

# 'We're Winning in Viet Nam'

## The Brave Little Men

By RICHARD TREGASKIS

HONOLULU (NANA)—  
Ever since I got back from Viet Nam, I have been hearing the same capsule opinion of our war down there in the southeast corner of Asia. It's a down-beat opinion and it's wrong.

That opinion, which is always the same, as if it were a recording, is: "The Vietnamese won't fight, and the government of Ngo Dinh Diem is no - - good." The logical next step is often: "We Americans are doing the fighting for the Vietnamese and we should cut loose from the whole deal."

When I hear these views, based as they are on misinformation, I jump into a listing of the facts. Those facts indicate the overall truth: We're winning, not losing, in Viet Nam. And if we are looking for a nation in southeast Asia which will fight for our kind of government against Communists, we'd have a hard time finding a better one than the Vietnamese.

Also, the contention that we Americans are taking the casualties for the Vietnamese is just so much balderdash. In the 15 months during which we have been assisting the Vietnamese government with an intensified program of support and military advice, we have lost fewer than 200 Americans killed and wounded in battle.

In the same period the Vietnamese have lost more than 15,000 killed and wounded. Their casualties have been running 300 to 400 a month killed, and 600 to 700 wounded.

That works out to a ratio of less than one American killed or wounded for every 75 Vietnamese lost in our war to hold back the advance of Communism in Asia. That's not bad for a war which is just as important to us as it is to the Vietnamese, maybe even more important.

And to say that the Vietnamese won't fight is a gross injustice to the valiant little men in American uniforms who in the last year have started to turn the tide against the Communist V.C. (Viet Cong).

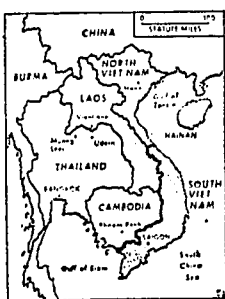
There's ample evidence that the Vietnamese have been winning, despite the defeat administered by the V.C. at Vac in January. That was a bloody nose for our side, and the best of armies get bloody noses once in a while.

★

The overall evidence in Viet Nam shows a generally cheerful picture. Things have improved vastly since a year ago, when we started to move in with large-scale military aid. A year ago our side had less Vietnamese territory, captured fewer prisoners than we were losing, lost more arms than were captured from them, and had more defectors than the enemy.

But now that picture has been reversed: We have gained more real estate than the enemy, captured more of them than we lost as prisoners, are picking up three enemy fire-arms for every two which we lose to them, and have less than half as many defectors as we are getting from the enemy.

What makes little Laos a focal point of world crisis is primarily the fact that it is the gate-



way to the rest of Southeast Asia—above all to South Viet Nam where the United States has been involved in a merciless war with Communist guerrillas.

Just now the tide in this war is turning in the favor of the anti-Communist forces.

How this change is coming about at a time when the Communists are stirring up new trouble in neighboring Laos is told by Richard Tregaskis, an American correspondent recently returned from the fighting fronts.

This civil war, in other words, is going well for our side, and the little brown men in Ngo Dinh Diem's armies are getting results.

★

Besides citing these statistics, I want to add my eyewitness testimony about the morale of the Vietnamese government forces. In traveling through all the sections of Viet Nam where there is fighting, I never saw a Vietnamese government troop unit which wouldn't fight (although there were varying degrees of aggressiveness between one unit and another, as there are in any army).

And I never talked to an American military adviser who didn't say that with some training the Vietnamese are really scrappy.

I started in the northern part, made some assault missions there with the U.S. Marine helicopter unit, carrying several varieties of Vietnamese troops into the attack. Later, I flew on 47 helicopter assault missions in different parts of Viet Nam.

In the north, the troops we carried most often were a Vietnamese ranger battalion: crack troops, well armed and aggressive.

There were also some troops of lesser training and experience, civil guard and self defense corps units comparable to our National Guard. I saw them, too, go into action, and they were always aggressive, well-armed, and eager.

And all the American advisers whom I knew in this northern corps area told me that by and large their Vietnamese charges were long on fortitude, and they would fight.

Down in the embattled Delta region, the rice basket of Viet Nam where the largest part of the daily fighting goes on and there are the largest numbers of V.C., I went on a couple of "eagle" operations, where the aggressiveness of the Vietnamese troops was put to an acid test.

That "Eagle" force charged out of the helicopters, rushed across the muck-bottomed paddy fields, waded across chest-deep canals, and got into a vigorous fire fight on the approaches of a town, in which some bonafide V.C.'s were scared out.

★

I could cite a dozen such cases where our Vietnamese allies fought hard.

It's the same in the sea patrol, the "junk fleet" cutting off V.C. supplies from the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea. The Vietnamese in the junk fleet have the motto "Sat

Con" (kill the Communists) tattooed on their chests.

We made a wise choice when we picked the Vietnamese as allies, and their country as the place where we would make our maximum effort to draw the line against Communism in southeast Asia.

**NEXT** Setting the pattern for any hot wars of the future.