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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
2 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 10
(As of 5:00 P.M. EST)

1. The Vietnamese Communists may be trying to put together some new kind of political facade to back up claims that their current offensive has touched off a popular uprising in favor of objectives long sought by the Communists.

2. The Viet Cong radio on 2 February broadcast as "appeal" from the "National Leadership Committee" of the new organization called the "Alliance of National and Peace Forces." The appeal is dated 30 January to coincide with the nationwide surge of Communist attacks which began then. The appeal is designed to show that a popular "revolution" has "broken out." It calls on all elements of the South Vietnamese population to join the "ranks of the people" and says that "we must at once set up a revolutionary government." The goals of the "Alliance" are said to include overthrowing the Saigon regime and replacing it with a "really" representative "administrative power," recovering national independence by demanding the withdrawal of the US and ending the war, building an independent, democratic, and neutral South Vietnam, and negotiating with the National Liberation Front to achieve these goals.

3. It is difficult to perceive how the new "Alliance" will be any more useful to the Communists than the National Liberation Front itself in accomplishing Communist objectives. The Front's basic weakness since it was formed in late 1960 has been its almost total failure to attract support from

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politically significant individuals and groups in South Vietnam.

4. So far the new "Alliance" shows no signs of being anything more than a paper organization. Although it is presented as a "national" apparatus, Communist broadcasts have referred specifically only to alliances in the cities of Saigon and Hue.

5. There are no details about the organization in Saigon. A Hanoi broadcast reported its establishment and said it issued a manifesto. Hanoi claims, however, that in Hue the alliance is headed by Le Van Hao, a doctor of ethnology and professor of Saigon and Hue universities. Hao reportedly read an "appeal" over Hue radio.

6. Le Van Hao seems to be a non-Communist political nonentity of the same stripe found throughout the ranks of the National Liberation Front. He was active in the 1966 Buddhist struggle movement and was imprisoned for his participation between June and October of that year. He has also been mentioned in connection with the Hung Viet Party, a small, little known anti-government group formed in central Vietnam during or shortly after the struggle movement, and, at some time before the struggle was editor of a leftist magazine Vietnam Vietnam.

7. Little is known of Hao's influence in central Vietnam or even at Hue University, but he may be able to generate some support for his "alliance" among university students, who have frequently been active in antigovernment agitation. There is no evidence that Hao has had Viet Cong or Liberation Front connections, but this is possible in view of his apparently leftist, antigovernment tendencies.

8. The enemy may believe that by stressing themes of peace, war weariness, Anti-Americanism, and neutrality in the name of a new organization untainted by any known links with either the Communists or the Liberation Front, they can muster greater support for their objectives than they have in the past. The effectiveness of this tactic, however would still seem to hinge on success in generating

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some real popular enthusiasm and ferreting out solid political support in order to create a power base.

9. It also is conceivable that, even if the Communists do not rally much support for the "Alliance," they might try to fashion an administration structure to pass off as a "coalition government"--an objective frequently mentioned in captured documents as a goal of the "winter-spring" campaign. This could eventually involve staging some kind of "negotiations" between the Front and groups represented by the "Alliance." The ensuing "coalition" could then be presented as the "real" government of South Vietnam. The Communists have avoided such a course with the Front itself, presumably because the Front's failure to develop a political base makes it so patently a creature of the Communists.

The Military Situation

10. There has been no significant change in the overall military situation.

11. Hue continues to be the focal point of heavy enemy pressure in I Corps. A large concentration of Communist troops has been reported massing for an attack against Quang Ngai City. This is unconfirmed, however. Da Nang Air Base has again been subjected to 122-mm. rocket fire.

12. Regimental-sized North Vietnamese forces are continuing to occupy extensive areas of Kontum City and Ban Me Thuot in the western highlands, with heavy fighting reported in both cities. In coastal II Corps, heavy fighting between allied reaction forces and three Viet Cong battalions continues in and around the Binh Thuan province capital of Phan Thiet.

13. In III Corps, the provincial capitals of Xuan Loc and Ba Ria are reported to be under heavy Communist attack, with the latter city at least 50 percent under enemy control. While no substantial fighting is currently underway in the Saigon area, there are reports that major concentrations of enemy forces have infiltrated into the southern portion of the capital and into the New Port area to the north-east. These reports are unconfirmed, however.

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14. The situation in the delta remains essentially unchanged, with heavy fighting apparently still continuing in some major population centers.

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