

The Propaganda Efforts in Support of The Legitimacy Contributing to The Failure of The U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" Policy in Saigon – Gia Dinh to Achieve Peace for Vietnam During the Period 1961 – 1965

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the propaganda efforts promoting the just cause, humanity, and humanitarianism of the resistance war conducted by the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh to oppose the U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" policy during the American invasion of Vietnam, aiming for peace and the reunification of the country. The study highlights the key target of the propaganda work, which was the soldiers, officers, and civil servants of the U.S. military, as well as those of the Republic of Vietnam. The goal was to minimize casualties on both sides, protect the lives and property of the people, and simultaneously convey to the U.S. and South Vietnamese military personnel that the war they were involved in was an unjust war caused by American imperialism and the South Vietnamese government. It also aimed to make them understand that the soldiers and officials of the Republic of Vietnam were the victims of American neocolonialism, while emphasizing the lenient policies and humanitarian treatment of prisoners and captives by the Vietnamese revolutionaries. The experiences from these efforts in Saigon – Gia Dinh during the period 1961 – 1965 also provide valuable insights for researchers to propose programs and mass mobilization policies for the Party and the State of Vietnam today. The article uses two common research methods in historical science: the historical method and the logical method, based on the methodology of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, and the perspectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: Peace, propaganda, soldiers, Saigon, Gia Dinh Classification of Discipline: History

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam has a tradition of fighting invaders through "psychological warfare" – targeting the hearts and minds of the people. As President Ho Chi Minh once said, "Using righteousness to defeat brutality, using humanism to replace tyranny" This study examines the process of conducting propaganda efforts to promote the just cause, humanity, and humanitarianism to U.S. and Republic of Vietnam (RVN) soldiers and civil servants by the military and people on the battlefield of Saigon – Gia Dinh, in order to destroy the U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" program. It aims to contribute to the revival of the heroic struggle of the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh in this special front of resistance. From there, the study clarifies the nationwide and comprehensive nature of this effort, providing a more detailed explanation of the crucial role it played as one of the factors that led to peace and the reunification of Vietnam, while also drawing meaningful lessons and experiences that can be applied to current mass mobilization work.

The topic of propaganda promoting the just cause, humanity, and humanitarianism to U.S. and Republic of Vietnam soldiers and civil servants during the resistance against U.S. invasion of Vietnam (1954 – 1975) has been summarized and addressed by many organizations and scholars from various perspectives and levels. However, the issue of this propaganda effort in Saigon – Gia Dinh in the struggle against the "Strategic Hamlet" program from 1961 to 1965 remains unexplored, with no comprehensive or systematic study available. For these reasons, the author has chosen the topic "Propaganda Supporting the Just Cause Contributing to the Failure of the U.S. 'Strategic Hamlet' Policy in Saigon – Gia Dinh to Achieve Peace for Vietnam during the Period 1961 – 1965" for research.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective

To provide a relatively full and comprehensive account of the process of conducting propaganda to promote the just cause in the effort to dismantle the U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" program in the key battlefield of Saigon – Gia Dinh. Based on this, the aim is to fill the historical gap regarding this work in the Saigon – Gia Dinh battlefield during the period 1961 – 1965.

Subject

This article presents the propaganda efforts promoting the just cause carried out by the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh in the process of dismantling the U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" program to achieve peace and the reunification of Vietnam. The subject of the study is the propaganda work conducted by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the Saigon – Gia Dinh battlefield, specifically focusing on the policies, measures, methods, organizational structure, participating forces, the implementation process, and the results of the propaganda and mobilization efforts.

Scope of the Study

Content: The propaganda and mobilization efforts aimed at U.S. and Republic of Vietnam officers, soldiers, and civil servants, with the goal of confusing, demoralizing, and turning them against the war, causing them to defect to the revolutionary side, and preventing them from opposing the people in dismantling the "Strategic Hamlet" program.

Time period: From 1961 to 1965.

Geographical area: The Saigon – Gia Dinh battlefield.

General Research Method: The article is based on the methodology of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, and the perspectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Specific Research Methods: A combination of two main methods: the historical method and the logical method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Just Cause Propaganda Policies of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Government from 1961 to 1965

When invading Vietnam, the U.S. imperialists identified the "Strategic Hamlet" program as the backbone of their "Special War" strategy, considering it the top "national policy" aimed at separating the armed forces and political leadership from the masses in order to destroy the revolutionary struggle movement.

To defeat the U.S. imperialists' "Special War" strategy, the policy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was to transition the revolution from partial uprisings to a full-scale revolutionary war, dismantling the U.S. "Strategic Hamlet" policy. The three-pronged military, political, and military propaganda approach was strengthened, taking the struggle to a new level, targeting and breaking down each unit of U.S. soldiers, officers, and civil servants, as well as the allies of the U.S. and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN).

On October 2, 1961, during a Politburo meeting discussing the revolution in the South, President Ho Chi Minh clearly outlined the tasks and methods of struggle: "In the short term, we must thwart the enemy's 18-month plan, further discuss military strategies, the issue of the front, and the Party... We are strong in politics but weak in military power. It is not beneficial to engage in a war of attrition. We do not meet force with force, but use strategy to defeat them, punish the evil to protect the foundation of the movement, so that the people will rise. When the enemy attacks the city, we attack their heart; we must win the people's support"¹.

In November 1961, the Central South Bureau issued a resolution to launch a people's war, identifying the core forces as primarily the guerrillas and local militia, with the direct and widespread participation of the people. The policy was to concentrate the armed forces in local areas to conduct guerrilla warfare, carrying out a three-pronged offensive to develop the movement and maintain the base areas.

On February 27, 1962, the Politburo issued a resolution "On the Revolution in the South. The resolution stated: "Currently, in the South, a form of resistance against sweeps has emerged by coordinating the three fronts of political, military, and military propaganda struggle. This is a good initiative. In dismantling the "Strategic Hamlet" program and breaking the encirclement, it is even more essential to coordinate all three fronts, but it must be done more meticulously, with better preparation, more actively, and more comprehensively"². In July 1962, following the guidance of President Ho Chi Minh, the Politburo and the Central South Bureau, along with the Saigon – Gia Dinh Party Committee, held a special meeting on countering the "Strategic Hamlet" program. The meeting emphasized the urgent,

¹ Nguyen Quy (chief editor) (2010), *History of the South Party Committee and the Central South Bureau (1954 - 1975)*, National Politics Publishing House, p. 537

² The Communist Party of Vietnam (2012), *Party Documents on Fighting Against the U.S., Saving the Nation, Volume I (1954 - 1965)*, National Politics – Truth Publishing House, p. 658.

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long-term, and fiercely contested nature of the struggle, characterizing it as a comprehensive battle. Therefore, the strategy was to “closely combine military, political, military propaganda, and economic struggles; focus on the land and the people, rely on the internal mass forces as the foundation; initiate the slogan “bring secret bunker lids into the strategic hamlets”; strive to campaign for the division of the local militia and youth fighters; build a base within the local militia and youth fighters, create underground self-defense forces and secret guerrillas, maintain links both inside and outside the hamlets, and coordinate the three-pronged offensive within the hamlets, attacking militarily from outside”³.

In early 1964, U.S. imperialism decided to further intensify the "Special War" in order to stabilize South Vietnam within the next two years (1964-1965). It was assessed that the U.S. and its puppet government continued to implement the Staley-Taylor plan while being strategically on the defensive. In March 1964, the Central South Bureau held its second conference, which outlined the strategy: "It is necessary to firmly grasp the fundamental spirit of the strategic policy and the immediate tasks of the South Vietnam revolution set out by the Central South Bureau: the prolonged struggle against the enemy through both political and armed means, while seizing the opportunity to strive for decisive victory in the coming years"⁴.

Regarding military propaganda work, the resolution from the second conference of the Central South Bureau (Resolution No. 2, March 1964) stated: “Timely take advantage of all favorable conditions, closely coordinate with military and political struggles, and further disband the enemy’s army. Additionally, intensify the efforts to divide the ranks of enemy officers, actively recruit elements who support 'peace and neutrality.' Urgently build and develop revolutionary forces within the enemy’s army, step by step implementing the slogan of workers, farmers, and soldiers’ unity to help change the balance of power between us and the enemy in the coming period”⁵.

In March 1965, the resolution (special) of the 11th meeting of the Party Central Committee identified: "Our basic task is to actively contain and defeat the enemy in the highest intensity of the special war in the South, make every effort to seize the opportunity, concentrate the nation's forces to achieve a decisive victory in the South, while being ready to deal with and decisively win the limited war in the South if the enemy provokes it”⁶.

The policies and measures of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo, and the Central South Bureau were concretized by the Saigon – Gia Dinh Party Committee, demonstrating timeliness and correctness. These actions created a shift in both strategy and strength, awakening a vigorous fighting spirit among the people.

2. The Propaganda Efforts of the Saigon – Gia Dinh Army and People to Dismantle the U.S.-VNCH "Strategic Hamlet" Program during the Period 1961 – 1965

In implementing the directives of the Central Committee and the Southern Central Bureau, the army and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh fought on the military propaganda front to maintain a legitimate position with various methods and degrees of intensity, such as exploiting contradictions between soldiers and the ruthless forces involved in pacification; mobilizing careless and indifferent soldiers of the VNCH, encouraging them to leave for production areas, bringing cattle out, building shelters to stay during the day, then staying overnight, and eventually remaining there permanently; digging secret tunnels to hide and nurture guerrillas and cadres, which resulted in significant achievements.

For example, in Tan Xuan commune (Hoc Mon), an area heavily bombarded by the US and the South Vietnamese government (VNCH) from 1955 to 1959, the Party cell here suffered severe losses from three attacks. In 1960, the organization managed to rebuild with 3 party members, 3 union members, and 8 core members. In order to rebuild the movement and fight alongside the people, the Party cell in the area found ways to be with the people, despite the danger and hardships caused by the widespread presence of "strategic hamlets" and the lack of revolutionary bases among the people. They could return at night, but had to crawl through the "strategic hamlets" and sometimes hide in piles of trees. Despite these difficulties, the base was successfully rebuilt, and the tactic of "bringing secret bunker lids into the strategic hamlets" was adopted, hiding during the day and conducting activities at night. At the same time, they connected and mobilized the masses to participate in the struggle. They used the people to mobilize others through family roots, relatives, and friends. They brought relatives from the liberated areas to visit and persuade them. After three months (from January to March 1961) of perseverance and mobilization, many active people were connected and contributed to the revolutionary struggle of the people in Tan Xuan commune (Hoc Mon).

³ Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee (2000), *Summary of Military Propaganda Work in the Resistance Against U.S. Aggression and National Salvation (1954 - 1975) on the Former B2 Battlefield*, Department of Civil Affairs Publishing House, General Department of Politics, Ministry of Defense, Hanoi, p. 55

⁴ The Communist Party of Vietnam (2002), *Complete Party Documents, Volume 25*, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 725

⁵ The Communist Party of Vietnam (2002), *Complete Party Documents, Volume 26*, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 759

⁶ The Communist Party of Vietnam (2002), *Complete Party Documents, Volume 26*, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 102

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In Hamlet 3 of Tan Xuan commune, close to the Quang Trung base, taking advantage of the enemy's negligence, the cadres and two armed guerrillas infiltrated and carried out armed propaganda. They infiltrated the Bui Mon market, joined in singing, and organized armed propaganda for over 200 relocated people. On National Road 1, they blocked vehicles, distributed leaflets, organized armed propaganda, and set off a mine that hit an American military vehicle, forcing them to withdraw to secure National Road 1. Faced with this situation, the local troops became panicked, thinking that the area would soon be liberated. The enemy organized patrols and ambushes, but the military and the people set traps and used grenades to kill 5 soldiers and wound 3 others. The soldiers were afraid and refused to go on ambushes. The enemy retreated, and the "strategic hamlets" gradually weakened. The people fought back fiercely by building dikes, pulling up posts, and removing fences and barbed wire. The people kept an eye on the ruthless individuals in Hamlet 3, informed the revolutionary base to punish them, and sent warning letters to other villains. They organized the transportation of 20 young people to the liberated zone. The people gathered at the district chief's office, protesting that with each "strategic hamlet" freed, the youth would be lost, causing suffering for the people. Through this, they mobilized the police and local militia to jointly dismantle the "strategic hamlet". The struggle was intense, but in the end, victory belonged to the people, and the US and VNCH were forced to abandon the "strategic hamlet" in this area.

The struggle to dismantle the "strategic hamlets" by the people in the rural areas of the outskirts was a fierce, prolonged battle against the enemy. The "Long-Haired Army" in Hoc Mon – Ba Diem raised the slogan, "We would rather die hugging the house's pillar than become a ghost in the strategic hamlet." In 1962, hundreds of "strategic hamlets" were destroyed by the people over and over again. On March 14, 1963, the people broke into the strategic hamlet of Xom Hue in Tan An Hoi commune, Tan Thong Hoi commune, dismantling 4 outposts and destroying 4 strategic hamlets.

The US and VNCH forces, carrying out the "strategic hamlet" program, increasingly exposed the basic weaknesses of the program, particularly in terms of the psychology of the soldiers, police, local militia, and combat youth. They, along with their families, became victims as well. This force was sent to bulldoze homes and gather people, witnessing the suffering of the local populace, which made them sympathize and carry out the tasks half-heartedly. Some even joined the people in fighting the reactionary forces of pacification.

Taking advantage of the situation and the psychological characteristics of the VNCH soldiers, the masses used various methods to influence them. They reminded the soldiers that their own families were also victims of the "strategic hamlets" and suffered the same hardships, which helped win them over.

The severe consequences of the repression of Buddhism heightened religious and social tensions, culminating in the eruption of the Buddhist struggle movement in Southern Vietnam in 1963. On May 1, 1963, VNCH mobilized forces to surround and attack the pagodas, close schools, and suppress the Buddhists and students. In response to this situation, the Sai Gon – Gia Dinh Regional Party Committee issued the directive "Pull over" to steer the movement along a revolutionary path, expanding the Party's leadership role in the political struggle of the people in inner Saigon. Under the guise of being Buddhists, the people, including workers, women, students, and intellectuals, rallied and fought fiercely from May to September 1963, escalating into a mass movement. Many places held meetings with the families of soldiers, strengthening the core support within military families, and mobilizing them for unity and struggle in the movements against the "strategic hamlets" and the urban resistance movements. This situation forced the US and VNCH to focus their efforts on establishing "strategic hamlet belts" surrounding Saigon. This also created favorable conditions for the military and people in rural areas to intensify their efforts against the "strategic hamlets".

On August 28, 1963, the undercover network of the Central Party Committee's military liaison office, in coordination with local forces from Binh Tan District, destroyed a support company of the 11th Regiment, 7th Infantry Division of the VNCH at the Ca De base, located about 10 km from central Saigon. The forces seized many weapons and captured 50 prisoners. These prisoners were briefed on the policies and released on the spot. The battle shocked the outskirts of Saigon, causing a ripple effect on the enemy's security outposts and militia, leading to their retreat and loosening control over the "strategic hamlets." The US's plan to strengthen the "strategic hamlet belt" around the Saigon enclave was unsuccessful in many areas. Most of the "strategic hamlets" were repeatedly destroyed, while the revolutionary base areas were reinforced, advancing the people's struggle and undermining the US-VNCH's pacification strategy. However, the situation remained in a deadlock, as the enemy was not entirely defeated. According to statistics: "In 1963, the rural outskirts destroyed 167 strategic hamlets, and the remaining ones were loosened, with the people taking control at night"⁷. The guerrilla bases were expanded and developed, and by this time, the "strategic hamlets" only remained in form.

⁷ Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee (2000), *Summary of Military Propaganda Work in the Resistance Against U.S. Aggression and National Salvation (1954 - 1975) on the Former B2 Battlefield*, Department of Civil Affairs Publishing House, General Department of Politics, Ministry of Defense, Hanoi, p.60

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From mid-June 1963 to July 8, 1963, the Standing Committee of the Central Office organized a conference for the entire region to draw lessons from the struggle against the "strategic hamlets." The Central Office instructed that the "strategic hamlets" should be dismantled primarily through political and military propaganda forces on the ground, with the armed forces of all three military branches playing an important role. The "strategic hamlets" were considered enemy attack zones. Both offensive and defensive actions had to be intensified, with internal bases established to combine efforts in attacking the "strategic hamlets." The principle of fighting the enemy head-on and undermining them from behind, while stirring up internal dissent to loosen their control, was emphasized. Efforts were also made to build up revolutionary bases within the "strategic hamlets."

The results of the conference on combating the "strategic hamlets" were implemented in the localities, sparking a wave of three-pronged attacks against the "strategic hamlets," bringing the struggle to a new level of development. In the rural areas of Saigon - Gia Dinh, from November 1963 to the end of 1964, there were nearly 300 battles, in which both "strategic hamlets" were destroyed and enemy forces were defeated. A total of 3,137 enemy troops were killed or wounded, 137 captured, and 330 weapons seized. The liberation of 37 hamlets in Cu Chi was achieved, 6 "strategic hamlets" in Tan Nhut (Binh Chanh) were destroyed, and the control over the "strategic hamlets" in Tan Tao and Binh Hung Hoa was loosened.

In addition to using "strategic hamlets," the U.S. imperialists and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) also employed new military tactics in an attempt to pacify South Vietnam within 18 months. With modern weapons and military equipment, they implemented tactics such as helicopter airlifts and armored vehicle deployments to launch campaigns aimed at destroying liberated areas, hunting down, and annihilating the main revolutionary forces. As a result, the military propaganda efforts played a crucial role, which the RVN government closely monitored and directed. The military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh creatively applied various flexible methods, combining them with the political mobilization efforts of the masses, working together with the armed forces to undermine the morale of enemy soldiers, deepen internal contradictions, and sway them to join the revolutionary cause, fighting alongside the people against the U.S. and the RVN government.

The military propaganda made use of internal networks to gather intelligence, and based on that information, the people's forces carried out propaganda and mobilization to win over enemy soldiers, limiting the enemy's sweep operations and military advances by U.S. and RVN forces.

All of the forms of struggle described above demonstrate the intelligence and unwavering will of the people, leading to the development of many creative measures. The movement to dismantle the "strategic hamlets" grew in tandem with military victories, combining with the urban struggle to push nearly half a million troops of the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), equipped with modern weapons and advised by American military consultants, into a critical situation. The strategy of "Special Warfare" by the United States was on the brink of failure.

From mid-1964 to mid-1965, the military mobilization efforts of the military and people of Saigon-Gia Dinh improved in quality, maintaining a strong offensive stance in the political struggle and the three-pronged approach to dismantling the "strategic hamlets".

Based on the directives from the Central Party and the Southern Central Bureau, on the entire B2 battlefield, preparations for "Plan X" were actively carried out to achieve a decisive victory, with a focus on Saigon – Gia Dinh and several other urban areas in the South.

In early 1965, in line with the Party's and the Southern Central Bureau's guidelines, the political struggle in downtown Saigon continued to grow. The student and youth movements sparked protests, strikes, demonstrations, and hunger strikes. On January 22, 1965, a protest targeted the USIS (United States Information Service) office in Saigon, demanding that the US withdraw its troops from Vietnam. Many intellectuals and prominent figures formed a Peace Committee to oppose US intervention in Vietnam. Special task forces were established along five fronts in the outskirts of Saigon – Gia Dinh. In Can Gio District, local forces, in cooperation with the armed forces, successfully liberated 8 enemy outposts. In Dong Hoa, a platoon of security forces surrendered, handing over 23 guns. The local population, with the help of the armed forces, wiped out the local puppet forces, liberating Dong Hoa and Long Thanh communes.

In April 1965, the Saigon – Gia Dinh Regional Party Committee held a meeting to implement the tasks outlined in "Plan X," which aimed to strengthen revolutionary forces, develop guerrilla warfare, and destroy or dismantle small enemy units. The main targets were the enemy forces controlling villages, hamlets, wards, and local militia, and they worked to actively build the three armies (people's militia, guerrillas, and regular forces). The strategy also involved coordinating struggles between urban and rural areas, dismantling "strategic hamlets," and combining military, political, and military mobilization actions to create a powerful force to attack the enemy, while preparing for any opportunity that might arise.

The implementation of "Plan X" was crucial to the enemy's military defeat. The situation in the outskirts of Saigon – Gia Dinh increasingly favored the revolutionaries, with liberated zones being consolidated and expanded. Most of the "strategic hamlets" in Thu

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Duc District were dismantled, and over half of the hamlets were under the control of the revolution. Revolutionary bases were established within the local militia and youth organizations.

On May 9, 1965, the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh launched an attack on the 8th Regiment, 5th Division of the ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) at Bau Lach in Nhuan Duc Commune (Can Gio), killing approximately 500 enemy troops, capturing over 250 prisoners, seizing many weapons, and organizing education for the prisoners. The prisoners were released after receiving medical treatment for their injuries. On May 10, 1965, the enemy forces returned to collect the bodies and wounded soldiers left behind, but in the process, they missed one wounded soldier who was handed over by the people, with the local population using the opportunity to engage in psychological warfare to persuade the enemy soldiers to join the struggle against the US and the South Vietnamese government. This event highlighted the ability of the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh to creatively carry on the tradition of "fighting with justice" in the nation's history.

In May 1965, the US imperialists deployed the 173rd Airborne Brigade to the Southeast region. On June 18, 1965, they launched B-52 bombing raids over Lang Forest (Cu Chi District) and Long Nguyen Forest (Ben Cat District). The US shifted its strategy from "special warfare" to "limited warfare." Although "Plan X" had not yet been fully implemented, the preparations made earlier laid the foundation for the revolution, ensuring that the people and military of Saigon – Gia Dinh were ready to respond to new developments.

On August 20, 1965, the people and forces of Binh Chanh District successfully liberated the Rach Say and Tan Quy Tay outposts. The "strategic hamlets" in Tan Quy Tay were completely destroyed, and most of the ones in Binh Hung were also dismantled.

Thus, alongside the military victories of the revolutionary armed forces, the wave of resistance against pacification and the dismantling of "strategic hamlets" contributed to the dissolution of enemy forces controlling the hamlets and communes throughout the South. This, combined with the rising political struggle in Saigon – Gia Dinh and other urban areas, led to the failure of the US imperialists' "Special Warfare" strategy.

3. Some Remarks on the Propaganda Efforts for U.S. and South Vietnamese Soldiers and Officials in Breaking the U.S.-Sponsored "Strategic Hamlets" in Saigon – Gia Dinh from 1961 to 1965

During the period from 1961 to 1965, the key feature of the military mobilization work in Saigon – Gia Dinh in the struggle against the "strategic hamlets" was its role in contributing to the collapse of the U.S. imperialists' "special warfare" strategy. This was achieved through the persistence of the secretive cadres who, while operating covertly, connected with families in old revolutionary bases that had been forcibly relocated to the "strategic hamlets" by the U.S. and the South Vietnamese government. These cadres guided the people in digging secret tunnels within the "strategic hamlets." Once these tunnels were established, the cadres infiltrated the "strategic hamlets" to build new revolutionary bases, organize clandestine self-defense units, and mobilize the people to destroy the enemy's repressive apparatus. The work of propaganda for justice focused on dividing the enemy's forces by educating the local militia and youth to join the revolutionary side. Thus, the strategy evolved to "stick with the land, stick with the people" and then "bring the secret tunnels into the strategic hamlets", mobilizing the people to cooperate with the armed forces to attack from the outside.

In terms of building revolutionary networks and combining armed struggle to eliminate the enemy, the efforts not only destroyed small outposts and sabotaged "strategic hamlets" but also led to battles where entire companies were wiped out. Notably, in mid-1965, in Can Gio, the revolutionaries began to target and destroy enemy garrisons, showing the beginning of dismantling the enemy's network of military posts.

It can be said that under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh, the Party Central Committee, and the military and people of Saigon – Gia Dinh, with their patriotism, determination, and creative spirit in the struggle, the Vietnamese revolutionaries found effective methods to counter the "strategic hamlet" program, achieving significant success. As a result, the movement against the "strategic hamlets" expanded and spread rapidly, rendering the U.S. imperialists' and their puppet government's "strategic hamlet policy" a failure.

In the course of the struggle to dismantle the "strategic hamlets" in Saigon – Gia Dinh, the strategy of defeating the U.S. "special warfare" campaign was realized. With close attention and careful direction, along with the preparation of forces to take advantage of the strengths of people's warfare, and the creative application of the "two legs, three-pronged" method of struggle, the revolutionary forces successfully neutralized the enemy's tactics. The Party's strategic shift from partial uprisings to combined revolutionary warfare maintained the momentum of the uprising and created a new situation. The revolutionary high tide and people's war expanded widely across all three strategic regions, rendering the "strategic hamlet" program useless, neutralizing the U.S. military tactics, and opening up new liberated and contested zones near the enemy's bases, urban areas, and key transportation routes. This brought the revolutionary movement and people's war into the cities, strengthened the regular revolutionary armed forces, and ultimately dealt a decisive blow to the U.S. imperialists' "special warfare" strategy.

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In the struggle in both urban and rural areas, the masses mobilized to disband the enemy's forces, combined with efforts to resist forced conscription, which resulted in the attrition of both local and regular enemy forces, contributing to the reduction of the size of the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) throughout the southern region.

In the urban areas, the work of military mobilization became a key offensive, combining with the intensification of political struggle movements, and playing a crucial role in breaking through and creating many political "pockets" of resistance. In the rural areas, uprisings were launched to destroy the "strategic hamlets," attack enemy posts and garrisons, and so on. The two regions worked closely together, supporting each other to gain control over the countryside, while maintaining and expanding the urban movement.

CONCLUSION

The work of propaganda for justice in Saigon – Gia Dinh during this period saw qualitative developments, enhancing the power of the coordinated offensive against the "strategic hamlets". From grassroots movements mobilizing the masses, combining efforts to win over the local militia and soldiers to weaken the enemy's control, to the development of internal revolutionary networks within the various military ranks and youth forces, this work effectively utilized both armed and political tactics on the ground. This strategy included eliminating enemy collaborators (such as the local militia), breaking their control, seizing enemy weapons, and building guerrilla forces, all while continuing to dismantle the "strategic hamlets".

Propagating the just and humane cause to the soldiers and officials of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) to dismantle the U.S.-RVN "strategic hamlets" has left valuable lessons for mobilizing the Vietnamese people to unite, build, and protect the country today. It contributes to the diversification and multilateralization of international relations, fostering more friendships and reducing enmities, in order to build a peaceful, stable, and friendly Vietnam.

APPENDIX



A1 In 1961, the women of Phước Hiệp commune, Củ Chi, raised banners with the propaganda message: "Soldiers, do not shoot farmers. Shooting farmers is like shooting the families of soldiers." [Source: Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee]



A2 The people of Saigon – Gia Dinh fought to dismantle the U.S. "strategic hamlets" in 1962. [Source: Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee]

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