

Research Article

PROPAGANDA OF JUST CAUSE AND HUMANITY, MOBILIZING AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND ALLIED FORCES IN THE SAIGON - GIA DINH BATTLEFIELD TO ACHIEVE PEACE FOR VIETNAM IN THE 1965 - 1968 PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the heartfelt propaganda efforts focused on just cause, humanity, and compassion carried out by the military and people of Saigon - Gia Dinh from 1965 to 1968. Their aim was to foster peace and unity in Vietnam during a tumultuous time. The study highlights the key audience of these efforts: American soldiers and troops from allied nations. It seeks to reduce the military actions of the U.S. and its allies, protecting the lives and homes of local residents, while conveying to the American troops that the war they are fighting is unjust and driven by those in power. It emphasizes that there is no hostility between the Vietnamese people and them, and promotes the Vietnamese revolution's approach of kindness and understanding towards prisoners of war and defectors. The lessons learned from these compassionate outreach efforts can also guide researchers in proposing meaningful programs and policies for grassroots engagement by the Vietnamese Party and State today.

Keywords: Saigon, Gia Dinh, propaganda, just cause, American soldiers.

INTRODUCTION

Saigon – GiaDinh was the political and administrative center of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) from 1954 to 1975. This city served as the regional command headquarters for the US war of aggression in addition to being the hub of political, military, and commercial activity. A strategically important territory, Saigon was bounded to the north by Tây Ninh Province, to the east by Bình Dương and Biên Hòa provinces, to the west by Long An Province, and to the south by the sea. Saigon also contained sections of Chợ Lớn and Gia Dinh Province.

Significant efforts were made by the US and the RVN to fortify and secure the city while fostering its economy to aid in the war effort. Consequently, Saigon – Gia Dinh developed into a hub for American products and a conduit for American culture and way of life in an effort to preserve its strategic significance during the Vietnam War. Gia Dinh, a neighborhood in Saigon, became the epicenter of hostilities between revolutionary elements and RVN and US forces.

Between mid-1965 and mid-1967, the landscape of the Saigon- Gia Dinh battlefield experienced significant changes. In May 1965, the U.S. initiated a "local war" by sending troops and allied forces directly into South Vietnam, along with a large supply of modern weaponry. As a consequence, the people of Saigon - Gia Dinh endured harsh oppression, repression, and violence resulting from the policies of both the U.S. and the RVN government. This region became a crucial and intense battleground, where revolutionary forces faced off against the U.S. military, allied troops, and the RVN government on multiple military and political fronts. Additionally, there were efforts to implement propaganda campaigns aimed at mobilizing American soldiers and those from allied nations participating in the conflict.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article focuses on the heartfelt propaganda efforts centered on just cause, humanity, and humanitarianism during the resistance of the military and people of Saigon – GiaDinh from 1965 to 1968, specifically aimed at American soldiers and their allies. The research methodology is grounded in the principles of dialectical and historical materialism from Marxist theory, reflecting the viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The main research method, the study employs a blend of two key approaches from Marxist historical analysis: the historical method and the logical method. The research draws from important sources, including documents stored at the National Archives Center II in Ho Chi Minh City and comprehensive reports on troop mobilization from the General Department of Political Affairs of the Vietnam People's Army. It also references various specialized historical studies that delve into the resistance against the American invasion and the broader national liberation movement from 1954 to 1975 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. U.S. Policies in the Strategy of "Limited War" in Vietnam

In May 1965, the United States embarked on its "limited war" strategy, employing two primary strategic forces. The American military, along with allied troops, was tasked with a "search and destroy" mission, while the South Vietnamese forces focused on "pacification," acting as a protective barrier for U.S. troops. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu was appointed by the U.S. as president of the South Vietnamese government. Together, the U.S. and the RVN restructured the battlefield, renaming the capital region as the capital military zone under the command of the RVN General Staff. A variety of security forces—including local police, civil defense units, three infantry divisions, special task forces, Marines, and paratroopers—were deployed to safeguard Saigon.

The U.S. pacification program, referred to as "winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people," sought to cultivate support among the populace. In this effort, the U.S. and RVN significantly bolstered police forces, embedding undercover agents within public organizations and opposition groups to undermine movements from within. They launched aggressive campaigns against grassroots resistance efforts, tightening control over local communities and extending their reach into individual households.

American troops escalated their operations, conducting increased raids and inspections while military police patrolled the streets of Saigon with heightened vigilance. They established "political pacification teams," formed "military advisory groups," and initiated programs focused on agriculture, rural education, and local justice, all designed to "win the hearts and minds" of the people in South Vietnam. Through these strategies, the U.S. aimed not only to counter resistance but also to foster a sense of allegiance among the South Vietnamese population.

2. The difference between righteous propaganda to enemy soldiers and psychological warfare

Propaganda and mobilization of enemy soldiers (militia) have an important strategic role and position in the liberation wars of the Vietnamese people. It is considered one of three common enemy attacks, forming three fronts including physical, military and political attacks. This work aims to influence the morale and strength of the enemy soldiers, leading to the destruction of all enemy troops, contributing to the overall victory of the entire nation.

According to V.I. Lenin, political and spiritual factors play a huge role in determining success or failure in a war: "In any war, victory is ultimately due to the spirit of the bleeding masses." on the decisive battlefield. Faith in a just war, the realization that it is necessary to sacrifice one's life for the happiness of one's brothers, are factors that raise the morale of soldiers and enable them to endure unprecedented difficulties. see¹. Thus, the Marxist-Leninist theory analyzed the spiritual factors of the two warring sides, placed on a solid basis of political factors. In particular, the political purpose of unjust or just war plays a decisive role, which in turn affects the level of confidence of soldiers and people in their victory, affecting morale, spirit, sense of organization and self-discipline and psychology when going into battle. Lenin also pointed out: "Today, the most important thing for us is to let our backward and politically uninformed citizens know that we have done everything possible to avoid a new bloodshed"². Here, we need to distinguish the difference in nature between the propaganda and mobilization work that the Vietnamese army and people carry out to wage revolutionary war and the psychological warfare and political warfare of the Vietnamese people, imperialism. That is the difference in goals, methods and content of implementation.

The work of propaganda and mobilization of enemy soldiers is a revolutionary campaign aimed at propagating righteousness, conquering, enlightening, enhancing human dignity and rallying the masses of the people manipulated by the enemy. Defrauded or forced to take up arms or work for the opposing side to join the revolution. Join the revolution, liberate the class, liberate the nation. Psychological warfare or political warfare of imperialism is based on psychological theories, military psychology and modern military theories of psychological warfare, psychological warfare organizers

used many measures to influence the opponent's politics and spirit. At the same time, emphasis is placed on emotional aspects and personal freedom, making people forget responsibilities and obligations.

Entering the twentieth century, psychological warfare was systematically used by imperialism as a part of opposing the formation and development of the socialist economy. The RF uses psychological warfare by primarily influencing the field of social psychology on all factors of social awareness and implementing it comprehensively, throughout both war and peace periods.

3. The Military and People of Saigon - Gia Dinh: Efforts to Engage U.S. and Allied Soldiers for Peace in Vietnam (1965-1968)

During the period when the U.S. implemented its "limited war" strategy, the military and citizens of Vietnam undertook a heartfelt mission to awaken the conscience of U.S. soldiers, allied troops, and progressive Americans. This initiative was marked by a wide range of methods and approaches, drawing on the strengths of diverse participants—from everyday citizens to skilled professionals—and employing both simple and sophisticated communication techniques, whether through direct engagement or more subtle means.

3.1. Propaganda via Radio Waves

In the dynamic landscape of the Saigon - Gia Dinh battlefield, propaganda aimed at U.S. and allied soldiers was creatively tailored to fit the unique circumstances of each area. The military and residents utilized a variety of strategies to make direct connections and convey their messages. Among these methods, radio broadcasts played a pivotal role, serving as a powerful tool to share the humanitarian voice of the Vietnamese people. These broadcasts sought to resonate with American and South Korean soldiers in Vietnam, while also reaching audiences back in the United States, emphasizing a shared humanity in the face of conflict (General Department of Political Affairs of the Vietnam People's Army, 2002, p. 129). The radio broadcasts primarily used English and Korean, serving as vital channels of communication. Starting in 1962, the segment titled "Stories for American Soldiers" was launched by the General Department of Political Affairs in collaboration with the Voice of Vietnam, airing during English-language broadcasts. By July 1965, a new program called "U.S. Mobilization" was introduced to further engage listeners. Then, in mid-1967, with assistance from the Cuban government, Vietnam initiated an English-language radio program broadcasting from Cuba, aimed squarely at the American public. This program aired six times a day, with each segment lasting 20 minutes, successfully reaching audiences across the entire United States. In 1968, with help from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the General Department of Political Affairs also began broadcasting in Korean, targeting South Korean soldiers with two daily segments, each lasting 30 minutes. These broadcasts significantly contributed to showcasing the just and humanitarian nature of the Vietnamese resistance, igniting anti-war sentiments among U.S. soldiers, allied troops in Vietnam, and peace-loving individuals around the world.

On January 1, 1962, the Liberation Radio Station emerged, broadcasting its first program and quickly becoming a key political tool in Southern Vietnam. Despite facing relentless attempts by the U.S. and the RVN government to jam and disrupt its signals, the dedicated staff and soldiers behind the station remained resolute, continuing their work with unwavering determination. By the end of 1962, reports from the RVN government indicated the rise of additional radio groups within the network, including teams specializing in telegraphic signals, while the Liberation Radio Station

¹V.I.Lenin (2005), V.I.Lenin Complete Works. Episode 41, Publishing National politics – Truth House, Hanoi. P.147

²V.I.Lenin (2005), V.I.Lenin Complete Works. Episode 41, Publishing National politics – Truth House, Hanoi. P.147

focused on audio broadcasts, each playing a crucial role in the struggle for hearts and minds during a tumultuous time.

On April 19, 1963, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Vietnam provided a report detailing the activities of the Liberation Radio Station. It stated: "The Liberation Radio Station (phonie) broadcasts on frequencies 30th50 and 40th50; the Southern Liberation Front (LPA) operates on frequency 33, 52th; the Eastern Liberation Front (KIG) is on frequency 55th; the Western Liberation Front (POR) can be found on frequency 53th63; the Central Liberation Front (GPR) broadcasts on frequency 53th70; and the Saigon – Cho Lon Liberation Front (GFK) is on frequency 52th70"³.

After just a year of operation, the Liberation Radio Station had already made a noteworthy impact on efforts to reach out to U.S. soldiers and allied forces in South Vietnam. Trần Quang recounts a striking incident during the Tet Offensive: "An unusual encounter unfolded along the Bình Tiên River, right in the heart of Chợ Lớn. Our armed self-defense unit managed to fend off an airborne assault and seize an armored vehicle. In the chaos, an enemy lieutenant abandoned his uniform and fled. On that very vehicle, a portable radio was broadcasting a program from the Liberation Radio Station"⁴. This moment highlights not only the strategic significance of the broadcasts but also the human stories interwoven in the conflict.

3.2. Direct Propaganda

In the context of Saigon – Gia Dinh, following the U.S. launch of its initial dry season counteroffensive and the establishment of the Dong Du base, local citizens employed creative strategies for propaganda. In nearby areas, they engaged in commerce with American soldiers and provided various services, actively looking for opportunities to connect and convey their messages. They distributed pamphlets to U.S. personnel, tapping into their nostalgia for home and stressing that "the challenges faced by the Vietnamese should be resolved by the Vietnamese themselves". During the second dry season counteroffensive (1966–1967), there was a noticeable increase in incidents of U.S. soldiers going AWOL. Many sought refuge in Saigon or took their leave to escape abroad, often aided by international anti-war organizations. The anti-war sentiment among American troops began to manifest in different forms. On October 9, 1966, more than 300 soldiers at the Dong Du base, nearing the end of their service, protested against deployment commands.

In the areas surrounding Saigon, a Korean engineering brigade was stationed in Di An, along with a civilian unit from the Philippines in Tay Ninh. Local residents took the initiative to build relationships with these forces, gradually distributing pamphlets to curb their activities. Officials from the Central Southern Region's mobilization committee actively engaged with the Filipino unit, which agreed to reduce its operations and committed to reporting back to the President of the Philippines. Meanwhile, in relation to the Taiwanese military advisory group, officer Lam Tuan Anh managed to create a valuable internal network at the junior officer level. This network consistently provided crucial information that supported the revolutionary cause.

³Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam (1963), Monitoring Viet Cong and reactionary radio stations in 1962-1963, file 8137, National Archives Center II, p.35

⁴Tran Quang (2015), "This is a radio station for liberation", Sharing a flag (About the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam), Publishing National politics – Truth House, Hanoi. P.873

4. Some remarks on the Propaganda Efforts Targeting U.S. Soldiers and Their Allies in Saigon – Gia Dinh from 1965 to 1968

The efforts to reach out to U.S. soldiers and their allied forces opened up new possibilities for connecting with a unique audience in the Vietnamese revolutionary movement. Through broadcasts from the Voice of Vietnam and the Liberation Radio Station, these channels served as vital tools to awaken the conscience of American troops and their allies, as well as resonate with peace-loving Americans back home. By fostering direct interactions, these initiatives highlighted the legitimacy of the Vietnamese struggle, supported stable living conditions for the local communities, and facilitated the distribution of pamphlets that shared humanitarian ideals and the desire for peace in Vietnam. This marks a significant early achievement in the campaign to engage U.S. soldiers and their allies on the battlefield in Saigon – Gia Dinh, creating a pathway toward peace and national unity for Vietnam.

Thus, to fight and defeat the enemy, we must not only use military power, but also proactively influence awareness, ideology, and politics. Cooperation That action was seen as a sharp attack, showing American soldiers and American allied soldiers a clear understanding of the nature of the war in the Saigon - Gia Dinh battlefield.

CONCLUSION

The Vietnamese people waged a revolutionary war to defend the nation, embodying a just cause. This sense of justice created the strength of political and spiritual elements. This was the foundation for fostering the unity and determination of the entire population in fighting the enemy—a people's war of the Vietnamese nation. Based on this foundation, President Ho Chi Minh advocated for the promotion and mobilization of soldiers and citizens of the opposing nation, as well as peace-loving people around the world, to understand and support Vietnam's resistance, viewing it as an integral part of an all-encompassing, nationwide war effort.

From 1965 to 1968, propaganda and mobilization efforts aimed at American soldiers played a crucial role in promoting peace and national unity in Vietnam. These efforts highlighted the courage of the people and military in Saigon – Gia Dinh during a tough period. They showed the collective spirit of the struggle and the humanitarian values that drove the Vietnamese military and people, believing in the idea of "using righteousness to overcome brutality." This understanding is still important today, offering valuable lessons for current grassroots mobilization efforts.

APPENDIX



A1 American soldiers landed at Cu Chi [Source: War Remnants Museum]



A2 Progressive American people protest against the US war in Vietnam in New York on April 27, 1968 [Source: (AP: photo)]



A3 Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at the large anti-Vietnam War rally held at the United Nations Plaza in New York City on April 15, 1967 [Source: The American experience in Vietnam]

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