[illegible].

The United States had given substantial financial aid to the French military activities in Vietnam, but when the forces of the Communist government at Hanoi captured the major French position at Dien Bien Phu a cease-fire agreement soon followed (at the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954), providing for the provisional partition of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel for a period of 300 days during which civilians

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could move freely between the two zones. All the members of the Geneva Conference except the United States and South Vietnam agreed to a provision for a general election to be held throughout North and South Vietnam in July 1956, on the question of uniting the two halves of the country. In respect to the proposed election, the United States made a momentous independent statement to which we shall return at the end of this article. The government of South Vietnam simply refused to recognize the partition of the country.

Under the Premiership, and subsequently the Presidency, of Ngo Dinh Diem, the government of South Vietnam was faced by many contending forces within the country. Among the factors favorable to the Diem Government was the major increase of American economic aid, and the assumption by the United States of the training and the maintenance cost of the South Vietnamese army. The Diem Government met with acute difficulties in establishing its authority over the countryside and in some regions it never succeeded in doing this. Very conscious of this dangerous situation, Diem's Government initiated two agrarian programs: Under one of these programs, the government resettled more than 125,000 peasants (many of them drawn from the narrow and overcrowded coastal plain of central Vietnam) in new communities established on uninhabited lands, chiefly on the high central plateau or in the marshes of the south.

The other and much more important program was embodied in three basic laws: the two ordinances of 1955 that sharply

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reduced the prevailing rents, and provided a limited security of tenure; and Ordinance No. 57 (of 1956) on the distribution of additional land among the peasants. Ordinance 57 provided that no native landlord could continue to own more than about 100 hectares (plus 15 hectares of inherited land to support the expenses of ancestor worship): the surplus was to be purchased by the government (at a modest figure, in cash and in bonds), and resold to peasant tenants (at a very low price, divided into six annual payments, but later spread over twice as long a period). In addition to the surplus lands of the Vietnamese, the government acquired the entire holdings of the French landowners, who were indemnified at a very low figure by the French government. According to the latest source available (issued in August, 1964), the distribution of the surplus land of the Vietnamese landlords had not yet been completed, and no final decision had yet been made as to the disposition of the former French holdings; however, if the pattern previously followed under Ordinance 57 were applied to all these lands, a grand total of less than one third of the country's la[illegible] tenants would become peasant proprietors, and about two thirds of the tenants would still own no land. Likewise, an unknown number of landless farm laborers would still possess no land of their own.

For some time after the signing of the Geneva Agreements and the rise of Ngo Dinh Diem to power, the authority of the government at Saigon seemed to be spreading through the countryside, though the Diem government never succeeded in bringing

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all of South Vietnam under control. The chief reasons for the partial success of this Saigon Government in spreading its authority may have been: the exceptional energy and ability of its leader; the very substantial aid provided by the United States; the homeward migration to North Vietnam of many of the revolutionists who had entered South Vietnam in the hope of Communizing the country, and were no doubt followed northward by [redacted] of the converts they had made south of the 17th parallel; the migration in the opposite direction of nearly 900,000 persons (chiefly Catholics) from North Vietnam who did not want to live under the Red Flag; the colonization of uninhabited lands; and the great devastation and war-weariness of North Vietnam, which had borne the chief burden of defeating the French, and needed to recuperate before renewing its attempt to carry the Communist revolution beyond its provisional southern frontier.

Diem's agrarian reform pertaining to rent reduction, security of tenure and land partition is not included in the list just given, for the reason that these measures may well have created [redacted] the villagers of South Vietnam more antagonism than support for the Saigon Government. For a very long time the villagers had nursed the grievances common to land-hungry peasants wherever they live in the neighborhood of large and enviable landholdings; but all through the eight years of the "War of Liberation" these grievances had been heated and sharpened by agitators from the north and their converts in the south, who told the peasants that all of the land should and would be

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theirs - and for nothing; so why not take it now? Some of the peasants (usually, perhaps, those who were better off than their fellow villagers), gladly accepted and acted on Diem's provisions for a greatly reduced rent, with more security of tenure, or for an outright purchase at a low price of a block of the landlord's land. But what did the reforms mean to the much larger number of peasants or landless agricultural laborers who had now been using the landlord's land illegally, often for years, without paying any rent at all - much less any purchase money? To these peasants, Diem's reform meant the restoration to the landlords of all the land that the peasants had taken over without sanction, perhaps with the exaction of rent for the rentless years that had just gone by, and certainly with the payment of either rent or purchase money for any of the landlords' land that any peasant or laborer was to use in the future. Diem's soldiers and Diem's police would bring the landlords back with them, and set them up on their old estates once more; true, the law said that each of the larger holdings must be reduced to about a hundred hectares in size, but to a laborer who had never owned or rented any land, or a peasant who had been trying to dig a living for himself and his family out of a hectare or two, a hundred hectares must have seemed an impressive domain. After eight years of lawless seizures and Communist promises, Diem's agrarian reform must have seemed to most of the peasants and landless farm laborers to represent an agrarian counter-revolution.

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And so it must still seem to most of them today, if they

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are dominated above all else by the desire to retain the land that they have seized illegally. Also the civilian losses resulting from the bombing of villages believed to contain members of the Viet Cong must have created antagonism to the Saigon Government and the Americans. And of course the Viet Cong presses increasingly on the formula that the Americans are imperialist aggressors. On the other hand, the villagers have often been treated very harshly and cruelly by the Communist Viet Cong, through the exaction of heavy taxes, the forced delivery of quotas of rice in exchange for payments in near-worthless paper, the ruthless execution of villagers who oppose the Viet Cong or are suspected of opposition. Such practices may have increased recently, as the numbers of the Viet Cong multiply, and their confidence in victory increases. Some competent observers believe that because of such practices, a majority of the villagers of South Vietnam are hostile to the Viet Cong, but the writer feels that all this is outweighed in the minds of a great many peasants by the Viet Cong's promises and actions in dealing with the land problem.

What, then, is to be done? Late in April, 1964, a spokesman of the Khank government of South Vietnam announced on the radio that his government was actively studying a program for land reform, designed to enable every farmer (italics added) to purchase land, for payments to be spread over a long period of years. On a matter of superlative importance, such a broad official statement as this could not have been made, unless the problem had already received serious consideration. With

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special emphasis on the word "every," this seems to be the most encouraging pronouncement on the land problem that has been made by the government of South Vietnam since its establishment in 1955. However, Kanh and his supporters lost control of the government some time after the statement was made.

It now appears that we may perhaps hope for something new on the side of the United States. A dispatch from Washington says: "Henry Cabot Lodge returned from his recent trip [of last Spring] to Vietnam insistent on the need for further action in land reform, to give the Vietnamese peasant something to fight for" (italics added). Mr. Lodge made this trip as a special representative of President Johnson; and now the President has nominated him to succeed General Taylor as Ambassador to South Vietnam.

It is reported that in a meeting with Secretary McNamara [and Ambassador-Designate Lodge], on July 16, Premier Nguyen Cao Ky stated emphatically that his government aims to gain stronger support from the people by taking social and economic measures to establish "social justice." The report does not indicate whether Premier Ky touched upon the question of broadening and deepening Premier Diem's agrarian Ordinance of 1956.

South Vietnam is essentially a peasant's country (the population is about 80 per cent rural), and the army is and must be a peasants' army. The military situation certainly cries out for some sweeping action that the peasantry will readily understand - something that will lift the morale of the peasants now serving in the Vietnamese forces, something that will lead

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many more of them to volunteer for such service, something that will attract defectors from the Viet Cong and the peasants in areas controlled by the Viet Cong, and (above all) something that will mobilize a multitude of guerrillas to fight on our side in the kind of warfare that demands only a minimum of equipment (even in our mechanized age), but the maximum of individual initiative and devotion (just think how easy it is for a guerrilla to desert, if he happens to feel like it).

To plan and carry out an agrarian reform that will be fair to all concerned is a very tedious and rather slow-moving business. But to advance the war toward a successful conclusion, and to keep down the cost in Vietnamese and American lives, speed in getting on with a reform that will appeal to the peasants is indispensable.

Measures that might be taken are: to cancel all payments still due on land already purchased by the peasants under the land reform law of 1956; to wipe out, at the same time, all tax arrears on peasant lands; and to announce that no further taxes will be levied on such lands during the war.

The wholesale gratis distribution of additional lands would be, of course, the measure that would have the strongest impact. The first step in that direction might be to transfer to the peasants, gratis, any land subject to distribution under the Ordinance of 1956, but not yet actually transferred. The goal of further distributions, under a new program, should probably be to provide each peasant or landless farm worker with a holding that would produce something more than a mere

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subsistence for a family of average size - with a supplement of land added for each member of the household serving in the armed forces of South Vietnam; provisional allotments of land could be made with a clause in each deed providing for a subsequent review if the holder of the deed, or anyone who claimed that his own interest was damaged by it, should apply for such a review within a specified number of years after the war. If this provisional distribution of land were assigned in each village to a committee elected by the heads of households, the number of appeals for post-war review by a higher authority would probably be modest. If the head of a given household were absent on military service for South Vietnam, his wife could vote in his place.

In the rice-plain of the Mekong River, the land needed for the additional allotments could probably be made available locally, if the maximum size of each landlord's holding were reduced from 100 hectares to, perhaps, 30 hectares; in addition, as was done in the law of 1956, a modest plot of hereditary land could be left to each landlord to maintain the expenses of ancestor worship - a provision designed to prevent the new reform from stirring up additional friction on religious grounds.

In the central part of South Vietnam, the necessary acreage of cultivated land for the new allotments simply would not be available for the over-crowded population; here, there is an acute need for the removal of the surplus villagers, including many who now have inadequate allotments, to settlements to be developed on new

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lands made available by draining marshes or clearing selected areas in the jungle. It has been very roughly estimated that two to three million hectares of new land could be brought into use in this way - an acreage that would probably be much more than adequate for the fulfillment of the suggested program. The necessary work of clearing or draining this land should be undertaken partly or entirely by the government; obviously this major task cannot be initiated until after the war and will require years for completion. Nevertheless, much of the desired effect on morale could be obtained very promptly by issuing to each qualified head of a household an official document (transferrable only by bequest), in which the government would guarantee to provide, within a certain length of time after the war, an allotment ready for cultivation, and adequate to maintain a family of a stated average size.

Also, in each deed currently issued, and in each certificate guaranteeing the future issuance of a deed, it could be made quite clear that the recipient becomes, or will become the full owner of the allotment, without the payment of any purchase price.

Finally, each deed or certificate, should provide that in advance of the new owner's first crop season on his new property, a local cooperative society (or failing that, the government itself) will make a long-term loan with low interest, to cover the cost of the materials for the buildings that must be erected on the allotment, and that the government would will provide the owner, without charge, with seed, fertilizer, implements and animals or other requisites for production, totaling a stated value,

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and accompanied by a farm advisory instructions in improved methods of cultivation. (There is a lot to be done along these lines; the Vietnamese produce only half as much rice per hectare as the Japanese.)

Is the present military situation such that the landlords will be willing to accept a modest compensation for the additional lands to be expropriated? Or will some of them use all their influence to oppose the measure? Would the government in Saigon be divided and its stability further threatened by such a bold undertaking, or would the members of the government unite upon an agrarian program designed to draw the peasantry more strongly to their side? Will some people in Washington shy away from the further expropriation of the landlord's land in Vietnam - the very thing that the Communists are doing? Or will Americans understand that it is one thing

(A) to tell the peasants to take the land in order to draw them into the Communist forces, but with the intention of binding both the farms and the farmers later on, in a system of enforced collectivization (or "communization"), at the bottom of the pyramid of Communist tyranny - and quite another thing

(B) to allot the land to the peasant in full ownership, as the basis of his future life as an independent self-directing farmer - a part of the best known foundation for a generally free society under a democratic government? The goal of Communist agrarian revolution has become clear enough in Russia and China; in Japan, on the other hand, the land reform

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after World War II,
fostered by the United States, created a mass of owner-cultivators - independent individuals who would almost certainly fight against the Communists if the issue should ever come to a test of force in that country.

Not long ago President Johnson began to talk of a huge develop[illegible]rogram for Southeastern and Southern Asia. Medical service, education, a Trans-Asian highway, huge hydro-electric plants and cheap electricity for the villages (a Southeast Asian T.V.A.) are among the suggestions that have gotten into the news, but newspaper reports of the preliminary discussions have made no mention of the one problem that outweighs all other problems combined, in the minds of the South Vietnamese peasants (except perhaps the longing for peace and security) and that is the hunger for land.

The statistics of the land problem in South Vietnam are dubious indeed, and the practicability and the desirability of every suggestion made here may be subject to serious question. However, these suggestions are not put forward as the product of any sort of expertise, but rather in the hope that some program of this general nature may receive serious consideration in both Washington and Saigon. The ultimate objective is to move toward a better life for the peasants of South Vietnam - which, of course, means among other things, a non-Communist life. But the immediate objective of this non-military program is strictly military: to strengthen the military effort of South Vietnam and to minimize the American and South Vietnamese casualties that this

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war will cost.

To gain the maximum impact on the military situation, it seems that the announcement of any broad program in this agrarian field should come as a complete surprise; that vigorous action under the program should begin on the day of the announcement; and that the announcement should include a summary of the program and a statement that it is going into effect at that moment, in certain areas, and will be pushed ahead as rapidly as new areas can be made secure by the armies. It seems that on the initial day, action under the program should begin in at least two secure zones of substantial size - one such zone somewhere in the Mekong plain and one in central South Vietnam. The original announcement of a broad program and of immediate action under it, would be of sufficient interest to justify a complete coverage in both South and North Vietnam by leaflet and by radio. If the name of the United States Government (perhaps as a contributor to the cost of the program) could appear in some subordinate way in the announcement, this should accomplish something toward improving the American image in the minds of the people.

It seems that a new program of agrarian reform should have an effect not only on the war but on another crisis that is bound to arise later on. The United States has indicated repeatedly that it is willing and eager to begin negotiations looking to the establishment of peace in Vietnam. When such negotiations do begin, one very important question that is

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certain to come up is the question of an election designed to lead toward the unification of all Vietnam. The Geneva Conference of 1954 voted in favor of such an election, with the United States and South Vietnam abstaining, but the United States issued a unilateral declaration pledging itself to "seek to achie... ity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly." The only point to be made here is that all of the peasants and landless farm workers of South Vietnam should receive either land deeds, or land certificates guaranteeing the subsequent issuance of such deeds, from the Saigon Government at some date well in advance of any such election. Any peasants or agricultural laborers in South Vietnam who have not received such deeds or certificates some time in advance of the election are likely to feel that any land that they have taken over informally is theirs only by the grace of the Communist Viet Cong; and there would seem to be a real danger that such peasants and laborers will vote as the Communists wish them to - for the union of North and South Vietnam in a single Communist state. If a majority of the votes in South Vietnam should be of this character, such a victory by ballot would be a resounding triumph for all the Communists on earth, but a profound disaster for the rest of the world - and particularly for the hundreds of millions of peasants in the under-developed countries that are still sitting on the fence between the non-Communist and Communist camps.

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A BOLD PROPOSAL FOR VIETNAM

BY GEROID TANQUARY ROBINSON
FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE RUSSIAN INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

CAN THE underdeveloped countries of the world be saved from communism without our fighting an endless number of guerrilla wars? And can we bring to a satisfactory end the seemingly interminable war we are now fighting to turn back the Communist advance in South Vietnam?

I believe the answer to both of these questions is yes—if we are ready to recognize the basic appeal the Communists have made to the people of these areas and apply a counterstrategy in time.

By all odds, the best time to apply this counterstrategy is before—and preferably long before—peasant land hunger develops to such a point that the Communists find it easy to enlist allies (very gullible ones, and very useful too) in the villages. First, give a peasant some experience as the owner and operator of a farm that provides a modest living for his family, and he will then be much more likely to fight against the Communists than for them.

We must recognize that in Russia and in China, the Communists could not have come to power without appealing to the land hunger of the peasants. The same tactic has been used by the Communists in Vietnam. In the late 1940's and early 1950's, they were already telling the peasants of South Vietnam that they could get all the landlords' land for nothing.

As a result, rents were very rarely paid in South Vietnam, and the old records of landholdings were burned in many villages; some of the landlords were killed, and many fled in a panic to the towns. Much of the landlords' acreage was occupied by the peasants, sometimes with the confirmation of documents issued by the Communists.

Under the premiership and, subsequently, the presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem, the government of South Vietnam met with acute difficulties in establishing its authority over the countryside. In some regions, it never succeeded in doing this. Very conscious of this dangerous situation, Diem's government initiated two agrarian programs. Under one of them, the Saigon government resettled more than 125,000 South Vietnamese in new communities established on uninhabited lands—chiefly, on the high central plateau or in newly drained marshes of the south. The other and much more important program was embodied in three basic laws: two ordinances of 1955 that sharply reduced the prevailing rents and provided a limited security of tenure; and ordinance No. 57 (of 1956) on the distribution of additional land among the peasants. Ordinance 57 provided that no native landlord could continue to own more than 247 acres of land (plus 37 acres to support the expenses of ancestor worship). The surplus was to be purchased by the government and resold to peasant tenants at a very low price. The government also acquired most of the property held by the French landowners, who were indemnified by the French government.

According to the latest source available (issued in August, 1964), the distribution of the surplus land of the native landlords had not yet been completed, and no final decision had been made as to the disposition of the former French holdings. But even if *all* the French acreage and *all* the surplus acreage of the native landlords were distributed by the Saigon government in accordance with the ordinance of 1956, only about one-third of South Vietnam's tenant farmers would have been converted into proprietors, and all the landless agricultural laborers would still be left without land.

THUS, Diem's agrarian reform may well have created among the villagers of South Vietnam more antagonism than support for the Saigon government. Some of the peasants (probably those who were better off than their fellow villagers), gladly accepted and acted on Diem's provisions for a greatly reduced rent, with more security of tenure, or for an outright purchase at a low price of a block of the landlord's land. But what did the reforms mean to the much larger number of peasants or landless agricultural laborers who had now been using the landlord's land illegally often for years, without paying any rent at all? To these peasants, Diem's reform meant the restoration to the landlords of all the land that the peasants had taken over without sanction, perhaps with the exaction of rent for the rentless years that had just gone by, and certainly with the payment of either rent or purchase money for any of the land that any peasant or laborer was to use in the future. Diem's soldiers and Diem's police would bring the landlords back with them and set them up on at least a part of their old estates.

With the lesson of Diem's failure, the present government of South Vietnam could make a bold—and, I believe, successful—bid for the support of the peasants by taking these four steps:

1. Cancel all payments still due on land already purchased by the peasants under the land-reform law of 1956.

2. Wipe out all tax arrears on peasant lands.

3. Announce that no further taxes will be levied on such lands during the war.

4. Make a wholesale gratis distribution of additional lands.

The fourth measure, of course, would have the strongest impact.

The final goal would be to provide each peasant or landless farm worker with a holding that would produce something more than a mere subsistence for a family of average size—with a supplement of land added for each member of the family serving in the armed forces of South Vietnam.

This provisional distribution of land could be made in each village by a committee elected by the heads of households, but subject to review after the war; if the head of a given household were absent on military service for South Vietnam, his wife could vote in his place. Deeds for the new peasant holdings in each district should be issued just as soon as Saigon's control is well established there.

In the rice plain of the Mekong River, the land needed for the additional allotments could probably be made available locally, if the maximum size of each landlord's holding were reduced from 247 acres to, perhaps, 75 acres. In addition, a modest plot of hereditary land could be left to each landlord to maintain the expenses of ancestor worship and to prevent the new reform from stirring up friction on religious grounds.

In the central part of South Vietnam, the necessary acreage of cultivated land for the new allotments simply would not be available for the overcrowded population. Here, there is an acute need for the removal of the surplus villagers, including many who now have inadequate allotments of land, to settlements to be developed on new lands made available by draining marshes or clearing selected areas in the jungle.

It has been very roughly estimated that 5 to 7.5 million acres of new land could be brought into use in this way—an acreage that would probably be more than adequate for the fulfillment of the program. The necessary work of clearing or draining this land obviously cannot be initiated until after the war and will require years for completion. Nevertheless, much of the desired effect on morale could be obtained promptly in central South Vietnam by issuing to each qualified head of a household an official certificate (transferable only by bequest), in which the government would guarantee to provide, within a certain length of time after the war, an allotment ready for cultivation and adequate to maintain a family of a stated average size.

ALSO in each deed currently issued and in each certificate guaranteeing the future issuance of a deed, it could be made quite clear that the recipient becomes or will become the full owner of the allotment, without the payment of any purchase price.

Finally, each deed or certificate should provide that a local cooperative society or the government itself will make a long-term loan with low interest, to cover the cost of the materials for the buildings that must be erected on the allotment, and that the government will provide the owner, without charge, with seed and fertilizer for the first sowing, and with implements, animals or other requisites for production.

Is the present military situation such that the landlords will be willing to accept a modest compensation for the additional lands to be expropriated? Or will some of them use all their influence to oppose the measure? Would the government in Saigon be divided and its stability further threatened by such a bold undertaking, or would the members of the government unite upon an agrarian

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VIETNAM

continued

program designed to draw the peasantry more strongly to their side?

Will some people in Washington shy away from the further expropriation of land in Vietnam—the very thing that the Communists are doing? Or will Americans understand that *it is one thing* to tell the peasants to take the land in order to draw them into the Communist forces, but with the intention of binding both the farms and the farmers later on in a system of enforced collectivization, and *quite another thing* to allot the [illegible] the peasant in full ownership, as the basis of his future life as an independent farmer?

The goal of Communist agrarian revolution has become clear enough in Russia and China; in Japan, on the other hand, the land reform fostered by the United States after World War II created a mass of owner-cultivators—independent individuals who would almost certainly fight against the Communists if the issue should ever come to a test of force in that country.

In Saigon recently, Premier Nguyen Cao Ky told James Reston of the New York *Times* that "the Communists were closer to the people's yearnings for social justice and an independent national life than his own government." How astounding, then, that Ky's government gave to the press, soon after this, a rather timid agrarian program that will do far less than the proposals offered here to close the gap between the government and masses of the peasantry.

The ultimate objective of the program suggested in the present article is to move toward a better life for the peasants of South Vietnam. But the immediate objective is strictly military: to lift the morale of the peasant army, to increase the number of guerrillas who are fighting *against* the Communists, and so to minimize the casualties—South Vietnamese and American—that this war will cost.

(C.)

THE program of agrarian reform should have an effect not only on the war, but on another crisis that is bound to arise later on. The United States has indicated repeatedly that it is willing and eager to begin negotiations looking to the establishment of peace in Vietnam. When such negotiations do begin, one very important matter that is certain to come up is the question of an election, which the Communists hope will lead to the unification of all Vietnam.

All of the landless peasants and farm workers of South Vietnam should receive either land deeds, or land certificates guaranteeing the subsequent issuance of such deeds, from the Saigon government at some date well in advance of any such election. Any peasants or agricultural laborers in South Vietnam who have not received such deeds or certificates are likely to feel that any land they have taken over informally is theirs only by the grace of the Communists; and there would seem to be a real danger that such peasants and laborers will vote as the Communists wish them to—for the union of North and South Vietnam in a single Communist state.

If a majority of the votes should be of this character, such a victory would be a resounding triumph for all the Communists on earth, but a profound disaster for the rest of the world—and particularly for the hundreds of millions of peasants in the underdeveloped countries that are still sitting on the fence between the anti-Communist and pro-Communist camps. END

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For

A Thousand Million

People

AGRARIAN REFORM

OR

COMMUNIST REVOLUTION?

By Geroid Tanquary Robinson

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The total population of the under-developed non-Communist countries is more than a thousand million souls, and a very large proportion of these people are peasants.

In nearly all of these countries, land-hunger is the need that is most widely and most deeply felt; also, it is the need that is most easily exploited by the Communists, and is therefore the most dangerous need of all.

On the other hand, once this danger is fully understood, there is no major need of the under-developed countries that non-Communists can so readily satisfy, if they will apply remedial measures with speed and thoroughness well in advance of the widespread development of peasant violence, so likely to be incited or exploited by Communists reaching for control of the state. Also, a timely preventive reform costs much less in cash, and far, far less in lives, than military action to turn back a revolution that has once gotten well under way.

If agrarian reform has advanced only very slowly in most of the under-developed countries, it is chiefly because of the opposition of most of the large landlords - in their unwillingness to believe that this opposition may lead eventually to the confiscation of all their property of every kind, and even to the loss of their lives.

A preliminary version of a United Nations report, world-wide in its coverage, says: "In recent years, the greatest center of planning for land redistribution has been Latin America. It is also the area where the need seems

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most pressing. In a good many countries /In Latin America/ a few thousand, or even a few hundred owners have great estates which occupy over half the land area, while 80 or 90 per cent of the farmers have small holdings of a few hectares covering no more than 5 per cent of the land. Many of them, at that, have only squatter status and live in constant danger of eviction, but even they are generally better off than the landless laborers." In Latin America a not uncommon sight is a lush valley entirely devoted to pasture, where the landlord's fat cattle and horses feed at their ease - a panorama directly under the eyes of peasants who are trying to scratch their living out of the eroding hillside farms that encircle this animals' utopia.

The Inter-American Committee on Agricultural Development completed in 1964 a series of land tenure studies in seven countries of Latin America, and the United Nations has made similar studies of two other countries in Central America. In their most summary form, eight of these studies indicate the estimated percent of "rural families requiring land and other assistance" (that is, peasant families that hold an inadequate acreage, plus the families of low-income rural workers who have no land at all):

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Chile	48	per cent
Brazil	56	" "
Colombia	64	" "
Honduras	75	" "
Ecuador	82	" "
Guatemala	84	" "
Peru	84	" "
El Salvador	89	" "

Of more than six million needy rural families covered by this table, more than half are found in one country - Brazil - the largest, the most populous, and the most strategically located of all the countries of Latin America.

The data-year for three of the countries listed in the table is 1950; for two others the year is 1961, while the dates for the remaining three countries fall between 1950 and 1961. The figures quoted are taken from a publication of the Inter-American Development Bank. In calling attention to the variations in the data-years, this publication makes a grim comment: "Even though some of these figures refer to earlier years, little or no improvement has since occured." The same publication says that the studies that stand behind the above table "generally show a very precarious situation, and confirm the earlier views on the vast number of rural families requiring land and other assistance."

In response most particularly to the rise of Communism in Cuba, [illegible] the Western Hemisphere (including

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the United States) established the Alliance for Progress in April 1961 and adopted for this organization a Charter pledging the member peoples and governments to join in "a great cooperative effort to accelerate the economic and social development of the participating countries of Latin America" (italics added), and, among other things, "to encourage, in accordance with the characteristics of each country, programs of extensive agrarian reform...so that...the land will become for the man who works it the basis of his economic stability, the foundation of his increasing welfare, and the guarantee of his freedom and dignity," (Thomas Jefferson would have approved very heartily of this passage in the Charter.)/

"Since 1960 thirteen countries in Latin America (not including Communist Cuba) have adopted land-reform laws." "The universal intention /of the new laws of the 13 non-Communist countries/ is to establish the beneficiaries on family farms." However, these laws are essentially permissive; the extent to which they are put into effect depends upon the will of each government and upon its assignment, from time to time, of the necessary funds. A report published by the Pan American Union in December, 1964, says: "...to date very little has been accomplished...especially in the matter of land distribution, when one considers the magnitude of the agrarian problem facing Latin America. The laws promulgated have not yet generated...a significant impact in the transformation of the agrarian structure of the region."

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Of course the existing situation is loaded with the possibilities of explosion. "A recent observer notes that 'there are only a few instances where land reform has been pushed ahead by governments without the active pressure of the peasants'"; and this observer reminds us that in Mexico and Bolivia, and more recently in Venezuela and Peru, agrarian reform followed land invasion by the peasants.

Among the Latin American states, the one that ~~most~~ recently has been most often in the headlines is, of course, the Dominican Republic, where about 70 per cent of the people live in rural areas. In 1960, 50 per cent of all the "farms" in this country were less than one hectare in size, while 36 per cent fell into the next group, with 1 to 5 hectares each. At the other extreme, there were 954 estates with 101 to 150 hectares, and 677 with more than 500 hectares each; this last group included "a few extremely large holdings". Considerably more than half of the territory of the country is cultivated or used as pasture, and because of the ruggedness of a substantial proportion of the terrain, it may be very difficult to make any considerable enlargement in the area under crops - unless it be at the expense of the pasture lands. "On most of the small units [that is, the small peasant farms] which for the most part contain marginal farm land, the agricultural activity is barely above subsistence level."

Surprisingly, the current disturbance in the Dominican Republic has been confined almost entirely to the capital,

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with no reports of peasant disturbances; on the other hand, it has been several times reported that arms have been carried away from the capital and hidden in the interior. If the Organization of American States can establish a temporary compromise government and can maintain sufficient forces on the island to assure that the subsequent election is freely and democratically conducted, a thoroughgoing agrarian reform (with generous financial aid from abroad) should follow promptly thereafter. If things do not work out in this way, the next disturbance in the Dominican Republic may well begin in the villages and develop into something far more widespread and more violent than a moderate amount of gunfire in the capital.

Once the peasants have a grip on the land, they can be expected to fight to retain it. The resistence of the Chinese peasants to enforced "communization" by the new dictators is well known, as is the resistence to compulsory "collectivization" in the Russian satellite states of eastern Europe. In the homeland of Russian Communism the peasants thought that the revolutionary "nationalization of the land" simply amounted to an approval of their retention of their own pre-revolutionary holdings and to their partition among themselves of most of the holdings of the landlords as well as most of the old State lands of European Russia. By the end of the 1920's Stalin believed that his government had strength enough to impose a new system of land holding and land use on the peasants, but neither then or at any subsequent time has the Soviet government felt that it could [illegible]

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peasant masses to accept the form of agricultural organization that has always been most admired by the Soviet Communists - the large State Farm, operated under professional management by hired laborers. In Stalin's great agrarian drive of the early 'thirties the chief goal was to "collectivize" the farmers and their farms - that is, to force the peasants to accept a form of organization that represented a compromise between the Communist ideal and the traditional forms to which the peasants were accustomed. The drive for collectivization involved a long and bloody struggle between the Communists and the peasants, but since the mid 'thirties the "collective" or kolkhoz has been the dominant form of organization in the countryside. Yet the struggle between the peasants and the Communists still continues, though with greatly reduced intensity; since the mid 'thirties, this perennial contest has centered chiefly on peasant attempts to enlarge, and the Communist attempts to reduce, the small plots and the very small number of animals that each member of a peasant "collective" is permitted to hold individually and quite apart from the collective as such. In sum, it may be said that the only massive and continuous domestic resistance that the Soviet government has been obliged to contend with, ever since the early 1920's, is the resistance of the peasants. Where the land is concerned, history testifies that very often the peasants are far from being as submissive as many landlords and rulers would like them to be.

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Commonly the two most urgent needs of an under-developed

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non-Communist country are, first, reasonably adequate protection against attack from abroad (this protection to be provided by a national military force, augmented in any major crisis by the assistance of one or more dependable allies); and second, such a development under the protection of this military screen as will make life more comfortable in a material sense, and at the same time more encouraging to an individualism that does not trespass upon the freedom of others; increasingly rich in opportunities that are available to all the people; and by reason of all this, increasingly resistent to infection by any sort of totalitarianism. Effort for effort and dollar for dollar, no other expenditure within the second general category just mentioned will bring nearly as rich a return in an under-developed and largely agricultural country as agrarian reform.

Yet all around the globe, in countries both under-developed and advanced, both Communist and non-Communist, it is the prevailing style of our time to give the highest priority to industrial development. The word "style" is here used advisedly, to imply that this attitude is based in part upon certain realistic considerations but extends far beyond this level into the realms of emotion. For most of the leaders and the followers in the advanced countries, big industry has much of the fascination, the glamour, the dazzle that large landed property had in Europe two centuries ago. This attitude is highly contagious, and in many of the leaders of the under-developed countries the emotional factor seems to

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play an even larger role than it does among their opposite numbers in the countries where giant industrial plants are no longer a novelty. In this situation, it is more than natural that an undue proportion of the American government's economic aid to the less developed countries has been assigned to their industrialisation - and as a matter of course the flow of American private capital to these countries is much more heavily concentrated on the same target.

This degree of concentration on industrial development is not in the best interest either of the United States or of the under-developed countries at the other end of the line. Instead, the highest priority should be assigned to the promotion of agrarian reform - chiefly, but by no means solely, for the reason that a reform of this kind is the most effective and speedy non-military means of preventing a Communist take-over. (When we send our military forces anywhere to hold the Communists in check, we are always accused of imperialism - but as a matter of fact the United States does not want any more territory abroad - not even enough to accomodate American battle cemeteries here and there.) Through friendly suggestions, and generous assistance in cash or in kind, the American government should do all that it possibly can to hasten agrarian reform in the less developed countries (the distribution of land; the initial provision of fertiliser, seed, impliments, animals, and, if necessary, dwellings; the promotion of instruction in methods of improving yields).

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We should even contribute to a very modest compensation of the landlords for expropriated lands, if the success of the reform depends on such aid/from us.

Instruction and financial assistance should also be given to promote the organization of various types of small peasant cooperatives - each completely voluntary, and democratically controlled by its members - each organized when a number of neighbors feel that there will be an advantage in acting as a group rather than individually (for example in the joint purchase of a machine and its rotation from farm to farm). There is no question here of sacrificing individualism; the objective is exactly the opposite of this; the whole stress is on the employment of a minimum of joint effort to preserve the independence of the small farmer.

There are other reasons for moving first and moving rapidly with agrarian reform, and following along at only a moderate pace with industrialization: If industrialization develops rapidly, before the life of the peasant is made more secure and more rewarding, masses of peasants will leave their villages and swarm around the new factories, competing for work under almost any conditions and at almost any wage. Often the families will be left behind, and always the ties with neighbors will be broken; after having been all his life a self-directing farmer and a member of a close-knit group of neighbors, the peasant who joins a factory crew will have few decisions to make and a strict discipline to observe during

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the working day. And outside the factory he will be a member of a formless mass. Soon he may join a union, but the chief and often the sole business of this new union will be, not to promote a cooperative effort in production, but to win a larger share in the product by threatening to bring production to a halt or by downing tools and walking out. Inside the plant the ex-peasant takes his orders from his machine and his foreman; outside, he is lost // and alone in the crowd, except when he acts as a member of an organization dedicated to combat - his labor union.

In the United States we are not very much afraid of strikes; we do not think now of strikes, even massive ones, as perhaps having a revolutionary potential. But it must not be forgotten that we have here many conditions and practices that help to cushion the shock of a strike: American industrial wages are very much higher than they are in any under-developed country; many millions of American workers own homes to which they are attached; have automobiles that amuse them, television sets that induce a dozy mindlessness, schools that they admire, savings accounts and strike-pay to tide the family over; public relief if the trouble hangs on too long; and a comfortable faith that the government will help them to get a pretty good settlement in the end. All, or nearly all, of these cushioning conditions are absent in the under-developed countries, where a strike may easily break over into violence, and open the way for the expansion of Communist influence and leadership.

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Under the American government's program of promoting the development of under-developed countries, policies are issued by a government agency guaranteeing American private investors against losses that they may incur in such countries through insurrection and revolution; and it does seem that in issuing such policies, high standards could be set for the labor policies to be maintained in the plants that are so insured.

However, much more depends upon the appreciation of the critical importance of labor-management relations by the American overseas investors and especially by the American managers overseas. There are some managers in this country who feel that it ought to be possible for labor and management to work as partners and to keep a plant going the year round for their mutual benefit. When such a manager is going to an under-developed country to set up a new enterprise, he would do well to find an experienced American labor leader who feels as he does, and to take him along overseas as a permanent member of the staff of the new plant.

Finally, the agrarian reform, if it is given top priority, will help in various ways to moderate the strains and stresses of industrialization - and most of all by preventing the peasants from crowding pell mell into the industrial labor market.

If the world's population is going to continue growing at its present rate, or someone is going to let a lot of nuclear weapons out of their cells, it is a waste of time to try to plan for a better future. But if we are going to continue

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making any plans at all, we had better make one in a hurry for handling the agrarian problem in the less-developed countries, and not leave it to to the Communists to carry out the plans that they have already made for this job.

The specific data presented in this article deal almost exclusively with Latin America, and this may seem to imply a suggestion that the cooperation of the United States be confined to, and spread over, the Latin states to the south of us. However, no such implication is intended. A serious comparative study of needs and opportunities in of all the/countries of under Latin America, Asia and Africa ~~might~~ would perhaps suggest that our assistance in agrarian reform might have the maximum total affect if it were centered largely on the three non-Communist countries that may have the largest influence on the future of their under-developed continents: Brazil, where agrarian difficulties are widespread, and seem now to be close to the kindling temperature in the northeastern region; India, overhung by the menace of China, and making only very slow progress with the agrarian reform that is so desperately needed; and the Congo, a loose conglomerate of almost all the problems that have ever faced mankind.

END

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