

**March 15, 1971**

**The Minister's Speech to the Conference Reviewing  
Fifteen Years of Struggle by the Public Security  
Service against Reactionaries Who Exploit the  
Catholic Religion**

**Citation:**

"The Minister's Speech to the Conference Reviewing Fifteen Years of Struggle by the Public Security Service against Reactionaries Who Exploit the Catholic Religion", March 15, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Trần Quốc Hoàn, Một số vấn đề về đấu tranh chống phản cách mạng (Tối mật; chỉ lưu hành nội bộ ngành công an) (A Number of Issues regarding the Struggle against Counter-Revolutionaries [Top Secret; For Internal Distribution within the Public Security Service Only]) (Hanoi: Viện Nghiên Cứu Khoa Học Công An, December 1975), 431-462. Translated by Merle Pribbenow.  
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300039>

**Summary:**

In 1971, North Vietnam's Public Security Service (the North Vietnamese equivalent of the former Soviet KGB, known at the time as the Ministry of Interior) held a national conference to review the status of the Service's efforts targeted against the Vietnamese Catholic Church over the past decade and a half and to formulate plans and policies for its future operations directed against the Church. In this speech given at the opening of the conference, Party Politburo Member and Minister of Public Security General Tran Quoc Hoan [Trần Quốc Hoàn], outlined the successes that he said had been achieved in gaining the sympathy and support of the Catholic "masses" and in combatting what he called "reactionaries exploiting the Catholic religion".

**Original Language:**

Vietnamese

**Contents:**

Original Scan  
Translation - English

[Page 431]

THE MINISTER'S SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE REVIEWING FIFTEEN YEARS OF STRUGGLE BY THE PUBLIC SECURITY SERVICE AGAINST REACTIONARIES WHO EXPLOIT THE CATHOLIC RELIGION

[Translator's note: No date is given for this speech, but according to another source, the conference was held 15-18 March 1971. See *Lực Lượng Chống Phản Động: Lịch Sử Biên Niên (1954-1975)* (Anti-Reactionary Forces: Chronology of Events, 1954-1975), by Major Nguyen Hung Linh and Lt. Col. Hoang Mac (Hanoi: Nha

xua

t  
ba

n  
Co

ng an  
nha

n  
da

n, 1997), 285.]

*Comrades,*

Our cause of conducting a revolution in our country faces many problems that we must study and resolve, but the two major political problems are the religious issue and the ethnic [minority] issue. With regard to the religious issue, the problem of the Catholic religion in particular is one of the most important political issues facing our Party's and our Government's front policy. As was true at the beginning and is still true today, the work of fighting against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion is an important element of our political and ideological struggle, and for us it is a very difficult, complex, arduous, ferocious, protracted struggle. It is one aspect of the class struggle and it is aimed at eliminating the vestiges of imperialism and of the old feudalist regime and at eliminating a source of support for foreign imperialism within our country. During each step of the Vietnamese revolution's steady progress, reactionaries, both domestic and foreign, who exploit the Catholic religion and who are allied with the imperialists have always plotted and attempted to carry out actions aimed at opposing and sabotaging Vietnam's revolution.

[Page 432]

In 1957 the Ministry held a special conference on this subject to unify thinking throughout our service regarding the position, nature, and special characteristics of the struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion. However, at that time, because the time period being reviewed was short and we did not have very much experience in this struggle, the results of the conference were limited. This time, we have conducted a much more comprehensive review of the struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion from the date when peace was restored [1954] until the present with the goal of correctly assessing the changes in the political and social situation in areas where Catholics live; assessing the changes in the enemy's schemes, methods, and operational procedures during each individual time period; and conducting a comprehensive, systematic, and focused assessment of our strengths and weaknesses in the struggle that we have conducted against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion from 1954 up to the present. We will then use this review to determine our achievements and our strengths, to analyze our weaknesses, shortcomings, and continuing problems, determine the reasons for these problems, and derive lessons learned from our experience. At the same time, using the Party's political responsibilities as our foundation, we will lay out guidelines

for the struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religions in the future in order to achieve better results.

Generally speaking, during the past 15 years of struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religions, *we have achieved a number of major successes and have accumulated a great deal of valuable experience.* These achievements may be demonstrated as follows:

*First, the political and social situation in areas where Catholics live has changed greatly when compared with the situation at the time the war against France ended.* Currently in North Vietnam we have about one million Catholics. For a long time (four or five years) the percentage of Catholics who had joined cooperatives was only 26%, but today this percentage has risen to 88%, which is a very encouraging number. Many areas were previously the central lairs of reactionaries, places such as Phat Diem, Phuc Nhac, and Con Thoi in Kim Son District, Ninh Binh Province - in 1947 I was in charge of Region 2, and the enemy situation in those areas was very tough at that time; the battle against them was very arduous and very difficult.

[Page 433]

The Le Huu Tu<sup>[1]</sup> clique had risen up in violent opposition to the revolution and their thugs brutally murdered our cadres in the most barbaric manners, but all we could do is to sit back and endure their crimes. Recently, however, when the Ninh Binh Party Committee conducted a review of their operations against this target, I revisited the Phuc Nha area and the situation was much different than before. Now there is a Party chapter there and our overall movement there is making good progress. In other areas, such as Tan Dien, Xuan Ha, Nguong Nhan, and Phu Nhai in Nam Ha Province, in Tam Tong and Ba Lang in Thanh Hoa Province, in Xa Doai in Nghe An Province, and in Dan Sa in Quang Binh Province, places where the reactionaries had been very strong, today the situation has clearly changed - our movement in those areas is now relatively good, and some locations, such as Dan Sa in Quang Binh, have become solid, strong villages for our forces.

There has been great progress in the status of our Party, our Youth Group, our organizations, and our hard-core supporters in areas where Catholics. The numbers of Party members and members of our Lao Dong [Labor] Youth Group have increased by 400% in comparison with the numbers in 1957; the number of Catholic youths who have joined the army has risen from 2,429 back then to 16,165 today; the number of Catholics working in various governmental sectors has risen from 1,756 to 8,470; the percentage of residents classified as progressives has risen from 23% to 39%; and the percentage classified as backward or as religious fanatics has fallen from 36% to only 18% today. The percentage of Catholic children attending our public elementary and junior high schools is about the same as it is in non-Catholic areas, and 23 out of every 100 Catholics [23%] are now in schools (according to statistics compiled by 16 provinces and cities).

*Second, the prestige and the strength of the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion in North Vietnam has declined greatly, including their political prestige, their economic power, and their religious power.* After the land reform program was implemented, Catholic peasants owned their own land and were no longer economically indebted to or obligated to the church.

[Page 434]

Politically, for many years now the enemy has not been able to inflict serious losses on us or to incite major incidents of a political nature. We have gained the strategic initiative in our struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion. Their religious power has also deteriorated significantly from what it once was. The Catholic laity no longer listens to or sympathizes with their reactionary sermons, and sometimes lay Catholics even speak out in opposition to such sermons.

The church's organizational structure has been cut back in size and its numbers have been reduced. They are suffering from a shortage of priests, and there are now very few monks and seminarians, who constitute the reserves from which replacements for the church's priests are drawn. The reactionaries have been strongly repressed during our struggle. In particular, during the 1959-1961 period we were able to expel all 26 foreign priests in North Vietnam without causing any significant reaction among the general Catholic masses or among the Vietnamese priests, not even among those

who were reactionary. Contacts between the Catholic Church in North Vietnam and the Vatican and the Paris Evangelical Council (M.E. P. - Hội Thừa Sai Paris) have been restricted, and those groups are not able to control or direct the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion in North Vietnam in carrying out counter-revolutionary activities. We have prosecuted and imprisoned a number of priests and monks for espionage activities, and have prosecuted and imprisoned many other dangerous reactionaries and lackeys of the reactionaries. We have continuously uncovered, combated and suppressed reactionary plans and activities, thereby helping to protect public order and security in North Vietnam.

*Third, we have accumulated a great deal of experience in proselytizing and mobilizing the Catholic masses and in operations aimed at combating reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion.* First of all, we have been able to more clearly identify our enemies in terms of their stubborn, recalcitrant nature as well as their crafty plots and schemes.

[Page 435]

We now know the methods, the schemes, and the operating procedures that they use when conducting overt, legal activities in combination with various forms of secret, illegal activities. Their activities are sometimes blatant and daring, while sometimes they are sophisticated and intelligent, depending upon the political situation, depending upon the balance of forces between our side and theirs at specific points in time and in specific locations. These activities also depend on the particular strengths, talents, and personalities of each individual leader. This is why, anywhere we let our guard down and think that there is no problem, if we actually look at and investigate the situation we find that the situation is extremely dangerous. For instance, in Ha Bac the reactionaries secretly and silently had eroded the strength and the reliability of our organizations and hard-core supporters at the hamlet and village level. Another example is Nghe An, where our movement had been weak in many locations and where for several years the local authorities had focused their attention and guidance on resolving this problem. They thought the situation had been stabilized, but from late 1969 up to the present the reactionaries have incited many incidents, including even some that have constituted serious disruptions of public order. Currently, in a number of other key areas where many Catholics live the situation still is not truly secure or quiet. The lesson we learn from this experience is that we cannot be subjective [over-confident], we cannot be self-satisfied, and we cannot let our guard down, especially when the situation seems to be quiet and peaceful. Instead we must constantly be vigilant against the unseen tidal wave that may be coming.

In the struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion, we must study, digest, and correctly and creatively apply the Party's policies and policy guidelines along with our own operational procedures. If we try to resolve situations simply through administrative procedures, using governmental orders and directives, these situations will become very dangerous, especially if we do not have a firm understanding of the Catholic lay masses. The expulsion of Father Giao from Dong Yen Parish in Ky Loi Village (Ha Tinh Province) and other such incidents demonstrates this point. In some places they held elections for new parish councils and sought to install lackeys to control and dominate them, and in other places where they were not able to hold elections for new parish councils, they used their covert lackeys.

[Page 436]

We have had the same kinds of experiences in our efforts to recruit and build our secret forces - in some places, as soon as we managed to gain a hold on the local priest we tried to utilize him immediately, before our grip on him was firm, and so after a period of time the priest washed his hands of us and reported what had happened to the Archdiocese. In other cases the priest told his congregation in a public church sermon that Public Security had tried to tell him what to do, etc. The above incidents demonstrate the crafty, wily nature of the reactionaries and demonstrate that when they agree to sign a statement confessing that they have committed a crime and agree to work with us, they are doing it just to get out of trouble - they have not truly repented of their crimes and volunteered to help us carry out our work.

I have discussed the above-mentioned problems so that we can clearly see the

difficult, complex, arduous, ferocious, and protracted nature of this struggle. I do not call this struggle protracted just because it has lasted so long, but because this struggle will continue for a long time into the future. For that reason, the issue facing us is that we must be patient and steady in our work of mobilizing the masses, of politically educating them, of elevating their revolutionary awareness, of building and consolidating our movement in areas that have large Catholic populations, of maintaining a sense of urgency in conducting our struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion, and of firmly understanding and correctly carrying out our basic types of operations. Only then can our minds be truly at ease and only then can we maintain the initiative and hold the upper hand in any situation or contingency.

The report on the results of our review is rather complete and detailed and the draft resolution presents the issues in a comprehensive way. Comrades, you all should study these documents carefully and participate by raising additional opinions and ideas to improve and perfect the content of these documents. I will now discuss a number of subjects to help you all in your research and application of our guidelines and instructions in the future as you direct the work of combating reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion.

[Page 437]

I - YOU MUST CONDUCT FURTHER STUDY AND ATTAIN A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REACTIONARIES WHO EXPLOIT THE CATHOLIC RELIGION AND YOU MUST CORRECTLY EXHIBIT THIS UNDERSTANDING AS YOU DIRECT STRUGGLE OPERATIONS AT ALL LEVELS OF COMMAND OF THE PUBLIC SECURITY SERVICE AND AS YOU DIRECT THE OPERATIONS OF EACH AND EVERY PUBLIC SECURITY OFFICER AND ENLISTED MAN

*With regards to* understanding this issue, perhaps a number of you do not yet agree with me because this is not considered to be one of our central problems and because there have already been frequent discussions of this issue during many other conferences and in many of our documents and memoranda. However, when we shine the light of reality on this issue, many weaknesses in our understanding of this issue can be seen. In Cao Bang, Lang Son, Yen Bai, Tuyen Quang, Vinh Phu, Bac Giang, Hai Hung, and the former Kien An provinces, among others, there are still many areas that contain large numbers of Catholics, and although there are not a large number of reactionary elements in those areas, because we did not pay sufficient attention to this issue or because we forgot the need to strengthen and build our movement, in certain places and at certain times the reactionaries were able to cause some limited problems for us, and in some locations there were in fact serious problems. For example, in 1963 the Phu Tho Province Public Security Office reported that our movement in that province was in rather good shape, but right after that report was received we uncovered a reactionary organization that had hundreds of members. This case involved enemy spies.<sup>[2]</sup> In other locations, such as Nghe An and Ha Tinh, at one time our movement in those provinces was good, but then the strength of the movement deteriorated. In areas where our movement was still weak and underdeveloped, after a period of great activity to stimulate the movement, we then let up on our work, including the work of building and strengthening the movement and even the work of combating reactionaries. From 1967 to 1970, many localities imprisoned very few targets, or in some cases they did not arrest and imprison even a single target. However, only recently did these localities report this fact to us as a result of the precautions we have been taking against the possibility that the enemy will reignite the war. Currently, there are many areas where we cannot guarantee that we will not have a problem if the enemy makes a strong push in those areas. To put it another way, our minds are not fully confident that we will not have a problem if there is enemy incitement from the outside that is closely coordinated with the domestic reactionaries inside our country.

[Page 438]

Our Central Committee and our local Party committees certainly cannot feel at ease or be unconcerned when we have such a situation! In our yearly conferences, the Ministry always reminds everyone about this problem, but many comrades have still not paid attention to it. In truth, there is not a deep and profound understanding of problem, and even though we say that we are all in agreement on the issue of

understanding the ideological problem, in concrete terms our actions have been shallow and perfunctory. I am saying this so that you can all see that we must place additional emphasis on this problem so that we can be unified both in our ideological understanding and in our practical, concrete actions.

*Discussing the special political nature of the Catholic problem*

In our nation the revolution's two main political problems are the religious problem and the ethnic problem. These problems have been, are now, and will continue to be two very important strategic issues for us. With regard to the religious problem in North Vietnam, at present we do not have any major problems with the other religions, like the Buddhists, the Protestants, and the Cao Dai, but the Catholic problem is one that has a special political character. In South Vietnam, the American imperialists, the French imperialists, and the Japanese imperialists are competing with one another for the Buddhists and the Cao Dai and they are actively exploiting these religions, but the problem with the Catholics is very clear. The Catholic religion is a problem in terms both of the religion's social viewpoint as well as the fact that the religion is a political and social force. To put it another way, it is the issue of the deep religious faith of the [Catholic] masses, but because domestic and foreign counter-revolutionary forces have become involved, it has become a special political problem.

*With regard to the issue of the deep religious faith of the Catholic masses.* When Karl Marx said, "religion is the opiate of the masses," or when Lenin said, "Religion is a kind of spiritual alcohol, and those who are slaves of the imperialists carry it in their bodies, and in their daily lives they are addicted, to some extent at least, to that spiritual alcohol," both Marx and Lenin were talking not only about the decadent and reactionary nature of religion - that is it a poison that controls and oppresses the people - but also about the fact that there is a profound mass character to the problem of religious faith.

[Page 439]

When we talk about religion, we are talking about the issue of the religion of the masses. In North Vietnam we now have about one million Catholics, and previously North Vietnam had almost two million Catholics. In Poland more than 80% of the masses are Catholics. Therefore when religion has become a requirement of their daily lives, when it has become one of the aspirations of the masses, it is hard to root it out, especially when a portion of the masses that follow a religion have become fanatics, because then they view it as right, as just, as an ideal that must be pursued, so they try to hold on to it. When there are intrusions into their religious beliefs and when they are strongly incited, then, for a moment at least, they can reject everything else, including even the rights and interests of our Fatherland and of our race, in order to protect their religion. During the Quynh Yen incident in Nghe An some years ago, even some elderly Catholic women attacked our soldiers.<sup>[3]</sup> This tells us that when the masses become fanatics and the reactionaries exploit and incite them, then the problem becomes extremely complex and extremely dangerous. That is the most profound reason that the religious masses have more difficulty in accepting the revolution than do other people. It is difficult enough for them to accept a national democratic revolution, but the socialist revolution makes them worried about their religion, even though in the end they will certainly accept the revolution. If we patiently educate our religious compatriots, in the end they will see the problem clearly. According to our mass concepts, class contradictions are more powerful than the lies and deception of religion. If there is oppression, there will be struggle, and the more repression there is, the more powerful the struggle will become. However, the thing that we must understand is that we simply are not capable of achieving our subjective desire of quickly liberating our compatriots.

[Page 440]

It is illusory, rash, and self-deceptive to think that we can. The Catholics have been brainwashed with religious ideology for generations. They have gone to church from the time they were toddlers, only two or three years old, right on through their forties and fifties. They read the Bible and attend mass morning, noon, and night, so religious activity has become a daily habit and an integral part of their lives. In the Dong Yen incident in Ha Tinh Province, Father Giao had worked with his parishioners for decades, while our cadre had only been on the job for one month. However, our

cadre tried to direct the parishioners to demand that their priest be expelled, in spite of the fact that we had not yet been able to form any of our mass organizations. I have heard some people claim that in just a few short years we will be able to complete the work of re-educating the Catholics. To think that is to be very subjective and very reckless. It is difficult enough to get people to give up smoking cigarettes or to wean them away from opium, to say nothing of attacking the problem of their religious beliefs. In my opinion, we must view this as a long-term problem that will take several decades to resolve, perhaps as much as forty or fifty years. We should not be overeager and overly rash, because that would cause many needless difficult and complex problems for us. The socialist revolution achieved victory in the Soviet Union fifty years ago, but the religious still attend church there, and even some youths, young men and women, still go to church. Therefore we must be cautious when dealing with this problem; we must not be too hot-headed or too overeager. If we want to reform and reeducate the church, we must work to mobilize, propagandize, educate, and awaken the religious masses gradually, devoting special attention to the young people and children. We must improve their education in politics, culture, science, and technology. We must improve the lives of Catholics, both materially and spiritually. To put it another way, the revolution must build a heaven for our religious compatriots down here on earth while they are still thinking about a heaven somewhere up in the sky. In order to convince our compatriots not to follow the enemy, to be vigilant against him and to struggle to expose the enemy's true colors, we must educate our compatriots so that they can see the justice and the superiority of the socialist system, so that they see the evil, crafty plots of the imperialists, and so that they see the barbarity and the brutality of the imperialists. The religious issue is a class issue in a society that still has classes.

[Page 441]

The ruling class oppresses and exploits the Catholic masses, so we must free them from the political, economic, cultural, and ideological bonds of the ruling class.

*With regard to the nature of reactionary politics*, Lenin said, "Class exploitation requires two figures: the executioner and the cleric." In a class society, the ruling class and religion become allies with one another in order to repress and govern the working masses. The exploiting class exploits religion, makes the religion wealthy, and gives religion new strength so that it becomes a powerful tool of the State, a State that is run by the exploiting and ruling classes. The larger a religion's exploitative economic apparatus becomes, the more reactionary that religion will become and the more closely that religion will be linked with the interests of the exploiting and ruling classes. The religion will repress the masses to prevent them from rising up in revolution to overthrow imperialism and the feudal and capitalist classes. They claim that capitalism was instituted by God, but in 1917 a socialist regime suddenly was born, a regime that overthrew the reactionary capitalist and feudal classes. The alliance of the ruling and exploiting classes with religious authority is very clear, and it exists in every exploitative regime. In Russia the Russian Czar was also the head of the church, and there were periods when this was also the case in France - when the king was also the head of the church. The Church is the lackey of the imperialists. In our own country, the Church was previously the lackey of the French imperialists. Draper, the former Papal Nuncio in Indochina, worked for the French. When the American imperialist jumped into Indochina to intervene in our affairs, they sent over Dooley to take control of the Vietnamese church; there are always struggles for influence between the different imperialist powers. Currently, the Vatican's Foreign Minister is the Cardinal who is the head of the Catholic Church in France.

Internationally, the Catholic Church has the greatest economic resources and the largest organizational structure of any of the world's religions, and it has expanded and grown throughout the world hand in hand with imperialism's expansion and aggression.

[Page 442]

After the Second World War, the Vatican moved all its money to the United States. The Vatican's leaders are virulent counter-revolutionaries and they have always been blindly and insanely opposed to socialism and communism. Previously Pope Pious VII blatantly and openly followed the aggressive war-mongering policies of the American

imperialists. Faced with the threat that the Catholic masses might abandon their religion, Pope John XXIII changed the church's methods of operations. After John's death, Pope Paul VI became Pope and continued to follow John XXIII's policies. Recently [PRG] Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh visited Italy and had a private meeting with the Vatican Foreign Minister, who presented to her a five-point peace proposal that was no different than Nixon's five-point proposal. This is clear proof that the Vatican Foreign Minister is simply Nixon's lackey. The closer they are bound together economically, the closer their political ties will become.

The Vatican opposes the revolution, both in theory and in its actions. It hates and despises communism, because socialism eliminates man's exploitation of other men and will eliminate their own exploitation of the people. The Catholic radio station in the Philippines, Radio Veritas, is aimed at North Vietnam so that it can broadcast psychological warfare propaganda that is no different from "Radio Freedom" and the Voice of America. We are not surprised that they are working together to oppose the revolution. The spies and commandos that they have dropped into North Vietnam all have ties to Catholic reactionaries, because those reactionaries constitute their social organization and are the best source of support for the imperialists. This has been clearly demonstrated by the spy cases in Nghe An and Quang Binh. Currently, almost all of the spies and commandos that the Americans and their South Vietnamese puppets are using are Catholic reactionary refugees from North Vietnam, and there are some division-sized units of the puppet army that are made up entirely of Catholic refugees.

[Page 443]

Both the imperialists and the Vatican rely on the Catholic Church in North Vietnam, and they use it as a reactionary political organization to carry out their black, evil schemes against North Vietnam. They have done this in the past, they still do it today, and they will continue to do this in the future, for as long as we can foresee. We understand that today in France, Italy, the United States, and in other countries they are training many new priests whom they plan to send to North Vietnam. There are more than 1,000 such priests abroad and more than 1,000 more such priests in South Vietnam. That is why Archbishop Khue<sup>[4]</sup> has said openly that he refuses to open the seminaries and refuses to carry out the government's instructions on training seminarians because this problem has been taken care of already by the church's people overseas. He said that the priests are there, just waiting to be sent back into North Vietnam. This is in spite of the fact that a number of the leaders of other parishes, such as Xa Doai, Bui Chu, Thai Binh, and Hai Phong, believe that it is necessary to begin training new priests. Today there are almost 300 priests and bishops in North Vietnam, but later, if they send more than 2,000 additional priests into North Vietnam, that would give us six or seven times as many priests as we currently have. We would be flooded with priests, and the parishes that today have one priest will each have two or three priests. For that reason, the alliance between imperialism and the reactionaries in our country who exploit the Catholic religion has become a pattern, and it will become a clear, real problem in the future.

Aside from a small number who have joined our Fatherland Front, the leaders of all of the different dioceses and a number of other priests are all reactionaries, to one degree or another. Most of them have served as imperialist lackeys in the past, and they have been nourished and supported by the imperialists from the time that the imperialists ruled our country. They are the remnants of the imperialist and feudal power structure that was toppled in North Vietnam; they are totally subservient to and loyal to the Vatican; and they are mortal enemies of the socialist revolution. The imperialists direct their activities through the Vatican. They are very stubborn and crafty.

[Page 444]

They oppose and sabotage us in many different ways, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly and blatantly. They do everything they can to exploit our weaknesses, and there is not a minute that passes that they are not thinking up ways to oppose us and sabotage us. Their ultimate strategic goal is to overthrow the people's revolutionary government and to total eliminate our socialist regime. Every one of their actions is aimed at carrying out their plans for opposing and disrupting our people's struggle against the Americans to save our nation, and every one of

their actions is, directly or indirectly, undertaken at the orders the imperialists or to benefit the imperialists.

Their plans and their methods of operations differ, depending on the location, the time, the balance of forces, and the personality and the abilities of their different individual leaders. Archbishop Khue, for example, advocates a policy of non-cooperation with the government, while Bishop Tao of Haiphong takes a different line - he wants to request permission from the government to reopen the seminary because he believes that a policy of complete non-cooperation is not to their benefit. Because of this, Bishop Tao from Haiphong and Bishop Trong from Nam Dinh want to travel to Hanoi to try to persuade Archbishop Khue to change his mind on this matter. To tell the truth, in some ways Khue's policy of non-cooperation works to our benefit.

When their activities are too blatant and we strongly suppress them, some of these people will change tactics. On the surface they go along with the government, but they also do everything they can to gain control of the young people and to consolidate and expand their following. At the same time they work covertly to undermine and oppose our policies at the grass-roots level. However, there are also places where they incite trouble, serve as "military advisors," and order their henchmen to organize subversive networks or form reactionary organizations. In Nghe An, after we prosecuted the Tran Dinh Can - Chau Thanh [Trần Đình Cán - Châu Thanh] case,<sup>[5]</sup> they changed tactics and began to covertly work to try to win support among the Catholic masses. That is why, in May 1970, they were able to mobilize supporters from an area encompassing ten villages (including one village that we were planning to honor as a "hero village") to come out to honor them and to disrupt public order and security and attack and beat our cadres.

[Page 445]

In general, they are united in their goal of opposing and fighting us, but the methods that are used by their individual leaders are different. Therefore we should not try to lump them all together and try to deal with them in a mechanical, formalistic manner; instead we must study each individual and each locality in order to be able to deal with each individual leader and each individual location appropriately. However, the constant and most dangerous aspects of their efforts are their efforts to gain control of the masses, their assembling of forces, their building of political forces, their covert opposition and sabotage, their lies and distortions about our policies, and their efforts to sow divisions between the Catholic masses and our Party and our Government. It is these activities that make it possible for them to constantly sabotage us and to prepare organizations to try to overthrow us when an opportunity presents itself. There have been cases in which these Catholic leaders were able to bribe and win over even some of our cadres and Party members who were Catholics, who were trained by us and tested in the fires of the revolution for many years. In Ninh Binh, for instance, there was a woman who had been one of our hard-core supporters. When she fell ill, they came to her to try to win her sympathies. They gave her medicine, sugar, and milk, and as a result slowly she began to abandon her duties and then finally turned against us altogether and became one of their followers. The fact that we lost one cadre is not important - the important thing is that they could make the Catholic masses think that if they worked for the revolution and then they fell ill, the revolution would abandon them. This would have a bad political influence on the Catholic masses as well as on our own cadres and hard-core supporters. For that reason, we must always be vigilant and we must study and analyze ways to counter their evil scheme.

The activities of the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion are usually coordinated and synchronized with the plans and schemes of the American imperialists and their lackeys. The reactionaries exploiting the Catholic religion always try to carry out the plans and policies of the American imperialists in order to try to sabotage the revolution.

[Page 446]

Today they are still working to try to consolidate their strength and to gather and expand their forces, and they are also waiting for help from reactionary forces in South Vietnam and in foreign lands so that when there is a change in the situation they can work together to oppose the revolution even more fiercely.

For that reason, if we want to resolve the problem of religious belief and the problem of political reactionaries, we must make sure that we distinguish the two separate issues:

*The problem of the religious beliefs of the masses is a long-term problem, one that will take a long time to resolve. We must educate and awaken the people's consciousness, we must increase their sense of patriotism, and we must increase their class consciousness. At the same time we must devote particular attention to improving their level of education – cultural, scientific, and technological – and improving the standard of living of the Catholic masses. While we patiently make these improvements, we must also make sure that we bring the Catholic masses into our revolutionary organizations at all levels, from the grass-roots level up to the highest levels, and that we strengthen the Party's leadership role. Only when the material and the spiritual conditions of the Catholic masses are improved will we be able to resolve this issue, and only this will provide us with the foundation we need to conduct our struggle against those reactionaries who are exploiting the religious beliefs of our Catholic citizens. Socialism will gradually eliminate their religious superstitions, because those religious beliefs are the narcotics that the reactionaries use to poison the spirits and the thoughts of our people. However, we must follow our policies and guidelines for dealing with the masses. We must be skillful and we must wait for the masses to understand – we cannot try to act too quickly, because this could cause the masses to mistakenly believe that we are interfering with their religion and that we are trying to destroy their religion.*

*As for the political problem, by which I mean the problem of the enemy exploiting our religious compatriots and using them to sabotage our revolution, we cannot view this as a long-term problem. We must act to resolve this problem quickly and not allow it to drag on for a long time.*

[Page 447]

We must fight to block their efforts to sabotage us and we must arrest and detain dangerous reactionary elements, but we must first weigh the situation carefully and make careful plans, because when we take action against the reactionaries, and especially when we take action against reactionary priests, if we are not careful and do not do it skillfully we will run afoul of the Catholic masses.

These two problems are closely connected with one another. If we want to resolve the problem of our enemies quickly and cleanly, then we must have a solid, strong mass movement and we must have solid mass organizations. On the other hand, if we want to stimulate the growth of our movement in those areas where reactionary opposition is strong, we must do everything we can to effectively combat and suppress the reactionaries. Although these two problems are different in nature, we must study and fully understand the relationship between them so that we can resolve them clearly and distinctly.

For that reason, we must avoid the rightist mistake of letting cases drag on and thereby allowing the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion to incite the masses to oppose the revolution and enable them to recruit additional lackeys who will cause trouble for us, which would allow them to expand their forces. At the same time, we must also avoid the leftist mistake of being hasty and overeager by trying to reform the church quickly and forbidding all regular worship services and religious activities, because this would upset the masses and enable the reactionaries to incite and stir up the Catholic masses. When we look at the recent cases in which reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion have opposed us in a number of locations, we will see that in the final analysis these cases were the result of a general right deviationist attitude of dragging our feet, acting too slowly, but when dealing with individual cases and investigations, we went to the other extreme and were guilty of "leftist" policies because we banned their activities in a rough and brutal fashion, which caused unrest among the Catholic masses and had a negative political effect.

[Page 448]

II - FIRMLY UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION AND THE PARTY'S POLICIES AND GUIDELINES ON THE CATHOLIC ISSUE AND APPLYING THEM IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE TO THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST

## REACTIONARIES WHO EXPLOIT THE CATHOLIC RELIGION IS THE FUNDAMENTAL FACTOR NECESSARY TO ENSURE VICTORY IN OUR STRUGGLE

Our 3rd National Party Congress laid out the following guidelines on religion: "Respect freedom of religion, unite all patriots and progressives in all of our religions, unite our Buddhist compatriots and our compatriots who practices other religions so that everyone works together to serve our cause of totally liberating our entire nation and building happiness and prosperity for all." Using those policy guidelines, in Directive 22 dated 5 July 1961 the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee clearly laid out the goals of our operations involving the Catholic problem: "Intensify our activities across the board, in every sector and branch, to win over and persuade the Catholic masses to firmly support socialism and be loyal to our regime. Increase vigilance, gradually push back and paralyze individual elements of the reactionary power structure, aggressively prevent and defeat all plots and schemes by the imperialists and their lackeys to use the Church to oppose our revolution."

The policies that the Party has laid out for us are very clear. On the problem of religion in general and the Catholic religion in particular, there are two components to our policies: one is to persuade the Catholic masses to become firm, solid supporters of socialism, and the other is to increase our vigilance against the reactionaries, push them back one step at a time, paralyze the sources of reactionary power one by one, and counter the imperialist scheme of using the church to oppose the revolution. Lenin said, "For us, uniting the workers to build a heaven here on earth is more important than uniting the members of the proletariat on the question of the existence of a heaven somewhere up above."

[Page 449]

This means that for us, the important thing is unity within the working masses to build a heaven down here on earth. That is why we have a policy on religion that guarantees both the freedom to have faith and the freedom to have no faith while we resolutely struggle against every plot and scheme of the imperialists and the reactionaries. The Catholic masses acknowledge that the Party has brought them a better material life, but they are still afraid of us from the standpoint of their religion. Therefore we should not do anything to increase such feelings among the Catholic masses and we should not cause discontent and unhappiness among the Catholic masses that the enemy could exploit to incite the masses to oppose us.

One of the important missions of the socialist revolution is convince the religious masses to support socialism. Our guidelines for proselytizing the Catholic masses are to improve their standard of living and to educate them politically and ideologically. As for the upper classes, our goal is to divide them and win them over - to win the support of any of them who can be convinced and to neutralize any of them who can be neutralized. As for the reactionaries among them, they must be politically isolated, we must constantly struggle against them, and our primary method must be to use the masses to conduct the struggle against them. When necessary, we can employ administrative methods against them, using the law to combat them to block and restrict their acts of opposition and sabotage. When punishment must be meted out, then we should punish them, but this must be done on a good, solid political foundation so that we can win over the sympathy and support of the masses. In the current situation, as our socialist revolution is developing and growing and the imperialists are suffering continuous defeats, they will see that it is impossible to fight the revolution, so they will gradually become less and less reactionary until they finally stop being reactionaries and stop serving as lackeys of the imperialists. From that point on they will slowly begin to work with and support the revolution. That will be a victory for our Party's correct policies. As for the lackeys, we will punish them and at the same time reeducate and reform them to cause their ranks to crumble and disintegrate.

[Page 450]

An overview of our efforts on the big issues shows that we have creatively employed our guidelines and our policies to repress the counter-revolutionaries in a manner that is suited to the particular, concrete characteristics of the struggle against the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion.

We have expanded the areas in which we have repressed the counter-revolutionaries

and we have pushed forward our movement to protect public order and security in areas where large concentrations of Catholics live. This means that we have mobilized the Catholic masses to struggle against and repress the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion; we view this as the most basic, the primary, and the most decisive method we can use. During this period we have been resolute and have concentrated our direction and guidance, so our mass movement in Catholic areas has made progress and the reactionaries have lost ground.

Our expulsion of 26 foreign clerics was a correct policy decision,<sup>[6]</sup> and it was implemented in a creative and resolute manner, but with a light touch and with a high degree of sophistication. We combined our political struggle and our ideological effort with administrative measures, applying the procedures governing foreigners to push them out. Initially, they thought that what we were doing was simply a matter of normal procedures, and only later did they realize that in fact all of the foreign clerics had been driven out. We also exploited the ethnic, racial conflicts and contradictions that existed between them and a number of Vietnamese priests, so those priests sympathized with our position and no one reacted negatively. At that time their position and their prestige rose, because if the foreign clerics had continued to lead and govern the Church in North Vietnam, then Trinh Nhu Khue certainly would never have been elevated to the post of Archbishop and a number of the rest of them, such as Du, Quang, Tao, etc., would never have been elevated to the level of bishops.

With regards to a number of stubborn, recalcitrant priests, we have arrested and punished a small number of them who deserved such treatment, priests such as Vinh and Thong in Hanoi, Han in Bui Chu, Can in Nghe An, etc. As for a number of other priests, we have conducted political struggles that eliminated the poison of their political views.

[Page 451]

In parallel with our elimination of the reactionary lackeys, we also conducted local re-education,<sup>[7]</sup> we re-educated their parish leaders and administrators, and we changed the character of their religious organizations and associations so that the reactionaries were not able to utilize the church's grass-roots organizations to oppose us. Recently, however, we have not paid sufficient attention to our work against the grass-roots church organizations, and in some cases we have even let up the pressure and left them alone, which has allowed them to hold new elections and install their own lackeys to replace the good people who were chosen by the masses. In some places they have appointed secret parish leaders and administrators. This is part of a dangerous, evil plot by them and it is one to which we need to pay attention.

Looking at individual localities, many locations have a number of strengths, like Ninh Binh, where the Province Party Committee has provided close direction and leadership. Because of that leadership, our forces there worked on building up our movement, consolidating and strengthening cooperatives, improving the living conditions of the masses, intensifying the work of suppressing the reactionaries, and implementing policies for combating reactionary priests that have yielded good results. Nam Ha has experience in mobilizing the masses to struggle, and this was effective against a number of the old reactionary priests. The province handled the arrest and punishment of Luong Huy Han [Lương Huy Hân] well, but it did not do a very good job in its handling of the problem of the 29 monks who were ordained as priests. Previously Nghe An and Ha Tinh had performed rather well in building our local movement there. Both provinces assigned a large number of cadres to work in key, vital areas and handled the expulsion of reactionary monks from these vital areas effectively. Afterward, however, they let up and turned their attentions elsewhere, thereby allowing the reactionaries to counterattack, and this has created a bad situation.

However, in concrete work in individual localities in a number of areas and in regard to a number of tasks, a number of our cadres, especially those at the district and village levels, have not implemented our struggle policies, guidelines, and stratagems properly, and in some cases they have committed serious errors.

- In many places our cadres, Party members, and hard-core supporters still harbor deep feelings of prejudice. In places where the village Party committees and Party

chapters consist primarily of Party members who are not Catholics, little effort has been made to provide leadership to Catholic hamlets and neighborhoods.

[Page 452]

Usually, our movement in Buddhist hamlets is rather good, but in Catholic neighborhoods our movement is weak because we do not pay attention to these areas. In some places Party members who are ex-Catholics and who left the religion after their revolutionary consciousness was awakened have committed many acts exhibiting "leftist deviationism" and have failed to gain the confidence and trust of the masses.

- With regard to following our policies on religions, some locations still use the tactic of issuing administrative orders or using crude measures such as blocking roads, forbidding the use of buses and ferries, and controlling people's movements in order to prevent the people from attending church services. These locations have created obstacles that have made it difficult for priests to travel to different localities to conduct mass, and they have even used these tactics against priests who are neutral and against priests whom we are trying to win over. There is no consistency between higher and lower levels of authority in the use of stratagems and tactics. At the province level the stratagem being used is to use persuasion to win over the Catholics, while at the district and village level, and especially at the village level, our people just use criticism and attacks. In many locations our people want to completely ban the training of new priests or just want to drive out the current priests and not accept new ones. In some places, when our people see that other areas have arrested and punished priests, they will recommend that they also be allowed to arrest their priests. Everyone wants to use concentrated re-education [imprisonment in reeducation camps] and views that method as an "all-purpose tactic" - everyone wants to get in on the act. For example, when Thai Binh realized that the situation had become difficult for them, they wanted to recommend that Bishop Tru be arrested, and when the Bui Chu diocese illegally ordained 29 priests, the local authorities failed to carry out a comprehensive plan for dealing with this issue and instead simply waited for higher authority to approve their request for permission to arrest the priests.

- Our people have focused their attention on the work of striving to suppress reactionary priests, but insufficient work has been done to sow internal divisions and to persuade and win over our opponents. We have worked to sweep away the reactionaries and their henchmen, but we have not focused attention on reeducating them and winning them over to our side. The important thing is to eliminate reactionary ideology, to eliminate opposition, and to educate them and reform them so that they become good people who will support the revolution. Our greatest shortcoming over the last several years has been that many localities have been negligent and lost interest in the movement to protect public order and security and to build strong, solid villages.

[Page 453]

I previously suggested to K-48<sup>[8]</sup> that it should provide guidance to each individual locality to help them develop comprehensive plans for each parish and each diocese so that over a period of time we could resolve this problem in a basic, fundamental way in each individual area so that the reactionaries would no longer be able to oppose us. Unfortunately, however, our standard practice has been to simply focus on dealing with individual incidents and cases as they arise, focusing primarily on dealing with the situation through the use of orders and administrative measures. This was the true recently in regard to the expulsion of Father Giao from Dong Yen and Father Duc from Do Thanh. Our comrades in Ha Tinh and Nghe An have at times also had a tendency to use administrative measures and even to use "armed force" to achieve their goal of driving out and expelling reactionaries, but they have not done enough work to educate and mobilize the masses.

- In carrying out our specialized professional work, many areas have not devoted sufficient attention to the work of studying and analyzing the target so that they can recruit agents, so either they have too few agents among the local priests, or if they do have such an agent, the agent is of low quality. Some places have a lot of priests who are recruited agents, but our officers seldom meet with these agents or sit down to work with them. In some places the recruitments are only superficial and we do

not have firm control of the agent, so some of our so-called agents are disloyal and continue to oppose us. There have even been cases when an agent met with an enemy commando [from South Vietnam] but did not report this to us. For that reason, during recent years our reconnaissance [intelligence] operations have deteriorated, and as a result we have failed to obtain timely and complete information on the plans and activities of the reactionaries and our reconnaissance [intelligence] has not been able to effectively support the requirements of our political struggle.

If we had avoided making such errors in our policies and policy guidelines, in implementing our plans, and in the methods we used, our achievements and successes would have been even greater, we would have won greater support among the masses, and we would have been able to create deeper and more significant divisions within the ranks of the reactionaries.

[Page 454]

### III - PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE AND KEY, FUNDAMENTAL OPERATIONS THAT WE MUST CARRY OUT

There are two possible scenarios for how the situation may develop in the near future:

First, the war may continue to drag on because of the stubborn war-mongering policies of the Nixon clique. In that case, the war will intensify and the fighting will be ferocious. With respect to North Vietnam, they will do everything in their power to oppose us and to destroy us. Their goal will be the destruction of the great rear area [North Vietnam] that supports the great front lines [South Vietnam]. The American imperialists and their lackeys will certainly not fail to try to use their best social support organization here in North Vietnam - the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion. They will try to send more lackeys who are Catholic reactionaries into areas of our country where large concentrations of Catholics live.

The second possibility is that, after suffering many battlefield defeats and after their "Vietnamization" plan has failed to the point that it cannot be resurrected, the American imperialists and their lackeys will be forced to continue to deescalate the war and to agree to implement a political solution. In that case, peace will be restored and relations will be established between North and South Vietnam. In such a situation, the struggle against counter-revolutionaries will become much more complicated, intense, and difficult than it is today. Once relations are established between North and South Vietnam, the Northern refugees who fled to South Vietnam might use this as an excuse to return home to North Vietnam. Mixed in amongst the good, honest citizens returning to North Vietnam there will certainly also be many enemy lackeys, including many priests. This would strengthen the forces available to the reactionaries in North Vietnam. The number of priests in the North could increase to several thousand, and each parish would have two or three priests, meaning that their activities would increase, and that is not even considering the fact that the number of lower-level lackeys would also have increased.

[Page 455]

In addition, the Vatican might establish diplomatic relations with us so they could send an ambassador to North Vietnam.

Even in normal times, such as in our current situation, we have to conduct a constant, arduous, difficult struggle against them in many locations, so if the situation undergoes such a major change our struggle will become even more difficult, complex, and ferocious.

However, with regards to the prospects for the future, in my opinion we will have some objective advantages: our socialist revolution and our people's cause of resisting the Americans to save our nation is winning greater and greater victories every day, the status of our movement in the Catholic areas is much different than it was before, and the power of the reactionaries has been greatly diminished. We also have some subjective advantages: our Party has established correct policies and policy guidelines, we have tight, firm leadership at all levels, all branches and all classes are actively participating in our struggle, our cadres are eager and enthusiastic, and during this review we have been able to derive many good lessons from experience in how to mobilize the masses and how to conduct the struggle to

suppress the reactionaries.

Therefore, even though we still have problems and continuing difficulties, we are very optimistic and we firmly believe that we can advance the struggle to gain new and even greater victories. Therefore, the mission that we have been given is to crush all imperialist efforts to work with the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religions to oppose and sabotage the revolution so that we can guarantee the security of North Vietnam in any and all situations. This is a very heavy responsibility, and we must make tremendous efforts. We must quickly create a powerful transformation in the situation in the areas where large concentrations of Catholics live so that our movement in those areas is strong and firm. We must transform the character of the Church so that it becomes a patriotic organization that supports socialism and that is loyal to our new regime. This is a mission that we must fulfill, no matter what. I have emphasized this subject over the past three years, and if we do not successfully accomplish a truly excellent transformation in the situation in the Catholic areas, if a new situation develops we will have many difficulties, we will be confused and uncertain, and on the defensive.

[Page 456]

In terms of practical actions, we must make truly excellent preparations and we must quickly carry out a number of key, fundamental measures:

1 - Reorganize our investigative and analysis operations in order to obtain a timely, complete, detailed and systematic view of the situation.

After you return home from this Ministry review conference, all localities, and particularly the focal-point provinces and cities, should study our review report and the Ministry's resolution and then hold a local-level conference on these issues, because many localities have still not completed their own reviews. After this is done, you must develop a comprehensive plan to reexamine the situation in every district, every village, every hamlet, and every neighborhood in which Catholics live and to make a truly accurate and objective assessment of the status of every Party member, Youth Group member, and hard-core supporter. You should not conduct an administrative-style statistical analysis designed to highlight your successes because that would only be lying to ourselves and would be extremely dangerous. You must assess the political attitude of every single Catholic family in order to come up with a comprehensive plan to be implemented over the next few years. If that is done, the situation in the Catholic regions will have been resolved properly and we will be ready to aggressively deal with new developments in the situation. You should suggest that local Party committees at all levels issue action resolutions on the Catholic areas in order to mobilize all branches and all classes to participate, doing whatever is necessary to attract the masses and induce them to join our revolutionary organizations. For example, you should have an operational plan for youths, for children, for women, for the elderly, etc. Coordinate with the Fatherland Front to develop a plan to transform the nature of the church at the grass-roots level and lay out concrete tasks that need to be accomplished with regard to every individual target and every local area. After you have completed your plan, you need to arrange for it to be implemented properly and conduct concrete, detailed checks on the status of the plan's implementation.

[Page 457]

You need to coordinate your activities with major campaigns conducted by the Party in order to coordinate with the different sectors involved with this issue and to resolve problems in individual areas. In order to accomplish this, you must carry out basic investigative activities in order to obtain a firm grasp of the situation regarding Catholics and regarding our grass-roots level organizations. For example, with regards to cooperatives, recently there have been cases where cooperative members have been working for the church but have been counted as working for the cooperative, and there are locations that have cooperatives but in fact the cooperatives only exist on paper. As for the reactionaries, we need to reinvestigate each individual target in order to determine each individual's current attitude. With regards to local lay parish leaders, we need to re-investigate them to determine which ones are good, which ones are wish-washy, which ones are bad, and whether there are any secret lay parish leaders. If we do not conduct concrete, detailed investigations, then our plans will just be general outlines and we will be unable to

make concrete, details plans.

To summarize, you must gain a firm grasp of the status of the enemy's plans and activities, you must gain an understanding of the current status of our movement, of the situation among the masses and within our grass-roots political organizations, and of the status of the implementation of our policies in order to be able to win the masses over to our side effectively, seal up any gaps in our defenses that the enemy cannot exploit them, and strongly suppress the reactionaries. Assign individual responsibilities to our public-security bureaus and province-level offices for conducting the work of gaining a firm grasp of the situation and providing guidance to village public security personnel on how to gain a firm grasp of the situation at the grass-roots level.

2 - Develop a practical, realistic plan to consolidate and intensify our movement to protect public order and security in areas where there are concentrations of Catholics and move forward in a systematic, orderly fashion to build politically-solid villages that are secure and safe.

In 1964, the Ministry conducted a review of our movement to protect public order and security in Catholic areas and we issued a directive on this work. You need to study and better understand the strategic significance of this movement in order to provide proper guidance and encouragement to the movement, especially in key, vital Catholic areas where this movement is still weak and under-developed. Utilize this movement to actively mobilize the masses to strongly oppose all plans and activities by the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion at the grass-roots level in order to destroy their base of support and build solid political organizations of our own.

[Page 458]

When we talk about politically strong areas, the first requirement for a politically strong area is to have truly strong Party chapters. Only if our mass movement is strong will we be able to have good operations, policies, and professional activities. When we say that a location is good, we are saying that our movement in that location is good. When we assess our movement as being good, we must talk about concrete details and not just generalities. When we say that our movement is good, this means that educating and awakening the revolutionary consciousness of the masses - which is a fundamental, strategic matter - must be conducted properly and meticulously in many different and appropriate ways in order to advance our movement and make it strong.

3 - Carry out our religious policy and strengthen the implementation of our policies for combating the reactionaries by taking the initiative and by continuously attacking the reactionaries

After we investigate and categorize our targets, we must develop concrete, detailed plans for dealing with each individual. We must make the education, awakening, and mobilization of the Catholic masses our foundation for implementing our policies for dealing with the reactionaries and for suppressing those who are currently active and blatantly opposing us. If we decide to suppress and detain reactionaries, we must first make concrete, cautious, and careful calculations. The plan must be approved by all levels from province down through the district to the village, and the plan's implementation must not violate our policies, because that would allow the reactionaries to exploit such an opportunity to incite dissatisfaction and unrest among Catholics. In addition to dangerous reactionaries who need to be punished, we must make sure that we also re-educate a number of other reactionaries.

We need to gain a firm understanding of the bishops, priests, monks, and nuns in each individual area. Currently there is a growing trend toward divisions and splits within the ranks of the priests, and even among the bishops, and this works to our advantage. We need, therefore, to coordinate with the Fatherland Front in order to increase the effort to win them over and create divisions among them. We need to persuade those who are neutral and who are progressive to come over completely to our side, and we must isolate those elements who still stubbornly oppose us.

[Page 459]

Conduct analysis and come up with concrete, correct policies for dealing with individual priests and bishops. In those locations that have large numbers of priests who are scattered out in the districts, far from our city and province public security

offices, we need to provide supplementary training and guidance to the chiefs and deputy chiefs of local public security offices in order to be able to give them responsibility for helping to implement our action plans. As for the nuns in North Vietnam, a number of them are young, so we need to come up with a plan to liberate them. We should not allow them to continue to be mistreated and exploited. If the older nuns want to remain as nuns for the rest of their lives, we should allow them to remain in their religious orders, but we need to liberate the younger nuns from their religious vows. When we remove them from their religious orders, we need to help them find work, encourage and support them, and explain their situation to the masses so that the masses do not criticize and look on them with disdain, which might make them unhappy and cause them to decide to return to their religious order.

We must quickly carry out the work of reforming and transforming the nature of religious organizations at the grass-roots level, meaning the parish councils, parish family groups, and religious associations, and we must cause the disintegration of reactionary forces at the grass-roots level, meaning all types of parish elders, lay leaders, leaders of religious associations, and reactionary lackeys and their hard-core supporters. Provide leadership to direct and control the church at the grass-roots level. This is a matter of strategic significance. In general, we need to properly reeducate all of these categories of people, except for those stubborn elements who are guilty of serious opposition and sabotage; those need to be detained and imprisoned for concentrated re-education.

4 - Step up our secret reconnaissance [intelligence] operations, with our primary emphasis being on recruiting and handling priests, seminarians, and lackeys as our agents, including some counter-revolutionary elements who have been released from prison.

Those localities that have a Catholic problem should analyze and review their agent network in order to develop a plan to consolidate and expand their agent network to ensure that their agents can cover all targets and all locations within their area. You need to make concrete, specific delineations of responsibilities between the Public Security bureaus and province offices and the region, district, and city committees for individual targets and target areas, and you must quickly carry out the work of recruiting agents to support both our short-term and our long-term efforts, and especially those that can assist if there are new developments in the situation.

[Page 460]

There are areas that appear to be normal and where we seem to have no problems in the current situation, but if the situation changes these areas may become important. With regard to our agent network among the priesthood, we must strive to make additional recruitments in order to achieve our goal of having one-quarter of all priests serving as our agents, not including those priests who are openly progressive. We need to have effective agents at all levels, in all locations, and who can cover all targets so that we will be able to actively monitor the situation and take appropriate action to deal with the enemy. To expand our agent network, we need to target a number of young priests, seminarians, and monks to serve our long-term requirements, and we need to assess and recruit agents from among the reactionary Catholic prisoners that are still in prison and who are able to get close to reactionary priests and dangerous lackeys in individual parishes. We need to provide guidance to our village public security officers so that they can aggressively expand their networks of secret informers to ensure that we have our eyes and ears everywhere.

5 - Pay special attention to training specialized cadres to serve in Public Security Bureaus and Provincial Offices

As I have stated, the work of mobilizing the Catholic masses and combating reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion is a difficult, complex, and arduous long-term task. For that reason, we must make sure that we train and develop cadres who are politically solid and who have excellent professional skills to specialize in carrying out the battle against this target. In any location where Catholics live, we need to first calculate the number of households involved so that we can organize a specialized cell to handle them. In areas that have large concentrations of Catholics, we need to form a specialized unit to discuss and draft comprehensive operational plans for dealing with this problem. Once we have a specialized unit or organization,

we must assign it responsibility for studying and analyzing each different target, each different problem, and each different area.

[Page 461]

We must ensure that we provide training and supplemental instruction to our Public Security cadres responsible for conducting operations in Catholic areas. This training should cover the Party's guidelines and policies towards the Catholic religion and basic knowledge and information about the church to make sure that they have a full understanding of our mass mobilization operations in Catholic areas and are proficient in our policies and in our various types of professional operations, depending on the roles and duties of each type of cadre. The goal is to improve the skills of our cadres across the board in order to be able to actively and aggressively deal with the reactionaries. The Political Security Department must be responsible for this area. This does not just mean that they must develop a plan for providing supplementary training to our reconnaissance forces [intelligence personnel]; they must also study and develop a training program for regional level, district level, and even village level Public Security officers. Training for village Public Security officers must focus on three areas: mobilizing the masses, implementing our various policies on dealing with the problem, and recruiting secret informants. With regards to our village Public Security officers, after we conduct background investigations and clear them, we need to provide them with systematic supplementary instructions and training. It is extremely important for us to provide initial and supplementary political and professional training to our cadres. Many priests are not just proficient in idealistic theory; they have also studied Marxism and our Party's and our Government's policies and guidelines to enable them to combat our efforts. If our cadres are not educated and if they are not given careful supplementary instruction, they will be awkward, confused, and on the defensive when dealing with these priests.

The final matter that I want to call to your attention is that in the current situation, we need to be vigilant against reckless, fool-hardy efforts by the American imperialists and their lackeys to resume their attacks against North Vietnam. If they do mount attacks into North Vietnam, and especially if they enter areas along the coast where large concentrations of Catholics live, we must annihilate them immediately and we must be on guard against the possibility that they will try to evacuate the civilian population and take them with them, and we must also guard against the possibility that they will try to plant their own lackeys inside our territory. For that reason, we must develop a plan to deal with such contingencies, a plan that fully implements the Ministry's Directive 92-95 on reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion.

[Page 462]

*My Dear Comrades,*

This review of our struggle against reactionaries who exploit the Catholic religion marks an important turning point. We have conducted such reviews many times in the past, but this time the review covered a longer time period, it was more systematic, it raised concrete, comprehensive issues that needed to be resolved, and it was focused.

During this conference you comrades should conduct discussions and make considered, profound assessments of the situation and of the enemy's plans, methods, and activities. You will clearly see the tremendous achievements, successes, and creativity of our operations. You will learn lessons from our experiences about how to change the political and social situation in Catholic areas and about how to change the balance of forces between our side and the enemy. At the same time, you should conduct a deep and careful review of our own errors, weaknesses, and shortcomings during the course of this struggle. Using that as your foundation, you should then contribute your own ideas about the draft resolution in order to make it better and more complete so that by the end of 1973, when we conduct another review of our operations, we will find that we have achieved more and greater successes and that we will have an even richer range of experiences to study and from which to derive lessons learned.

Finally, I would like to wish all of your good health and hope that you all will resolve to make our operations designed to combat the reactionaries who exploit the Catholic

religion stronger and more effective. I am certain that we will win major new victories in this struggle.

[1] Father Le Huu Tu was a Catholic priest in Ninh Binh who was a leader of the anti-communist movement among Catholics in North Vietnam during the war against the French (1946-1954) and who became a supporter and advisor to South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem.

[2] Minister Tran Quoc Hoan may have misspoken when he gave the name of the province in which this incident occurred. Another classified Vietnamese Public Security history describes the uncovering of a Catholic “reactionary organization” with “almost one hundred members” in Nam Dinh Province in early 1963. See Nguyen Hung Linh and Hoang Mac, editors, “Luc Luong Chong Phan Dong: Lich Su Bien Nien (1954-1975) (Luu Hanh Noi Bo)” [Anti-Reactionary Forces: Chronology of Events (1954-1975) (Internal Distribution Only), Hanoi: Publish Security Publishing House, 1997.

[3] This is a reference to the November 1956 Catholic uprising at the Catholic church in Quynh Yen Village, Quynh Luu District, Nghe An Province, during which the 324th Division had to called in to put down the rebellion.

[4] Archbishop Trinh Nhu Khue, the leader of the Catholic Church in North Vietnam at that time.

[5] This was a case supposedly involving Nguyen Chau Thanh, a spy from South Vietnam, who worked with Catholic priest Tran Dinh Can in Nghe An Province to organize an espionage ring. Nguyen Chau Thanh and Tran Dinh Can were arrested in 1966 and were tried and sentenced to prison in 1967.

[6] This refers to the expulsion of all foreign Catholic priests from North Vietnam in the late 1950s.

[7] “Local re-education” means forcing individuals to attend political re-education classes without actually arresting them, allowing them to return to their homes each night.

[8] “K-48” was the code designation for the Ministry of Public Security’s Political Security Department.