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**Up Front, Saigon Officer Blames U.S.**

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**CHINHAN, South Vietnam, May 27** — Lieutenant Minh, the commander of a company of 100 men posted on the lonely front lines of South Vietnam's northern defenses, says: "The war will never end because the Americans need it for the support of their industries."

"If this war ended," he said, "then the Americans would have to make war in some other country for the sake of their economic development. The war is part of the policy of the United States Government."

"The Communists, from both Russia and China, will never stop trying to conquer South Vietnam and put it under Communism," said the lieutenant. "If they stop temporarily for today, they are only planning for tomorrow." He added:

"Since the Americans will never go away and the Communists will never stop trying, the war will never end."

"It would be easy for the American Government to bring the war to an end, but they don't want to stop it."

Lieutenant Minh explained that he meant bring the war to an end by military force, not by negotiation.

#### Amid Rubble of School

Lieutenant Minh talked candidly — and with a deep sense of helplessness — about the war and the American role as he sat amid the rubble of his temporary command post. The post had been set up in a smashed elementary school in this hamlet in the wasteland of coastal scrub and sand dunes about 17 miles northwest of the city of Hue.

He and his men had successfully fought a battle against attacking North Vietnamese tanks and infantry a few days earlier, and two tank hulks sat rusting in a paddy field a couple of hundred yards away.

Only an hour before Lieutenant Minh's conversation with a visitor, the Communists had shelled his position with long-range artillery, but his company had suffered no casualties.

"I am a schoolteacher," said

the lieutenant, who had taught mathematics for six years in a high school before being drafted seven years ago. "But now I am always sitting in destroyed schools. This is my third destroyed school since the North Vietnamese started their invasion."

Lieutenant Minh, who is 34 years old, represents the leadership element in this country. He is a person of ideas but can also act; he is educated, strong-minded and articulate.

The essence of what he believes — his feeling that the war is under American control and that he and all the South Vietnamese have no power to affect its outcome or determine their country's fate — is a common feeling in South Vietnam today.

Lieutenant Minh is not his real name. He asked that his identity be disguised. "These are my ideas, not my Government's," he said after the frank, hour-long conversation. "It would be easy for me to be imprisoned. Be careful for me."

"My country is very poor," he began, "and my people have been treated as children who grew up on the assistance of different people who dominated us — namely the French, the Japanese and now the Americans."



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Lieut. Minh

"But those who help us do not do so with goodwill. They give us clothes, but do not teach us how to make clothes. So we are now dependent on the Americans, we belong to them."

As usual with conversations near the front these days, the discussion with Lieutenant Minh took place against a background of outgoing friendly artillery nearby and the blackish clouds of American air strikes in the distance. Some small-arms fire rattled not far away across the dunes.

Several of the Lieutenant's men gathered around to listen to him. A couple were distracted elsewhere. They were chasing a chicken with a stick. The chicken escaped into the scrub briefly, but within a few minutes they had it, and it was quickly beheaded, plucked and turned into lunch.

The lieutenant continued:

"In 1963, when the Vietcong were armed with old French rifles and machetes, the Americans gave us carbines. Then, in 1967, when the Communists were given AK-47's [modern automatic rifles], only then were we given M-16's [similar automatics]. It seems that the Americans have tried to keep the war in balance between the two sides so that it will go on."

"Take the B-52 and other bombing strikes on the Ho Chi Minh trail. They have been going on for many years. But despite this, there are now 400,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong in South Vietnam. So we think they might be just dropping the bombs on empty jungle or in open fields instead of hitting North Vietnamese units moving south."

#### Latest Action Assessed

"These are the reasons that we have come to the conclusion that if the Americans want to win the war and end it, they can. Their latest military action is strong, but it is not enough to destroy the Communists."

Lieutenant Minh spoke sometimes in his limited English and sometimes in Vietnamese