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INTRODUCTION

The Eleventh International Student Conference in July 1964 mandated the Research and Information Commission to carry out a study of the situation in South Vietnam. At that time, after the fall of the Diem regime, some democratic solution of the Vietnamese problem appeared possible. Hopes of a rapid end to the conflict were of course quickly to fade and the war has rapidly escalated. The Eleventh Conference did not pass a resolution on the Vietnam situation, and gave R. I. C. no guidance as to the type of report it required. In accordance with past practice, the Commission has concentrated on the root causes of the present situation. This approach is especially required in the case of Vietnam since the facts of today's war are widely presented in the Press, but at the same time there are many confusing references to the events of the past: the Geneva Convention, the Diem regime, the origins of the Vietminh and the N. L. F., the beginnings of U. S. involvements, etc. As is usual with R. I. C. reports there is an extensive section on education and student involvement. The Chairman of the Commission visited South Vietnam briefly in July 1965 and the R. I. C. team made its visit in April, 1966. The North Vietnamese government did not grant visas for a visit.

The Commission is aware that no one of the parties to the dispute will agree with all of this report but it represents the facts as the Commission has found them.

VIETNAM'S PEOPLE AND ECONOMY

The population of Vietnam is approximately thirty two million, fifteen and a half million in the South and sixteen and a half million in the North.

The population is extremely unevenly distributed; the people are largely crammed into the two great rice producing areas - the Red River Delta in the North and the Mecong Delta in the South, and into the coastal plain running between the Annamite Mountains - thus about 95% of the population lives on 20% of the land area. "To describe the shape of their country the Vietnamese like to recall an image familiar to them: that of a shoulder pole carrying a basket of paddy at each end".(1) The total land area is divided almost equally between North and South, 63,000 and 66,000 square miles respectively.

The people are predominantly Viet in origin. Three important ethnic minorities exist totalling five million or so people. In the South, there are approximately one million Chinese, and about half a million of Khmer or Cambodian origin. The other minority are the Montagnards, who live in the mountain areas and of whom there are approximately one million in the South and two and a half million in the North.

The main religions are: Buddhism - 70 to 80% of the population; Catholicism - 7%, mainly in the South; Confucianism and Taoism.

Vietnam is an extremely rich rice-producing country. This applies to the South in particular, but the North has richer mineral resources and a more developed industrial base. "Accidents of climate and geology make the two zones of Vietnam not economic rivals, but in normal times perfect complements to each other. The northern zone possesses the mineral wealth necessary, and in economically sufficient and accessible quantities, for a viable light-and-medium-industrial base; the south has an output of highly diversified agricultural products more than adequate to meet the needs of the interior market and supply cash exports. There is enough cheap high-grade anthracite and coal in the North to solve all Vietnam's industrial fuel problems, and leave a comfortable margin for economically competitive exports; and in South Vietnam rice, rubber, spices and textiles could likewise take care of the needs of the whole population and still leave highly valued export surpluses. In each zone, the sealing off at the 17th Parallel has resulted in the diversion of costly human and material resources into projects designed to alleviate the shortages created by the absence of complementary deliveries to the other area".(2)

(1) General Vo Nguyen Giap: "Peoples' War, Peoples' Army", P.11.

(2) Bernard Fall: The Two Vietnams.

EARLY HISTORY

The Kingdom of Nam-Viet was founded, to the north of its present territory, in 208 B.C., and its long history is one of civil war and foreign domination. It was conquered by China in 111 B.C. and attempts to throw off the Chinese colonial yoke were not successful until 939 A.D., and even then Vietnam remained a tributary state of China until the French conquered the country.

From the fifteenth till the end of the eighteenth century when it reached its present frontiers, Vietnam undertook its own programme of military colonisation to the South, first defeating the Champas and then the Khmers. A failure to integrate the mountain minority into the Vietnamese national community has remained a serious problem until this day.

This was also a period of war between the North and South - the Trinh family faction north of the 17th Parallel was backed by the Dutch, and the Nguyen family faction south of the Parallel by the Portuguese.

After the TaySon revolt in the 1770s overthrew first the Nguyen, and then the Trinh, the country was reunited under the TaySon. In 1801, it was reconquered by Nguyen Anh with French military help, though the dynasty's hold over areas nominally under its control was often tenuous. However, the French did not come in large numbers till the late 1860s, and for about fifty years Vietnam had its only period as a single united country free of foreign domination.

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A FRENCH COLONY

European penetration of Vietnam began in the usual manner, first with missionary and then commercial activity, in the 1600s. There were recurrent waves of persecution of the Catholic minority and expulsion of priests, until finally, in a classical colonial manoeuvre, the death of some missionaries was used by the French in 1859 as a pretext for invasion of the country, the conquest of which was eventually completed with the fall of Hanoi in 1883. However, Vietnamese resistance (with Chinese assistance) continued and it was not till 1913 that the last of rebellions was put down.

The close and often cordial relationship between Catholic missionary activity and French political encroachment in Vietnam is one of the factors which has created strong emotional tension and hostility between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Fifty years of French colonial rule was to leave a shattering effect on the Vietnamese way of life. Vietnam may have turned out to be an unprofitable investment for the French, but it was solely from the point of view of a prestige investment that the administration of Indochina was viewed. Thus the President of the U. S. A., F. D. Roosevelt, could say in 1944 of French Indochina, "The people are worse off than they were at the beginning (of French rule) ... France has milked it for one hundred years".

Vietnam was regarded as one part of French Indochina. The form of French rule varied from area to area, but it was for the most part "indirect", in that, while the Mandarin class retained the trappings of authority, the real power, even at village level, was in the hands of French "fonctionnaires". Elected advisory assemblies had no real power and the French never had any intention of preparing the people for self-government, preferring the process of "assimilation" whereby a privileged few became French citizens. "Loyalty to the colonial regime was the first quality demanded of the Mandarins. Any who retained a grain of nationalist sentiment were pitilessly deprived of their jobs or relegated to subordinate functions. In the end the Mandarinal class suffered a complete loss of prestige". (3)

The economy was dominated by a combination of private French investors and the Bank of Indochina. Speculation by notables and Mandarins led to a great shrinkage of village communal lands and the village lost much of its cohesiveness and autonomy. The imposition of the French legal code further undermined Vietnamese life. Any moves towards liberalisation of the regime were strenuously opposed by the local French colons.

(3) Nguyen Kien: "Le Sud-Vietnam Depuis Dien-Bien-Phu".

Education was reserved for the elite - during the French regime there were fourteen secondary schools in all Vietnam, and though the University of Hanoi was founded in 1908 it was later closed on a number of occasions after student political activity. In 1945 the illiteracy rate was 80% which was higher than when the French arrived. However, even the tiny educated group found its progress blocked by Frenchmen at all levels, and Frenchmen performing menial tasks were paid more than Vietnamese University professors. "Unemployed or underpaid in secondary governmental positions, the disillusioned elite formed the nucleus around which patriotic and anti-French activity would coalesce at the earliest opportunity", (4) (although within the elite, the Communist leadership differed from the remainder in their education in that for the most part either they had no schooling or attended the reformed Vietnamese schools, and most underwent a period of training in China in the 1920s.)

Throughout the period resistance to French rule continued in various forms. Political groups at first were aimed simply at getting rid of the French rather than at social or political reform. The dominant nationalist organisation by the time of the 1920s was the Viet Nam Quoc Don Dang (V. N. Q. D. D.) - Vietnamese Nationalist Party, modelled on the Chinese Kuomin tang, but it was virtually destroyed by the French after an uprising in 1930.

However, in 1925 an Association of Revolutionary Vietnamese Youth (Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi) had been set up in Canton by Ho Chi Minh, then working as a Comintern agent under the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc. By 1929 there were three communist parties working in Vietnam and these were united the following year by Ho under the name of Indochinese Communist Party (I. C. P.).

(4) Kahin (ed) : Government and Politics of South East Asia.

WORLD WAR II AND THE RISE OF THE VIET-MINH

With the fall of France and establishment of the Vichy Government, a French Vichy regime under General Decoux took over in Indo-China. But while the French continued to administer Indochina, real power was now in the hands of the Japanese who had 35,000 troops in the country and allowed the French to remain in office as an administrative convenience.

The Fascist Decoux administration crushed two rebellions in 1940, the latter of the two being organised by the Communists in Cochinchina (the southern area of Vietnam). After these, resistance was limited largely to isolated guerilla activity.

Meanwhile in May 1941, the Indochinese Communist Party had decided to moderate its policies and to create a National Front which would include even "patriotic landowners" and the same month saw the Communists ally with other groupings under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh to form the Vietnam Doc-Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam) usually referred to by the abbreviation, Viet-Minh.

The Japanese overlords believed they would use the Viet-Minh as a puppet group to extend their control into Vietnam and in March 1944, under Japanese protection a "Provisional Republican Government of Vietnam" was proclaimed in which the Viet-Minh were a minority. Later in 1944 the Viet-Minh sent guerilla groups into Vietnam and established contact with the U.S. forces from whom they began to receive assistance. The Viet-Minh, as the only group actively resisting the Japanese, was able to establish its leadership of the Vietnam liberation movement.

In March of 1945, the Japanese effected a coup against the French garrisons and took over the country and declared it "independent". On the 11th March the Emperor of Annam, Bao-Dai, denounced the 1885 French treaty and declared Vietnam to be within the framework of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. However, while Vietnamese now returned to nominal positions of authority, this new independence was a sham and all real power remained with the Japanese "advisers".

With the surrender of Japan the Viet-Minh, whose forces now numbered some 10,000, saw the opportunity to seize independence for Vietnam before the Allied occupying forces arrived. Following a conference at Tan Trao a new organisation, the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam, was set up. By the 25th August Ho's forces, amid popular acclaim, had taken over Hanoi, and another Viet-Minh group had control of Saigon (though in the south their power was disputed by other religious and nationalist groups).

With this Emperor Bao-Dai resigned and, as a private citizen, became adviser in Ho's government. On the 29th August Ho Chi Minh announced the establishment of the "Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", and on the 2nd September, a cheering crowd of half a million heard the proclamation in Hanoi of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (D.R. V. N.). The new government set about establishing its authority.

D. R. V. N. AND RETURN OF THE FRENCH

In the Declaration of Independence the new government had stated their conviction that the Allies which had "acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam".

The Allies had already laid plans, however, for the occupation of Vietnam - by Chinese forces in the North, and British in the South; and the French government was determined to use this occupation to re-establish its authority. The war had not altered French imperialism.

The Chinese recognised the de facto Viet-minh administration in the North and permitted it to function. In the South, however, the British forces under Gracey refused to deal with the local Viet-minh group, facilitated its overthrow by a group of the French military, and used Japanese troops to quash Vietnamese resistance. The French, under Admiral d'Argenlieu, who tended to sympathise with the French colons and ignore Paris, increased the numbers of their troops in the South and by June 1946 had recognised a puppet separatist regime in the newly-seated "free republic" of Cochinchina in the South, in contravention of the guarantees given to the Viet-minh (the failure of this republic was evidenced later in the year when the "President", Nguyen Van Thieh hanged himself).

In the North, however, the Ho Chi Minh government was much more firmly established and even after the withdrawal of Chinese troops its authority was recognised by the French. On November 11, 1945, the I. C. P., lacking the wholehearted support of overseas Communist parties, and needing to win aid from all groups for the new state, officially dissolved itself though its individual members retained their places in the Viet-minh, and the Association of Marxist Studies was formed on the same day. In January 1946 elections were held. The non-Communist group had agreed not to contest these in return for 70 seats in the legislature which is more than they would have won. There were many irregularities in the elections, but the overwhelming victory for the Viet-minh is regarded by most observers as a fair indication of their support in the country. Throughout 1946 the government consolidated itself in North Vietnam and their achievements included a nationwide food production campaign.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that at this time the Viet-minh, as they had in September in the South, carried out a campaign of assassination against certain provincial mandarins and the leaders of other political parties and sects who were regarded as reactionary or Trotskyist. A large number of parliamentary opposition members were arrested despite their parliamentary immunity and their fate is not known. Later in 1946 the French and Viet-minh joined in police and military action against the Nationalist party and the Revolutionary league (whom the Vietminh regarded as reactionary).

On March 6, 1946 Ho Chi Minh and the French negotiator, Sainteny, had signed an agreement under which the French government, in order to facilitate the re-entry of their own troops and departure of the Chinese, recognised the new Republic in the north as a "free state . . . forming part of the Indochinese Federation and French Union", and agreed to a referendum as to the status of the rest of Vietnam. As 1946 progressed, however, it became clear that the two sides had different ideas as to what a "free state" was, and the French broke the agreement and tried to split up Vietnam into three states. The Republic passed a constitution which insisted on both independence and unity of the three parts of Vietnam, Cochin China, Annam and Ton Kin. A series of Conferences at Fontainebleau and Dalat found the Vietminh reasonable and moderate in their attitude, but the French became increasingly intransigent, and in the meantime were destroying all opposition in Cochin China which had become a police state. It became clear that the French intended to reassert full control. At the same time, early U. S. encouragement of the Vietminh dissolved, and much of the French military repression was carried out with U. S. equipment.

A series of clashes culminated in the Haiphong incident when after fighting over a customs dispute, a French heavy cruiser opened fire on a crowd of Vietnamese civilians resulting in the death of 6,000 people.

Finally on December 19, 1946 the Vietminh forces in Hanoi and throughout the country attacked the French intruders. "The next day . . . President Ho Chi Minh called on the whole people to rise up and exterminate the enemy and save the country, to fight to the last drop of blood, and whatever the cost, to refuse re-enslavement"(5). The state of open war was to last eight years.

(5) Vo Nguyen Giap: "People's War, People's Army", p. 18.

The French army had apparent initial success and rapidly took the major towns and roads, while the Vietminh retreated to the countryside. In May 1947 Coste-Floret, French Minister for War, could say "There is no military problem any longer in Indochina, the success of French arms is complete". However, the Vietminh were merely biding their time, and following the first strategic defensive phase of Maoist guerilla warfare, establishing their authority in the countryside, and refusing to accept battle except on their own terms. General Giap who commanded the Vietnam People's Army wrote "It is possible for them (the French) to understand a fundamental and decisive fact: this fact was that the Vietnamese army though weak materially was a people's army. This fact is that the war in Vietnam was not only the opposition of two armies. In provoking hostilities, the aggressive colonialists had alienated a whole nation ... The French generals who believed in easy victory, went instead to certain defeat". At the same time, during these early years of the war the Vietminh remained conciliatory and sought peace negotiations, offering France "a policy of open door and cooperation".

The establishment of the Communists in power in China proved of great help to the Vietnamese as a retreat and source of supplies, and they were able to move into the second phase of military activity. A series of victories followed and with the fall of Lang-Son in October, 1950 they were in complete control of almost the whole of the northern half of North Vietnam.

However, a series of setbacks were to follow. These were in part due to the tactical error of moving too rapidly into the third phase of general counter-offensive, in part to the generalship of the new French commander, de Lattre, and in part to the increasingly military supplies that were coming to the French from the U. S. A. after the outbreak of the Korean war. In July, 1950 the first U.S. military mission - the U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) - arrived in Vietnam. At first the U.S. tried to maintain its traditional antagonism to European colonialism, and clashed with the French by insisting on increased independence for the local Vietnamese Bao Dai government (see below) with which it wanted to conclude its agreements; but by 1954 the U.S. was underwriting most of the cost to the French of the war, and Dulles was expressing his "sympathy for the gallant struggle being waged in Indochina by French forces " (Dept. of State Bulletin April 12, 1954). At the time of Dien Bien Phu it was only the flat refusal of the British government to cooperate that deterred the U.S. from throwing in its air and naval forces in support of the French.

The 1951 setbacks to the Vietminh proved temporary, and by 1953, despite the presence of 175,000 men in the French Expeditionary Corps and a similar number in the allied army of the Associated State of Vietnam, Ho controlled large parts, not only of Vietnam but Laos also. The final French

attempt in 1953-54 - the Navarre plan - also proved a failure, and with the success of Giap's general counter offensive the major French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 spelt the end of their desire to re-establish their presence in Vietnam.

NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN REGIMES 1947-54

At the same time as conducting the war the French had to establish an apparently Vietnamese government to rival Ho's government but the demands of the Nationalist and Buddhist groups in the newly formed National United Front were more than the French were prepared to grant. They finally in June 1948 prevailed on the "nightclub emperor" Bao Dai to return from Hong Kong to head the provisional government of the Associated State of Vietnam which was recognised as "independent" but remained part of the French Union. Bao Dai was not prepared to accept the French terms, however, and in the Elysee agreement of June 1949 the French made further concessions and agreed to reunify Vietnam by including Cochinchina after a referendum. In theory Vietnam was once more united and independent but despite continued negotiations Bao Dai never achieved any sort of real independence from the French. No elections were held. In February 1950, shortly after the recognition by Russia and China of the D.R.V.N., the Associated State was recognised by the British (with reservations) and the U.S., and joined a number of U.N. specialised agencies though its entry into the U.N. itself was halted by the Soviet veto.

"In their political counter offensive against the Republic, the French envisaged Bao Dai as a key figure, the majority of the Country, however still supported Ho. Despite the strong and entrenched communist minority in the Republican government by far the greater part of non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists regarded Ho as their only possible leader in the struggle against the French. Bao Dai appeared so much a creature of French policy as to make it extremely difficult for him to win support among his people". (6)

As has been outlined Ho's government even when suffering military defeats retained control of much of the rural areas - largely through the establishment of small but efficient administrative units that duplicated the colonial administration ("Hierarchies Paralleles"). In its early years the Vietminh government contained some non-communists, e.g. socialist Hoang Ming Giam as Foreign Minister till 1954, and the Vietminh (and its successor the Lien Viet) was a national coalition of numerous

- (6) Ellen J. Hammer: "Genesis of First Indochinese War".
(7) Mat Tran Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam (Vietnamese Popular National Front) formed on May 31, 1946, a broader front than the Vietminh but the term "Vietminh" is used throughout this report since it is the accepted term for the Front.

political groups with an organisation throughout Vietnam and a membership claimed at nine million. That it was a genuine national liberation movement and commanded wide nationalist non-communist support there can be no doubt, but discussion raged at the same time (just as it does today about the National Liberation Front) as to whether it was also communist or communist dominated. Now there can also be no doubt that it was. The Vietminh commander, Giap, has written "The Vietnamese People's War of liberation attained this great victory ... above all because it was organised and led by the Party of the working class: the Indochinese Communist Party, now the Viet Nam Worker's Party. In the light of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, it was this Party which proceeded to make an analysis of the social situation ... to establish the plan for the armed struggle .. It was the Party which found a correct solution to the problems arising out of the setting up and leadership of a people's army, people's power and a national united front". (8)

In February 1951 there was held a national congress (which Giap calls "The second Congress of the Indochinese Communist Party" though officially the I. C. P. had been disbanded in 1945) at which the Lao Dang or Workers' Party was founded to succeed the I. C. P. At the same time the Vietminh and the existing political union called the Lien Viet, were amalgamated under the name Lien Viet. From this time on the non-communist element in the leadership gradually diminished. At first great efforts were made to disguise the communist nature of the Lao Dang and its leadership of the Vietminh, but three years later these facts were openly accepted.

(8) "People's War, People's Army" (Hanoi 1961, pp.35-6.

GENEVA CONFERENCE 1954

By 1954 the French people had become disillusioned about "the dirty war" in Vietnam and the political climate permitted an international initiative towards a cessation of hostilities. The Big Four meeting in January 1954, agreed to a 14 Nation Conference on Korea and Indochina which convened in Geneva on April 1 and began its discussions on Indochina on May 8. Dienbienphu had fallen on May 7.

The participants in the Indochina discussions were France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, U. S. A., Peoples' Republic of China, the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, the D.R.V.N. and the State of Vietnam. The meeting was chaired jointly by Britain and the Soviet Union and it was apparent that it was these two powers, conscious of the potential danger to world peace, who were most anxious for a compromise solution. During the discussions a new French government under Mendes-France had come into office with the promise it would end the war by July 20, and the Chinese were also conciliatory. The D.R.V.N. at first insisted it should be the sole representative of the Vietnamese people as it was a direct continuation of the government that was established in August 1945 and had received de Facto recognition by the negotiations with France through 1946. However, it was agreed that the delegate of the Associated State of Vietnam should also attend though his view does not appear to have been accorded much attention: the communist delegates finally waived their insistence on Khmer and Pathet Lao representation.

The United States adopted probably the most intransigent attitude. The U.S. was at this time convinced that not only from the point of view of national self-interest but also from the point of view of the peoples concerned, it had a moral commitment to prevent the establishment of any new communist governments. Throughout the talks Dulles refused to acknowledge the existence of the Chinese delegation and continued to seek British support for military intervention. Sir Anthony Eden wrote "The issue of intervention continued to dog us during the opening stages of the conference. As soon as I arrived in Geneva, Mr. Dulles came to see me to learn the British attitude to the United States proposal".(9). When Dulles was unable to gather support he left the conference and the U.S. delegation remained virtually as observers.

A passage from one of Eden's despatches to London during the conference provides an illuminating comment on the political and military situation: "Meanwhile Mr. Robertson (U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs) whose approach to these questions is so emotional as to be impervious to argument or indeed to facts, was keeping up a sort of "theme song" to the effect that there were in Indochina some three hundred thousand men who were anxious to fight against the Vietminh and were looking us for support and encouragement. I said that if they were so anxious to fight I could not understand why they did not do so. The Americans had put

(9) Sir Anthony Eden: "Full Circle", p.108

in nine times more supplies of material than the Chinese, and plenty must be available for their use. I had no faith in this eagerness of the Vietnamese to fight for Bao Dai".(10). (One cannot exclude the likelihood, however, that the threat of U.S. intervention made all the other parties at the conference more amenable to a compromise solution.)

The conference ended the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Two agreements relevant to Vietnam emerged.

The first signed on July 20, 1954 was an Armistice Agreement, the signatories to which were General Deltiel and Ta Quang Buu on behalf of the French and D.R.V.N. commanders-in-chief. It was not thought necessary for the representatives of the "independent" State of Vietnam to be signatories, and their protests "against the hasty conclusion of an Armistice by the French High Command alone" were ignored.

The Armistice Agreement provided that French and Vietminh forces would withdraw and regroup to the north and south respectively of a "provisional military demarcation line" (Article 1) and that "pending general elections which will bring about the unification of Vietnam, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped there in virtue of the present agreement". (Article 14a). Both sides undertook "to refrain from any reprisal or discrimination against persons or organisations on account of their activities during the hostilities and to guarantee their democratic liberties" (Article 14c) and to assist in the repatriation to the other zone of civilians who wanted to move north or south (Article 14d). Both sides also agreed to permit "no destruction or sabotage of any public property and no injury to the life and property of the civil population ... (and) no interference in local civil administration". (Article 15d).

Articles 17 and 18 prohibited "The introduction into Vietnam of any reinforcements in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war material and the establishment of new military bases ... throughout Vietnam territory". Article 19 provided that no military base under the control of a foreign state may be established in the re-grouping zone of either party; the two parties shall ensure that the zones assigned to them do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy".

An International Commission for Supervision and Control of the execution of the Agreement was established with India (Chairman), Poland and Canada as members. (Article 29, Article 34).

The second agreement was the so-called "Geneva Declaration" - the final declaration of the Conference.

(10) Sir Anthony Eden: "Full Circle", p.113.

In this declaration the conference took note of the Armistice Agreement between the D.R.V.N. and the French, in particular taking note of the clauses "prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops and military personnel" and arms, the introduction of foreign military bases, the participation of either zone in military alliances or its use to resume aggression.

The Conference recognised that the agreement was a military one and that the demarcation line was military and "should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary". The Conference declared that "the final political settlement would be based on unity, independence and democratic freedoms and that general elections shall be held in July 1956" under the supervision of the members of the International Commission.

The members of the Conference agreed to respect "the sovereignty, the unity and the territorial integrity" of Vietnam, "to refrain from any interference in (its) internal affairs", and to consult one another on matters referred by the International Commission to ensure that the agreement was respected.

The full text of the Geneva Declaration appears as Appendix I to this report (11).

No state signed this declaration, but the representatives of eight of the nine nations attending the Conference gave it their verbal assent in the final session of the Conference. The State of Vietnam, however, entered reservations and objections which amounted to a rejection of the Declaration. It objected to various provisions of the Armistice Agreement and protested against the fact that the French High Command alone had concluded the cease fire with the Vietminh and that the Command "was pleased to take the right without a preliminary agreement of the delegation of the State of Vietnam to set the date of future elections". The State of Vietnam reserved "its full freedom of action in order to safeguard the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to territorial unity, national independence and freedom".

The United States was "not prepared to join" in the Declaration but issued a declaration of its own which took note of the Agreement and the Declaration (except paragraph 13) and stated that it would "refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them", and would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid Agreement with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security. The elections should be supervised by the UN. The full text of the declaration appears as Appendix II.

(11) All quotations from the documents of the Geneva Conference are taken from the official version as printed in Cmd. 9239 Her Majesty's Stationery Office (London): "Further Documents relating to the discussion of Indo-China at the Geneva Conference".

The Geneva agreements were carefully worded not to include any reference as to who was the legitimate de jure sovereign of the territory of Vietnam. This problem was to be solved by the general elections in 1956 since the unity of Vietnam was stressed and the division of the country was seen as a purely temporary military expedient of no political significance. However, given the results of temporary military divisions elsewhere in the world, in Germany and Korea, many observers were not too optimistic that the elections would ever be held.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIEM REGIME

It was apparent that if an election were held in 1954 Ho Chi Minh would have been the overwhelming victor. The sects, the Catholics and the army were powerful sections of society opposed to him, but in general, "the political cliques which had formerly existed in Nationalist Vietnam merely represented scattered bourgeois elements, whose political ideology was of the vaguest, or groups of civil servants, all of whom had practically no contact with the people. It was most probable, therefore, that they would all be carried away in the powerful stream of the wind blowing from the Viet-Minh". (12)

The French were thus anxious to delay the elections till 1956, as was to be laid down in the Geneva agreements, and, in the meantime, to bolster the government of the Associated State of Vietnam. Thus, while the Geneva Conference was still in session, they agreed on the 4th June, 1954, to full independence for Vietnam, and on the 7th July Bao-Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem as Premier of the State of Vietnam with absolute dictatorial powers.

Diem, now remembered for his repressive dictatorship, at that time had a reasonable record of nationalist activity. He had initially co-operated with the French, first as governor of Phan-Thiet in 1929, then as Minister of the Interior in 1933. He had, however, resigned the same year when the French refused to agree to legislative power for the local Assembly, and accused the emperor of being "nothing but an instrument in the hands of the French authorities". He refused a portfolio in the Japanese-sponsored administration, and, later, offers from Bao-Dai, as the real power was still in the hands of the French authorities. In 1945 he had also refused a post Ho offered him in the Viet-Minh government (though by 1950 the Viet-Minh had sentenced him to death in absentia) because the Viet-Minh had killed his brother. In 1949 he founded the Phong Trao Quoc-Gia Qua Kich or Nationalist Extremist Movement, with largely Catholic support, but it was short-lived, and in 1951 he

(12) Philippe Devillers: "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam" - China Quarterly, January, 1962.

went to the U.S. and spoke extensively on the need to back an anti-Communist form of Vietnamese nationalism. He was an aloof figure who, while he opposed the French and was proudly Vietnamese, was unwilling, unlike Ho, to go into active opposition. By July 1954, he was finally offered the Premiership independent of French control. Behind this offer there may have been the belief of the French, or Bao-Dai, that Diem would be a convenient scapegoat in a hopeless situation. Another theory is that Diem's appointment was due to U.S. government pressure. However, while Diem always had the support of powerful groups in the U.S., including Senator Kennedy, Cardinal Spellman and Colonel Lonsdale, the U.S., on the advice of its Ambassador Extraordinary in Vietnam, General Collins, was ready to withdraw its support in 1954-5, and it seems that it was not till after he had crushed the sects in mid-1955 that he had full U.S. backing.

At this stage Diem had the backing of many liberals in the U.S. and elsewhere as a genuine nationalist. His first actions were also encouraging. By the middle of 1955 he had crushed the Binh Xuyen sect which controlled criminal activity in Saigon. He then won over or defeated the leaders of the other two major politico-religious sects, the Cao-Dai and the Hoa-Hoa, both of which maintained large military forces and were probably receiving French assistance. However, Bernard Fall in "The Two Vietnams" claims that \$12 million of U.S. money was used to bribe sect leaders though the evidence for this is inconclusive, and the crushing of these latter sects may have been unjust and, in the long run, unwise. This removed the major overt organised opposition groups south of the 17th Parallel.

Diem finally established his absolute authority by a referendum in October, 1955, in which the people were to choose between a monarchy and a republic, i.e. between Bao-Dai and Diem. The campaign in the words of the British Embassy official, was conducted with "a cynical disregard for decency and democratic principles".(13). There were hundreds of thousands more votes counted than voters and the whole procedure was a farce. Not surprisingly, Diem won a 98.2% majority for the republic, and the Republic of Vietnam was accordingly proclaimed and Diem became the first President.

(13) D. Lancaster: "Emancipation of French Indochina" (O.U.P. 1961)

REFUGEES FROM THE NORTH

The Geneva Convention had called on the signatories to permit the passage of civilians from one zone to the other. One of the major indictments against the Viet-Minh has been the mass flow of refugees from the North, as compared to the numbers going North from the South (though one should allow for the fact that the Vietminh wanted its supporters to remain in the South to prepare for the elections). While reliable figures are difficult to obtain it seems that about nine hundred thousand fled South, while about one hundred and fifty thousand took refuge in the North. For the most part refugees were allowed to travel without impediment, though the International Control Commission in its 1955 Interim Report criticised North Vietnam for failing to make "adequate administrative arrangements" to facilitate freedom of movement.

It should be noted that apart from dependents of officials and soldiers in the Franco-Vietnamese army, nearly all (about six hundred thousand) of these refugees were Catholic - about 65% of North Vietnam's Catholic population. From the evidence and interviews it seems that the reason for this exodus was fear of persecution or of reprisals for co-operation with the French, though some observers stress the importance of intensive Southern propaganda along religious lines (e.g. slogans such as "Christ has gone to the South").(14)

The resettlement of these refugees with the assistance of massive U.S. aid from both governmental and charitable sources was the other early success of the Diem regime, and a major achievement. However, socially and politically, these refugees were never really integrated into the South Vietnamese population and resentment at the preferential treatment given them increased the Catholic-Buddhist tension which helped to undermine the Diem regime.

(14) For this alternative viewpoint see "La Verité sur l'affaire des 'Refugiés au Vietnam' (Hanoi, 1955).

BREACHES OF THE GENEVA CONVENTION, 1954-6.

DIEM'S FAILURE TO HOLD ELECTIONS.

In general, the military provisions of the Geneva agreements were faithfully carried out by May 1955, to the satisfaction of all parties and the International Control Commission (I. C. C.). However, as the I. C. C. stated in its Second Interim Report, "There was room for improvement in the implementation by both parties of the Articles of the Agreement dealing with democratic freedoms . . . "and there was some criticism of the North for obstructions to the movement of refugees. As time passed the Southern government grew more obstructive, especially over the introduction of U.S. military equipment, and in its Sixth Interim Report in September, 1956, the I. C. C. stated: "While the Commission has experienced difficulties in North Vietnam, the major part of its difficulties had arisen in South Vietnam". (15)

The major breakdown of the Geneva agreements was the failure to hold general elections for the government of a unified Vietnam. There can be little doubt that the major responsibility for this failure rested with the South Vietnamese government supported by the U. S.

The nations at the Geneva Convention had declared that "general elections shall be held in July, 1956" and that "consultation will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from the 20th July, 1955". France, which had signed the ceasefire agreement and adhered to the declaration, had turned over political authority south of the 17th Parallel to the State of Vietnam and withdrew the last of its Expeditionary Force by April, 1956. Thus, although in the ceasefire agreement France had agreed that the responsibility for implementing the provisions was the obligation not only of its signatories but also of "their successors in their functions" (Article 27) and although Pham Van Dong had said in January, 1955: "It was with you, the French, that we signed the Geneva Agreements and it is up to you to see that they are respected", the French now washed their hands of responsibility for the Geneva agreements.

However, the Diem government, which had taken over from the French, refused to be bound by the Geneva agreement in general, and the obligation to hold elections in particular. They based their stand on two grounds. Firstly, they had not adhered to the Geneva agreements. (16) "We did not sign the Geneva Agreements. We are not bound in any way by

(15) Paragraph 84, Sixth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam (Cmnd. 31 H. M. S. O. London).

(16) The ceasefire agreement was between the Viet-Minh and the French, not the State of Vietnam, and the latter had recorded its reservation against the Final Declaration of the Conference (see above).

these Agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people". (Ngo Dinh Diem)(17). Against this it could be argued that since the Diem government expected to receive the benefits of the observation of the Agreements by the D.R.V.N., the Diem government should accept the responsibilities imposed by the agreements.

Secondly, both Diem and U.S. spokesmen claimed that elections could not be held, because conditions in North Vietnam did not guarantee democratic liberties. This may have been true but it was irrelevant for, as Marvin Gettleman points out, the Declaration "provided for, not immediate elections, but elections in July 1956, to be preceded by consultative conferences. At these conferences the parties could set their conditions, iron out difficulties, and arrange for impartial international supervision of the elections. The Saigon regime refused to participate in these conferences..."(18) despite repeated appeals by the D.R.V.N.

In this refusal to hold elections Diem was encouraged by the U.S. government (this is widely accepted, e.g., Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "It cannot be denied that there have been mistakes over the years in our policy in Vietnam, not the least of which was the encouragement given in the mid-fifties to President Ngo Dinh Diem to violate certain provisions of the Geneva accords".)(19)

The reason for these refusals was clearly because Ho, with the prestige of his leadership of the nationalist resistance to the French, would have won.

However, while U.S. reluctance to hold elections cannot be doubted, the refusal to hold consultations may not have been U.S. policy but an example of Diem's pride and stubbornness. Even William Warbey, a virulent critic of U.S. policy, in writing of the differences between Diem and Tran Van Do, his Foreign Secretary, which led to Tran Van Do's resignation, says: "Tran Van Do had wanted to have discussions with the Northern Government in accordance with the Geneva Agreements, (and told Warbey) 'Even Dulles said to me in 1955: There's no harm in talking. The talks could go on for years'".(20)

(17) Embassy of Vietnam, Washington, Press and Information Service: Vol. I, No. 18, July 1955.

(18) Marvin E. Gettleman: "Vietnam". Penguin, 1966.

(19) The Times. 17th June, 1965.

(20) William Warbey: "Vietnam: the truth" P.63 (Merlin Press, 1965)

Some blame must also fall on the Co-Chairmen (Britain and the Soviet Union) of the Geneva Conference. The I. C. C. reported the Republic of Vietnam's intransigence to the Co-Chairmen and the Soviet supported, but Britain opposed, a request from China and the D.R. V. N. for reconvening the Conference. Finally the Co-Chairmen contented themselves with piously urging both North and South "To make every effort to implement the Geneva Agreements..."and inviting them "to transmit... their views about the time required for the opening of consultations on... elections".(21)

NORTH VIETNAM 1954 - 1966

a) Industrialisation, Land Reform and Revolt

The twelve years since 1954 have been a period of considerable economic advance and some setbacks in the North. The Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam emerged from the French Indochinese war in a battered state, its severe economic plight worsened by the loss of its traditional agricultural supply base in the South. Ho Chi Minh's conciliatory attitude towards the South and his adherence to the Geneva Convention was based as much on economic as on political considerations. Indeed, in the years immediately succeeding 1954 disaster could easily have overtaken the North. In addition to war devastation, the French had made off with vast quantities of capital equipment and a pronounced labour shortage was brought about by the exodus of some 860,000 people to the South. In 1955 severe famine was averted only by importing rice from Burma which was paid for by the Soviet Union.

As with nearly all Marxist-Leninist orientated regimes rapid industrialisation and agrarian reform were the twin pillars of the first two three-year plans. The agrarian reform, even though land distribution was made far easier by the presence of many areas left vacant by the refugees, was carried out with ruthlessness and dispatch. Its objectives were not only economic ones but political ones as well. Economically, after partition there was a chronic need to replace the South as a source of food: thus the need to increase domestic rice production was paramount. Politically, the reform movement would serve to demonstrate the power of the regime and incidentally remove opposition from among the traditionally independent and conservative landlords.

(21) "Message from the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China to the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam dated 8th May, 1956"...(Cmd. 9763, H. M. S. O. London).

Trained party cadres were sent in large numbers to the countryside to carry out the reforms. The campaign directed by the Party Secretary General Truong Chinh soon set up peoples courts to try, condemn and often execute alleged landlords. In numerous cases the so-called 'landlords' were ordinary peasants suspected of being antipathetic to the government. So severe was the persecution that 'Figaro' and 'Le Monde' reported in 1956 that 12,000 people were released from hard labour camps after unjustified imprisonment by the people's courts. The number of those executed was estimated as between ten and fifteen thousand although Bernard Fall states that a figure of 50,000 executed was an 'educated guess'.

Such was the reign of terror that a number of peasant revolts broke out, the most significant of which occurred in November 1956 at Nghe-An - in Ho Chi Minh's own province. What began as a minor incident soon developed into a major expression of protest and was stifled only by the sending in of a division of the Vietnamese Peoples Army. In the resultant repression it is alleged that almost 6,000 farmers were deported or executed.

The protest had not been in vain however for Ho summarily dismantled the people's courts, prisoners were released, Truong Chinh was forced to resign from his Party office and public acknowledgement was made of errors committed in the reform campaign.

A further result of these revolts was that the whole question of agrarian reform was re-examined and subsequent planning became much more rational and effective. Collectivisation which began in earnest in 1958 was firmly related to the village as the basic unit, greater productivity was urged not only by threats but by incentives and the relationship between agriculture and industry rationalised.

At the present time agrarian advance is considered by many to suffer from the too rigid application of Marxist precepts but at the same time the rate of growth of agricultural production, estimated at about 3% a year, is greater than that achieved in any other communist country. Attempts are being made to diversify production and produce new crops such as sugar cane, cotton, jute, etc., the most notable advance, however, has been made in rice production by the efficient irrigation of the coastal deltas.

In the field of industrial development the DRV followed closely the recommendations laid down in the Bourgoin Plan - drawn up by French specialists under Jean Monnet. The Bourgoin aims were not achieved just as the targets of the first regular five year plan were not fulfilled. At the same time a highly developed iron and steel complex had been completed at Thai Nguyen and the engineering industry expanded rapidly. New factories have been built in Hanoi, Haiphong, Nam Dinh, Lao-Kai, Viet-Tri and Bac-Gouing. The most immediate needs at the moment appear to be a considerably enlarged communications network and a rapid expansion of electrical power. In her industrial advance North Vietnam has received substantial aid from other Communist countries. Between 1955 and 1961 for example

it has been estimated that aid from these sources amounted to more than \$1 billion in grants and loans - an amount roughly equivalent to that provided to South Vietnam by the USA in the same period.

b) Tensions within DRV ruling group

When Truong Chinh was relieved of his post for mishandling the agrarian reform it might well have been expected that he would have lost his membership of the Politburo and even of the party as well. That he did not illustrates the most severe area of tension among the DRV leadership. Chinh was the foremost pro-Chinese member of the party and backed by sufficiently influential people to warrant his continuance as a public figure of major importance.

To disgrace him entirely would have aggravated the internal Sino-Soviet dispute and would have gravely impaired relations between the DRV and China. Ho throughout this period had maintained a primarily pro-Russian stance in Foreign policy believing in the relevance and necessity of the Krushchev line of peaceful co-existence. At the same time he had maintained cordial relations with the Chinese - a contention evinced by the fact that China had given almost twice as much aid to the DRV as the USSR.

This steering of a middle course between the Soviet Union and China has grown progressively more difficult. The differences in the period before the formation of the N.L.F., between the Russian line, favouring strict adherence to the Geneva Convention, and the more militant Chinese line were a constant source of tension, and are described in more detail in a later section.

The formation of the National Liberation Front and the at first gradual escalation of warfare necessitated a firm commitment of support from the DRV. The move to a more Chinese outlook gathered momentum.

With the escalation of the war and the bombings of North Vietnam, pronouncements from Hanoi have been almost identical with those of Peking whilst Hanoi's earlier preparedness for a negotiated settlement has been transformed into a much tougher line.

Yet there is no agreement on North Vietnam's actual relationship towards the USSR and China. Some commentators maintain that it is firmly in the Chinese camp whilst others maintain that the DRV still treads the tightrope albeit infinitely more taut and precarious. If the latter assessment is true, then it is due only to the diplomatic skill of Ho Chi Minh.

Chinese pressure on the DRV to continue the war and reject negotiations is considerable and it is possible also that the North Vietnamese do not favour standing in permanently as a military proxy for China in a battle with the USA however much the Chinese want the war in Vietnam fought to the bitter end. It is with such considerations in mind that some recent articles in

the North Vietnamese press suggest that Hanoi too has its 'hawks' and 'doves' and that a negotiated settlement is still possible. What is currently clear from the record of negotiation attempts in the last two years is that the enemies of negotiation are not confined to one particular side and that its allies have not always been constant.

c) Education

Since 1954 great efforts have been made in the DRV to develop educational facilities throughout the country. This has included a massive drive against illiteracy and the reorganisation of the school system. The old colonial system of elementary, primary and secondary schools was replaced by a single system 'popular Schools' comprising a basic four year cycle, or three year intermediate cycle and more advanced two year cycle.

Statistics produced by the DRV are highly suspect since they are often contradictory, whilst basic information is scanty and often appears to include great exaggeration. North Vietnamese sources maintain that between 1954 and 1963 the numbers undergoing education changed dramatically.

	Popular Schools	Technical Schools	Universities
1954	592,095	2,928	915
1963	3,800,000	64,000	20,600

Similarly there were 12,000 teachers at popular schools in 1954. In 1960 this had reached a figure of 34,726.

In 1955 there existed at the higher education level only three establishments, the General University with faculties of Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Literature and History; the Teachers Training College; and the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy. In 1957 the Poly-technical Institute was created and the Economic and Financial Institute teaching staff increased from 40 in 1955 to 1,260 in 1960.

At the secondary technical level similar increases are claimed. In 1955 there were 2,752 students at such schools with 101 members of staff. By 1959 these figures had reached 16,422 and 841 respectively. In 1964 the figures were given thus:

Years	Students in Higher Education	Students in Secondary Technical Education
1960	14,995	30,719
1963	20,858	67,260
1964	26,300	80,000

	Teaching Staff	Teaching Staff
1960	1,260	841
1963	2,411	1,631
1964	3,000	5,546

The curricula were largely based on the French system. They have now been Vietnamized but remain basically the same. French is no longer the medium of instruction and instruction in various disciplines must be consistent with acceptable Marxist doctrines, e.g. the theories of Mitchurin in biology must be followed. Marxism-Leninism is a new field of teaching and is compulsory at all levels whilst the schools have become the centres for Party Youth activity.

Enormous strides have no doubt been made in providing educational opportunity to a wide sector of the community whilst the literacy campaign is still progressing. At the same time the inevitable defects of a too rigid application of Marxist control of the system are evident, the most important and damning of which is that everything is taught from the standpoint of ideology and not pedagogy.

DIEM'S REGIME

The Republic that Diem established in 1955 rapidly developed into a repressive and dictatorial regime. Elections for a Constituent Assembly were held in 1956 and 1959 (and a presidential election in 1961) but very few opposition candidates were allowed and they were harassed and intimidated. The counting was fraudulent. One opposition candidate who still won, Dr. Phan Quang Dan, was disqualified and later arrested. The Assembly passed all Diem's requests.

In the meantime all power became increasingly concentrated in the hands of Diem's small family group - in particular his brother and sister-in-law, Ngo Dinh Nhu and Madame Nhu. Diem became increasingly inefficient and corrupt. He ruled with the aid of a totalitarian party with secret membership, the Can-Lao Nhan-Vhi Lach-Man-Dang. Promotion in the army was based not on military merit but on loyalty to the Diem family.

Any open political opposition to the regime was suppressed. All publications were subject to censorship, many papers were banned, foreign correspondents were expelled, all meetings required government permission, and arbitrary arrests and imprisonment without trial became common. Law 10/59 set up a system of military courts from which there was no appeal. Reforms were sometimes promised (as after the unsuccessful coup in 1960) to maintain an international 'image' but were never carried out. In April 1960 a group of eighteen ex-Ministers and professors sent Diem an open letter, "A constitution has been established in form only; a National Assembly exists whose deliberations always fall into line with the government; anti-democratic elections.... continuous arrests fill the gaols and prisons to the rafters.... public opinion and the press are reduced to silence".

Inept attempts to arrest Vietminh agents in the rural areas aroused widespread hostility. One observer wrote "(in 1957) the population was called upon to redouble its vigilance and to denounce all Communist activity. The organisation of the police, which was already elaborate, was yet further strengthened. Guided by informers 'mopping-up operations' became only too frequent. . . . a considerable number of people were arrested in this way and were sent to concentration camps. . . . This repression was in theory aimed at Communists. In fact it affected all those. . . . who were bold enough to express their disagreement with the line of policy adopted by the ruling oligarchy. . . . Often too (in error!) people of no political applications found themselves subjected to repression. . . . In 1958. . . . round-ups of 'dissidents' became more frequent and more brutal. . . . Moreover, the way in which many of the operations were carried out very soon set the villages against the regime. A certain sequence of events became almost classical: denunciation, encirclement of villages, searches and raids, arrests of suspects, plundering, interrogations enlivened sometimes by torture (even of innocent people), deportation, and 're-grouping' of populations suspected of intelligence with the rebels etc." (20)

In the meantime, the programme of land reform made little progress. In South Vietnam 2% of landowners (most of them absentee) own 45% of the land, and had often demanded 50% of the crop as rent. In 1955 and 1956 Diem introduced a series of land reforms confirming the rights of those who had taken over their land when the landlords had fled and abandoned it, to purchase it over six years (but many resented this as they had been happily in possession until the landlords came back in 1954), limiting rents to 25% of the crop and individual holdings to about 25 acres. But even this modest programme bogged down - by 1961 only about half the land eligible had been expropriated and less than half of this distributed to the peasants. Thus 10% of tenants benefited while the rest of the land went to Diem's family and friends. The courts were dominated by the landlords. (in the meantime, the "Vietcong" were distributing land free in the areas they controlled). Diem was especially effective in antagonising the montagnards who received least government services, and were often illegally deprived of their ancestral lands.

Much is claimed for the economic advances under Diem. However, the extent of economic progress is disputed. Rice production (2.8 million metric tons in 1955, 4.2 million in 1961) increased but not enough to keep up a high level of exports, and food had to be imported. Rubber exports had a moderate rise (62,000 metric tons in 1955, 78,000 in 1961). Industrialisation suffered from a paucity of raw materials and absence of a concerted industrialisation policy but progress was probably as rapid in the North, though it was concentrated on light industry. This was achieved with massive U.S. aid much of which was, however, diverted through corruption or misdirected, e.g. building up of reserves of \$220 million. In 1961 4.8 million out of 9 million potential workers were employed, 3.9 million of these in agriculture and 600,000 in the administration and army. The trade deficit remained high. Detailed figures show Professor Milton

Taylor's analysis in 1961 to be somewhat too harsh: "In its economic aspect, American aid represents a large scale relief project more than an economic development programme, and because development has not been emphasised, termination of American aid would almost certainly produce both political and economic collapse in Vietnam.... The tragedy of the past six years is that both American aid and Vietnamese effort have been dedicated to military defence and the maintenance of consumption levels rather than to the objective of economic growth.... Vietnam is becoming a permanent mendicant".(21) But it balances some of the wildly exaggerated accounts of South Vietnam's progress.

Thus the years of Diem saw very modest economic advance perhaps slightly more than in the North, but certainly not "something close to an economic miracle" as the U.S. 'White Paper' of 1961 claims. Nearly all experts reject the Paper's claim that "the economic and social advances scored by the South Vietnamese up to last year (1960) made it clear that Hanoi's programme for peaceful takeover had little or no chance of success".(22)

There may have been a change from the previous peaceful strategy in Hanoi in 1959, but if so, it was prompted by the unexpected longevity of the Southern regime and not by any economic and social advance; rather it was the economic and social discontent of the peasants which facilitated the task of the guerilla.

21 Milton C. Taylor, "South Vietnam: Invisish and Limited Progress" Pacific Affairs 1961.

22 "A Threat to Peace: North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam" Department of State, Washington, Dec. 1961.

AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH OR CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTH?

I. Origins of Conflict and Allegations of Terrorism

One of the major controversies of the Vietnam war concerns the origins of the "Vietcong" movement, as it is referred to by the authorities of the South, and the question of whether the National Liberation Front, as it is termed in the North, is an independent body or is controlled by the Lao Dong Party (Communist) of North Vietnam. It should be noted that there are really at least four different questions involved in this controversy and confusion among them clouds the issue. First, did the insurgency in the South begin as a spontaneous popular manifestation against Diem, or was it begun on the direction of the North to local Communist agents? Secondly, to what extent does the insurgency owe its support among the peasants to popular appeal, and to what extent to terrorism and intimidation? Thirdly, whatever the origins of the movement, is the N. L. F. now a genuine independent body representing all sections of the community, or is it a Northern Communist puppet or Northern Communist-dominated group, using the war for its own ends? Is the war today a civil war in the South or is the political and military control in the hands of Hanoi? Fourth, what is the extent of military aid, in terms of both men and materials, that comes to the N. L. F. from North Vietnam?

The differences over the first question have already been referred to in the previous section. For the U. S. State Department there is no doubt "And so it went - a record of steady improvement in the lives of the peoples (of South Vietnam). It was intolerable for the rulers in Hanoi; under peaceful conditions, the South was out-stripping the North. They were losing the battle of peaceful competition and decided to use violence and terror to gain their ends. After 1956 Hanoi rebuilt, reorganised, and expanded its covert political and military machinery in the South".(23) However, most authorities disagree with so simple an account. Doubts about the economic progress in the South have already been referred to, and the repressive measures of the Diem regime against the peasants are fully documented. There is little dispute from any source, however, that the hard core of the resistance were the Vietminh agents who had buried their arms and stayed in the South after Geneva, but most observers are agreed that it began not on the instructions of Hanoi, but as a response to Diem's measures, and its initial support amongst the peasantry arose from these measures and the return of the landlords. On the U. S. hypothesis of the origins of the war, Devillers

(23) "Aggression from the North. The record of the North Viet-Nam's campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam".
Department of State Publication 7839. (February 1965)

comments "The hypothesis is certainly a plausible one (cfn. leading articles like that of April 3, 1961, in the "Nhan Dan" of Hanoi make it seem very likely) ... but it leaves out of account the fact that the insurrection existed before the Communists decided to take part, and that they were simply forced to join in. And even among the Communists, the initiative did not originate in Hanoi, but from the grass roots ..." (24)

It is to be noted that at this early stage the I.C.C. was not yet investigating complaints that the insurgency was North Vietnam inspired. Indeed the official theory of the governments of both South Vietnam and the U.S. was that resistance was a short term affair being organised by the last remnants of the Vietminh left behind after 1954, and in 1957 the South Vietnam government could claim that "The Vietminh authorities have disintegrated and been reduced powerless"(25), while Admiral Stump, U.S. Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific testified on March 21, 1958, to a Senate committee that the Vietnamese were "still having trouble in some areas".

Violent resistance in the South is acknowledged to have commenced in 1957, but the Vietminh 'line' did not change till about 1959. Wilfred Burchett, an Australian Communist journalist working in the North, gives an interesting account of a conversation with a Communist cadre in that it not only gives a date for a change in the 'line' but also shows the resistance to have been by 1959 a centrally controlled well-disciplined movement: "(Quyet Thank said) 'The line up till the end of 1959 had been exclusively a legal, political, non-violent form of struggle, but faced with the wholesale wiping out of all former resistance cadres, it changed at the end of 1959 to permit the use of arms but in self-defence only'. I asked who set the 'line' and who changed it ... This reply was 'As for the 'line' this was set by our leadership the moment the Geneva Ceasefire Agreements were signed for the whole of Vietnam. Absolute strict respect for the Geneva Agreements was spelt out into detailed instructions to observe discipline; not to go beyond the bounds of legal, political struggle. We are revolutionaries. This was an instruction which our sense of revolution does not permit us to violate ... We are used to having a 'line' set for a considerable period ... That line was non-violence till towards the end of 1959, and 'violence for self-defence' after that'.(26)

The reference to violence raises the issue of the major allegation against the Vietminh in these early years, that it gained its control over the population by terrorism. In the words of the U.S. State Department, "The period 1956 - 58 was one of rebuilding and reorganisation for the Viet Cong ... More and more, the Viet Cong Units turned to the use of force and terror. One purpose clearly was to win prestige and to give strong backing in their

(24) Philippe Devillers op.cit.

(25) "The Fight against Communist Subversive Activities". (Republic of Vietnam, Dept. of Information) Jan. 1957.

(26) W. Burchett, "Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War", p.112. (International Publishers New York 1965).

requests for support and aid from the people, the kind of support that political and propaganda appeals had failed to elicit. Another purpose was to embarrass the government in Saigon and to raise doubts about its ability to rule effectively and to maintain internal order. After 1958 the use of terror by the Viet Cong increased sharply ... local recruitment, through both terror and propaganda, became a priority assignment for all units". (27)

Bernard Fall gives a chronicle of these attacks. In mid-1957 the first deliberate offensive of the insurgents began. Their target was simple and well-chosen: the village official ... losses of South-Vietnamese village officials were extremely heavy ... According to President Kennedy's earlier cited May 1961 message, 4,000 low level officials were killed between May 1960 and May 1961. Other partial figures published earlier show that perhaps 2,500 had been killed in 1959 - 60 and perhaps half that many the year before and more than 700 in 1957. Since the killings continued throughout 1961-63 as well ... perhaps as many as 13,000 small officials (sic) have been killed in South Vietnam". (28)

The Vietminh do not deny these killings of village officials, but deny that the aim was to terrorise the population. Their aim was rather firstly to defend themselves against informers and secondly to free the population from oppression by the reactionary local officials of an oppressive regime. For a first hand account by a Vietminh cadre (Sao Nam) Burchett may again be referred to: "People on the plains had been so terrorised that at first they trusted no one. 'When we started, we lost some cadres', Sao Nam told me ... 'We decided it was necessary to break the grip of the enemy; to wipe out the worst of the Diemist agents ... as new light came into the people's eyes, confidence returned. It was clear whom we represented when we struck down the worst of the tyrants, always posting up explanations as to why. Until the National Front of Liberation was set up at the end of 1960, we operated under the name of Armed Propaganda Groups of the People's Self-Defence Forces' ... every village was first carefully studied ... 'You could be certain that the hand-picked chief agents were always responsible for multiple murders, but we did not mark them down for execution if there was the slightest chance they might mend their ways ... We would send a group at night with loudspeakers to explain the policy of the new resistance movements, to expose the crimes of the Diemist regime and tell the people how to struggle against it. Finally we would give a stern warning to the local agents, our megaphones directed specifically at their homes. Usually we fired a few shots in the air to impress them. At first the agents took little notice, actually stepped up their terror. Our group would pay another visit, usually with two variants of hand-written leaflets. On one was written the biography and the crimes of the local agents and the death sentence by the local organ of the People's Self-Defence Force; the other was similar except it contained a par-

(27) "A Threat to Peace", p.4 op.cit.

(28) pp. 259-60 "The Two Vietnams" op.cit.

don with a warning not to commit any more crimes. If we found the chief agent at home, we executed him, leaving the execution slip with the body and posting up a few copies. For the others, and for the chief agent in case he happened to be away, we posted up the pardon and warnings". (29)

It may be accepted that many of the killings of village officials were in the nature of the elimination of agents of a dictatorial regime, such as many resistance movements have had to undertake. Such killings have usually been justified by history. However, the overwhelming weight of evidence from documentary sources and personal interviews is that a proportion of the killings were merely murders of eminent villagers who were not Diem's agents but whose only crime was a refusal to accept the orders of the Vietminh. The Vietminh find it difficult to explain also the campaign against schoolteachers which was launched in 1959, notably in the provinces of Cong-An, Dinh-Tuong, and Kien-Hoa. Fall cites an A.P. report of a field survey carried out by the World Federation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession in 1962, the findings of which were that almost 80,000 schoolchildren had been deprived of schools because of terrorist action, and 636 schools were closed. Approximately 250 teachers had been kidnapped and another 30 allegedly killed. (30) Other targets are social workers and medical teams, and killings and kidnapping ended the malaria eradication campaign in 1961.

However, fear of terrorism was only a part of the reason for support of the Vietminh. The other two major factors were peasant dissatisfaction with the Saigon regime and the closely associated question of land reform. "The Vietcong stake much of their appeal in the hamlets on giving out land to the people who work it. Previous titles of absentee landlords are swept aside and the land is parcelled out ceremonially to the peasant families". (31)

(29) "Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War", pp.146-7, op.cit.

(30) A.P. report May 28, 1962.

(31) Peter Grose "New York Times" 29 January 1965.

AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH OR CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTH?

2. Formation and Status of National Liberation Front

One of R. I. C. 's greatest difficulties has been to obtain reliable information on the activities of the N. L. F. and on events in areas under its control, and even the circumstances of its birth are far from clear (the Chairman of R. I. C. received a verbal invitation from the Students' Liberation Union to visit the 'liberated' areas as their guest if he were able to overcome the 'difficulties of transportation' into the areas. Unfortunately no visas were obtainable into Hanoi, and any other routes by which these difficulties could be overcome did not seem practicable).

There appears to have been a genuine difference between the Vietminh of the North and South in 1959. The North Vietnamese 'line' had always stressed peaceful unification and, as the I. C. C. reports showed, avoided to a great extent breaches of the Geneva Convention. This was in accord with the 'peaceful coexistence' policy of Khrushchev. In the South, however, the Vietminh were not prepared passively to view their compatriots arrested and even executed by Diem's police, and insisted on resistance. In March 1960 a meeting of the "Nambo (32) Veterans of the Resistance Association" published a manifesto calling on the people to "put an end to the Fascist dictatorship of the Ngo Family" and shortly after a People's Liberation Army (P. L. A.) of Vietnam appeared in Nambo. These important events are not mentioned in a 45-page compendium produced in Hanoi of the principal events that occurred in South Vietnam between 1954 and 1964.(33)

An observer from the North had been present at the meeting and the next steps occurred at the Third Congress of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi in September 1960. At this Congress it appears that although the prudent (pro-Soviet line) leading group remained in control and "adventurism" in the South was not supported, the Party recognised its responsibilities in the South, and also the danger that it would have to act or else lose control of the movement there. Giving an account of the Congress Truong Chinh, a member of the Politburo of the Cao Dong Party, wrote in 'Hoc Tap' for April 1961 "After determining the role and responsibilities of the socialist revolution in North Vietnam, the Congress set forth the role and responsibilities of the National People's Democratic Revolution in South Vietnam which are: to overthrow the rule of the U. S. Imperialists and their lackeys in order to liberate South Vietnam and fulfil the responsibilities of the People's Democratic Revolution throughout the country ... "(34)

(32) Vietminh term for Cochinchina, i.e. southern half of South Vietnam.

(33) Annex to "The South Vietnam People will Win", Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi 1965.

(34) The translation here, as of the next two quotations is from Appendix A of the U.S. 'Blue Book'. The Commission has been able to check most, but not all, the quotations in Appendix A against the North Vietnamese texts and found them accurate. Appendix A, unlike the other appendices, contains translations only of public statements and resolutions and as far as the Commission is aware their accuracy has nowhere been questioned.

Finally, the resolution passed by the Congress makes the importance of the Lao Dong in the creation of the N. L. F. clear, "To insure the complete success of the revolutionary struggle in South Vietnam our people there must strive to establish a united block of workers, peasants and soldiers, and to bring into being a broad national united front directed against the U. S.-Diem clique and based on the worker-peasant alliance. This front must rally all the patriotic classes and sections of the people, the majority and minority nationalities, all patriotic parties and religious groupings, together with all individuals inclined to oppose the U. S.-Diem clique ... The front must carry out its work in a very flexible manner in order to rally all forces that can be rallied, win over all forces that can be won over, neutralise all forces that should be neutralised, and draw the broad masses into the general struggle against the U. S.-Diem Clique for the liberation of the South and the peaceful reunification of the fatherland".

On December 10, 1960, the National Liberation Front (N. L. F. or Mat-tran dan-toc giaiphong) was formed at a meeting somewhere in Nambo. From the evidence it appears that it was created by the Lao Dong to widen their support in the South and at the same time a device by which the Lao Dong could exert some political control over the movement in the South.

However, the programme that N. L. F. proclaimed did not propound a Communist doctrine, and demoted to Point IX "advance toward peaceful reunification", and advocated a neutral foreign policy.(35) The leadership is composed of Southerners, and contains only one Communist, Vo Chi Chong. The President is Nguyen Huu Tho, a Saigon lawyer with a Vietminh background who had advocated reunification elections and was imprisoned in 1961 by Diem but released by guerillas. The other Vice-Presidents are Ybih-Aleo (a mountain tribesman representing ethnic minorities), Phung Van Cung (a Saigon doctor, chairman of the Saigon 'Peace Committee'), Thome The Nhom (Buddhist bonze), and Tran Nam Trung (P. L. A.) representative) and the Secretary General is Huynh Tan Phat (Secretary General of the small South Vietnam Democratic Party) ... Of the 53 seats on the central committee 22 were left vacant by the first N. L. F. Congress to be filled by "collectivities, political parties, or important persons who will join the Front later". As far as can be ascertained none of these has been filled.

The final move was the creation in December 1961 of a new Communist party in the South - the People's Revolutionary Party (Dang Nhan - Dan Cach Mang). The declaration of the P. R. P. stated it to be the 'vanguard' group in the struggle to overthrow "the present regime in South Vietnam and the U. S. imperialists". In many ways this is a parallel between the formation of the P. R. P. and that of the Lao Dang in 1951 which gave the Communists an organisational base within the Vietminh, and strengthened their control over it. At that time the Party went to great lengths to disguise their control of the Vietminh but now it is openly admitted.

(35) For the full Programme see Appendix III.

P. J. Honey recounts how a leading member of the D.R. V. N. delegation to the Geneva Conference on Laos in July 1962 told pressmen that the list of members of the Central Committee in the North was not complete because "they are directing military operations in South Vietnam". That author considers that the evidence is conclusive that the P. R. P. though "ostensibly unconnected with the Workers' Party of the North is in fact one and the same as the Workers' Party". (36)

Despite the non-Communist leadership at the top, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that the N. L. F. is very similar to the Vietminh which the Communists used as a front during an earlier period, and that the Communists who are the only activist group within it with a large political following play in it a dominating role. They are, after all, the only opposition group who are prepared to wage a military struggle for their beliefs, and the numerical preponderance of the Communists in the middle rank of leadership is about two to one. (37) This Communist leadership, about which one would expect the average Party member to be proud, is pretty well admitted in many pamphlets, and with it the importance of the Northern Party. (For example, writing of the struggle in turn against the 'Japanese locusts', 'French imperialists', and 'American aggressive expeditionary force' General Vo Nguyen Giap states, "For over thirty years now under the correct and clear-sighted leadership of our Party headed by President Ho Chi Minh our people have risen up to liberate themselves". (38)

Perhaps this section should be concluded with the opinion of the International Control Commission which in June 1962 (Polish Delegation dissenting) accepted the conclusion of its legal Committee "that the P. A. V. N. (People's Army of North Vietnam) has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging, and supporting hostile activities in the South. The use of the Zone in the North for such activities is in violation of Articles 19, 24 and 27 (of the Geneva Agreement)". (39).

(36) P. J. Honey "North Vietnam Workers' Party and South Vietnam People Revolutionary Party" Pacific Affairs Winter 1962-63.

(37) Georges Chaffard L'Express 26 April 1965.

(38) Vo Nguyen Giap: 'Once again we will win' (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi 1966), p.47.

(39) Special report of the I. C. S. C. to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China, June 2, 1962 (Cmd. 1755 H. M. S. O. (London). Hereinafter referred to as "1962 Special Report. Other violations chronicled by this report by both North and South Vietnam & U. S. are referred to below.

AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH OR CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTH?

3. Extent of Military Aid From The North

The extent of arms and military personnel infiltrated from the North, at least until 1965, has probably been greatly exaggerated. Firstly, as has already been stated, the resistance had its origins in 1957 when there was as yet no question of infiltration from the North, and the insurgency was well under way by 1959, the first date at which even the greatest enthusiasts for the infiltration theory state that men came in any large numbers from the North. Further, it seems that the political decisions which were necessary for large scale infiltration were not taken before 1960.

The strongest indictment is again contained in the 1965 U.S. White Paper. "The hard core of the Communist forces attacking South Vietnam are men trained in North Vietnam. They are ordered into the South and remain under military discipline of the Military High Command in Hanoi. Special training camps operated by the North Vietnamese army give political and military training to the infiltrators. Increasingly the forces sent into the South are native North Vietnamese who have never seen South Vietnam. A Special infiltration unit, the 70th Transportation Group, is responsible for moving men from North Vietnam into the South via infiltration trails through Laos. Another special unit, the maritime infiltration group, sends weapons and supplies and agents by sea into the South Since 1959 nearly 20,000 V.C. (40) officers, soldiers and technicians are known to have entered South Vietnam under orders from Hanoi. Additional information indicates that an estimated 17,000 more infiltrators were despatched to the South by the regime in Hanoi during the last six years Personnel from the North, in short, are now and have always been the backbone of the entire V.C. operation . . . a high proportion of infiltrators are well trained officers, cadres and specialists . . . The authorities in Hanoi have developed an extensive espionage effort. An essential part of that effort is the regular assignment of secret agents from North to South Vietnam. The heart of the V.C. intelligence organisation is the Central Research Agency in Hanoi".(41) The South Vietnam Command in a letter to the I.C.C. dated February 12, 1965, lists a total of 39,000 infiltrators (1959 - 300: 1960 - 11,700: 1962 - 10,700: 1963 - 7,200: 1964 - 7,100 figure incomplete) and states that "The majority of the infiltrated contingents were drawn from the former units of the Vietminh in South Vietnam regrouped in North Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Agreement. These elements have been chosen for their knowledge of the regions and have generally been sent back to South Vietnam to operate again in their former sector . . . since the

(40) Commonly used abbreviation for Viet Cong, meaning Communist Viets, but is regarded by many as pejorative.

(41) pp. 3, 12 "Aggression from the North" op. cit.

year 1964, the presence of elements native of North Vietnam has been reported, notably on certain fronts in Central Vietnam". (42)

These claims are of course impossible for R. I. C. to evaluate. The U.S. White Paper, apart from publishing the names and photographs of a handful of infiltrators, does not indicate the evidence on which the figures are based, and nowhere states just how many infiltrators have actually been captured. Most writers on the subject agree that there has been some infiltration, but regard these figures as inflated. The Vietminh deny that there has been any infiltration at all. General Giap who has already been quoted on the subject of control of the insurgency by the Lao Dong Party writes "The liberation war of our Southern compatriots must be mainly self-supporting although international assistance is important and invaluable because it is a revolutionary struggle waged by a people who, not content to be enslaved, rise up to liberate themselves; because, however advantageous they may be, the objective conditions from without are efficacious only when they are facilitated by the efforts from within; because, though the North is a firmer and firmer base of the revolutionary struggle for the whole country, yet the policy of the government of the D.R. V. N. is constantly to respect the stipulations of the Geneva Agreements ... For this reason the South Vietnam people must do their best to stand on their own feet in order to win victory". (43)

The other aspect of military infiltration is the supply of arms. At first the guerillas could rely on arms left over from the French war, and then as the military campaign continued they captured large quantities of arms from the South Vietnamese army. It is claimed however that, as the numbers of guerillas increased, more and more arms were infiltrated into the country from the North, many of Communist manufacture. The U.S. White Paper lists these captured arms, but the list is far from impressive - it would not equip one battalion. In a reply to the White Paper, I. F. Stone wrote "According to the Pentagon figures, we captured on the average 7,500 weapons each 18 months in the past three years. If only 179 Communist made weapons turned up in 18 months, that is less than 2½% of the total". (44) Vietnamese guerillas have always taken great care not to leave weapons behind them when they withdraw from battle, and most writers are agreed that the vast bulk of the arms used by them are captured from the South Vietnamese army, and weapons from the North at least till 1964 were relatively insignificant.

The International Control Commission considered South Vietnamese complaints about military infiltration from the North, and its Legal Committee, with the Polish Member dissenting, reached the conclusion "that in specific instances there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organising and carrying out

(42) Special report of the I. C. S. C. to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China February 1965, Appendix 2. (Comnd. 2609, H. M. S. O.).

(43) pp. 61-2 "The South Vietnam People Will Win" op.cit.

(44) I. F. Stone's Weekly, March 8, 1965.

hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the Armed Forces and Administration of the Zone in the South".(45) Paragraph 10 of the 1962 report reads: "The Commission accepts the conclusions reached by the Legal Committee that there is sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt that the P. A. V. N. (People's Army of North Vietnam) has violated Articles 10, 19, 24 and 27 in specific instances. The Polish Delegation dissents from these conclusions ..."

To some extent these arguments about arms are now out of date. Since the bombing of the North began, a number of statements from the North have acknowledged the aid given to the South and exhorted the North Vietnamese to work hard for victory in the South. James Cameron, a friend of Ho Chi Minh, was told by the P. A. V. N. Lieutenant Colonel in charge of liaison with the N. L. P. "Our own help from the North grows. This I do not conceal from you. The Americans claim three divisions of our regular army have been identified in the South. I can assure you that this is not so, to send so many troops from the North is not necessary when there is too much manpower already there. We provide training and equipment. Not so much equipment as you might think; the Americans and the public are good providers. I cannot, of course, inform you of the strength of our aid".(46) By the time of writing this report, however, escalation on both sides has advanced rapidly and the evidence is conclusive that considerable quantities of equipment and large numbers of men have come in from the North to aid the anti-government forces.

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT AND THE WAR : IMPERIALIST WAR OR DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY (1)

a) Military and Economic aid in Diem's early years - Roots of U. S. Commitment

Reference has already been made above to U. S. support for the French war against the Vietminh and for the Diem regime in its early years in 1954 to 1956. This support of Diem was both economic and political - he could not have survived against internal dissension and French pressure without it. The commitment was part of a general determination to prevent the spread of Communism in Asia and had as its most dramatic (if not most effective) manifestation the creation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (S. E. A. T. O).

(45) Paragraph 9. 1962 Special Report. op.cit.

(46) James Cameron "Hanoi Exclusive" London Evening Standard, December 8, 1965.

The pledge of economic aid to Diem was made in a letter from President Eisenhower to Diem on October 1, 1954, "... We have been exploring ways and means to permit our aid to Vietnam to be more effective and to make a greater contribution to the welfare and stability of the Government in Vietnam. I am accordingly instructing the American Ambassador to Vietnam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent programme of American aid given directly to your government can serve to assist Vietnam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied. The purpose of this offer is to assist the Government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means. The Government of the United States expects that this aid will be met by performance on the part of the Government of Vietnam in undertaking needed reforms. It hopes that such aid combined with your own continuing efforts will contribute effectively toward an independent Vietnam endowed with a strong government. Such a government would, I hope, be so responsive to the nationalist aspirations of its peoples, so enlightened in purpose and effective in performance, that it will be respected both at home and abroad and discourage any who might wish to impose a foreign ideology on your free people".(47)

In fact of course, the Diem regime rapidly became an oppressive dictatorship, as has been traced in a previous section, and doubts about the effectiveness of U.S. economic aid were also expressed in that section. The Americans may at first have believed that in backing Diem they were supporting Vietnamese nationalism, but having committed themselves to the support of Diem, at first cautiously, the U.S. became more and more firmly tied to him, over 9 years, regardless of the nature of his regime, and the aspirations of the people.

It should be mentioned that one of the most important groups advising the Diem regime in the years of its establishment was that from the Michigan State University. This mission involved 54 professors and 200 Vietnamese assistants. But the M. S. U. group did not confine itself to studying Vietnamese methods or advising and administration. They were also busily engaged in coordination with the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency in training Diem's police and intelligence service. Robert Scheer (48) quotes from the M. S. U. monthly report July 1955: "It has been generally agreed that we concentrate almost exclusively on the police and field administration projects until the elections next July.. It is now felt by the M. S. U. team that in order to be in accord with U. S. policy locally it is necessary to engage almost exclusively in immediate impact programmes until after the elections in July 1955 and that the immediate impact programs in our program are the field administration and

(47) "Why Vietnam". U. S. Government Printing Office 1965.

(48) "How the United States got Involved in Vietnam" (Santa Barbara, California, Fund for the Republic 1965).

the police projects". It is also widely claimed that the M. S. U. group itself acted as a "cover" for C. I. A. agents. This was confirmed by Professor Ralph Smuckler, acting dean of the centre for International Programs at M. S. U., who is quoted as saying "They (the C. I. A.) were engaged entirely in training activities. They represented people with special talents. They were not operating a spy net, though I suppose there's always the possibility we were being duped". (49)

At the same time the U. S. were replacing the French in the military sphere. The State Department held talks with French officials in September 1954 and the French were told not only that all economic aid would be given directly to the Indochinese States and not channelled through French agencies but also that no further budgetary support would be given to the French army in Vietnam, and that major military training responsibilities would be transferred to the U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (M. A. A. G). On April 26, 1956 the last French troops left Vietnam. Their replacement by U. S. advisors had already begun.

The International Control Commission traditionally spent an extremely long time investigating complaints and was invariably cautious in its conclusions. In 1962 it was to condemn U. S. intervention as a violation of the Geneva Convention, but even in their early careful reports a picture of the U. S. military build-up was beginning to take shape. In July 1956 the Commission complained that "The second problem faced by some of the Commission's teams in South Vietnam is with regard to the notifications to be given under article 16(f) and 17(e) before the introduction of military personnel and war material. Under Article 16, military personnel can be introduced into Vietnam only by way of rotation, notification for which is required to be given to the Joint Commission at least two days in advance of the arrivals or departures of such personnel ... according to reports received from some of the teams, especially the Saigon Fixed Team, United States Naval and Military planes continued to enter and leave Vietnam without notification during the period under review (December 11, 1955 - July 31, 1956). In a number of these cases, these planes were seen bringing in and taking out United States and Vietnamese military personnel", and in another section, "The Commission received a request ... for grant of permission for the entry of 350 military personnel of the United States Army Service Corps into South Vietnam. It was stated that these persons would constitute a mission called "TERM" - Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission - whose duties would be to examine war material and military equipment lying in South Vietnam which was the property of the United States Government for the purpose of selecting material to be exported from Vietnam and to protect and preserve this material ... The Commission informed the French Liaison Mission that the matter was under consideration and that pending the decision of the Commission no entry should be effected. In spite of this, 290 United States military personnel belonging to the "TERM" have been introduced into South Vietnam" ... (50)

(49) "Newsweek" April 25, 1966.

(50) paras. 53, 63 of Sixth Interim Report of I. C. S. C. op.cit.

By 1957 the Commission was referring to TRIM (Training Reorganisation and Inspection Mission) and CATO (Combat Arms Training Organisation) which had been added to TERM and MAAG. The Commission also recorded "a few violations under Articles 16 and 17 ... The violations of Article 16 and 17 mentioned above concern introduction into South Vietnam of United States Military Personnel in five United States military aircraft, a few aircraft wheel tires, 1,000 revolvers, and 610 cases of revolver ammunition..."(51)

In 1958 the Commission complained that "As regards MAAG and other organisations referred to above the Government of the Republic of Vietnam did not supply information on all the points requested by the Commission and the Commission expressed grave concern that all assistance and cooperation in this matter had not been offered ... The Canadian Delegation dissented ..." (52), and in January 1960 the Commission reported that "During the period under the report, the Commission considered the import of war material by MAAG (and)... the alleged setting up of the organisation called the United States Air Force Detachment and the alleged creation of the organisations called the Controller Division of the Direct Air Division, all claimed by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to be sections of MAAG. These matters are being pursued ... The Commission continued to receive complaints from the P. A. V. N. High Command, during the period under report, in regard to the alleged increase in the strength of U. S. military personnel in the Republic of Vietnam. The Government of the Republic of Vietnam furnished its explanation for the excess figure of 754 of arrivals over departures of American military personnel in the Republic of Vietnam for the period 7th January 1956 to 28th December, 1957 ... The Commission having considered this reply informed the Party that it had not shown cause why violation of Article 16 of the Geneva Agreement should not be recorded."(53)

b) The War till 1961

During this period the Vietminh were increasing in strength and support among the populace. By the end of 1958 they had increased their political and military offensive to the point where security for government officials in many areas was a serious problem, and they began to set up their own administration in many villages, running schools and collecting taxes. The number of hard core guerillas was about 5,000 in 1959 and they controlled about a third of the countryside and had created important bases in the delta and in the highlands.

The guerilla forces were organised in three layers. The base was composed of Du-Kich (militia) Units who provided information and supplies,

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- (51) paras. 59 Seventh Interim Report of I. C. S. C. (Cmnd. 325 HMSO London 1957).
 - (52) para 32 Eighth Interim Report of I. C. S. C. (Cmnd. 509 HMSO London 1958).
 - (53) paras. 48,50 Tenth Interim Report of I. C. S. C. (Cmnd. 1040 HMSO London 1960).

carried out local sabotage and ambushes and were raised in each village and returned to their ordinary work after each task. The next level were the Dia-Puhong-Quan (regional troops) better trained, used for larger actions but still capable of 'melting' back into their original village. The elite are the Chu-Luc (main force) regulars, well trained, politically conscious and extremely keen. The Vietminh were using the traditional guerilla methods of rapid attacks where they held local superiority, and rapid retreat into areas where they could rely on the support of the population or where they could simply return to their everyday tasks.

However, the South Vietnamese regime and its U.S. military advisers clearly did not understand the nature of the threat. All effort was being devoted to building up the army to repel open aggression across the 17th Parallel and the mobile units useful in anti-guerilla activity were broken up. It has already been pointed out that in the 1950's the guerillas were regarded as last remnants. Thus on April 17, 1959 U.S. Major General Samuel L. Myers, deputy to the MAAG Commander testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "The Viet-Minh guerillas . . . were gradually nibbled away until they ceased to be a major menace to the Government. In fact estimates at the time of my departure indicated that there was a very limited number of hostile individuals under arms in the country. Two territorial regiments reinforced occasionally by one or two regular army regiments were able to cope with their depredations . . ." (54) However, while the U.S. trained an army for a conventional land war the Vietminh were slowly taking over the country.

The only response that the South Vietnamese Government had to the success of the rebels and the failure of its own Civil Guard and Self-Defence Corps, was a resurrection of a French plan to separate the insurgents from the population by regrouping the latter in fortified reserves, the agrovilles.

This would in theory afford protection to the villagers and deprive the guerillas of the local support they depended upon. In theory also the agrovilles would prove attractive to the peasants because of the facilities they provided - electricity, schools, hospitals, etc. About 800 were planned for the next four years, each to contain about 400 families. This was not how it worked out in practice. Scigliano tells the story. "Most peasants, however, saw the agrovillage program quite differently, whether they were included in the new settlement or not. They had to prepare the sites, without pay and often providing their own tools, which meant building access roads, digging wide surrounding canals and interior interlacing canals, and distributing the vast amount of earth thus removed so as to provide raised foundations for houses and other buildings . . . Since the number of people who could be moved into the total number of agrovilles did not exceed 500,000 it was obvious that most of those forced to work on the sites would not profit from their labor.

(54) Quoted by Bernard Fall from "Situation in Vietnam" (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations July 30-31, 1959).

The government, moreover, was wrong in assuming that those selected to live in the agrovilles would willingly do so. The peasant was asked or, in most cases, compelled to abandon his old homestead with its ancestral tomb, small garden, and fruit and shade trees, for a desolate plot of ground in a strange place. He had to build his new house from materials taken from his old one, and his only help from the government was the gift of about \$5.50 and the offer of an agricultural loan. The loan was necessary, because the peasant had to pay for the acre and a half of land he had been allotted. Whatever he thought of having neighbours and administrative services close at hand, he did not like the long distance which he generally had to walk to his rice fields. Many people resisted entering the agrovilles or went into them with great reluctance.

Communist attacks on some of the construction sites and intensive Communist propaganda against the program seriously added to the government's problems. The Communists' motives were clear, for the agrovilles, besides preventing access to the peasantry, were established in strategic areas, usually along a main road or a water axis, which obstructed their free movement. So important was the strategic consideration that the President himself approved all proposed locations. Another difficulty was the ambitious scope of the program. It required detailed planning, the commitment of a considerable number of government personnel, and fairly substantial expenditures for public buildings, all of which the Vietnamese Government had to sustain from its own revenues. For these various reasons, the program virtually came to a halt in early 1961, with about 22 agrivilles actually completed". (55)

c) 1961 - The Americans' Point of No Return

When the Vietnamese war had already involved hundreds of thousands of U. S. troops, the U. S. columnist James Reston was asked by "Encounter" magazine, "Looking back with hindsight on the history of this commitment, was there any point at which a President should have seen the writing on the wall and got out or should, alternatively, have refrained from taking one of the many steps of escalation?". His reply was as follows: "Well, I had an interesting experience just by accident with President Kennedy about that. He agreed to see me just a few minutes after the last meeting with Krushchev at Vienna in the spring of 1961. He really had a hard time with Krushchev - Krushchev tried to bully him through the four meetings, and Kennedy said to me at that time that he thought he understood why Krushchev had taken this position. He said looking back on the Bay of Pigs fiasco that Krushchev had decided that anybody who was stupid enough to get involved in that situation was immature, and anybody who didn't see it all the way through was timid and therefore could be bullied. Kennedy said to me then: "We will never do anything with these people now, unless we make our pow-

(55) R. Scigliano; South Vietnam: Nation under Stress (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston 1963).

er real to them. It must be credible. Otherwise we'll get nowhere on anything ..." And it was at that time in order to make this power credible that he came home and increased the military budget by six billion dollars; he sent the Red Arrow Division to Germany; and most important, he escalated in Viet Nam, not because the situation on the ground demanded it in Viet Nam, but he wanted the 12,000 men in Viet Nam to prove a diplomatic point, not a military point. And that, I think, is where we began to get off the track". (56)

In fact, however in 1961 the situation on the ground also was getting desperate for the Diem regime. Scigliano in this passage summarises the position (he regards the rebels as Communists). "At the end of 1961 the Vietnamese government was clearly on the defensive. The Hanoi claim that the guerillas had "liberated" 1,100 of 1,290 villages in the southern region and 4,000 of 4,400 hamlets in the highlands does not seem to be too much inflated. From other sources, it appears that about 80% of the Vietnamese countryside had come under Communist influence. In areas where influence was strong, the population in effect lived under Communist rule; government officials, where they continued to exist, confined their movements mainly to districts and village centers, and Civil Guard and Self-Defence forces made little effort to patrol away from their posts. Where control was partial officials either lived in fear of their lives or followed government orders by day and Communist orders by night. Unless confronted by sizeable army incursions, Communist military units were free to move as they wished within the areas under strong control. Even large government forces ran the risk of annihilation. Also military units could be grouped, troops trained, weapons manufactured, administrative and military headquarters located, and food grown." (57)

At the same time the Americans were having increasing trouble with Diem. He was gradually becoming withdrawn, suspicious and isolated not only from his people but also from his military and civilian advisors except for his brother Nhu whose power was on the increase. The Americans found that Diem was becoming more and more an inefficient dictator but less and less a puppet. David Halberstam, New York Times correspondent, sums up the situation thus: "The problem, however, was very simple: The Ngo family wanted American aid, American equipment and some American troops but it did not want American advice". (58)

In view of the nature of Diem's regime the joint declaration by Diem and the then U.S. Vice-President Lyndon Barnes Johnson who visited Vietnam in May 1961, is quite extraordinary. Inter alia it states that the United States "is conscious of the determination, energy, and sacrifices which the Vietnamese people under the dedicated leadership of President Ngo Diem have brought to the defence of freedom in their land ... The United States recognises that the President of the Republic of Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, who was recently re-elected to office by an overwhelming majority of his country-

(56) "Encounter" May 1966

(57) pp. 142-3. R.Scigliano, o.cit.

(58) D. Halberstam "The Making of a Quagmire" (Bodley Head, London 1965)

men despite bitter Communist opposition, is in the vanguard of those leaders who stand for freedom on the periphery of the Communist empire in Asia". (59)

The 1961 visit of Vice-President Johnson was the first of a series in that fateful year. He was followed by Professor Eugene Staley of Stanford University who was to write an all-embracing economic study. But the most important mission was that of General Maxwell D. Taylor in October, and it is apparently on the basis of this report that after bitter discussion in Washington the crucial decisions were taken. The first was to continue to back Diem - apparently President Kennedy decided that in the middle of a war it was dangerous to try to find a new government. The second decision was on the military front: Taylor's view that the war could be won under the existing government provided that a huge retraining programme orientated the Vietnamese military away from conventional warfare, was accepted, and while the memory of Korea prevented the commitment of combat troops the military stakes were to be greatly increased. Increased numbers of advisers, helicopters, fighter bombers, fighter trainers and pilots were to be sent.

On December 14, 1961 President Kennedy wrote to Diem, "I have received your recent letter in which you describe so cogently the dangerous condition caused by North Vietnam's efforts to take over your country ... The United States, although not a party to the (Geneva) Accords declared that it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security ... In accordance with that declaration, and in response to your request, we are prepared to help the Republic of Vietnam to protect its people and to preserve its independence. We shall promptly increase our assistance to your defense effort as well as help relieve the destruction of the floods which you describe. I have already given the orders to get these programs under way". (60)

The International Control Commission had another view of this aid and was to report six months later, "Taking all the facts into consideration, and basing itself on its own observation and authorised statements made in the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam, The Commission concludes that the Republic of Viet-Nam has violated Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Agreement in receiving the increased military aid from the United States of America in the absence of any established credit in its favour. The Commission is also of the view that, although there may not be any formal alliance between the governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Viet-Nam, the establishment of a U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Viet-Nam, as well as the introduction of a large number of U.S. military personnel beyond the stated strength of the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), amounts to a factual military alliance, which is prohibited under Article 19 of the Geneva Agreement". (61)

(59) Department of State Bulletin, (June 19, 1961) p.956.

(60) "Why Vietnam" p.3 op.cit.

(61) I. C. S. C. 1962 Special Report op.cit.

At the same time as these military decisions, it was decided to try to urge reforms on the Diem government to make it more popular with the people. Diem on this issue, however, strongly resented what the government-controlled Press called "interference in the internal affairs of Vietnam" and while accepting U.S. aid launched an anti-American crusade - "REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM NO GUINEAPIG FOR CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM - IS IT NOT TIME TO REVISE VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN COLLABORATION" ran one eight-column headline. The Americans under mild-mannered Ambassador Nolting soon withdrew the pressure for reform and decided to back military measures alone. Halberstam describes U.S. policy at the time: "So, the Americans began to give in to the Ngo family on virtually everything. Having failed to get reforms, our officials said that these reforms were taking place; having failed to improve the demoralised state of the Vietnamese Army, the Americans talked about a new enthusiasm in the Army; having failed to change the tactics of the military, they talked about bold new tactics which were allegedly driving the Communists back. For the essence of our policy was: There is no place else to go". (62)

In January of 1962 the first of the military aid recommended by the Taylor mission - the helicopters and the men to fly them - had begun to arrive. Two billion dollars of American aid had already been spent over the past seven years - now the stakes were raised higher no one knows even today where this new commitment will end.

(62) D. Halberstam. p.69 op.cit.

COUPS, COUNTER COUPS AND DISORDERS

a) Chronology

May 1963	The Buddhist Crisis erupts in South Vietnam.
November 2, 1963	Diem overthrown. Military regime under Duong Van Minh established.
January 30, 1964	Coup d'Etat by General Nguyen Khanh.
August 1964	Tonking Gulf incident and U. S. retaliation.
August 22, 1964	General Khanh ousted; Dr. Nguyen Xuan Oanh becomes acting premier.
September 4, 1964	General Khanh returns as premier as part of triumvirate.
September 13, 1964	Coup d'Etat led by General Lam Van Phat fails.
October 1964	Saigon's mayor, Tran Van Huong replaces Khanh.
January 1965	Premier Huong deposed, replaced again.
February 16, 1965	Dr. Phan Huy Quat replaces Dr. Oanh (General Khanh still in power).
February 21, 1965	General Khanh forced to leave Vietnam by military leaders.
May 1965	First U.S. combat troops deployed.
June 1965	Phan Huy Quat replaced by General Nguyen Cao Ky.
March 1966	Buddhist crisis erupts.

b) Buddhist Crisis 1963

Buddhism, as has been explained, is the majority religion in South Vietnam and something over 70% of the population are at least nominally members of the Buddhist faith. Buddhism is a non-violent religion and though there had been persecution of Catholics in previous centuries, this was due more to their identification with a foreign power than to their religion.

Diem, himself a Catholic, saw in the Catholics and especially in the Catholic refugees from North Vietnam, a force which could be trusted, and rapidly promoted many of them to village chiefs, regional commanders, province chief and so on. Additionally the regime practised favouritism to Catholics in land tenure and in the allocation of economic aid and positions of privilege. Legislation on some matters such as divorce reflected Catholic thinking alien to the bulk of the population, and from some regions came complaints of enforced conversions to Catholicism. The Buddhists found themselves second class citizens in their own country. Eminent Catholic institutions abroad disapproved of Diem's policies, but he took no heed of their warnings.

In the fact of this discrimination against it, the Buddhist Church gained in popularity. The Buddhist had not played much role in politics and it took them a long time to get organised. In 1951-2 a General Buddhist Association of six of the sixteen sects had been formed with its headquarters in the Xa Loi pagoda, but when the 1963 crisis began there was still no central unified structure.

The crisis began in Hue where there was already considerable resentment against Diem's brothers, Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc and Ngo Dinh Can who virtually ruled Central Vietnam. The early events of the crisis are outlined in a Memorandum presented by 14 Afro-Asian nations to the Secretary General of the U. N.

"In May 1963, Vietnamese citizens in Hue sought to exercise the right recognised in the article referred to above (Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by seeking to observe the appropriate ceremonies connected with the 2507th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the faith professed by over 70% of the Viet-Nameese subjects. This right was denied to the subjects of the Government of President Ngo Dinh Diem. In fact, the denial of the right was accomplished in a ruthless manner. Nine persons were killed when troops fired on the orders of the Government on the participants. This incident resulted in a request for redress of grievance and the acceptance of responsibility for the killings by the Government.(63) Neither was done, resulting in an increased demand for remedial action. The intensity of feeling against the injustices done by the Government was such that five monks and a nun immolated themselves - a course of action unusual to the followers of the faith.

(63) The Government falsely attributed the deaths to the Vietcong.

The appeal for justice from their subjects was met by threats and ridicule and was followed by an attack a little after midnight on Tuesday, 20th August 1963, on the venerated Xa Loi Pagoda, the chief shrine in Saigon of the majority faith. Hordes of armed police equipped with machine guns and carbines entered the precincts of the pagoda and carried away hundreds of monks and nuns to prisons, after inflicting injury on them. This action was repeated in the early hours of the same day in a number of other pagodas throughout the country. At least 1,000 monks are estimated to be incarcerated at present. The death toll is not known.

Students of Saigon University demonstrating against these arbitrary actions of the Government were arrested by the hundreds on Sunday, 25 August 1963. The Government is moving daily, more and more in the direction of the suppression of fundamental human rights such as the denial of the right of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of communication, etc."(64)

Diem continued to believe that repression was the correct answer to the Buddhist demands and fell increasingly under the influence of Ngo Dinh Nhu and Madame Nhu. Secretary of State Thuan said after Diem's death, "he (Nhu) began taking more and more of his wife's advice, and in time he began vying with her to see who could be more extremist. The two of them and Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc worked close together and at length Diem listened only to them. Those of us who knew the situation from the inside were always aware of the utter futility of the Americans' efforts to separate Diem from Nhu. Diem would never have removed Nhu. His own personal weakness on top of his natural mandarin bent led him to go along with the Nhus and with Thuc in their crazy destructive schemes. Whenever some of us tried to show him the gravity of the Buddhist situation, and momentarily felt that perhaps we had begun to bring him around, Nhu would brainwash him all over again".(65)

c) Fall of Diem

The events of May to August 1964 marked a takeover of the Buddhist movement by younger priests and an increasing militancy. But they marked far more than that, for the world wide wave of horror at the self-burnings and the attacks on the pagodas turned a local difficulty for the regime into an international crisis. All those opposed to the regime began to ally themselves with the Buddhist cause, as the Buddhists were the only organised opposition group.

There was at this time also a major revision of the attitude of the U. S. which had been supporting Diem but at the same time urging him to make concessions to the Buddhists and give them full freedom of worship. In the words of Bernard Fall "These gratuitous acts of savagery (attacks on the pagodas) reduced to a shambles whatever rationale remained for American policies in Vietnam. The "Nolting Mission" of conciliating the Saigon rulers at any price

(64) Document A/5489/ADD.1. Eighteenth Session of U. N. General Assembly September 13, 1963.

(65) Quote on pp. 190-1 "The Lost Revolution: Vietnam 1945-65". Robert Schaplan (Andre Deutsch 1966).

for the sake of winning the Guerilla war had utterly failed. It remained for the incoming Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge (66) to construct from the shambles a new rationale of the kind that would make the average South Vietnamese willing to endure the horrors of yet another decade of revolutionary war". (67)

After the pagoda raids the U. S. suspended a twelve-million dollar monthly aid programme and President Kennedy publicly criticised Diem and called for a change of policies and perhaps personnel. The local C. I. A. chief, favourable to Diem was recalled and Lodge allowed his lack of sympathy for Diem to become known.

In these circumstances, and possibly spurred on by rumours that Nhu was initiating negotiations with the North, the army decided that it was time to step in. After an intricate series of negotiations and double crosses among the army commanders, a coup was executed on November 1-2, and so were the Ngo brothers. There can be no doubt that the coup was planned and controlled by the army but that at the same time it was carried out with the full knowledge and consent of the U. S. Embassy and Washington.

d) Rule by Military Revolutionary Council and its overthrow

It is important to note that while the coup that ended the Diem regime could not have succeeded without wide popular opposition to Diem's government, it was a military Revolutionary Council (M.R.C.) - a junta of twelve officers headed by General Duong Van Minh. The generals had been brought together by a desire to overthrow Diem, but now that this task was accomplished, it was clear not only that they were disunited and distrustful of one another but also that they lacked any sense of dynamic purpose with which to tackle Vietnam's problems.

The junta never seemed to realise that political and social programmes were more important than the military aspects of the struggle, and indeed in the month immediately following the coup government troops suffered their heaviest defeats of the year especially in the delta area south of Saigon. The post-coup administrative changes succeeded in disrupting the administration without democratising it. A period of drift set in and the economic condition of the country grew worse.

Civilian political activity continued in an atmosphere of unreality - by December there were 62 political parties! A civilian Council of Notables was convened to advise the junta but it consisted largely of professional and academic leaders and included no representatives of the peasantry or labour movement, and quickly bogged down in fruitless debate.

(66) Lodge arrived in Vietnam on August 22, the day after the pagoda raids.
(67) Bernard Fall op. cit.

The demonstrations against General de Gaulle's neutralist proposals in January 1964, and rumours of a "neutralist plot", added to the confusion, and Generals Nguyen Khanh and Tran Thiem Dhiem now saw their opportunity and pretext for a new coup. On January 1964, again with the knowledge of the Americans they carried out a bloodless coup and seized power. The November coup had at least been greeted by popular enthusiasm at the downfall of Diem; now there was general apathy - another general had taken over.

e) The Khanh Regime

Soon after the takeover, Khanh installed himself not only as Chairman of an enlarged M. R. C. but also as Premier. His political sympathies were clearly with the right wing nationalist Dai Viet party with which, initially, he allied himself. General Minh remained nominal Chief of State.

General Khanh began his rule by announcing a bold series of reforms and a new programme for the "pacification" of the countryside, mobilisation of all able bodied citizens to perform paramilitary or social tasks which would help to win the war, and a reorganisation of the strategic hamlets. The ones in unsafe areas were to be disbanded, greater stress was to be placed on social improvements, and as a region became secure the area of hamlets was to be slowly extended - the "oil slick" theory.

Khanh's programme impressed the Americans, who stepped up their aid, more than it did the Vietnamese. The latter were proved correct. For while he was to prove a better politician than Minh, he was just as deficient as an administrator and even less prepared to cooperate with civilian groups. The Council of Notables was abolished and discussions with political leaders came to nothing as the N. L. F. gradually extended its area of control. By mid-July a new plot was being prepared, but as one American journalist reported "The only thing that made the plotters hesitate, apparently, was a fear that even if they captured the government they would be unable to win the support of the Americans. It had become an accepted 'coup rule' in Saigon by now that no coup could succeed if the Americans didn't support or at least countenance it".⁽⁶⁸⁾ Thus an important factor in Khanh's survival was to be that "almost from the moment General Khanh had seized power, the American position was that he was 'our boy', and it was made clear in repeated statements both in Saigon and Washington that we were ready to back him fully in his efforts to sustain a government and conduct the war against the Vietcong."⁽⁶⁹⁾

On August 16, Khanh taking advantage of the crisis created by the Tonkin Gulf incident (see below) persuaded the M. R. C. to promulgate a new constitutional charter which removed Minh and established Khanh as President with quasi-dictatorial power.

(68) Robert Shaplen, p.269.

(69) p.283 *ibid*.

There then followed a period of total chaos and confusion both in the governmental structure and in the streets of Saigon. Massive demonstrations organised by the students and Buddhists against Khanh's new power culminated in his resignation as President on August 22, only to be followed a few days later by his restoration to the position of Premier apparently as part of a triumvirate with Minh and Khiem. In the meantime, there were increasingly bloody clashes in the streets between crowds and police, and between Buddhists and Catholics; the "students" reported to be in the vanguard of these latter clashes were mainly schoolchildren unconnected with the official student movement. In the meantime, in Hue, the Central Vietnam leaders had set up a People's Revolutionary Committee with rather vague aims and apparently under the control of Thich Tri Quang and Sub-General Nguyen Chanh Thi. By the second week in September Khanh had however re-established some authority - but he was in power only on sufferance.

On September 13 Generals Duc and Phat staged yet another coup. But its success was shortlived (in part at least because they failed to get U. S. support) as a new group of the younger general officers, termed the 'Young Turks' and headed by General Thi and Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky remained loyal to Khanh and restored the triumvirate. Later that month a High National Council of elderly politicians was established who in turn chose Tran Van Huong, schoolteacher and former Mayor of Saigon, as Premier. But the real power remained with Khanh who was made Commander-in-Chief while his rivals in the triumvirate were sent abroad.

The Huong government could not however gain the support of the Buddhists and a further period of street demonstrations followed. An extremely complicated series of moves in which the High National Council was dissolved and an Armed Forces Council under the control of the "Young Turks" set up. In this period U. S. Ambassador, Maxwell Taylor, who had begun to despair of any stable government being set up, was criticised on all sides for his 'interference' (in the standard expression of anti-U. S. feeling a Buddhist-led crowd set fire to the U. S. library in Hue. Finally, Huong was ousted and Dr. Phan Huy Quat made Premier. On the 19th February, Colonel Phan Gnoc Thao staged yet another coup, but though loyalist forces under Air Marshall Ky regained Saigon, the Armed Forces Council decided that it was time for Khanh to go, and he was relieved of his military posts and sent out of the country as Ambassador-at-large. Despite the fact that the Saigon leaders are often accused of being a U. S. puppet regime the evidence is that for these six months at least the U. S. Embassy not only could not control what was happening in the power struggle, but often did not even know. This had not, however, prevented an increasing commitment of military aid to the Saigon government - perhaps in the vain hope that military success would bring political stability, rather than the other way round.

f) The Ky Regime

Dr. Quat's government was also to prove shortlived. It began with the usual announcements of proposed reforms and preparations for local elections, but he was never able to reconcile to his regime the more militant Buddhists (who formed a National Front for a True Revolution), nor the rival group of military conspirators around Colonel Thao who were still receiving considerable support from the Catholic hierarchy concerned over Quat's concessions to the "Buddhist neutralists". Against a background of Catholic-Buddhist conflict pressure on the regime mounted and on June 11, the generals stepped in again and forced Quat to resign.

In his place there was established a National Leadership Committee of ten generals chaired by General Nguyen Van Thieu and a smaller Executive Council for day to day administration headed by Air Marshal Ky, who against U. S. pressure was appointed Premier. The generals' "Directory", as it is called, met in secret but it was widely believed that its most powerful figure was General Thi, then commander of the First Corps and virtual ruler of South Vietnam's five northernmost provinces.

The Ky regime started inauspiciously by closing down many of Saigon's newspapers and promising reforms which never came. However, although both Buddhists and students became increasingly dissatisfied with this military regime it somehow showed great survival power and in February 1966 Premier Ky was thought to be sufficiently well established in power to be invited to meet President Johnson in Honolulu, where they issued a joint communique. A new crisis was however only just round the corner and it was triggered off by Ky himself when with the tacit consent of U. S. Ambassador Lodge, he forced through the junta a motion relieving General Thi, who was consistently refusing to obey instructions from Saigon, of his command.

Thi had however established for himself a power base in the north with considerable Buddhist support and anti-government demonstrations broke out in Da Nang and Hue. Thich Tri Quang the militant northern Buddhist leader had seen in this dismissal a good pretext on which to commence his campaign to restore the Buddhists to their power position and to force the government to agree to elections. The demonstrators also called for the resignation of Chief of State General Thieu as he was a Roman Catholic and thought to favour that religion. Even though Thich Tam Chau, the Buddhist leader in the South, called for moderation the demonstrations spread to Saigon. In both Hue and Da Nang thousands of dissident troops joined the demonstrations.

The rioting continued for five weeks during which attempts to repress it were unsuccessful and during which also, complicated negotiations between the regime and the Buddhists broke down continually amidst bitter recriminations. Finally towards the end of April 1966 the junta convened a congress representing the country's major religious and political groups (though in the end neither Buddhists nor Catholics attended). The congress recommended that the Buddhist major demands be met - the holding of elections and the transfer of power to a civilian government within three to five months, and the regime promptly adopted their recommendations.

Even then however the situation remained tense as Ky declared that he would overthrow any government that emerged from the elections "if it does not meet the requirements of the situation". For the following weeks however both Buddhists and Catholics concentrated on organising their political strength for the forthcoming elections.

Once again it was Ky who reactivated the crisis. Buddhist leaders and dissident troops were still in effective control over most of the five northern provinces. At dawn on May 15, 2,500 loyal government troops landed in Da Nang to restore the government's authority. A week's bitter fighting ensued but at the end of it government troops were in control. Thich Thi Quang demanded Ky's resignation and called on President Johnson to restrain Ky. Now the centre of resistance moved to Hue where leadership of the anti-government forces was controlled by a triumvirate, Tri Quang, Hue University rector BUI Tuong Huan, and General Minh. At the same time the demonstrations acquired for the first time an anti-American flavour and the Hue U. S. I. S. library was sacked and burned. To this series of demonstrations Ky reacted very strongly, attacked the pagodas and the Buddhist centre (Vien Hoa Dao) in Saigon and even placed Tri Quang under house arrest.

The Ky regime has continued for two months of relative quietness in the streets, but it remains an unrepresentative military clique, and has promised elections for September. So it is on these that hopes for the emergence of some form of democratic rule must be based.

g) U. S. presence and Buddhist position

Two important continuing political factors in the narrative above merit further examination. One is the effect of the U. S. presence and the local reaction to it on South Vietnamese politics; the other is the political influence of the organised Buddhist church.

The United States is claimed to have adversely affected the internal political situation in two ways. First it is widely felt that South Vietnam is now a client state and the really important decisions are made in Washington, not Saigon. Secondly, the presence of large numbers of foreign troops has inevitably undermined the Vietnamese way of life.

The cost of the war to the U. S. is estimated now to be running at the rate of \$20 billion a year and economic aid at \$1.5 million a day. Eighty per cent of the Vietnamese budget comes from the U. S. The bombing of the North is in U. S. hands. It seems fair to say that the Vietnamese army depends almost entirely on the Americans for its equipment, munitions, fuel and pay. During operations it can seldom do without the protection of American transport planes and helicopters. A South Vietnamese general cannot undertake an operation on his own initiative, if the Americans refuse him their support". (70)

(70) "Le Monde", May 25, 1966.

This has resulted in attitudes to the government such as reported by the U.S. National Student Association, "The students felt that Ky and the Directory were largely tools of the U.S. Government. They said that Ky has no real support beyond the military and could not be said to represent the people of Vietnam," (71) and "Students generally felt that many decisions regarding the future of their country are being made by American officials in Saigon and Washington without any consultation of the people or government of Vietnam ... many students felt that consultations with the Ky government has been merely an American creation from the outset. The students do not want the major decisions affecting their country made by the Americans alone. The students are intensely nationalistic. They do not want to be ruled by North Vietnam or China." (72).

Secondly, at the very least, in the words of Senator Mansfield, "There are also the beginnings of the rumblings of personal discontent and antagonism which generally characterise the reaction in any nation to the sudden infusion of a large body of foreign troops". (73) The National Student Association report is more severe: "Vietnamese students expressed deep and very emotional concern for the accompanying moral decay of the population. Cheap bars and night clubs, catering primarily to American servicemen, have mushroomed in numbers since the rapid escalation of the war effort began. Students express great fears for the future of their society as they witness more and more young women turning to prostitution and a continuing increase in economic corruption. The students placed the blame on the American military command for not better controlling the actions of the servicemen". (74) At the same time there is severe economic dislocation; retail prices in Saigon have risen 75% in the last eighteen months. "Housing is terribly expensive, or impossible to find, transportation costs have risen sharply, food and entertainment are now out of reach due to the heavy spending of American G.I.s and officials". (75)

In view of all this it may be thought a little surprising that it is only very recently that demonstrators have started carrying anti-U.S. slogans, and that Buddhist leaders and others who are not afraid to speak their mind and call for the overthrow of the government do not demand a U.S. withdrawal. The R.I.C. personnel found that the reason for this was that while nearly all criticised the U.S. presence, most thought that the U.S. would eventually leave and that its temporary presence was for the time being a necessity as they were not prepared to accept what appeared to them to be the alternative: Communist domination. Thus while criticising sharply U.S. actions Buddhist militant leader Thich Tri Quang replied to the question, "Are you afraid of the U.S. withdrawing its troops from Vietnam?". "Of course I'm afraid. I never said that the U.S. should leave". (76)

(71) United States National Students Association (USNSA) delegation to Vietnam: A report to the constituency. March 21 - April 5, 1965, p.7.

(72) p.4. *ibid.*

(73) Mansfield report *op.cit.* p.7.

(74) USNSA report p.6. *op.cit.*

(75) p.5. *ibid.*

(76) "Newsweek" April 25, 1966. Confirmed in other interviews.

As is described above the Buddhists came into political prominence in their role in the overthrow of Diem. The political involvement of the Buddhists has continued perhaps in large part because in a country without effective political parties or democratic institutions a group such as the Buddhists becomes a natural focus for opposition. The non-violent methods of political struggle (non-cooperation, passive resistance, fasts, strikes,) too, struck a particular chord in a country in which normal channels for political change did not exist. In January 1964 a Unified Vietnamese Buddhist church was formed, eventually gaining the support of fourteen of the sixteen sects. It has a secular arm under the Buddhist Institute in Saigon (Vien Hoa Dao) which coordinates Buddhist social and educational work and, unofficially, political activity in Saigon. The Chairman of the Institute Thich Tam Chau is thus after Thich Tri Quang the most influential of the Buddhist leaders. Tri Quang is the Secretary General of the other arm of the Unified Church, the Council for Spiritual Affairs (Vien Tang Thong). Nevertheless there is still considerable factionalism within the leadership of the Church and no clearly defined command structure. Thus during a period of the anti-Ky demonstrations Tam Chau was calling for moderation while Tri Quang was leading the demonstrators.

The major Buddhist aims at present are elections and a civilian government. They clearly consider that they have a good chance of dominating any elected Assembly. Since Buddhist-inspired demonstrations have undermined successive Saigon governments, however, they are sometimes also accused or suspected of either being in league with the N.L.F. or of favouring a deal with North Vietnam. However, all the evidence points to a hostile attitude towards the N.L.F. It is true that the statements of Buddhist leaders are often considerable in emphasis from time to time, e.g. Tri Quang said in March 1965, "I strongly urge the United States and Hanoi to start peace talks through diplomatic channels. My conviction is that this is the right time to beat the Communists by means of a negotiated settlement, not by retaliatory attacks on the North"⁽⁷⁷⁾ but by April 1966 the enthusiasm for talks had weakened and he is quoted as saying, "But if negotiations can really achieve peace in Vietnam that peace should be the result of a victory over the Communists and a victory for the Vietnamese people. It would be illogical to have peace resulting from negotiations that are to the advantage of the Communists".⁽⁷⁸⁾ However on the subject of cooperation with the N.L.F. Tri Quang's attitude did not change between the two interviews. "We, the Vietnamese, are fully aware that we can never live at peace with the Vietcong - or with any kind of Communism" (March 1965). "Question: 'If the N.L.F. would agree to discontinue its armed activity would you agree to their participation in the government'? Answer: 'No Communist Party can be a real political party. No Communist Party can live in harmony with other political parties ...'" (April 1966).

This attitude is indeed to be expected when it is recalled that many of the Buddhist leaders, including Tam Chau (an outspoken opponent of Communism) and Tri Quang, are refugees from North Vietnam and know the conditions under which Buddhism must try to operate there (Buddhist self-burnings

(77) Far Eastern Economic Review, March 12, 1965.

(78) "Newsweek" April 23, 1966.

against religious persecution are not confined to the South). "It is worth recording that from the beginning of their campaign against Diem, the Buddhists made clear their determination to be independent; and when General Vo Nguyen Giap of North Vietnam stepped into the dispute with a letter to the International Control Commission protesting against the persecution of the Buddhists, the General Buddhist Association quickly declared that it objected to the letter and argued that the I. C. C. had no power to intervene in internal affairs." (79)

The Buddhists, then, appear to be fighting for an independent non-Communist South Vietnam under civilian rule. They refuse to cooperate with the N. L. F. and while they do not condemn the U. S. presence, as such, regarding it as an unfortunate temporary military necessity, they strongly condemn those U. S. actions which they feel are alienating the Vietnamese people such as the bombing of villages and the support of military cliques.

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT : IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION OR DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY (II)

a) Continuing War in the South

The slow build up of the war in the south till the new American commitment in 1961 has been traced. Casualties admitted by the government scored from 138 killed and 200 wounded in 1959 to more than 2,000 killed in 1960 and more than 4,000 in 1961, while more and more of the countryside fell to the Vietnamese. The character of the war now began to change, however, as the United States committed to it increasing advisers, aircraft and modern weapons and finally in 1965 combat troops. The build-up can be seen in the following figures for numbers of U. S. troops in South Vietnam:

	1961	-	1,300
	1962	-	10,000
	1963	-	16,000
	1964	-	23,000
	May 1965	-	34,000
	Sept. 1965	-	125,000
	Dec. 1965	-	165,000
	July 1966	-	280,000

(79) Adam Roberts: "Buddhism and Politics in South Vietnam", World Today, June 1965.

(in addition by December 1965 there were 21,000 soldiers from South Korea, 1,600 from Australia, and 120 from New Zealand aiding the South Vietnamese forces (ARVN) which totalled 635,000) (80)

At first increased U. S. aid and two technical developments, the use of the M113 armoured personnel lorries in the rice fields and swamps of the Melong Delta and the introduction of large bodies of troops had swung the war against the N. L. F. They slowly adapted their tactics to the new situation, however, and though helicopters were to remain an important advantage to the government forces, the shooting down of five helicopters at AL-Bac in January 1963 symbolised a resurgence of the movement. At the same time as the increased U. S. commitment the Diem regime embarked on a programme of "Strategic hamlets". Shortage of funds and peasant opposition had prevented the agrovilles (see above) which were much larger than the strategic hamlets from moving much beyond the experimental stage. Now on the advice of Robert Thompson, former British Secretary for Defence in Malaya, the government planned a large number of villages with good facilities and strong defences to attract the peasants and isolate the Vietcong. However, things did not turn out that way, and the much-discussed hamlets became another form of oppression. Denis Warner, an Australian writer, discusses the reasons and at the same time gives his assessment of the U. S. contribution: "Instead of going slowly, South Vietnam went into mass production. Instead of concentrating on white (or Viet Cong free) areas, the government went for the red (or Viet Cong dominated). Operation Sunrise, which was intended to separate the Maquis D, the Viet Cong's main base in the rubber, jungle and swamps immediately north of Saigon from the the capital, and the Maquis D itself from the Cambodian border by the resettlement of the peasants, was almost Operation Sunset for the strategic hamlet concept. Without warning, preparation, or consent, peasants saw their homes, and often their belongings, burned behind them. They were uprooted at bayonet point and planted down in new areas which had not been prepared to receive them. It was the worst of starts for the strategic hamlet. To add to their misfortunes, the villagers were not settled in their own localities but were often moved considerable distances. This meant that they lost not only their homes but also their land. In Malaya where such drastic action was necessary it was done cautiously, and the villagers were also compensated for their loss of land, when they owned it, an essential difference between Vietnam and Malaya was that most of the Malaysians who had to be moved were 'squatters' with no citizenship or property rights. Many could be shipped back by boat load to China whence they came.

"Unfortunately, few Vietnamese officials learned by error, and the results in most areas were bad. In few, but very few, areas they were extremely good. The American Military Aid and Advisory Group tried nobly but their work was destroyed by the insane determination of the Ngo Dinh to turn all of South Vietnam at once into a great strategic hamlet. All over South Vietnam small teams of American instructors arrived and went out into the hamlets to

(80) At this time N. L. F. forces were estimated at 230,000 of which 73,000 were main force soldiers. The U. S. claimed these included 14,000 PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) troops from North Vietnam.

teach people how to fight. They slept with guns and grenades by their sides and they built their own defences around them - among the people they taught.

"They became marked men. The Viet Cong sentenced them to death and posted rewards for their execution, sometimes in the agrovilles and hamlets where they were working. They were ambushed and stalked and sometimes killed. Sometimes their nerves broke. The strain was too much. But they taught well and they taught widely. Their contribution to the Vietnamese effort was rapid and effective." (81)

When Diem was overthrown it was found that many of the hamlets had few defences or public facilities while in other areas the figures for construction had been falsified and the hamlets just did not exist. The new regime at the end of 1963 decided to put a halt to the building programme, abandon those that could not be safeguarded, and to consolidate those that were considered valuable, which was only about 20% of the 8,600 that the old regime claimed to have built.

The strategic hamlet programme and the expanded numbers of U.S. advisers and amounts of aid (amounting to an annual level of \$400 million by 1963) were the mainstays of resistance against the N.L.F. and by 1964 it was clear that they were failing, and by early 1965 the situation was, in the words of Senator Mike Mansfield, Democratic Majority leader in the Senate, "near desperate". In a report after a study mission to Vietnam he stated "There is no

(81) Denis Warner: "The Last Confucian" Penguin Books, London 1964.

question that the Government of Vietnam in Saigon was faced with a rapidly deteriorating position at that time. After the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem, repeated coups had weakened the cohesiveness of the central authority and acted to stimulate public disaffection and indifference to the war. At the same time, there was a greatly accelerated military drive by strengthened Vietcong forces. Their control expanded over large areas of the country, particularly in provinces adjacent to the western borders. Communications and transportation between population centers became increasingly hazardous except by Vietcong sufferance. In short a total collapse of the Saigon governments' authority appeared imminent in the early months of 1965". (82)

By July 1965 the greatly increased numbers of U. S. troops were still officially advisors, and the bombing of the North had not stopped the deterioration in the Saigon government's position, and following a visit to Vietnam by Defence Secretary McNamara the decision to raise the number of troops to 125,000 and count U. S. combat troops was made. Thus began a new plane of the war - the U. S. had done what ever since Korea its leaders had always refused to do, committed itself to a land war in Vietnam. Escalation continued and each side increased its forces and the war is now being marked increasingly by large scale battles. The present course of the war is impossible to assess so flatly contradictory are the reports coming from the two sides but it is impossible to assess which side is "winning", but it seems fair to say that neither side is at present making spectacular advances. The N. L. F. claims it controls 80% of the land area and over 75% of the population. The U. S. estimate is different. It is estimated that about 22 per cent of the population is under Vietcong control and that about 18 per cent inhabits contested area. About 60 per cent of the population is under Vietcong control and that about 18 per cent inhabits contested areas. About 60 per cent of the population in the country is, at present, under some form of government control, largely because of its hold on Saigon and other cities and large towns". (83) In view of the difficulties of deciding under whose control any group of peasants live (and sometimes control changes each night and morning) it seems not unfair to regard about a quarter of the population as under government control, a quarter under N. L. F. control and the remaining half under varying degrees of each.

b) A Dirty War in the South

All wars are dirty wars, in all war the innocent suffer most. But the Vietnamese war has been marked by fierce allegations (by both sides) of inhuman practices. The allegations of terrorism against the guerillas have been discussed above - the only new factors in the more recent period have been bomb attacks in Saigon in which inevitably there have been far greater casualties among Vietnamese bystanders than U. S. or ARVN military. This section while it refers in a few places to the conduct of the guerilla forces is thus largely concerned with

(82) Page 1, Vietnam Conflict: The Substance and the Shadow. Report of Senator Mike Mansfield, Senator George D. Aiken, Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Senator J. Caleb Boggs, Senator Daniel K. Inouye to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate (January 1966 U. S. Government Printing Office).

(83) *ibid* p.7.

the conduct of U.S. and ARVN forces. That this conduct has greatly harried the civilian population is admitted even by those who are in sympathy with U.S. aims in Vietnam, e.g. Shaplen: "... mere mobility and the use of special techniques were not enough. The application for example of such expedients as chemical sprays to hill rice crops in Vietcong-controlled areas, of defoliation sprays and fire bombs to chase and burn the Vietcong out of forest bases, and of tear- and nausea-gas to flush the enemy from caves, did not provide the real answer to the greater problem of winning the war in Vietnam, in fact even when preceeded by warnings to the population, which were given in the case of the sprays in the use of napalm and ordinary bombs in what were now called "bomb free" zones, their value as legitimate weapons of war was doubtful when set off against the basic need 'to win the hearts and minds of the people', a phrase that had now become pretty shop-worn but remained the key to the situation". (84) Indictments of these acts from North Vietnamese and Communist sources (accompanied often by photographs) have been widely circulated and are easily obtainable. Since many would consider that because propoganda is part of any war such material is suspect, quotations below are restricted to Western sources concerned with the general question of U.S. involvement.

There are roughly two groups of crimes with which the U.S. is charged. The first concerns civilians, bombing of villages, use of napalm, destruction of crops, burning of villages, shooting of innocent villagers. The second concerns military practices, the use of inhuman weapons, the use of gas, torture or maltreatment of prisoners. Some of these practices are not denied but instead it is argued they are justified. We set out some of the evidence below - and leave it to the reader to judge. (Many would state that the distinction between the killing of N. L. F. forces or of innocent bystanders is an irrelevant one since the N. L. F. are "innocent patriots" - this raises the general question of the justification of the U.S. presence which is discussed above and again below. This section is concerned with the methods of warfare.)

That it is the Vietnamese people, the ordinary peasants who are the most frequent and tragic victims of this war all would agree. It is they who are losing their crops, their homes, their families, their lives. In their thousands they are fleeing the countryside for the comparative safety of the cities. Some claim they are fleeing the "Vietcong". They are not. Like populations through the ages they are simply fleeing the war without a thought for politics. Responsible U.S. spokesmen recognise this. "The population of the cities has been augmented by a great number of refugees. Hundreds of thousands in number, they are for the greater part composed of people who have fled to the cities in an effort to escape the spreading intensity of the war. In this sense they are unlike the refugees who came from North Vietnam in 1954. These earlier refugees consciously chose to leave their ancestral homes and come south permanently rather than accept a Communist regime. The new refugees, for the most part, are believed merely to be waiting for an end to the fighting in order to return to their homes and land." (85)

The very nature of guerilla warfare and more especially of the methods used to fight it mean that the civilians suffer more than anyone. Since

(84) R. Shaplen op.cit. p.328.

(85) P.7 Mansfield Report op.cit.

the guerilla wears no uniform and returns to his village there is no way of distinguishing a villager from a guerilla. Many correspondents have reported the shooting of anyone who ran away during an attack on a village, and most agree that it is difficult often to estimate casualties since many not involved in the war die simply because they happen to be in the vicinity. The result is described by Warner. "When unarmed men are shot without question and without chance, the innocent inevitably suffer with the guilty, and soon because of the need for self defence there are no innocent, and every man's hand must be turned against those who come with blazing guns, as we had come on this day." (86) Added to these 'accidental' victims must be those who live in peaceful villages on whom the military by mistake drop bombs. There can be no compensation for the loss of one's family. But the bombing of villages raises a second question about who is or who is not to be counted an "enemy". Is a villager who harbours an N. L. F. soldier a fair target? Is his wife? Are his children? For in the bombing "hostile" villages and in the defoliation of crops in "hostile" areas it is these people who are suffering. Jean Lateguy reports the words of a village priest in a heavily bombed area: "Today nothing remains of that region. All is razed. As for the poor mountain people whose villages and rice granaries have been destroyed they can only live as wild boars in the forest. Before the bombardment, the loud-speakers, in the planes above them, told them not to go into the fields and to stay in their huts. They stayed in their huts and their huts were bombarded anyway. Or again the Viet Cong obliged them to come out and machine-gunned them in the fields. I have seen my faithful burned in napalm. I have seen all my villages razed. C'est pas Dieu possible"(87)

Thus, I. F. Stone comments: "The real error in that erroneous bombing of a friendly village in South Vietnam has been overlooked in press comment and official apology. The real error is the bombardment of any villages, friendly or unfriendly. 'To bomb a village' Roger Hilsman told the Senate refugee sub-committee Sept. 30, 'even though the guerillas are using it as a base for sniping, will recruit more Vietcong than are killed'. Hilsman resigned last year as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. 'If bombing the North has been a bad mistake', Hilsman told the refugee sub-committee, 'bombing the South has been a tragic one - for it has worked to alienate the people'."(88)

But the destruction of villages had at times been even more deliberate. "Newsweek" reported: "On the ground too, the "Americanization" of the war had its unhappy consequences. During a sweep south of the Da Nang base, U. S. Marines poured artillery shells into the village of Chau Son, which was suspected of harboring Viet Cong. And, indeed, the marines did succeed in killing 25 guerillas. But they also inadvertently killed a woman and four children. Next day, as they approached the nearby village of Can Ne, the Da Nang marines came under sniper fire. The marines, reported CBS correspondent Morley Safer, who was on the scene, "had orders to burn the hamlet to the ground if they received so much as one round." First, however, they replied to

(86) D. Warner. op.cit. p.26.

(87) Paris Match, October 2nd, 1965.

(88) I. F. Stone's Weekly, November 8th, 1965.

the sniper fire with a rocket barrage that wounded three women and killed one infant. Then, according to Safer, they moved into the village and proceeded "first with cigarette lighters, then with flame throwers to burn down an estimated 150 dwellings. Old men and women who were pleading with the marines to spare their houses were ignored . . ." (89) The burning was seen by millions of U.S. television viewers and shocked the nation. But for the Vietnamese it was just another incident in the war.

In many parts of Vietnam Americans were living with villagers trying to understand their problems and to improve their standard of living. Many individual Americans had done a great deal of useful and humanitarian work. Michael Wall in a series of articles in the London Guardian, a newspaper for the most part unsympathetic to U.S. activity in Vietnam, has described these efforts and concluded: "For the ordinary soldier it is deeply perplexing to be expected to kill and to risk being killed and at the same time to be an ambassador of goodwill and social worker among the people is to ask a great deal. From what I have seen of the American Marines in the field they seem to be attempting, and indeed achieving, something which has never been demanded of soldiers before." (90) Inevitably however, these individual successes in pacification and goodwill are gravely overshadowed by the killing or rendering homeless month by month of thousands of innocent people.

There have been many protests against the type of weapons used by the U.S. such as napalm, or the "lazy dog", a giant shrapnell causing terrible body wounds. Perhaps the greatest protests came against the use of gas. The U.S. authorities explained that it was a non-toxic nausea gas, and claimed it was more humane to use it than bombs. But the idea of the use of gas remained repugnant to most people. Sixteen Congressmen began their letter to President Johnson as follows: "Dear Mr. President: The actions of our military in South Vietnam in providing riot-control type gases appear to have violated our long-standing policy against the first use of gas in warfare. This policy was first enunciated on June 9, 1943, by President Roosevelt, who said, "Use of such weapons has been outlawed by the general opinion of mankind . . . I state categorically that we shall under no circumstances resort to the use of such weapons unless they are first used by our enemies". It was reaffirmed on January 13, 1960 by President Eisenhower who said, when asked at a press conference about our governments' policy on the use of gas in warfare, "So far as my instinct is concerned, (it) is not to start such a thing as that first". The first use of gas in warfare, however innocuous its variety or effective its results, subjects the using country to the censure of the civilized world. . . ." (91)

Finally we present two accounts of the treatment of prisoners. Denis Warner in 1963 describes the interrogation of suspects captured after a raid on a village: "Captives got uniform treatment. After their hands

(89) Newsweek - August 16, 1965.

(90) Guardian - February 8th, 1966.

(91) I.F. Stone's Weekly, April 5, 1965.

were tied behind their backs their questioners would kick and punch them, dragging them from the water to knock them down again. Presumably this failed on all occasions to produce satisfactory replies to questions, and all went through the second state. This involved three soldiers who forced the man underwater and held him there until he was on the point of drowning. A minute or two at a time and spread repetitively over ten or fifteen minutes was routine for this performance, the final act of which was to hold the prisoner's mouth open while another poured down his throat from helmet. When he could hold no more, he was thrust back under the water.

"The troops knew all the tricks of elementary torture. Once a soldier marched his captive off through the rice and threatened to shoot him with his .45, which he held next to the prisoner's ear. Everytime he fired it the prisoner sank on his knees. Other prisoners hidden behind one of carriers were sure that it was their turn next to be shot, though this happened, in fact, only to one, a badly wounded man who was finished off before interrogation. He was too far gone to be questioned about his gun. Some prisoners denied they were Viet Cong, or had guns, and the latter statement, at least, was probably true enough, since in many areas such as this not every guerrilla has a gun but must rely on a knife or billhook, or on recovering a gun when a comrade is killed or wounded in action.

"Those who said they had guns always insisted they had buried them back at the village. But no one thought of going back to look. It was too far, or too late, or perhaps just not worthwhile, which made the torture not only brutal but pointless, also."(92)

Such accounts of barbarities are well documented and torture and brutality are widespread. The tortures may have been carried out by local troops but the U. S. has connived in these brutalities. At the same time the fate of prisoners of North Vietnam is in great doubt since the parading of U. S. airmen through the streets of H. noi in July 1966 and the denial that they had any rights as prisoners of war. "Newsweek", at that time somewhat critical of U. S. policy at that time in September 1965 published the following summary: "...scores of photographs showing South Vietnamese troops brutally mistreating Viet Cong prisoners they have interrogated have appeared in the Western press. And, indeed, there is no doubt that Saigon's soldiers often extract information by torture.

"To their credit, U. S. authorities in South Vietnam have repeatedly pressed the South Vietnamese Government to improve its treatment of prisoners. But so far such pressure has had scant effect and individual Americans in South

(92) Denis Warrner, *op.cit.* pp.24-6.

Vietnam are often made accomplices to their allies' brutality. U.S. helicopter pilots have reportedly found themselves obliged to stand by while Viet Cong prisoners were thrown out of their planes by South Vietnamese troops. And on one operation witnessed by a U.S. photographer, a U.S. enlisted man, and an Australian officer made no protest when a Vietnamese officer shot a suspected guerilla out of hand.

"The South Vietnamese justify such behavior by arguing that it is a question of an eye for an eye. And, indeed, it is probably unrealistic to expect anything else from soldiers who have seen their families or fellow citizens murdered and mutilated by the Viet Cong.

"What's more, when it comes to shooting prisoners, the Viet Cong are hardly blameless. Last January, four American soldiers were caught by the guerillas while fishing. Later, the bodies of two of them were found in the water with their arms tied behind their backs and their genitals cut off and stuffed into their mouths.

"This incident, however, is apparently not typical of Viet Cong treatment of U.S. prisoners - seventeen of whom are now known to be in Communist hands. So far, some of the best evidence on this subject has come from 28-year-old Donald Dawson who spent four months in a guerilla prison camp during a vain search for his brother, a missing Air Force pilot. According to Dawson, he and three other American prisoners of the Communists there were allowed plenty of exercise and, by Viet Cong standards, were well fed.

"Be that as it may, neither the Viet Cong nor Hanoi are notable for their strict adherence to the 1949 Geneva Convention governing the treatment of prisoners of war. Hanoi has refused repeated requests by the International Red Cross that U.S. prisoners be permitted to send and receive mail. And in South Vietnam, American captives have undergone the humiliation of being paraded in cages from village to village by Viet Cong cadres. In Vietnam, in short, the treatment of prisoners of war has reverted to something painfully close to the barbarities of the ancient world." (93)

c) Bombing of the North

The first raids by bombers north of the Seventeenth Parallel occurred in August 1964 as a reprisal against alleged attacks on U.S. naval vessels. The truth of this incident is not known. Official U.S. sources described it as an unprovoked attack, the North Vietnamese stated that they were defending themselves against attack. The vessels were within 11 miles of the North Vietnamese islands and in this connection Senator Wayne Morse made the points at the time that "if we are to talk about provocation, the United States was a provocateur by having any ships anywhere within striking distance; and the South Vietnamese

(93) "Newsweek", September 13, 1965.

boats did bomb those islands. We should have been completely out of the scene". Secondly he said that "We would have been in a stronger position before the eyes of the world tonight if, after we had responded, as we had a right to respond Tuesday night to the attack on our ships, we had on Wednesday laid that issue before the United Nations and asked the United Nations to proceed to take actions encompassed under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. Oh no. We had to proceed to bomb the mainland..."(94)

It seems that these bombings were intended to be a warning to the North of the steps that the U.S. was prepared to take if the war continued. The next occasion for bombing was a night attack on the U.S. barracks at Pleiku. At this stage U.S. troops had not been officially committed to combat and the bombings were presented to the world as reprisals for what President Johnson termed "provocations ordered and directed by the Hanoi regime". As the bombings continued in the following months, however, it was clear that they were not reprisals but a new phase in U.S. policy in the Vietnam war. The move caused world wide concern and condemnation, partly because it was quickly realised that even if the U.S. restricted itself to "military targets" as it promised to do, bombing on this scale inevitably involved heavy civilian casualties, and partly because no one could predict where this new step in escalation would lead. U.N. Secretary General U Thant was sufficiently concerned to give cessation of bombing pre-eminence in his statement of March 9: "The Secretary General is deeply concerned over the escalation of the fighting in Vietnam and the mounting casualties and destruction there. He feels that any move to bring the parties closer together must include the following: (1) Cessation of bombing of North Vietnam. (2) Substantial reduction by all parties of all military activities in South Vietnam. (3) The participation of the National Liberation Front (Vietcong) in any peaceful settlement."(95)

However, the U.S. President was undeterred by these protests and continued on in his speech at John Hopkin University in Baltimore on April 7, 1965, he demonstrated his determination to continue the bombing: "In recent months, attacks on South Vietnam were stepped up. Thus it became necessary to increase our response and to make attacks by air. This is not a change of purpose. It is a change in what we believe that purpose requires.

"We do this in order to slow down aggression.

"We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Vietnam who have bravely borne this brutal battle for so many years and with so many casualties.

(94) Congressional Record as quoted in "Vietnam", ed. Gettleman, pp.403-4, op. cit.

(95) I.F. Stone's Weekly, March 21, 1966.

"And we do this in order to convince the leaders of North Vietnam, and all who seek to share their conquest, of a very simple fact.

"We will not be defeated.

"We will not grow tired.

"We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.

"We know that air attacks alone will not accomplish all these purposes. But it is our best and prayerful judgment that they are a necessary part of the surest road to peace."(96)

The aim of the bombing was thus threefold. First it aimed at boosting the sagging morale of the South Vietnamese army and boost the regime. In this it was temporarily successful - though in the long run the U.S. control of so large a sector of the war undermined the appearance of independence of the Saigon government. Second on the basis that it was infiltration from the North that was maintaining the war in the South, there was the military aim of slowing down the war by slowing down infiltration. It is difficult to assess what success this had - but judging by the build-up that followed in the South over the next 18 months, and by the failure of interdictory bombing in Korea 13 years before, the North had little difficulty stepping up its efforts to overcome this military difficulty. Third and most important the aim was political: to raise the price that the North would have to pay in the continuing war, to create such damage that the North would be forced to the conference table on U.S. terms. Thus the U.S. has at times suspended bombing (e.g. for 5 days in May 1965, and for 37 days at the beginning of 1966) in attempts to get the North to agree to begin negotiations. Again past experience both in Korea and World War II must raise grave doubts as to whether a nation can be bombed into changing its policy.

Walter Lipmann, the American columnist and political theorist, cast doubt on these aims as soon as they were enunciated. He asked: "Can the Saigon government win the civil war while we attack the Hanoi government? The outcome of this test depends in the first place on whether the government in Saigon can acquire the military morale and muster the national support to put down the rebellion. It depends in the second place on whether our bombing can hurt or frighten the North Vietnamese sufficiently to cause them to stop supporting the Viet Cong rebellion and, indeed, to tell the Viet Cong to desist. The official policy assumes that they will do that when they are hurt more than they can endure. Looking at it in a cold-blooded way, this is a test of a military theory. For my part, I am inclined to think that Hanoi will endure all the punishment that we dare to inflict.

"I am assuming that we dare not and will not devastate the cities of North Vietnam and kill great masses of their people. I am assuming that we shall not do this because we are too civilized, and also because the reaction

(96) Department of State Bulletin 211 (April 26, 1965), pp. 607-8.

to such cruelty would be incalculable in every continent.

"The relatively moderate punishment we are inflicting we shall probably continue to inflict. I believe it will not force the North Vietnamese to their knees. They are, we must remember, a country of peasants. Their industries are comparatively primitive, and their capacity to do without the products of their industries is quite different from that, let us say, of a well-to-do, middle-class American community in an affluent suburb. Provided they get some food, which they can from China, they are not likely to quit and to do what we might want because their power plants and bridges and factories are demolished. What they are likely to do if we make the north increasingly uninhabitable is to go into South Vietnam."(97)

By the end of 1965, one Western observer at least found Lipmann's predictions coming true. James Cameron visited North Vietnam and reported: "One thing is sure, if the bombing of North Vietnam is designed either to terrorise the people into submission or to crush their economy into ruin, its effect on both counts is precisely the reverse ... So far from terrorising the people, the bombings have stimulated and consolidated them. By the nature of the attacks so far, civilian casualties have not been great, but they have been great enough to provide the Government of the Vietnam Republic with the most totally unchallengeable propaganda they could ever have dreamed of. A nation of peasants and manual workers who might have felt restive or dissatisfied under the stress of totalitarian conditions have been obliged to forget all their differences in the common sense of resistance and self defence. From the moment the United States dropped its first bomb on the North of Vietnam she welded a nation together unshakably. Every bomb since has been a bonus to Ho Chi Minh.

"Nor is this an economy that can be wrecked by high explosive. This is a peasant agrarian society, immensely resilient. The Pentagon's thought-processes seem to be exclusively those of a highly developed sophisticated Western society; even in their own interests the U.S. planners fail to recognise the realities of a society like this. A bomb here, a bomb there; a family eliminated here or there; a rice field churned into swamp - these are troublesome, infuriating; they are not disabling. The destruction of a bridge or a road - in Western terms it could be disastrous. Here it is a nuisance. The people will mend it, or they will go some other way. When I drove to Haiphong it took three hours along the country's most important road. While I was away the road was cut. It took seven hours to return - but we returned; in Vietnam there is always another way.

"If the day comes when the industries are bombed and destroyed it will be a grievance and maddening setback to a nation that is only just beginning to grope among the problems and advantages of industries - but it will make fundamentally no difference at all. Every single industrial enterprise in the country could be ruined - and it would directly affect about 5 per cent of

(97) "Newsweek", April 26, 1965.

the working population. Vietnam is not Detroit, nor even Washington or London. Its people can survive the inconveniences of destruction, dismay and death. They have learned how, over 25 years. I fear we have learnt less."(98).

The bombings, suspended in January, recommenced in February 1966 and the area bombed slowly widened. Finally in July the previously untouched area around Hanoi and Haiphong was bombed. The object was to destroy the oil dumps and U.S. sources stated that the destruction was essential to prevent the flow of vehicles down the Ho Chi Minh trail. They also stated that the bombing had been carried out with precision and civilian casualties minimised. However, these are densely populated areas and casualties must have been high and protests were world-wide. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the one world leader who had stood behind President Johnson in all his policy, promptly disassociated himself from the bombings. James Reston, one of America's most respected political columnists wrote in the "New York Times" that the Johnson Administration "will probably never regain the confidence it has lost in its judgment and veracity" and had misled not only its enemies but its friends. With the bombings, the Administration "had done almost everything it said or indicated it would not do except bomb China, and the end of this melancholy chapter in American history is not yet." The Administration has said it was there merely to help a legitimate Government to defend itself, and it had ended up by supporting a military clique that was not a Government, not legitimate and not really defending itself. The Administration had said it was not seeking a military solution in Vietnam and it was now obviously seeking precisely that, wrote Mr. Reston.(99)

d) Why are the Americans in Vietnam?

Millions of words have been written to justify, condemn, criticise or appraise the American presence in Vietnam. The factual information provided by this report is designed to permit each reader to draw his own conclusions. It may be as well however to rehearse briefly the arguments put forward by three or four of the major schools of thought.

The North Vietnamese line of argument and that of the N. L. F. is that the Saigon rulers are a puppet regime and that the U. S. is trying to make out of South Vietnam a military base and colony. "For over ten years now, the U. S. imperialists have been pursuing with all their strength a policy of intervention, aggression and war against Vietnam. Their purpose is to turn South Viet Nam into a U. S. new-type colony and military

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- (98) James Cameron: "Hanoi exclusive". London Evening Standard, Friday December 10th 1965.
(99) "Guardian", July 1966.

base in preparation for an attack on the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and other countries in this part of the world."(100)

The war in Vietnam, then, is seen in the North as a neocolonialist one, and the U.S. presence described by General Giap as follows: "Neo-colonialism is by nature a concentrated expression of the basic tendency of capitalism: enslavement of weak and small nations, search and wrangle about markets and raw materials, utter oppression and exploitation of the people of these nations. Its main practice is reliance on violence. It differs from old colonialism in the fact that it carries out its policy of enslavement and uses violence not directly, but indirectly by the medium of a puppet administration and army vested with sham independence and democracy, and in the form of "aid" or "alliance" in all respects. Neo-colonialism screens its aggressive and exploiting nature in all clothings, therefore it is all the more cunning and wicked, and easily induces the peoples to relax their vigilance. In the South, after the defeat of French imperialism, old colonialism was completely doomed and was buried together with the images of its cruel or crafty governor generals and high commissioners and its ruthless expeditionary corps against the will of U.S. imperialism which, unable to revive that decaying corpse, is compelled to act under the cloak of neo-colonialism."(101)

The N. L. F. puts these views in their own strong terms: "For more than ten years now, the U.S. imperialists have continuously interfered in, and committed aggression against South Vietnam ... The puppet administration, hangers-on of the USA, in South Vietnam is daily committing more heinous crimes against the country. The impudent traitors are kowtowing before the aggressors and are bringing in snakes to kill chickens of the home coop, inviting troops of the United States and many of its satellite countries to come to South Vietnam to massacre our people, occupy and trample upon the territory of our sacred fatherland, and oppress and exploit our people most harshly".(102)

In the U.S. justification for their presence in Vietnam three of the major themes may be underlined. The first is that the U.S. have come to South Vietnam in response to a request of the South Vietnamese government to give the people a chance of freedom, and protect them from an authoritarian communist regime. In the words of President Johnson: "... Moreover, we are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American Nation. Three Presidents - President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President - over 11 years, have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation We do not seek the destruction of any government, nor do we covet a foot

(100) Memorandum of Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the Vietnam problem, published as supplement to "Vietnam Youth" December 1965.

(101) "The South Vietnam People will Win" p.28. op.cit.

(102) Statement of the Central Committee of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, (1965). Vietnam Courier, April 3, 1965.

of any territory. But we insist, and we will always insist, that the people of South Vietnam shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the South, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision. And they shall not have any government imposed upon them by force and terror as long as we can prevent it." (103)

The second theme is the danger of an expansionist power in Asia, the Peoples Republic of China, and the need to deter China from a path of aggression. "Over this war - and all Asia - is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peking. This is a regime which has destroyed freedom in Tibet, attacked India, and been condemned by the United Nations for aggression in Korea. It is a nation which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purpose." (104)

The third theme is that the war in Vietnam is part of a U. S. commitment to its friends and allies to resist aggression anywhere and to maintain world stability. "Vietnam is far from this quiet campus. We have no territory there, nor do we seek any. The war is dirty and brutal and difficult. And some 400 young men - born into an America bursting with opportunity and promise - have ended their lives on Vietnam's steaming soil.

"Why must we take this painful road?

"Why must this nation hazard its ease, its interest, and its power for the sake of a people so far away?

"We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure . . ." (105)

"Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist the growing might and grasping ambition of Asian communism. Our power, therefore, is a vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Vietnam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise, or in American protection. In each land the forces of independence would be considerably weakened. And an Asia so threatened by Communist

(103) "Why Vietnam" p.5. op.cit.

(104) President Johnson John Hopkins Speech.

(105) ibid.

domination would imperil the security of the United States itself.

"We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else.

"Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace. We learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueller conflict."(106)

A third group of commentators on U.S. policy whose views have been widely publicised are those who do not agree that U.S. intentions are evil but consider that they are misguided, mistaken and based on a wrong analysis of the Vietnam situation. This group, both within the U.S. and throughout the rest of the Western and neutralist world, is too diverse for its views to be summarised, but a few of their recurrent viewpoints may be mentioned.

First, these critics point out that even if the goodwill of the U.S. and its desire to promote Vietnamese nationalism and democracy is admitted, the day of democracy in South Vietnam is long past and the U.S. is backing a corrupt military regime whose continuation in power is dependent on U.S. support. In its harshest form this argument particularly condemns the effects of U.S. intervention: "The 'plain fact' is that the scale of American intervention is incompatible with the goal of self-determination. North Vietnam has, to be sure, intervened by helping the Vietcong. But at every stage of the war the scale of American intervention has been far greater. The manner of combat shows that we have saturated South Vietnam with every kind of military equipment the terrain allows. We air-lift troops and supplies continually. We drop napalm on civilian populations intermingled with guerillas. We burn and defoliate crops and forests. We have resorted to incapacitating gas. An intervention as massive as this does not furnish a choice to the people. It deprives them of one ..."(107)

Another theme of these critics is that the war in Vietnam is not the best way to contain China: "We continually proclaim our desire to halt Chinese imperialism in its tracks, and yet we are systematically devastating the country which is best placed to resist Chinese hegemony in South-east Asia. A strong North Vietnam stands as a powerful barrier to China's centuries-old desire to dominate Southeast Asia. In the effort to contain Chinese expansion, it matters little that North Vietnam happens to be Communist; what is crucial is that it is Vietnamese. The history of the Vietnamese people has been one of resistance to China."(108)

(106) President Johnson "Why Vietnam" *op.cit.*

(107) Statement of Group of U.S. academics in "New York Times" May 9, 1965.

(108) "New Leader", May 1966.

These critics also often express their doubts whether the war in Vietnam is essential to international democracy and stability, and see in it instead a threat to world peace. Walter Lippmann has written: "The theme of the opposition to the escalating war in Vietnam is that this is the kind of war that if pursued will lead to a war with China and that would be a ruinous mistake." (109) It is above all the twin feelings of horror at the sufferings of the Vietnamese people and fear at the consequences to the world of an escalating war that have motivated this last group of critics.

One final viewpoint should probably be noted - one held by many politicians and statesmen of the "realist" school who see the Vietnam war as essentially a confrontation between China and the U.S. Typical of these is Arnaud de Borchgrave who writes in "Newsweek" on June 6, 1966: "The slogans about why the U.S. is in Vietnam - e.g. making South Vietnam safe for democracy - and arguments about the slogans have contributed mightily to mass confusion at home and abroad. The rhetoric tends to obscure both the fundamental interest and the fundamental issue.

"The fundamental interest, quite simply, is to contain the expansion of Chinese Communist imperialism. As Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski of Columbia articulated one of the U.S.'s basic foreign policy goals, it is "to establish international conditions which channel the revolutionary changes taking place in many societies toward constructive ventures, and prevent the process of modernization and development from being forcibly taken over by Communist elites supported by militant Communist states employing the strategy of 'national liberation wars'."

"The fundamental issue is whether we can find an effective answer to this new method of warfare - the device whereby China and North Vietnam can expand, almost by proxy, by promoting a so-called 'people's war' of so-called 'national liberation'.

And what we are trying to do in Vietnam is to demonstrate that changes in Asia - and elsewhere in the world - are not to be precipitated by "outside" force. Some of us have forgotten rather quickly that it was not South Vietnam that set out to absorb North Vietnam, but rather the other way round. What's at stake for the U.S. in Vietnam is not freedom and democracy for South Vietnam, though this might become a happy by-product. The key point at issue is whether the U.S. can successfully resist and subdue a war of 'liberation'. Similarly, what's at stake for China is whether it can prove that the balance of power in the world can be changed by tunneling under the nuclear stalemate of the major powers. Peking's chosen instruments are North Vietnam and the Viet Cong."

(109) "Newsweek", March 14, 1966.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF SOUTH VIETNAM

The educational structure of South Vietnam especially in the higher stages is a mixture of the remaining French pattern and improvisations in the face of the state of war. The system as a whole seems singularly badly geared to the needs of a developing country.

The original Vietnamese education system was an elite mandarin system inherited from the Chinese and, already well codified by 622 A.D., it flourished until French colonisation. The French educational organisation which replaced this was originally designed primarily to provide a limited number of subordinate clerks and interpreters for the colonial regime. Slowly the educational system expanded and improved, but it remained available only to a small elite - by 1936 only two French lycées were offering secondary schooling to Vietnamese. After 1945 attempts were made to build up a Vietnamese system of education and the national language was chosen as a medium of instruction at both primary and secondary levels. By 1954 there were about 400,000 students in elementary schools and 22,000 at secondary schools.

The University of Hanoi was founded in 1907, but was closed in 1908 after nationalist student demonstrations and not reopened until 1917. The number of University students in 1954 was about 2,100. Many students continued to go to overseas universities, usually to France.

a) Primary, Secondary and Technical Education

The full primary school course as now established is of five years and leads to the certificate of Primary Studies. The primary school population in 1963-64 was 1,475,000 - although this is a threefold increase in ten years it still represents less than half of the school age population. Secondary school numbers were 266,000; over half of these are in private schools and many more seek admission than can be accommodated. French schools operated under the direction of the French Cultural Mission responsible to the French Ministry of Education still remain popular as their academic standards are high, and the use of French as a language of instruction eases University entry. They have an enrolment of 11,000.

General secondary education is divided into two consecutive courses (cycles), the first of four years (leading to an examination for the equivalent of the French Brevet d'études du premier cycle - B. E. P. C.) and the second of three years (leading after two years to an examination for the Baccalaureate Part I - Tu-Tai I - and after the third year to the Baccalaureate Part II - Tu Tai II). The complete (two part) baccalaureate (which is recognised in France as the equivalent of the French baccalaureate) is a requirement for enrolment in a university faculty or, in some cases, for entry for a competitive faculty entrance examination (in Pedagogy or Medicine). Teaching is in Vietnamese in all classes in both cycles, and curricula and syllabi are determined by the Department of National Education. Entrance to secondary schools is by examination among holders of the C. E. P.

In 1955 there were only two technical schools in Vietnam. With the withdrawal of the French, no qualified technical teachers remained. Teachers have been trained in Vietnam and overseas however and in 1963-64 there were eight secondary technical schools (the Lycee Technique at Cao-thang, the Technical College Nguyen-truong-To, and colleges at Hue, Danang, Qui-nhon, Nha-trang, Bannme-thuot and Vinh-long) with 3,819 students; two schools of applied art (at Bien-hoa and Binh-duong) with 346 students; the National School of Maritime Navigation at Phu-tho with 60 students; and the Secondary Polytechnic at Phu-tho, with 222 students.

In addition, tertiary technical training is carried on at the Higher School of Public Works in Saigon (118 students in 1963-64) the National School of Industrial Engineering (74 students), the Higher School of Electricity (9 students) and the Higher School of Agriculture at Blao (211 students). A complete baccalaureate (or equivalent certificate) is required in these higher technical schools.

b) Universities

Until 1954, the University of Saigon was the only university south of the 17th parallel, with the status of constituent of the university of Hanoi, which was in turn associated with the University of Paris.

The University of Saigon is modelled on the French Universities and total enrolment is uncertain as students may enrol in more than one faculty and there is no central register. In most faculties there is no limit on the number of failures a student can accumulate and remain at the University, and attendance at lectures is voluntary, so there are a certain proportion of "professional" students. The language of instruction is largely French, although Vietnamese has been instituted for courses in Law and Letters.

At the present time courses are provided in six faculties - Medicine (the oldest, dating from a School of Medicine established in Hanoi in 1898), Pharmacy, Law, Science, Letters, Pedagogy (students who plan to become secondary school teachers enter this faculty by competitive examination, receive special allowances, and there is a low failure rate) - and in the associated Higher School of Architecture.

Because the various faculties began as separate entities rather than as a single higher institution they are scattered throughout the city, making communal life difficult and resulting in wasteful duplication of facilities.

After the 1954 Geneva agreements the number of students entering the University of Saigon rose rapidly. Many of the students entering in the late 'fifties were refugees from the north. To cope with the increasing demand, the University of Hue was established and commenced teaching in 1957-58 academic year with faculties of law, science, letters and pedagogy (a faculty of medicine was inaugurated in September 1961). Most of the instruction at Hue is in Vietnamese, but most of the text books are still in French and English. A third university, the University of Dalat, commenced teaching (in departments of letters, science and pedagogy) in the 1959-60 academic year. This is a private

university administered by the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Dalat: there is no provision for first-year teaching in the department of pedagogy, and students must take this first-year course at the University of Saigon or Hue - usually the former. Instruction is in French. There are no student fees and it is financed from the funds of the Roman Catholic Church in Vietnam, but less than a third of its students and less than a quarter of its teachers are Catholic.

A fourth institution, the VanHanh University, was established in Saigon by the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam and under the direct control of the Vien Hoa Dao. Teaching - only in a faculty of letters - began in the 1965-66 academic year. Most of its 1,000 students are part-time and study matters relating to the Buddhist religion, although non-Buddhists are freely admitted if they wish.

There is also a National Institute of Administration in Saigon.

The National Universities of South Vietnam are attached to the Department of National Education, and are placed under the direction of a Rector. Each University is comprised of several Faculties, each headed by a Dean, who is responsible for the administrative and educational aspects of his Faculty. University finances for the Universities of Saigon and Hue are appropriated from the national budget.

The University of Dalat is a private organisation.

c) Student Numbers

The total number of University students in South Vietnam increased sevenfold - from 2,907 to 20,335 in the eight years from 1955-56 to 1963-64. In 1965-66 the total number was estimated to be over 26,870 made up as follows:

University of Saigon	-	21,365 students
University of Hue	-	2,990 students
University of Dalat	-	1,515 students
Van Hanh University	-	1,000 students

TOTAL - 26,870

Of these (on the 1963-64 figures) 27% were in the Faculty of Letters, 18% in the Faculty of Law, and 10% in the Faculty of Pharmacy. 25% were in the Faculty of Science. The remainder were more or less equally divided between the Faculties of Medicine and of Pedagogy with a few in Architecture. One may well question whether this is a desirable distribution in a developing country. About 22% of students are women.

Tuition and examination fees are relatively low. Lecture fees are about 800 VN piastres (US \$11) on an average, and examination fees 300 VN piastres (US \$4).

Bursaries are granted to about 600 students at the University level, and are worth 8,400 VN piastres per annum. These are in addition to the pedagogy allowance of 1,500 VN piastres a month.

d) Academic Staff

There are a number of difficulties facing the academic staff. Some of these are directly or indirectly attributable to the war; other difficulties could be removed or lessened by concerted efforts on the part of the authorities. In the case of the University of Saigon, with no university "campus" within a defined area, the different faculties housed in separate buildings and spread widely over the city, reflect the lack of long term planning for the University. There is usually a staff common-room within each faculty building, but facilities are minimal. There is no provision for bringing academic staff from different faculties together to discuss problems of administration, discipline, or joint action on a university-wide basis. With the staff lacking office facilities such as private telephones, private studies, desks and bookshelves, and with no secretaries to attend to stencilling of materials, conditions show great room for improvement. Lack of research facilities, such as good libraries, well-qualified library staff, and regular periodical journals, further tend to discourage the more able of the potential staff from joining the university.

For the teachers, a major complaint is the small size of their salaries. Better salaries, they argue, would lead to a regaining of status in the community: better-qualified staff would also be attracted. Low salaries are considered responsible for low standards in the calibre of staff recruited, and for their comparative disinterest in meeting with the students to discuss their problems. Many lecturers at the University of Saigon also teach at the University of Dalat, whence they fly weekly. Lecturers also complain that opportunities of exchanges with overseas universities are not good.

The effective academic staff in 1963-64 for Saigon and Hue was 595 for a total student roll of 29,355. This represents an average class of 34 students per teacher - on the face of it a largish class not unmanageable, although the optimum staff/student ratio in the major universities of Europe and the U.S. is considered to be about 14 students to each teacher. However, in Vietnam the over-all average hides marked discrepancies between faculties. The largest number of students for one staff member is in the Faculty of Pharmacy at Saigon - 117 - while the figure is 54 in the Faculty of Letters.

Almost one-quarter of the academic staff in 1963-64 was non-Vietnamese, concentrated mainly in the Faculty of Letters (where more than 37 per cent of the teachers were foreigners) and the Faculty of Pedagogy (26 per cent). Most of these foreign teachers are on comparatively short-term contracts.

At the start of the academic year there are no set books of recommended reading published for the students' guidance: for the staff also, there is no indication of holidays or examination dates, so that it is more than usually difficult for new staff members to plan a comprehensive course of lectures and allow time for revision or summaries.

e) Conditions of Study

Many academic staff consider that attendance at lectures should be compulsory, at least for a large percentage of lectures in each course since they consider that absenteeism is a major factor in the high failure rates that the country cannot afford.

In any case, poor library facilities and a dearth of good, up-to-date, comparatively cheap textbooks, make the students' lot more difficult. France sells some texts at subsidised prices under its cultural aid programme, but there are few English or American textbooks to meet the demand. There is no university bookshop. Finding a quiet space to study in is also a problem: the W. U. S. headquarters has a heavily patronised reading-room-cum-lounge, close to the Faculty of Agriculture: but its very popularity indicates the continuing need. The Saigon Students Union also has desks available at its headquarters, which are put to constant use.

The four student hostels in Saigon provide accommodation for only 430 of the university's students.

The use of a foreign language (French) as a medium of instruction is an additional burden, especially for those who come from Vietnamese language schools where there is a generally low level of foreign language instruction due to lack of teachers. In most cases Vietnamese is used as the medium of instruction now in the Faculties of Law, Letters and Pedagogy.

Many of the problems of university education are a result of the French colonial past but far too little has been done since the French left.

The quest for security, in a country where security is difficult to find, also saps much of the energy of the students, especially those who are not naturally gifted. This quest is focussed primarily on passing the examinations, and it is widely believed that many students - fearful of their ability to cope with unpredictable questions - in the absence of good academic tuition or textbooks tend to rely on learning lecture notes by rote. Even if the examination is passed, however, there is no certainty of a job with status and commensurate pay: before this, for the male students at least, comes military service ("the draft"). The draft affects all those of military age, beginning at age 20. Under the present law, students who are studying at the universities when they reach the draft age are exempted from military service until they have either completed their course or have failed. Those who graduate are offered the chance to become officers in the armed forces.

f) Education in 'Liberated Areas'

A considerable number of villages of South Vietnam are controlled by the insurgent movement. There is not much information available on education in these areas. An article in the Vietnam Courier published in Hanoi carried the following account:

"By the end of 1964, the liberated areas had had 4,142 general education schools with nearly half a million students, not to mention the classes scattered here and there, literary classes, complementary education classes, nursery classes, and infant classes. On the average 80% of school age children attend schools ... In the liberated areas from 90 to 95% of students are promoted or passed their exams. As for the curriculum, it is pervaded with the patriotic spirit of the Front. The students are trained into working people and valiant fighters, and right now, they are making contributions which are within their capacities to the resistance against the U.S. imperialists for national salvation by producing food-stuffs, watching malefactors, observing secrecy or keeping an eye upon the enemy...

"To train teachers the N. F. L. has set up the "August" teachers' school. Every province has a school to train primary education teachers, some are even training secondary education teachers ...

"The N. F. L. Central Administration has organised three schools to train physicians, including one specialising in turning out gynaecologists. Every province has a school to train nurses, preparers and village medical workers. Thousands of people have graduated from these schools".

Since the same source claims that 10 million South Vietnamese live in the "liberated areas" presumably many of the schoolchildren referred to are the same as those in the official statistics. The Commission is not in a position to comment on the accuracy of the above account, but it may be noted that if there are 10 million people in these areas and "nearly half a million" at school this certainly does not amount to 80% of school age children as is claimed.

STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

(a) University of Saigon (21,365 students):

The seven major faculties of the University of Saigon (pedagogy, law, pharmacy, letters, medicine, science and architecture) each have elected student committees. Although only a small percentage of the students in each of these faculties usually elects the Faculty Committee, the student leaders nevertheless have an extensive sphere of influence. In addition to being a major student political force, the committee carry on active programmes to develop student facilities, promote civic action and cultural programmes, and promote faculty sports contests.

Other institutions (7 in number), including the Faculties of Agriculture and Dentistry, and the National Institute of Administration, also elect student committees.

The Saigon University Students Union (SUSU) was established as a functioning entity in April 1964. Prior to the anti-Diem coup in October 1963, virtually all student organisations had been subjected to government control and supervision. Within a short period after its formation, the SUSU became the pivotal student organisation in Vietnam, but by November 1964 its authority had been somewhat discredited.

In theory, the SUSU represents the more than 25,000 students of the seven faculties and seven schools of higher education in Saigon: but no more than 3,000 students have ever participated in an SUSU election, and the last two elections have been indirect. This was thought necessary because of the widely dispersed schools and lack of a central campus, but some Faculties are now pressing for a return to direct balloting by the students.

Under the present system of electing the SUSU President and Executive (Vice-Presidents for External Affairs, and Secretary-General) the Presidents of the 14 student Faculty Committees come together to constitute the Council of Students. This 14-man body elects the SUSU President and Executive. Currently the Faculty of Letters Committee has broken away from the SUSU on the grounds that the 1965-66 President of SUSU, Mr. To Lai Chanh, was a law student but not a member of the Council of Students. Mr. To argues in rebuttal that although he is not President of the Law Faculty Student Committee, he is the Chairman of one of that Committee's sub-committees. Current External Affairs Vice-President is Duong Manh Hung.

Although the activities of the SUSU cover a wide range, including organising student welfare programmes, developing student facilities, and organising sports contests, much time is spent on seminars and discussion groups (to help formulate official SUSU policy) and public relations (such as press conferences).

(b) University of Hue (2,990 students):

The Hue Student Union carries out activities similar to those of the SUSU, but it is more actively engaged in politics and has more authoritative leadership. Buddhist political influence on the student union is considerable, and some 96 per cent of the union's finances are said to come from the Tu Dam pagoda in Hue. The majority of the students are Buddhist: perhaps a little more than 10% are Catholic. Because of student involvement in anti-government demonstrations inspired by the Buddhist clergy based on Hue (and master-minded by Thich Tri Quang), the university has been closed on order from the Saigon authorities, since early March 1966. In addition to political activity, however, the Hue Student Union also engages in welfare and civic activities.

(c) University of Dalat (1,515 students):

The Dalat student union is one of the most active, largely because of the strong sense of community felt by the Catholic student body. Considerable accent has been placed on civic action programmes. A large number of Dalat's students are resident in Saigon and commute to Dalat for the University year.

(d) Van Hanh University (1,000 students):

The student union at this university is still in the process of formation. At present there is a membership of about 50, largely because most of Van Hanh's students are part-time.

(e) Buddhist Student Groups:

These are probably the most powerful and the largest in South Vietnam, and are affiliated to the Vien Hoa Dao (the Executive organ of the Unified Buddhist Church). Thich Thien Minh, the Vien Hoa Dao's Commissioner for Youth Affairs, has great influence in their affairs.

There are six major Buddhist groups:

- (1) Buddhist Scouts and Guides
- (2) Buddhist Family Groups
- (3) Buddhist Youth Association
- (4) Buddhist High School Student Association
- (5) Buddhist Student Association
- (6) Buddhist Voluntary Association.

The Buddhist Family Groups claim a total membership of about 1,000 members, who are not permitted to hold concurrent membership of any other association. This stricture does not apply to Buddhists belonging to the other five groups. The Groups' strength is in the provinces.

The Buddhist High School Association, which has its headquarters in Saigon, claims a membership of upwards of 100,000 (nominal) members throughout South Vietnam, organised on a provincial basis.

The Buddhist Student Association (or University Buddhist Association - UBA) is the most important Buddhist group in terms of political influence and activity. The Association's leaders claim 2,000 active members from Saigon (since 1961), Dalat and Hue (since 1963) and in Qui Nhon; other assessments of membership go as low as 500. The higher figure seems more reasonable. The Buddhist students at each of these four centres elect a President and Executive at the commencement of the academic year. The four Presidents thus elected, choose one of their number as National President of the UBA. The four Executive Committees meet regularly to discuss and coordinate policy. The Association has five main committees: social welfare (which organises social welfare and civic action projects - such as building an orphanage and a school at the Vien Hoa Dao - with the assistance of the Vien Hoa Dao; cultural (which publishes a newspaper and other literature); educational (teaching at the Vien Hao Dao school, leadership training courses "for the Buddhist movement as a whole"); religious (which promotes religious activities); and health.

The leaders of the UBA have said that "decisions of the Association are taken independently of the leadership (of the United Buddhist Church), although as a religious organisation the Association must take orders from Thich Thien Minh". If there was a disagreement on policy between the Church and the UBA, they added, "the Association would act independently". But so far there have been no disagreements on either strategy or tactics. The "greater part" of the Association's funds are said by the UBA leaders to come from the Commissioner for Youth Affairs' budget, and some from a variety of other sources.

All six Buddhist youth organisations elect local and National Presidents in a manner similar to that of the UBA. Each of the six National Presidents proposes the name of a Venerable to Thich Thien Minh, to act as an intermediary between the group which each National President heads and Thich Thien Minh.

At the local level, in Saigon the six presidents of the Buddhist youth groups meet regularly - twice a month - to discuss their programmes. Usually Thich Thien Minh is present: usually also, the National Presidents are also the Saigon-area Presidents.

(f) Catholic Student Groups

Although they are smaller in number than the University Buddhist Association, the Catholic groups are better disciplined, and are much influenced

as are the Buddhist groups, by the views of the individual priest assigned to work with them.

(1) Federation of Catholic Students

There are Catholic Societies in each of the Faculties of the University of Saigon, each averaging 80-100 members, according to Catholic student leaders.

(2) Young Christian Students' Association (YCS)

The YCS at the University of Saigon has a reported membership of about 500 members, with branch organisations in each faculty. Activities are educational and cultural.

(3) Valiant Hearts

This is the militant organisation of Catholic students in Saigon: almost all of its activities are religious in character.

(4) Movement of Students for Freedom and Democracy

This is not strictly speaking a Catholic organisation since its membership of some hundreds includes non-catholics, but it works closely with the Greater Catholic Unity Force and its militant Chairman, Father Hoang Quynh. It is militantly anti-communist.

(g) National Unions of Students

Under President Diem's regime, there was an NUS controlled by the government through rigged elections, the Tong Hoi Sinh Vien Viet-nam Quoc-Gia. This organisation was fiercely anti-communist, but operated as a tool of Ngo Dinh Nhu. Its leaders were not representative. The students regarded the leaders of the Union as Diem's agents, ignored the Union and directed their anti-Diem activities through other channels.

In 1964, efforts were made to re-create a free NUS, but no agreement was reached on how to eliminate the disparity in size between Saigon and the other universities in such a way that minority views might carry weight rather than be drowned by 20,000 votes. Most students agreed that the delegation sent to the 11th I. S. C. represented a national union in no more than name and was really a National Delegation of prominent student leaders who had oppressed Diem and though sponsored by the government also had the support of the various student organisations. Progress towards a solution of the problems of representation was being made in 1965, only to be stalemated by differences over whether Van Hanh University could be admitted to the NUS. Both Hue and Dalat opposed such admission during the 1965-66 academic year. At the time of the RIC team's visit in April/May 1966, there appeared to be

general agreement that Van Hanh should be a member of NUS; but whereas in 1965 it had not been possible to hold elections to set up an Executive Board for the NUS because of disagreements over policies, in 1966 the closure of Hue University prevented the election of a new Executive for the Hue student Union and this in turn was felt to prevent the taking of a vote on the question of admission of Van Hanh. At the same time fundamental political differences (as well as occasional outbursts of Catholic-Buddhist antagonism such as the burning of the SUSU offices in 1964) also divide the various student organisations. The President and Secretary of the Dalat Students' Union were reported in April 1966 to have been threatened with assassination by Hue students operating Hue's radio station, and sought refuge in Saigon.

Various other associations have been formed at different times. Prominent among these was the Student Leading Council which was established in 1964 to oppose the Khanh government and which included representatives of 15 faculties in Saigon and many high schools. In Hue students and junior staff also combined and eventually a "Salvation Committee" was set up of students from the centre of Vietnam (Hue, Da Nang, Quang Tri, Quang Ngai). The Student Leading Council dissolved itself after the government was overthrown.

(h) Student Organisations Associated with the N.L.F.

The Liberation Students and Pupils Union came into being as part of the N.L.F. on January 9th, 1961. Its aim was proclaimed as being to "struggle for the specific aspirations of their group while joining with other sections of the population in the patriotic struggle for the liberation of South Vietnam". Together with the People Revolutionary Youth Union it forms the main bulk of the Liberation Youth Federation (founded in April 1961) which claims a membership of 500,000. Little is known of the structure or leadership of this organisation. Student leaders in Saigon stated that it had very little influence in the University but had stronger cells in a number of high schools. The Liberation Press Agency reported that 200 delegates attended the second Congress of the Liberation Youth Federation on March 28th to 31st. It did not say where it took place. According to an article in "Vietnam Youth", journal of the North Vietnam NUS, "a broad movement was launched at the closing of the Congress, aimed at encouraging the youth to kill as many enemy troops as possible, to join the Liberation Army, to conduct political struggles to serve the front and to devote themselves to the internal production of food". The RIC team could find little evidence that the Union was a force among students in Saigon, at least. The Union under the initials UELSV (Union des Etudiants pour la Liberation du Sud Vietnam) is a full member of the I.U.S. It has unfortunately not replied to correspondence from RIC.

(1) Students and the War.

Students have played a prominent part in the politics of South Vietnam ever since the downfall of the Diem regime in which student demonstrations were an important factor. The role of the Student Leading Council in 1964 has already been referred to, and students are still an important factor in the opposition to the Ky regime. Indeed it is among the students of Hue that many of the recent waves of demonstrations against the regime have commenced.

At the same time it must be borne in mind that many of the more spectacular student demonstrations referred to in the Press are composed not of University students but of High School students including many boys of only 12 to 14 years of age. In a Buddhist demonstration of some 15,000 people in Saigon in April 1966 the R.I.C. team noted that behind the banner of "Faculty of Science, Saigon University" (a faculty of over 3,000 students) marched only 30 students.

This indicates also a difference between the students at Hue and at Saigon. University students in Saigon are far less ready to take to the streets and to indulge in the more extreme forms of political activity than are students at Hue.

Hue is the old imperial capital of Saigon and there feelings of nationalism run deep. It is also a stronghold of militant Buddhism and the Buddhist leaders have a very strong influence over the students. The students in Hue are often on strike and the University has frequently been closed. In the latter part of 1965, while Saigon was relatively peaceful, Hue students began to hold public meetings to denounce the Saigon Government as illegal and broadcast over a loud-speaker to crowds outside the University daily bulletins calling for a "revolutionary policy to settle the war". The R.I.C. team reported that "In fact, the disappointment of Hue university students over the non-advent of a post-Diem social revolution is more acute than in Saigon, if only because the students there have a greater sense of nationalism. Burdened by the weight of the U.S. military machine forged with wealth and modern technology in sharp contrast with the poverty of the people of Central Vietnam, on the one hand, and having no wish to adopt the harsh totalitarian regime of their compatriots to the North, on the other, the students of Hue are at present in disarray. They are unable, as a group, to see with any clarity where they should place their idealism, and have thus far been used by others for partisan ends. The students of Hue suffer more deeply than those in Saigon the tragedy of contemporary Vietnam".

However the aims of student leaders in Saigon and Hue do not differ much - both accept neither the Ky regime nor the N.L.F. as representative of South Vietnam - except that in Hue there is probably

a little more anti-American and a greater readiness to reach an agreement with the N.L.F. What is true is that the mass of University students in Saigon is not very active politically, and there is considerable criticism in Saigon of the openly political aims of the Buddhists and of the militant methods employed.

The influence of the Buddhist church on the militant wing of the student movement has been referred to above and should be stressed. Indeed many observers agree with the conclusions reached by the U.S.N.S.A. delegation, "The degree of control exercised by the Vien Hoa Dao over youth and students in Vietnam became clearer and clearer as the delegation travelled through Vietnam, and met with leadership among student and Buddhist groups. Particularly during the last days in Saigon, through interviews with three of the most powerful venerables, and the lay spokesman for the Vien Hao Doa leadership it became clear that the Buddhists had tight control over most of the significant organistaions of youth and students in the country." (110)

Thus the major student demonstrations against the military regime in Da Nang, Hue, and finally Saigon in March-April 1966 were carefully coordinated with the Buddhist leadership though it appears that in their later stages the students took the initiative and refused to heed the more moderate Buddhist leaders. Important in these latter demonstrations was the rapidly created "Council of Youth and Students to Safeguard the Nation" headed by the militant Thich Thien Minh. These demonstrations revealed not only the Buddhist Catholic division but also, once again, that between Hue and the other areas as both the Saigon Students Union and the Dalat Students Association dis-associated themselves from the demonstrations.

Indeed the following month marked the most bitter division in the student movement. The Saigon University Students Union supported the Ky government once it had promised elections while Buddhist-led groups continued to demand its downfall. Thich Thien Minh accused the S.U.S.U. of having been bribed by the government (the basis of the allegation was apparently an item in the Government Education budget marked "Private organisations 5 million VN piastre" which however as far as the R.I.C. team could ascertain refers to a non-political distribution among non-University groups). The President of the S.U.S.U. went on a hunger strike in protest. Meanwhile other students, mainly from the Medical faculty staged a coup and seized the S.U.S.U. officers terming themselves the "Student Committee to Oppose Fratricidal War and to Protect Elections". This was a period of proliferation of student committees (one called itself the "Struggle Committee for the Protection of the Fatherland and Citizens' Rights against Camouflaged Communists") but even so nearly all student leaders remained united at least on the necessity of holding elections.

(110) U.S.N.S.A. report, p.11 op.cit.

Indeed since the fall of Diem the majority of student leaders have held rather similar views on the major political issues facing them; the character of the South Vietnam government, the character of the N.L.F., the presence of the United States and even the bombing of China.

There has been almost unanimous opposition to all the military regimes and the call for free elections, at least in those areas under government control, has been and is a constant theme. All groups interviewed by the R.I.C. team demanded elections within a matter of months. The lack of legitimacy (either through elections or through the carrying out of popular reforms) of the Saigon government has kept the students permanently alienated from it.

The antagonism to the Ky regime does not imply support for the N.L.F. The R.I.C. team could not find even among the most militant groups and among students who had spent considerable time in goal anyone who favoured a government dominated by the N.L.F. (This is in contrast to the situation in other revolutionary situations where students are often prepared privately to declare their sympathies with a Liberation Front). They considered the N.L.F. to be a Communist organisation without reputable non-Communist nationalist leaders and did not want to live under a regime similar to that in the North. What they were seeking was a revolutionary non-Communist alternative to cure their country's social, political and economic ills. This attitude is confirmed elsewhere: Ninh Kha, leader of the Hue Student Union condemned the Government for helping the Vietcong with its indiscriminate bombings and shellings and stated that students in Hue were convinced that if South Vietnam could have what he called a 'popular-based' government, the Vietcong would 'with away'. (111) In the words of another observer, "Reading petitions of social grievances drawn up by articulate youth groups is not too different from reading certain material published by the NFLSVN. But it is with the observed political and military policy of the NFLSVN - aimed ostensibly at eradicating these commonly-felt social evils - that many young urban intellectuals refuse to go along. They seek revolutionary alternatives to the NFLSVN, not out of disagreement with the ideological vagaries expressed, but out of distrust and disenchantment with such promises when measured against the actual achievements of communist-led movements around the world. They hope for eclectic, imaginative solutions to Viet-Nam's ills, not subordination to a doctrinaire line. When and if such an alternative seems completely beyond reach, intellectuals may associate themselves with the NFLSVN in much larger numbers than has been the case to date". (112)

(111) Adam Roberts: "The Buddhists, the War and the Vietcong." World Today, May 1966.

(112) David Marr: "Political attitudes and activities of Young Urban Intellectuals in South Vietnam." Asian Survey 1966 p.255.

This opposition to the N.L.F. naturally modifies to some extent the attitude of the students to the presence of U.S. troops. The criticisms that the students have of their government for not being sufficiently independent of the U.S. have already been referred to at length above. (113) Again David Marr comments: "Many believe that a Saigon regime taking actions contrary to U.S. Government desires will be quickly undercut by the numerous counter-measures available to U.S. officials, from public expressions of concern (which encourage rival political groups to act) to economic pressures, CIA machinations, or even military action by readily available U.S. units. And yet any Saigon regime choosing to follow the U.S. policy advice closely is wide open to nationalistic opposition. The real art for contemporary Vietnamese leadership, some pragmatic students believe, is to show concrete evidence of independence while continuing the barest of essential relations with American representatives. Beyond this, they state that Saigon should demand quick correction of obvious American faults and should publicly lecture Americans on Vietnamese sensitiveness". (114)

The Buddhist Students association spokesman told the R.I.C. team: "We want the Americans to be our friends but not our bosses". Considerable reference has also already been made to the dismay and disapproval with which the Vietnamese students view the economic and social chaos created by the presence of large numbers of American troops. These feelings are very strongly held but because immediate withdrawal would probably mean an N.F.L. victory there are almost no demands for such withdrawal. What is demanded is only a curbing of the activities of the troops present. Thus the S.U.S.U. President told the R.I.C. team that the S.U.S.U. accepted the presence of U.S. forces in Vietnam on three conditions:

- a) that this presence should not be harmful to the social order of Vietnam:
- b) that these forces should not interfere with the internal political affairs of Vietnam:
- c) that the forces should avoid economic disturbance in Vietnam caused by their greater purchasing power and that the "free world" should encourage a firmer, more diversified economic base in Vietnam.

Somewhat surprisingly also the bombing of China is a popular course among many students. This in part reflects a feeling that Vietnam is being used as a battleground in a big-power confrontation between U.S. and China, and in part it reflects a belief that a root cause of the Vietnamese war is a desire by China to dominate its traditionally hostile small neighbourhood.

(113) see above under "Coups, Counter-Coups and Disorders". final section.

(114) *ibid*, p. 258

The students are sick with horror at a war that is slowly destroying their country and their future . The flow of hundreds of thousands of refugees to the urban areas is a constant reminder that it is the rural people that bear the brunt of destruction of both sides. Almost all want a negotiated political settlement of the war as rapidly as possible - but not at any price. First they seek a democratic elected government which will spearhead fundamental revolutionary changes that may put non-Communist nationalists in some real bargaining position. The settlement of the war they seek will allow their country to undergo a social and political revolution, free itself of foreign troops, but remain a totally independent democracy where fundamental freedoms can be exercised. Their hopes are not high.

WHO WANTS NEGOTIATIONS ?

One of the most controversial areas in the war is that of negotiations. The U.S. accuses the North and the N. L. F. of refusing to discuss peace - the North brands the U.S. offers as 'phoney' and as a mask for aggression. It is difficult to penetrate the propaganda of both sides, but set out below is the record.

On the U.S. side, President Johnson's Baltimore speech on April 7, 1965 when he stated U.S. readiness for "unconditional discussions" heralded a marked change in attitude. Despite official U.S. denials it now seems clear that in late 1963, and in mid-1964, the U.S., probably fearing the effect of talks on the Saigon regime, had rejected North Vietnamese proposals for negotiations transmitted by U.N. Secretary General U Thant.(115) These were dismissed as lacking in serious intent. The New York Times commented editorially "The gnawing thought will never be erased: that opportunity tapped faintly at the door - and the United States would not open it."(116)

Even after the Baltimore speech there was at first widespread doubt that the offer was not in fact completely "unconditional". First the President had refused to negotiate with the N. L. F. Secondly the President in his speech had described an "independent South Vietnam" as an "essential" of any final settlement, thus apparently already ruling out reunification as an objective of the talks. On the first question the U.S. position has now been modified and they are prepared to see the N. L. F. at the conference as part of the North Vietnamese delegation.(117) On the second issue the U.S. position is now quite clear that reunification is not excluded but should be left to the "free choice" of the Vietnamese people.

(115) John Gittings: "Vietnam - a record of proposals to Negotiate",
World Today, December 1965.

(116) "New York Times", November 17

(117) Statement by Dean Rusk U. S. I. S., July 4, 1965.

If the difficulties over the status of the N. L. F. can be overcome it would appear that the U. S. offer of unconditional negotiations is quite genuine. They have set out their position in 14 points termed the "United States Official Position on Vietnam":

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace.
2. We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or any part thereof.
3. We would welcome negotiations without preconditions.
4. We would welcome unconditional discussions.
5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions.
6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose.
7. We want no U. S. bases in Southeast Asia.
8. We do not desire to retain U. S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured.
9. We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice.
10. The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision.
11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be non-aligned or neutral if that be their option.
12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least one billion (thousand million) dollars.
13. The Viet Cong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented.
14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace."(118)

(118) "Pursuit of Peace", U. S. I. S. publication.

The U. S. has backed these proposals with a number of "peace offensives" (i. e. attempts to gain the support of neutral and other nations for the convening of a conference on Vietnam) sometimes combined with "pauses" in the bombing of North Vietnam. It is now the turn of the North however to denounce the proposals as "not genuine". As long as the U. S. large scale military commitment continues they denounce the offers as a fraud. "To cover up their aggressive actions such as the introduction of an additional contingent of tens of thousands of U. S. and satellite combat troops into South Vietnam, the expansion of the war of destruction by the air force of North Vietnam, the U. S. imperialists have spread a 'peace' smokescreen to soothe and deceive public opinion in the world and the American people." (119)

The position of North Vietnam is that peace must be on the basis of four points and the U. S. must accept these in word and deed before negotiations begin. The four points are:

- "1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva Agreements, the U. S. government must withdraw from South Vietnam all troops, military personnel and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all U. S. military bases there, cancel its 'military alliance' with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva Agreements, the U. S. government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam, completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
2. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones the military provision of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, there must be no foreign military bases, troops and military personnel in their respective territory.
3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, without any foreign interference.
4. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference." (120)

(119) Statement by Nguyen Van Vinh, Chairman of the D. R. V. State Committee for Reunification, "Vietnam Courier" September 23, 1963.

(120) Speech of Pham Van Dong April 1965, "Vietnam Courier". April 29, 1965.

There can be no doubt, then, that the North Vietnamese government is refusing unconditional negotiations. They justify this by stating that to accept the U. S. offer would be "tantamount to coming to the conference table to recognise their aggression and their permanent presence in South Vietnam and negotiate under the pressure of their bombs" (121) In regard to the preconditions laid down by the D. R. V., the U. S. in any case finds point 3 unacceptable as a precondition holding to the view that the internal affairs of South Vietnam should be settled by elections and not by accepting the programme of the NLF, but the important question is whether North Vietnam is demanding verbal acceptance of these points (i.e. a commitment to withdraw troops) or an actual withdrawal. The answers of the North Vietnamese to this question are far from clear, e.g. in reply to the question from U. S. Professor Staughton Lynd, "What must the United States do before there can be negotiations?" Premier Phan Van Dong set out the four points and added, "A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the U. S. government has accepted the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and has proved this by actual deeds, at the same time has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." (122) The stand of the North Vietnamese has hardened as the war has escalated and it appears that some withdrawal of U. S. forces at least, is a pre-condition for talks.

The stand taken by the N. L. F. against unconditional negotiations is stronger than that of the North: "Johnson's speech is only a clumsy manoeuvre to mislead public opinion ... Johnson's double talk only conceals the darkest designs ... any effort to bring about peace without taking as its first prerequisite the withdrawal of U. S. troops from South Vietnam will be an unpractical one if not an act of connivance at the U. S. imperialists' piratical policy ... any solution to the South Vietnam problem will lose its practical and positive meaning if it is undertaken without the participation of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation with its decisive role." (123)

Perhaps the toughest opponent of talks now is the Peoples Republic of China. It has come to demand a U. S. withdrawal as an absolute precondition for negotiations and condemned all American offers and all attempts at mediation by third parties, including the Soviet Union (China in February 1965 refused a request by the Soviet to find a way out of the Vietnam situation and later publicly denounced the Soviet initiative) as devices to weaken the revolutionary resolve of the Vietnamese people and to force them to accept a compromise instead of victory. "Only the withdrawal of all U. S. armed forces from South Vietnam can create the indispensable precondition for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question ..." (Peoples Daily Editorial). However it is not the Chinese people who are suffering, it is the Vietnamese and the Chinese leaders bear a weighty responsibility both to the Vietnamese people and the world for their continued pressure on the D. R. V. to refuse to accept any proposal for talks.

(121) Nguyen Van Vinh, op.cit.

(122) "Vietnam Courier" (Hanoi), January 31, 1966.

(123) "Vietnam Courier", April 29, 1965.

A number of other countries have made initiatives for a peace conference. Britain, one of the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, has on a number of occasions wanted to reconvene this Conference but the other co-chairman, Russia, has not considered the time appropriate. In March 1965 the conference of 17 non-aligned nations made "an urgent appeal to the parties concerned to start such negotiations without posing any preconditions . . ." (124) The U. S. accepted this appeal but North Vietnam replied that after its four points were accepted as a basis "favourable conditions will be created for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem and it will be possible to consider the reconvening of an international conference on the pattern of 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam." (125) A Commonwealth peace mission in June 1965, and an initiative by President Nkrumah in July were similarly unsuccessful.

As the war has progressed the gap between the standpoints of the protagonists has widened, not narrowed, and even if negotiations began hope of agreement must be slight. But even if negotiations are a far cry from peace they are a first step. An act by the United States to convince the North Vietnamese and the N. L. F. that its offer is genuine, and an agreement by the N. L. F. and the North to accept the offer seem to be the only courses of action which can provide the Vietnamese people with even the faintest glimmer of a peaceful future for their children.

APPENDIX I

Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indo-China, in which the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America took part

July 21, 1954

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam and organising international control and the supervision of the execution of the provisions of these agreements.
2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the ending of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam; the Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements on the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations.

(124) "Recent Exchanges concerning attempts to Promote a Negotiated Settlement of the Conflict in Vietnam". (HMSO London Cmd.2756), p.25.
(125) p. 65 *ibid.*

3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and of Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.

4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam prohibiting the introduction into Viet Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions. The Conference also takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of their resolution not to request foreign aid, whether in war material, in personnel or in instructors except for the purpose of the effective defence of their territory and, in the case of Laos, to the extent defined by the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam to the effect that no military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilised for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. The Conference also takes note of the declarations of the Governments of Cambodia and Laos to the effect that they will not join any agreement with other States if this agreement includes the obligation to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos or, so long as their security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian or Laotian territory for the military forces of foreign powers.

6. The Conference recognises that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet Nam.-

7. The Conference declares that, so far as Viet Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace

has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onwards.

8. The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to ensure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must, in particular, allow everyone in Viet Nam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.
9. The competent representative authorities of the Northern and Southern zones of Viet Nam, as well as the authorities of Laos and Cambodia, must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who have collaborated in any way with one of the parties during the war, or against members of such persons' families.
10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the Government of the French Republic to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, at the request of the Governments concerned and within periods which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.
11. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that for the settlement of all the problems connected with the re-establishment and consolidation of peace in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, the French Government will proceed from the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam.
12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above-named States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.
13. The members of the Conference agree to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to ensure that the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam are respected.

APPENDIX II

Declaration of Government of United States at Geneva Conference.

The Government of the United States being resolved to devote its efforts to the strengthening of peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations

Takes Note

of the Agreements concluded at Geneva on July 20 and 21, 1954 between (a) the Franco-Laotian Command and the Command of the People's Army of Viet Nam; (b) the Royal Khmer Army Command and the Command of the People's Army of Viet Nam; (c) Franco-Vietnamese Command and the Command of the People's Army of Viet Nam, and of paragraphs 1 and 12 of the Declaration presented to the Geneva Conference on July 21, 1954.

The Government of the United States of America

Declares with regard to the aforesaid Agreements and paragraphs that (i) it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2 (Section 4) of the Charter of the United Nations dealing with the obligation of Members to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force; and (ii) it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.

In connexion with the statement in the Declaration concerning free elections in Viet Nam, my Government wishes to make its position which it has expressed in a Declaration made in Washington on June 29, 1954, as follows:-

"In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to ensure that they are conducted fairly."

With respect to the statement made by the Representative of the State of Viet Nam, the United States reiterates its traditional position that peoples are entitled to determine their own future and that it will not join in an arrangement which could hinder this. Nothing in its declaration just made is intended to or does indicate any departure from this traditional position.

We share the hope that the agreement will permit Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam to play their part in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations, and will enable the peoples of that area to determine their own future.

PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION
FRONT OF SOUTH VIET-NAM

(On December 20, 1960, the day of its founding, the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam issued a manifesto and published its ten-point program, the text of which follows:)(126)

I. TO OVERTHROW THE DISGUISED COLONIAL REGIME OF THE U. S. IMPERIALISTS AND THE DICTATORIAL ADMINISTRATION - AND TO FORM A NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC COALITION ADMINISTRATION.

The present South Vietnamese regime is a camouflaged colonial regime dominated by the Yankees, and the South Vietnamese Government is a servile government, implementing faithfully all the policies of the American imperialists. Therefore this regime must be overthrown and a government of national and democratic union put in its place composed of representatives of all social classes, of all nationalities, of the various political parties of all religions; patriotic eminent citizens must take over for the people the control of economic, political, social and cultural interests and thus bring about independence, democracy, well being, peace, neutrality, and efforts toward the peaceful unification of the country.

II. TO BRING INTO BEING A BROAD AND PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRACY.

1. Abolish the present constitution of the dictatorial powers of Ngo Dinh Diem, servant of the Americans. Elect a new National Assembly through universal suffrage.
2. Implement essential democratic Liberties, freedom of opinion, of press, of assembly, of movement, of trade-unionism; freedom of religion without any discrimination; and the right of all patriotic organisations of whatever political tendency to carry on normal activities.
3. Proclaim a general amnesty for all political prisoners and the dissolution of concentration camps of all sorts; abolish fascist law 10-59 and all the other anti-democratic laws; authorise the return to the country of all persons persecuted by the American-Diem regime who are now refugees abroad.

(126) The text of this declaration corresponds to that published in Bernard Fall "The Two Vietnams" and elsewhere translated from a Liberation Radio broadcast, but paragraph headings are taken from a more recent source in the "Vietnam Courier" (Hanoi).

4. Interdict all illegal arrests and detentions; prohibit torture; and punish all the Diem bullies who have not repented and who have committed crimes against the people.

III TO BUILD AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN ECONOMY, IMPROVE THE PEOPLE'S LIVING CONDITIONS.

1. Suppress the monopolies imposed by the American imperialists and their servants; establish an independent and sovereign economy and finances in accordance with the national interests; confiscate to the profit of the nation the properties of the American imperialists and their servants.

2. Support the national bourgeoisie in the reconstruction and development of crafts and industry; provide active protection for national products through the suppression of production taxes and the limitation or prohibition of imports that the country is capable of producing; reduce customs fees on raw materials and machines.

3. Revitalize agriculture; modernize production, fishing and cattle raising; help the farmers in putting to the plow unused land and in developing production; protect the crops and guarantee their disposal.

4. Encourage and reinforce economic relations between the city and country, the plain and mountain regions; develop commercial exchanges with foreign countries, regardless of their political regime, on the basis of equality and mutual interests.

5. Institute a just and rational system of taxation; eliminate harassing penalties, of ill-treatment of wage earners, improvement of the living conditions of workers and civil servants; imposition of wage scales and protective measures for young apprentices.

7. Organise social welfare: find work for jobless persons; assume the support and protection of orphans, old people, invalids, come to the help of the victims of the Americans and Diemists; organize help for areas hit by bad crops, fires or natural calamities.

8. Come to the help of displaced persons desiring to return to their native areas and to those who wish to remain permanently in the South; improve their working and living conditions.

9. Prohibit expulsions, spoliation, and compulsory concentration of the population; guarantee job security for the urban and rural working populations.

IV TO CARRY OUT LAND RENT REDUCTION AND ADVANCE TOWARDS THE SETTLEMENT OF THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM SO AS TO ENSURE LAND TO THE TILLERS.

1. Reduce land rent; guarantee to the farmers the right to till the soil; guarantee the property right of accession to fallow lands to those who have cultivated them; guarantee property rights to farmers who have already received land.

2. Dissolve "property zones" and put an end to recruitment for the camps that are called "agricultural development centers". Allow those compatriots who have already been forced into "prosperity zones" and "agricultural development centers" to return freely to their own lands.

3. Confiscate the land owned by American imperialists and their servants, and distribute it to poor peasants without land or with insufficient land; re-distribute the communal land on a just and rational basis.

4. By negotiation and on the basis of fair prices, repurchase for distribution to landless peasants or peasants with insufficient land those surplus lands that the owners of large estates will be made to relinquish if their domain exceeds a certain limit, to be determined in accordance with regional particularities. The farmers who benefit from such land distribution will not be compelled to make any payment or to submit to any other conditions.

V TO BUILD A NATIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE.

1. Combat all forms of culture and education enslaved to Yankee fashions; develop a culture and education that is national, progressive and at the service of the Fatherland and people.

2. Liquidate illiteracy; increase the number of schools in the fields of general education as well as in those of technical and professional education, in advanced study as well as in other fields; adopt Vietnamese as the vernacular language; reduce the expenses of education and exempt from payment students who are without means; resume the examination system.

3. Promote science and technology and the national letters and arts; encourage and support the intellectuals and artists so as to permit them to develop their talents in the service of national reconstruction.

4. Watch over public health; develop sports and physical education.

VI. TO BUILD AN ARMY TO DEFEND THE FATHERLAND AND THE PEOPLE.

1. Establish a national army devoted to the defense of the Fatherland and the people; abolish the system of American military advisers.

2. Abolish the draft system; improve the living conditions of the simple soldiers and guarantee their political rights; put an end to ill-treatment of the military; pay particular attention to the dependents of soldiers without means.

3. Reward officers and soldiers having participated in the struggle against the domination by the Americans and their servants; adopt a policy of clemency towards the former collaborators of the Americans and Diemists guilty of crimes against the people but who have finally repented and are ready to serve the people.

4. Abolish all foreign military bases established on the territory of Viet-nam.

VII. TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHT OF EQUALITY BETWEEN NATIONALITIES, AND BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN: TO PROTECT THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN VIETNAM AND VIETNAMESE LIVING ABROAD.

1. Implement the right to autonomy of the national minorities: Found autonomous zones in the areas with a minority population, those zones to be an integral part of the Vietnamese nation.

Guarantee equality between the various nationalities: each nationality has the right to use and develop its language and writing system, to maintain or modify freely its mores and customs; abolish the policy of the Americans and Diemists of racial discrimination and forces assimilation.

Create conditions permitting the national minorities to reach the general level of progress of the population: development of their economy and culture; formation of cadres of minority nationalities.

2. Establish equality between the two sexes; women shall have equal rights with men from all viewpoints (political, economic, cultural, social, etc.)

3. Protect the legitimate interests of foreign citizens established in Vietnam.

4. Defend and take care of the interests of Vietnamese citizens residing abroad.

VIII. TO CARRY OUT A FOREIGN POLICY OF PEACE AND NEUTRALITY.

1. Cancel all unequal treaties that infringe upon the sovereignty of the people and that were concluded with other countries by the servants of the Americans.

2. Establish diplomatic relations with all countries regardless of their political regime, in accordance with the principles of peaceful co-existence adopted at the Bandung Conference.

3. Develop close solidarity with peace-loving nations and neutral countries; develop free relations with the nations of Southeast Asia, in particular with Cambodia and Laos.

4. Stay out of any military bloc; refuse any military alliance with another country.

5. Accept economic aid from any country willing to help us without attaching any conditions to such help.

IX. TO ESTABLISH NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ZONES AND ADVANCE TOWARDS PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION OF THE FATHERLAND.

The peaceful reunification of the country constitutes the dearest desire of all our compatriots throughout the country. The National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam advocates the peaceful reunification by stages on the basis of negotiations and through the seeking of ways and means in conformity with the interests of the Vietnamese nation.

While awaiting this reunification, the governments of the two zones will, on the basis of negotiations, promise to banish all separatist and warmongering propaganda and not to use force to settle differences between the zones. Commercial and cultural exchanges between the two zones will be implemented; the inhabitants of the two zones will be free to move about throughout the country as their family and business interests indicate. The freedom of postal exchanges will be granted.

X. TO OPPOSE AGGRESSIVE WAR, ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND DEFEND WORLD PEACE.

1. Struggle against all aggressive war and against all forms of imperialist domination; support the national emancipation movements of the various peoples.
2. Banish all war-mongering propaganda; demand general disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear weapons; and advocate the utilization of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.
3. Support all movements of struggle for peace, democracy, and social progress throughout the world; contribute actively to the defense of peace in Southeast Asia and in the world.

RESOLUTION OF THE TWELFTH ISC

The 12th ISC, viewing with grief and anger the continuing war in Vietnam, which is daily costing the lives of hundreds, and considering

- that the Vietnamese people have had a long and tragic history of foreign domination and resistance to that domination;
- the long history of the Vietnamese people of struggle for national independence against Chinese, Japanese and French domination;
- that this struggle is a just and necessary one and represents the desires of the Vietnamese people;
- that for centuries the peasants of Vietnam have been oppressed by the landlords, who have always opposed any measure of political or economic reform;
- that these landlords were supported by the French imperialism and colonial bureaucracy;
- the heroic struggle of the Vietminh during World War II against the corrupt French colonial regime and against Japanese occupying forces for national independence and social justice;
- that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh was established in 1945 after the overthrow of the Japanese;
- the assistance of the US to the French colonial war against the Vietminh led by Ho Chi Minh;
- that the reactionary and corrupt regime of Bao Dai, supported by the French, opposed every movement of social and political democracy;
- the Vietnam finally gained its independence after a bloody war against resurgent French imperialism;
- that the Geneva Agreement which the US refused to sign in ending the war established the 17th Parallel purely as a provisional military demarcation line and not as a political boundary;
- that the responsibility for failure to hold elections for a Government of a unified Vietnam as required by the Geneva Agreement rests with the Government of the US because of its encouragement and the support of Diem's refusal to hold elections and its refusal to recognise the validity of the Geneva Agreement;
- that the division of Vietnam resulted in a flow of nine hundred thousand refugees from the Northern zone to the Southern zone;

- that only a month after the signing of the Geneva Agreement, the SEATO was established, on the initiative of John Foster Dulles 'in order to provide for any act of aggression against South Vietnam';
- that the Diem regime, despite its repeated promises of agrarian reform, not only continuously failed to carry them out but also maintained its defence of feudalist oppression at the expense of the peasants;
- that the people of South Vietnam suffered for nine years under the dictatorial rule of Ngo Dinh Diem and his brothers during which all democratic freedoms were suppressed;
- that the Diem regime restored the feudalistic order that had been partially broken down by the Vietminh war of liberation;
- that the US offered continued support to a regime of this nature;
- that since 1954 in the DRV basic agrarian reform has been undertaken by the Government of Ho Chi Minh in the face of resistance elements, several thousand of whom were killed as a result of the decisions of the People's Courts;
- that the people of North Vietnam first under the Vietnamese Popular National Front (the national communist coalition) and then under the Bao Dang communist party of Ho Chi Minh have attained independence and considerable economic progress and have had to continue their struggle in the diplomatic sphere to prevent an excessive political influence by the People's Republic of China;
- that the revolution in South Vietnam started as a spontaneous liberation movement led by Vietminh cadres against the excesses of the Diem regime;
- that the resistance movement gained widespread support because the NLF distributed land to the peasants and advocated other popular reforms while at the same time the Diem regime was widely hated for its repressive measures; on the other hand, in some areas where the NLF could not get popular support, it pursued its objectives by means of terrorism;
- that even according to Dean Rusk, over 80 per cent of the freedom fighters of the South are 'South Vietnamese';
- that 75 per cent of the land area of South Vietnam outside the cities containing 25 per cent of the population is under the de facto government of the NLF and the NLF has considerable support in other areas;
- that the struggle in South Vietnam thus is primarily a civil war now supported by infiltration of arms and soldiers from the North and the explanation of the origins of the war as 'aggression from the North' is incorrect;
- that the International Control Commission in 1962 found that in specific instances armed personnel, arms and munitions had been infiltrated from the North; the flow has since increased greatly;

- that the people of South Vietnam since the fall of Diem have suffered under a series of unrepresentative and dictatorial military and civil regimes, receiving considerable aid from the United States;
- that the number of United States troops in South Vietnam has been built up to a massive 280,000, is still rising, and this has had a seriously disrupting effect on the Vietnamese way of life and economy;
- that following a series of complaints over the years about the unauthorised entry of US military personnel, the I.C.C., after the US military build-up in 1962, finally found that the military aid from the United States violated articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Agreement, and that there was a military alliance between the US and South Vietnam which violated Article 19 of the Agreement;
- that the economic progress of South Vietnam was dislocated in these years both by destructive NLF activity and by attempts by the South Vietnamese Government to regroup the population in agrivillages and strategic hamlets;
- that the economy and lives of the people are even more badly disrupted now by bombing missions on villages and use of defoliation sprays in areas considered to be hostile to the South Vietnam Government;
- that the US has used gas, napalm, and defoliation spray as weapons of war;
- that the Buddhists and students have for the past three years waged a gallant struggle against the military regimes and in favour of free elections for a democratic government which will carry out economic and social reform in South Vietnam;
- that the Government of South Vietnam has placed controls on the conduct of the proposed elections by refusing to allow the candidacy of those who advocated neutralist or communist form of rule;
- that the treatment of prisoners by both sides is not in accord with the Geneva Convention;
- that the bombing of North Vietnam by the United States was a dangerous act of aggression in the escalation of the war and that this bombing of both North and South has caused the death of many innocent people;
- that this bombing has been intensified by strikes at petroleum storage areas around the heavily populated urban centres of Hanoi and Haiphong, thus jeopardising the possibility of a negotiated peace and the lives and livelihood of the people;
- that the escalation of the war constitutes a serious threat to world peace;
- that the US which for two years has rejected all offers of negotiations by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and National Liberation Front has in the last

year called for negotiations but has not yet accepted the NLF as a separate participant in the negotiations;

- that the South Vietnamese military regime has refused to participate in negotiations;
- that the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the USSR have stated that the decision on peace negotiations is a matter for the Vietnamese people and that they would support such a decision;
- that the uncompromising attitude of the People's Republic of China is not conducive to the attainment of a negotiated settlement;
- that the North Vietnam Government and the NLF have rejected both United States proposals and initiatives by neutral nations for negotiations leading to a settlement;
- that widespread demonstrations have taken place all over the world against the US actions in Vietnam;

This Conference

- welcomes and supports the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people for social justice and national independence;
- condemns the brutal repression of internal, especially Buddhist political opposition by the fascist military regime of Marshall Lao Ky;
- condemns the persistent and flagrant violations of the Geneva Declaration by the United States, and the presence in Vietnam of 280,000 US troops and the troops of its allies, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand;
- condemns the numerous violations by the Government of South Vietnam of the 1954 Geneva Accords;
- considers that South Vietnam and the United States are the parties basically responsible for the current conflict in Vietnam because of their violations of the Geneva Agreement in failing to hold the elections provided for in the final declaration of the Geneva Agreement, elections which the Geneva Conference envisaged as the final solution to the Vietnam problem;
- condemns the violations of the Accords by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), although recognising that the sending of DRVN troops into South Vietnam was in response to an American military build-up there and that there is escalation of the war against the DRVN;
- strongly condemns the government of the United States for the bombing of North Vietnam by US planes and in particular the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, which constitutes an unjustifiable attack upon the people of that country as well as a

serious escalation of the war, and a threat to world peace;

- condemns the bombing, by US and South Vietnamese planes, of South Vietnamese villages; the use of gas, napalm, and defoliation sprays by US and South Vietnamese troops;
- condemns the terrorist methods used by the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam;
- condemns the military regime of Marshall Ky and the attempt of the United States to foist this unrepresentative clique upon the Vietnamese people;
- strongly supports the struggle of Vietnamese students and people for free elections to elect a government which will carry out social and political reform;
- recognises the National Liberation Front as a genuine nationalist movement and therefore acceptable as a negotiating partner;
- deplores the fact that, although making numerous offers of 'unconditional' negotiations, the US Government has refused to recognise the NLF as a separate participant in such negotiations, and has repeatedly escalated the war, thereby damaging any possibility of negotiations;
- deplores the intransigent attitudes toward negotiations taken, for different reasons, by the DRVN, South Vietnam and the People's Republic of China;
- calls on the British Government to cease all support, moral or otherwise to the US Government and further to cease the sale of arms to the Australian Government who eventually use such arms against the peoples of Vietnam;
- commends the efforts of the various non-aligned and other countries which have attempted to bring about a cease-fire and conditions conducive to negotiations;
- demands that the US immediately cease bombing, throughout all Vietnam; and begin de-escalation by reducing its military presence in South Vietnam;
- and calls upon all parties to cease hostilities immediately and to agree to negotiations based on Geneva settlement and aimed at the total withdrawal from Vietnam of the troops of the US and her allies; the withdrawal of troops of the DRVN from South Vietnam; and the establishment of a democratic government, in a reunified Vietnam, which will be capable of creating conditions of independence, social justice, and economic progress, according to the will of the Vietnamese people.

Footnote: North Vietnam is the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and South Vietnam is the Republic of Vietnam.

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The members of R&I are:

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John B. Smith	USA
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