

MEMORANDUM  
RM-5281/1-ARPA  
SEPTEMBER 1967

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## THE HIGHLAND PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gerald C. Hickey

PREPARED FOR:  
ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY

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*The* RAND *Corporation*  
SANTA MONICA • CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

This study of the montagnards of South Vietnam examines their needs and aspirations in relation to the policies of successive governments in Saigon. The Highlanders' strategic location in the present war makes it imperative for the central government to win their support. Various means to that end are discussed.

The Memorandum consists of a survey of 21 Highland ethnic groups and subgroups. Using standard anthropological techniques, the study draws on the small body of available literature on the Highlanders; on recent first-hand investigation in the field, including visits to villages of all 21 highland groups covered by the survey; on discussions with highland leaders; and on recent statistics and documents provided by GVN and American authorities in Saigon.

An earlier Memorandum by the same author provided a general introduction to the montagnards of South Vietnam. This was The Major Ethnic Groups of the South Vietnamese Highlands, RM-4041-ARPA, April 1964.

The author, Gerald C. Hickey, is an anthropologist and has been a research staff member of The RAND Corporation since the end of 1963. His experience of Vietnam antedates his association with RAND, and he has lived in that country almost continuously for six years. He is the author (with Frank M. LeBar and John K. Musgrave) of Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia, Human Relations Area Files Press, New York, 1964.

Author's Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Special Commission for Highland Affairs (GVN); the Summer Institute of Linguistics; the Advanced Research Projects Agency Field Unit in Saigon; the MAC/V advisory groups in I, II, and III Corps areas; and the USAID province representatives and their staffs.

SUMMARY

The "Highlanders," or montagnards, of South Vietnam, whose total number has been estimated at up to a million, are indigenous ethnic groups -- racially and linguistically distinct from the lowland Vietnamese -- who are dispersed throughout the upland areas, from the 17th Parallel southward to the Saigon plain, that is to say, over roughly two-thirds of the South Vietnamese land mass. In the past, these predominantly rural people have been removed from the centers of government, French or Vietnamese, by their geographic isolation, their inability to compete with the culturally more advanced Vietnamese, and a tribal economy that necessitated few contacts with the world beyond the village.

Since the founding of the Republic of Vietnam, however, the Highlanders' role and status have been changing. The French administration had found it expedient to let them cultivate their languages and customs and dispense their own form of justice in indigenous courts, and their connection with national institutions therefore had remained quite loose. The Diem government, by contrast, sought to assimilate and absorb them into Vietnamese society in ways that aroused the Highlanders' active discontent and thereby spawned unprecedented protest movements under a strong and vocal leadership. In recent years some of the most articulate highland spokesmen have been identified with a dissident movement known as FULRO (for "Front Unifié de Lutte des Races Opprimées," or "United Fighting Front of the Oppressed Races"), whose origins go back to 1958, when the Highlanders first rebelled against what they perceived as

a threat of cultural annihilation. Though the most active leaders of that abortive protest were jailed and the rest dispersed, some of them re-emerged in 1964 at the head of the newly founded FULRO organization, which first made itself felt by precipitating a revolt in five Civilian Indigenous Defense Group camps in Darlac, Quang Duc, and Pleiku provinces. Led among others by Y Bham Enuol, a Rhadé who had spent five years in jail for his part in the protest of 1958, FULRO subsequently addressed the central government in a series of written communications that spelled out the Highlanders' past grievances and future needs and desires, or aspirations, as they like to call it in French. In a series of conferences and sporadic negotiations with the government, the main points of FULRO's demands have been echoed by non-FULRO representatives of the Highlanders, notwithstanding the apparent political division between the two camps. Although the number of specific requests has been reduced from time to time, the essential ones remain unchanged: Highland leaders are seeking guarantees that the government will leave their people free to preserve their languages and customs while granting them opportunities for greater participation in the nation's political life and for more direct control over the administration of the highlands. FULRO, in addition, has outlined explicit social and economic programs for raising the level of highland society, and has emphasized, in particular, the right of Highlanders to hold clear title to the land they farm.

The Highlanders' strategic location in the present war makes it imperative for the central government to win their support. To do so, it must convince them that it

intends to satisfy their express needs and wishes and to let them become part of the national framework without threatening their cultural identity. This effort will call not only for well-defined policies but for concrete evidence of good-will in the form of legislation and practical programs -- both short- and long-range -- some of which will require foreign aid. In return the Highlanders must support the GVN and assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

Though the GVN thus far has vacillated in its responsiveness to the Highlanders' demands, it has made some progress toward convincing them of its good faith. The most notable achievement to date has been the formation of the Special Commission for Highland Affairs (SCHA) in the central government and the appointment of a highland leader, Paul Nur, once jailed for his part in the 1958 revolt, to the post of Commissioner. The government also has launched various educational programs and has reactivated some of the Highland Law Courts, an institution that had flourished under the French but had been relegated to insignificance when the Diem regime introduced Vietnamese legal codes in the highlands. Recent GVN-FULRO talks have centered on the granting of guarantees that all future Vietnamese governments will honor a statut particulier, a "bill of rights" that would incorporate in a single document all agreements between the GVN and the Highlanders. The crucial matter of FULRO's support of the war effort may hinge on whether or not such assurances are promptly forthcoming.

The benefits that the GVN would reap from the active support of FULRO are many. Beyond the immediate acquisition of an estimated 3000 to 5000 armed men skilled in jungle warfare and familiar with the mountain terrain near Cambodia, it would greatly help the government's intelligence network

at the village level in areas where FULRO has much popular following. Also, evidence of FULRO's pro-GVN stand and of the government's willingness to let the Highlanders assume a larger role within the nation would lessen not only the chance of open discontent and protest but also the demand for autonomy and, most important, the Highlanders' susceptibility to the appeal of the Viet Cong, whose presence in the highlands would thus become increasingly untenable. Ultimately, of course, such a course of mutual accommodation would serve the important objective of weaving the various ethnic groups into the fabric of Vietnamese society, furthering their economic development, and thereby adding to the entire nation's political stability and economic prosperity.

This Memorandum, which offers a detailed description of the social and economic traditions and characteristics of twenty-one highland groups, with particular emphasis on local agricultural practices, sums up the various ways in which Highlanders have tried, in recent years, to achieve a greater measure of equality with the majority group and more direct participation in the nation's affairs. Having presented the problem in its historical, social, and economic complexity, and with due stress on the extent to which the GVN is already attempting to meet it, the author goes on to propose a variety of possible measures that would go far toward satisfying the Highlanders' stated aspirations and would benefit not only that important minority but the nation as a whole and the course of the present war.

To be able to devise the best possible programs, it is pointed out, the central authorities, and indeed all Lowlanders, must enlarge their knowledge about the Highlanders

and rid themselves of many current misconceptions. Radio programs and exhibits are among several readily feasible ways of familiarizing the Vietnamese with the Highlanders' social customs and agricultural practices, as well as with their music, folk tales, artifacts, and other cultural expressions.

Agriculture being virtually their sole means of livelihood, the highland people can improve their economic status only by advancing from their present tribal to a peasant economy, in which the raising of cash crops becomes a major pursuit rather than an incidental one, as it has been in the past. This will entail a considerable change in their pattern of life, as Highlanders will have to master new farming techniques, as well as marketing methods, the organization of transport, and, with the greater availability of cash and the consequent rise in the demand for consumer goods, at least the rudiments of economics and petty commerce. In the author's opinion, it would be well, wherever possible, to allow agricultural development to proceed within the existing framework, that is to say, to improve techniques already in use, and to turn traditional subsistence crops into cash crops, though this should not preclude experimentation with new crops.

The expansion of the educational system will be an integral part of this development, as wider primary schooling is needed to spread literacy among the highland people, while secondary schools must teach newly needed skills and techniques, and ready access to the universities is essential to training the future highland elite.

Another problem, whose solution is of crucial importance in any attempt to enhance the economic welfare of the

Highlanders and win their allegiance, is the as yet unsettled question of land tenure. Unequivocal legislation is needed to ensure the Highlander's right not only to enjoy the fruits of the land he farms but to hold clear title to it (and also to land that may be lying fallow at any given time as part of the "swidden" method of rotating cultivation). Studies of existing land-tenure systems in the various highland groups, as well as cadastral surveys of the areas, are essential preliminaries to satisfying the Highlanders' land claims. In line with some of the work begun by the Special Commission for Highland Affairs, the author suggests the forming of a Land Tenure Commission with authority to act. Another recommendation for a means of providing needed basic data on the highlands as well as a site for possible experimentation is the formation of a Center for Highlands Research similar to one in Thailand that is directed to the needs of the Hill Tribes there.

The Highland Law Courts authorized by the French, rendered obsolete by the Diem regime, and recently restored to active function in some of the provinces, should be slowly expanded, their competence carefully defined, and their number and level of operation kept commensurate with the number of available professional personnel. An important part of the task will be the training of more Highlanders competent to staff the courts and to compile highland law codes similar to the coutumiers prepared by some French administrators.

To meet the Highlanders' desire for greater representation in the central government, a beginning has been made with the formation of the Special Commission for

Highland Affairs. The Commission's functions and responsibilities remain to be more clearly defined and considerably expanded, and there is particular need for a program of specialized training for Commission members.

Despite past setbacks in the Highlanders' relationship with the Vietnamese government, the climate for resolving some major difficulties, in the author's opinion, is now favorable; it must be exploited promptly if future conflict is to be avoided.

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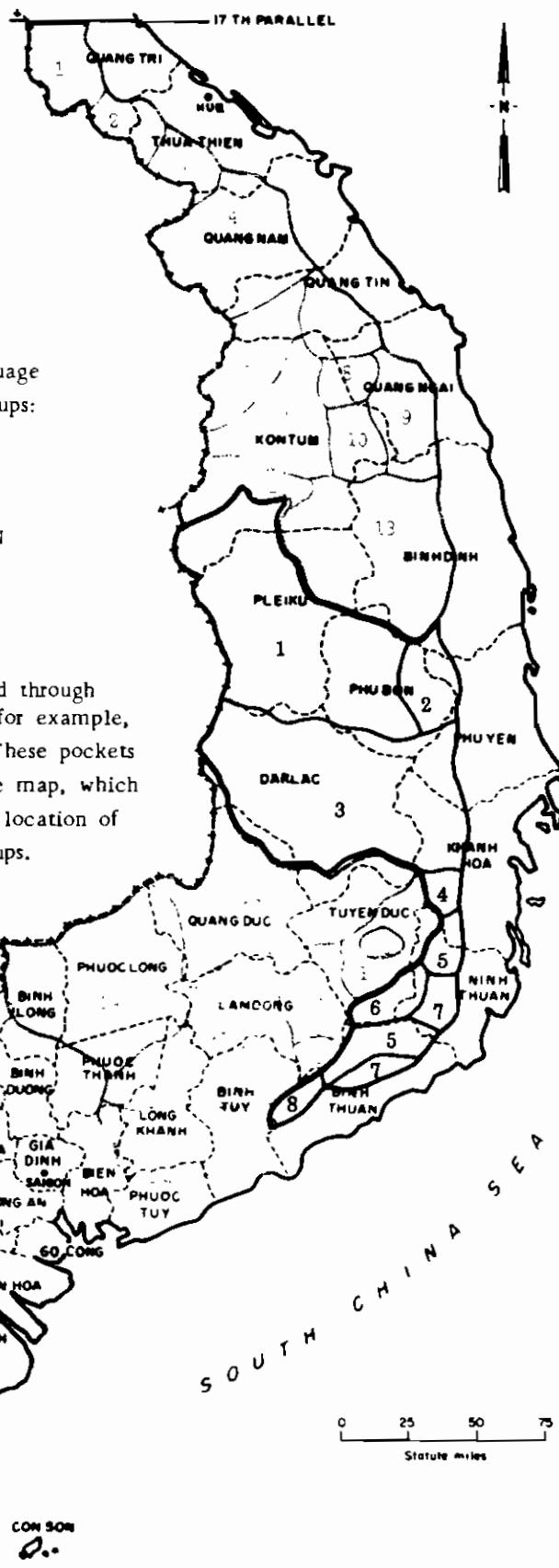
Color codes denote major language groups; numbers denote subgroups:

 VIETNAMESE

 MALAYO-POLYNESIAN

 MON KHMER

Note: Vietnamese are scattered through parts of the highlands (for example, in and around cities). These pockets are not indicated on the map, which is designed to show the location of indigenous highland groups.



## ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUPS OF SOUTH VIETNAM

## I. INTRODUCTION

This Memorandum is concerned primarily with the social and economic development of the South Vietnamese Highlanders. The collective term "Highlanders" designates those indigenous ethnic groups that occupy the upland areas from the 17th Parallel south to the Saigon plain, and are racially and linguistically distinct from the lowland Vietnamese.<sup>1</sup> An almost totally rural segment of the population (only a few refugees and military dependents are to be found in highland towns), the Highlanders are dispersed over an area that encompasses an estimated two-thirds of the South Vietnamese land mass. In the current war this is a strategic area, for it adjoins North Vietnam as well as Laos and Cambodia. The main infiltration routes for Viet Cong coming from North Vietnam pass through the highlands, which, moreover, have been the scene of most major military operations in 1965 and 1966.

There is general agreement among those concerned with the present conflict that the Government of South Vietnam (GVN), if it is to attain a stable peace, must gain the active support of the rural population. One of the greatest difficulties in achieving this end, however, is that of determining what programs and appeals will induce in the rural people attitudes favorable to the GVN.

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<sup>1</sup> These groups are known variously as moi (Vietnamese for "savage"), nguoi thuong (Vietnamese for "highlander"), and montagnards (French for "highlanders" or "mountaineers"). Some French anthropologists call them "Proto-Indochinois" (Protoindochinese). This Memorandum refers to them as "Highlanders" throughout.

Since 1958, leaders have emerged among the Sedang, Bahnar, Jarai, Rhadé, Mnong, Sre, Ma, and Chru, and have welded themselves into a well-defined group. The immediate cause of this development was a threat to the Highlanders' cultural identity, the culmination of a long history of conflict between them and the Vietnamese, who consider the Highlanders backward and congenitally inferior, while the latter believe the Vietnamese to be aggressive, ruthless, and devious. With the formation of the Republic of South Vietnam, the Vietnamese for the first time assumed administrative responsibility for the highlands; it had been a Crown Domain, directly under Emperor Bao Dai, and even Vietnamese migration into the area had been severely restricted. Ngo Dinh Diem's policy was to assimilate the Highlanders into the Vietnamese culture and settle large numbers of Vietnamese in the highlands. It was this threat of cultural annihilation that spawned the new highland leadership and led to the protest of 1958. In retaliation, the most active leaders were jailed, some for as long as five years, and the rest were expelled from their native areas.

Most of these leaders, however, managed to maintain contact with one another. In September 1964 some of them emerged at the head of a new movement, the Front Unifié de Lutte des Races Opprimées (FULRO),<sup>2</sup> which

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<sup>2</sup>Literally, "United Fighting Front of the Oppressed Races," this movement also has been known since then variously as The Movement for Liberation of DEGA-Chams (DEGA is the Rhadé designation for all Highlanders), and the Provisional Government of the DEGA-Cham High Plateaus. FULRO, however, has remained the commonly-used designation.

precipitated a revolt in five Civilian Indigenous Defense Group camps<sup>3</sup> and threatened the town of Ban Me Thuot. Notable among these dissident leaders was Y Bham Enuol, a Rhadé who had spent five years in jail for his participation in the 1958 affair. In a number of written communications, the FULRO movement spelled out its grievances against the GVN as well as its demands and wishes. Essentially, its leaders sought guarantees that the Highlanders would be free to preserve their way of life, and asked for greater participation in the political life of the nation and for more direct control over the administration of the highlands. FULRO also outlined explicit social and economic programs, emphasizing particularly the right of Highlanders to hold clear title to land.

In October 1964 the government reacted to the revolt by calling a conference that gathered together most of the highland leaders outside the FULRO movement, and for the first time an open dialogue took place between Highlanders and the GVN. The highland delegates' requests were very similar to those contained in the FULRO communications. Premier Nguyen Khanh addressed the conference and promised to satisfy most of the demands submitted. Indeed, soon after the conference, legislation was passed abrogating a decree of the Diem regime that restricted the land ownership rights of

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<sup>3</sup> The CIDG camps are part of a program organized by the Vietnamese and U.S. Special Forces wherein local civilians are recruited and trained as members of a local militia.

Highlanders, reestablishing the old Highland Law Courts, and permitting the teaching of highland languages in the primary schools. But implementation of the new laws was not forthcoming, partly as a result of political turmoil and partly because the government lacked the necessary motivation.

Notwithstanding the apparent division of highland leaders into the FULRO and the non-FULRO camps, the two groups actually maintained communication and were not far apart in their aims. In mid-1965 one non-FULRO leader summed up the situation by saying, "The aspirations of FULRO are the aspirations of all the highland people." When, in August 1965, the government of General Nguyen Cao Ky began negotiations with FULRO, dissident representatives in Ban Me Thuot kept in close touch with non-FULRO leaders. After these talks broke down in the late fall, there was a brief but violent second revolt, in December 1965, during which a FULRO unit temporarily captured Gia Nghia, the capital of Quang Duc Province, and FULRO elements in the Phu Thien District Regional Forces in Phu Bon Province slaughtered some thirty-five Vietnamese military and civilians.

In the course of 1966, the situation improved somewhat, as the GVN made some progress toward convincing Highlanders of its good faith. The most notable achievement was the formation of the Special Commission for Highland Affairs (SCHA). Paul Nur, a Bahnar leader who had been jailed in 1958, was named Commissioner, the highest position in the GVN ever attained by a Highlander. The government also has launched various educational

programs, and has reestablished the Highland Courts, for which it budgeted close to 6,000,000 VN\$. In May 1966, it resumed negotiations with FULRO, and these are continuing, with staff members of the SCHA serving as liaison between the GVN and Y Bham Enuol. The talks have centered on a statut particulier, a kind of "bill of rights" that would incorporate in a single document all the agreements made between the GVN and Highlanders. The Highlanders are asking for a firm, legal guarantee that the government will abide by this document at all times. If such assurance is forthcoming, FULRO very likely will give its support to the GVN; if it is not, we can expect future conflicts.

The FULRO movement has come to symbolize highland nationalism. Although it is not possible to estimate the number of its supporters among Highlanders, those familiar with the situation agree that FULRO's influence has spread to Kontum, Pleiku, Phu Bon, Darlac, Quang Duc, Lam Dong, and Tuyen Duc provinces. Significantly, this sphere of influence embraces some of the largest ethnic groups -- the Jarai, Rhadé, and Bahnar -- and also seems to coincide with the groups that have had the most formal education, such as the three large groups just named, the Sre, and the Chru. Personal experience of the author and others has shown that FULRO sympathies are deeply rooted among villagers in parts of Darlac, Phu Bon, and Tuyen Duc provinces. And U.S. military advisors point out that FULRO influence also is strong among highland

personnel in the Civilian Indigenous Defense Groups and in the Regional Forces.<sup>4</sup>

The benefits that the GVN would derive from gaining the active support of the FULRO are many. In the immediate future it would mean the acquisition of an estimated 3000 to 5000 armed men with considerable experience in jungle warfare and knowledge of terrain along the Cambodian border adjacent to Quang Duc, Darlac, and Pleiku provinces. It will greatly improve the government's intelligence network at the village level in areas where FULRO sympathies are deeply rooted.

Accommodation that would yield the government the direct support of the highland leaders would be the more desirable as these leaders command considerable following among large segments of the highland population, and their pro-GVN stand therefore would lessen not only the possibilities of open conflict, such as erupted in the 1964 and 1965 revolts, but also the desire for autonomy as the Highlanders assumed a larger role in the national framework. Moreover, with the growing political stability that such an accommodation would bring, the Viet Cong presence would become untenable in ever-larger parts of the highlands. Since the emergence of FULRO in 1964, the increased FULRO presence in the villages of Darlac Province has noticeably restricted Viet Cong infiltration and political influence.

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<sup>4</sup> In the September 1964 revolt, the FULRO rebels were almost exclusively CIDG personnel; in the December 1965 uprising, they included many men from the Regional Forces.

Over and above these immediate and short-term benefits, such mutual understanding and support would serve the long-range objective of weaving the various ethnic groups into the fabric of Vietnamese society, furthering their economic development, and ensuring increasing political stability for the country.

The best way for the GVN to win the support of highland leaders is to convince them that it intends to satisfy the Highlanders' needs and desires and allow them to become a part of the national framework. Such a demonstration of good faith will entail well-defined policies toward the Highlanders, as expressed in legislation and in programs. Some of these measures and initiatives can be left to the GVN alone, while others will require foreign aid funds and other assistance from the outside. A good beginning has been made. It is very important, however, that action on such policies and programs be taken as soon as possible to avert the danger of future conflict. At present, the climate for resolving some of the difficulties is favorable, but there is no telling how long it will remain so.

Particularly is there a need for an explicit government policy -- perhaps one that should be stated in the constitution -- affirming the Highlanders' right to preserve their cultural identity. They must be allowed, if they so desire, to remain Highlanders in language and style of life, at the same time that they are learning the Vietnamese language and assuming the responsibilities associated with Vietnamese citizenship.

This need not mean that the Highlanders must remain isolated and immune to change; they will be exposed to social and economic innovations, partly through greater contact with the outside world and partly as a result of government programs which they themselves have indicated they want. The present Memorandum suggests a series of social and economic programs<sup>5</sup> that would go far toward meeting many of the Highlanders' aspirations. Such programs, though aimed at satisfying immediate needs, should be planned with a long view; some will take at least fifty years to realize. They also should be related to one another as various aspects of a grand design. Educational programs, for example, ought to be geared to the growing needs associated with social and economic development. They will be of central importance in producing the future highland elite as well as a literate peasantry, and they should be designed so as to impart the many and varied skills requisite to agricultural development. As the Highlanders move from a tribal economy, wherein they produce primarily subsistence crops, to the peasant level, which involves cultivating extensive cash crops as well, they must be taught improved farming techniques, marketing methods, the organization of efficient transport, and the techniques of small business.

This report emphasizes the need for more knowledge of highland societies if the government is to plan efficacious programs. Projects formulated on the strength of the present limited information and based on ethnocentric

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<sup>5</sup> Military and medical programs are not included.

values alien to the Highlanders can only lead to disruption and waste. The kind of information that is needed is illustrated by the ethnographic materials gathered in the course of the author's field work and cited below in his discussion of various aspects of social and economic development. At the present time, too many misconceptions about highland economic activities and inadequate knowledge about swidden agriculture<sup>6</sup> make it impossible to conceptualize a meaningful program for increased agricultural production in the highlands.

Finally, this Memorandum includes a variety of data and documents that should make it a useful reference tool. In addition to statistics and descriptive detail on the land tenure and economic activities of twenty-one highland ethnic groups,<sup>7</sup> it contains some information on agriculture as practiced among upland groups in the Philippines and Thailand, which furnish useful comparisons. The discussion of the Highlanders' express needs and desires and of GVN programs is supplemented in the

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<sup>6</sup> This form of agriculture is also known variously as slash-and-burn, primitive horticulture, field-forest rotation, shifting-field agriculture, and brand tillage, as well as by such local names as ray (the term used in most French and Vietnamese literature on the highlands of Vietnam). The revived English dialect word swidden for "burned clearing" has been favored in recent works by Conklin, Izikowitz, and others. It is an appropriate general designation not linked to any particular region, and it can be used as a noun.

<sup>7</sup> Listed in alphabetic order, these twenty-one groups are the Bahnar, Brou, Chrau, Chru, Cil, Cua, Halang, Hre, Jarai, Jeh, Katu, Lat, Ma, Mnong, Pacoh, Rengao, Rhadé, Roglai, Sedang, Sre, and Stieng.

Appendices by translations of documents, laws, and legislative proposals, both official and unofficial, that bear on the present demands and the evolving status of the Highlanders.

#### METHODOLOGY

In his field work for this study, which began in March 1965, the author used a variety of standard anthropological techniques. He visited villages of all twenty-one groups included in his investigation, and thus was able to observe economic activities as well as behavioral aspects of their life and to meet some of their leaders. In a number of groups, security allowed him to remain in a village for several days; with most others, it was possible to stay in a nearby small town or Special Forces camp and visit villages during daylight hours. Thanks to the hospitality of the Highlanders, the author participated in numerous meals and ritual celebrations, so that much discussion took place in an informal, convivial atmosphere.

Of the numerous interviews conducted with highland leaders, some of those with non-FULRO leaders took place during the periodic conferences mentioned above, as well as on visits to district and province capitals throughout the highlands. The author also talked frequently and at length with heads of the Directorate for Highland Affairs and the more recently organized Special Commission for Highland Affairs. His presence in Ban Me Thuot during the September 1964 revolt, at the request of Ambassador

Maxwell Taylor and General William Westmoreland, enabled him to meet with some of the FULRO dissidents. He later interviewed FULRO representatives who were present in Ban Me Thuot during the negotiations of 1965 and 1966.

Interviews with some villagers and local leaders were conducted in French or Vietnamese. In others, the author used interpreters who spoke a highland language and either French or Vietnamese; at Gia Vuc and Ba To in Quang Ngai Province, for example, he had Hre-speaking Vietnamese interpreters. Long discussions with informants also were made possible by the linguistic assistance of a group of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who have been conducting structural linguistic research on many of the Mon Khmer languages and speak those languages fluently, and of members of the Christian Mission Alliance who also are familiar with highland languages.

The variety of documentary materials used in the present study includes some ethnographic information taken from French monographs on the Highlanders and data from several unpublished French sources. Works dealing with the agricultural practices of upland groups in the Philippines and Thailand proved relevant and useful in the discussions related to the author's recommendations. Translations of pertinent GVN legislation and of various statistics on education were supplied by the Highland Affairs Office in the Operations Division of USAID, Saigon. The Special Commission for Highland Affairs also supplied valuable data. Finally, as a member of the Mission Council Subcommittee for Highland Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, the author had access to some

unclassified documents used in this Memorandum. As regards logistical support and similar assistance, these were provided by the Advanced Research Projects Administration (ARPA) Field Unit in Saigon, as well as by MAC/V AND USAID.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HIGHLAND POPULATION

### ETHNOLINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION

South Vietnam is a plural culture, a national entity encompassing a variety of ethnolinguistic groups. The Vietnamese constitute the majority group, and three minority groups can be distinguished. Of these, the Cham, who are scattered through the Phan Rang-Phan Ri area of the central coastal region and along the Cambodian border near Chau Doc and Tay Ninh, are remnants of a once-numerous Malayo-Polynesian-speaking people who dominated the kingdom of Champa, which declined in the fifteenth century. The Khmer, an indigenous Mon Khmer-speaking group, are dispersed throughout the Mekong River Delta. Having once been part of the Khmer empire, they have close linguistic and cultural ties to the Cambodians. The third and largest of the minorities consists of the many and diverse ethnic groups that occupy the upland areas of South Vietnam and are collectively known as the Highlanders.<sup>1</sup> Linguistically, the Highlanders can be broadly divided into two stocks, the Malayo-Polynesian and Mon Khmer. Any narrower identification and classification of these ethnic groups would raise basic anthropological and linguistic problems whose solution would require considerable field research followed by painstaking comparisons.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1954, some North Vietnamese Highlanders have settled in the highlands of South Vietnam. They include the Nung, White Tai, Black Tai, Tho, Muong, Yao (also called the Man), and Meo. These groups are not part of the present study.

The first question in studying these highland people is the seemingly simple one of what should be considered the proper or standard name for a given ethnic group. The members of such a group do not necessarily use a collective name; in the central highlands, for example, many of the Katu simply call themselves and their neighbors by the names of the villages from which they come. Where collective names do exist, the members of a group will frequently use a name other than the one by which their neighbors describe them, and outsiders will use still a different name. Thus, it is common for members to refer to themselves as "the men" or "the people," and for their neighbors to call them by another name, often pejorative. The Mnong Gar, for example, are known to surrounding groups as the "Gar" but speak of themselves as "phii bree" or "men of the forest." Outsiders -- French, Vietnamese, or Americans -- usually adopt either the name of the group itself or the one used for it by its neighbors. In some instances, the name most widely used is a generic term covering a number of ethnic groups. Finally, discrepancies arise from the different ways in which names are transcribed, particularly by outsiders. The Ede, as they call themselves, became Rhadé in the French transcription. This, in turn, is sometimes Americanized to Raday, and the Vietnamese frequently write it as Rade.

The names used in this Memorandum are those most likely to be found in the literature and on maps. Where names are not yet well established (this is especially true of subgroups), it has been deemed best to adopt the designation used by the first investigator. In many of these instances, recent research by the staff of the Summer

Institute of Linguistics (SIL) has suggested minor changes in spelling to approximate more closely the native form of the name; thus, Bru has been changed to Brou, Raglai becomes Roglai, and so forth.

Ethnic classification poses a more complicated problem. Just as in American society, for example, the accent and some of the social institutions of Vermont differ from those of Mississippi, so in Vietnam as in the United States such linguistic and cultural variations do not necessarily point to there being more than one ethnic group. South Vietnam presents an ethnolinguistic mosaic in which, however, the different languages and cultures are not sharply delineated but tend to shade into each other, thus making it difficult in many cases to decide where boundaries between ethnic groups should be drawn. French investigators, for example, have not been able to agree on whether the Rengao are a subgroup of the Bahnar, a mixed Bahnar-Sedang people, or a group apart from either. In the highlands, ethnological and linguistic research is having to be conducted under conditions that are far from ideal, and the classifications and ethnolinguistic mapping contained in this report are therefore only tentative.<sup>2</sup>

Following is an annotated alphabetical listing of ethnic groups in the South Vietnamese highlands. The information included in it is derived from mimeographed listings provided by the SIL (1966), from the author's own ethnographic survey (part of an ongoing research project),

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<sup>2</sup> The Frontispiece of this Memorandum shows the location of the main ethnic groups and the boundaries of the major linguistic areas of Vietnam.

and from the work of LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave, Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia (Human Relations Area Files Press, New Haven, 1964).

Bahnar: The SIL, on whose research all the linguistic classifications herein are based, places the Bahnar language in the Northern Bahnaric subgroup of the Mon Khmer stock. Guilleminet reports a number of subgroups: Alakong, Tolo, Bonom, Golar, To Sung, Jo Long, Kontum, Ho Drong, Krem, Kon Ko De.<sup>3</sup> He considers the Rengao a Bahnar subgroup, although research by the SIL group and the author points to their being a separate group. The Bonom (also called Monom) likewise appear to be separate, whereas the Ho Drong are a Jarai subgrouping. Guilleminet considers the Hroy a subgroup of the Bahnar, but others disagree.<sup>4</sup>

Brou: Also known as Bru, Baroo, Muong Leung, Kalo, Khua, Tri, Leu, Mangoong, and Van Kieu, the Brou speak a language of the Katuic subgroup in the Mon Khmer stock.

Chrau: This group also is known as Jro and Ro. SIL investigators report that subgroupings are the Jro, Dor, Prang, Mro, Voqwaq, Vajieng, Chalah, and Chalun. Their language is Southern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Chru: The Chru speak a language of the Malayo-Polynesian stock. They also are known as Churu, Cado, and sometimes Chrau.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul P. Guilleminet, "Recherches sur les croyances des tribus du Haut-Pays d'Annam, les Bahnar du Kontum et leurs voisins, les magiciens," Institut Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme, Bulletins et Travaux, Vol. 4, Hanoi, 1941, pp. 12-13; and Coutumier de la tribu Bahnar des Sedang et des Jarai (de la province de Kontum), Publications of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. 32, Paris, 1952, pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> See the separate listing for the Hroy, below.

Cil: This group also is known as the Chil, Kil, and Mnong Kil or Mnong Cil. They speak a language of the Koho grouping, which is part of the Stiengan subgrouping of the Mon Khmer stock.

Cua: SIL reports that this group is also known as the Kor, Traw, and Bong Mieu, and that sometimes a distinction is made between those who live in the foothills -- the Traw and Dong -- and those at higher elevations -- the Kol, Dot, and Yot. Their language is of the Northern Bahnaric subgroup of the Mon Khmer stock.

Duan(?): The existence of this group is not well established and consequently is not marked on the author's ethnolinguistic map. Condominas makes only passing reference to them, describing them as being located in the northwestern part of Kontum Province.<sup>5</sup>

Halang: The Halang are also known as the Koyong. They speak a language that is classified as Northern Bahnaric in the Mon Khmer stock.

Hre: The Hre are also known as the Davak, Davach, and Da Vach, with subgroups reported to be the Rabah (Tava), Creq (Kare), and Taliang. Their language is Northern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Hroy: Guilleminet considers the Hroy (whom he refers to as the Cam) a subgroup of the Bahnar.<sup>6</sup> Various other sources have called them the Bahnar Cham, and Phillips believes them to be a separate Malayo-Polynesian-speaking group.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Louis Condominas, "Notes sur les Mois du haut Song Tranh," Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises, Vol. 26, Saigon, 1951, pp. 13-38.

<sup>6</sup> Coutumier de la tribu Bahnar, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> R. Phillips, "Map of Ethnic Groups in the Highlands of South Vietnam," 1962 (unpublished).

Jarai: French writers often spell this name Djarai. Lafont reports that subgroups of this Malayo-Polynesian-speaking group are the Arap, Habau, Hodrung, Sesan, Chu Ty, and Peli Kly.<sup>8</sup> Other reported subgroupings are the Puan and Hrue. According to this author's own findings, there are, in addition to those reported by Lafont, the Jarai Cheo Reo and the Mdhur.

Jeh: This group is also known as Die and Yeh, and subgroupings reported by the SIL are the Jeh Perak, Jeh Brilar, Dram, and the Langya. Their language is Northern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Kalop(?): This is reported to be one of the Koho-speaking groups of the Mon Khmer language stock, but not enough information is available to prove its existence as a separate ethnic group.

Katu: This group is also known as Teu, Attouat, Kao, Khat, Thap, Nguon Ta, Ta River Van Kieu, Phuong Katu, Kato, and Ka-Tu. Their language belongs to the Katuic group of the Mon Khmer stock.

Kayong: Also called Ca-Rong, Koyong, Kagiuong, Ca Giong, and Tatang, this group speaks a language that appears to be close to Cua, a Northern Bahnaric language of the Mon Khmer stock. Present research suggests that the Kayon may be a subgroup of the Cua.

Laya(?): This group is reported to speak one of the languages collectively referred to as Koho, of the Southern Bahnaric group of the Mon Khmer stock. We lack sufficient data to prove the actual existence of the Laya as a distinct ethnic group.

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<sup>8</sup> Pierre-Bernard Lafont, Toloi Djuat: Coutumier de la tribu Jarai, Publications of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, 1963, p. 11.

Ma: Sometimes spelled Maa, these are also known as Cau Ma. Reported subgroupings include the Ma To, Ma Ro, and Ma Sop (also known as Cho To, Cho Ro, and Cho Sop, and considered by Phillips and some others as a separate group). The language of the Ma is of the Koho group of the Mon Khmer stock.

Mnong: The findings of the SIL indicate that the Mnong encompass a number of subgroupings: The Nong, Dreh, Bunor, Bu Rung, Bu Prang, Bu Non Dih Bri, and Rohong all are located in Quang Duc Province; in Darlac Province there are the Kwenh, Rolom (Lam), Gar, and, according to SIL, the Cil. (The present author's research points to the Cil as a separate ethnic group.) Condominas reports that the Mnong Gar refer to themselves as the phi bree or "men of the forest."<sup>9</sup> Mnong is classified linguistically as Southern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Monam: Known also as Bonom and Menam, Monam speak a language that is of the Northern Bahnaric group of the Mon Khmer stock.

Nop: This group is also known as Noup and To Lop. The author's investigation shows the Nop to be a distinct ethnic group. Their language is of the Koho group of the Mon Khmer stock.

Pacoh: SIL researchers report that this group is also known as the Bo River Van Kieu, and that one of its subgroupings is the Pahi. The Pacoh language belongs to the Katuic group of the Mon Khmer stock.

Phuong: SIL staff members have identified this relatively small group, also known as the Huu River Van Kieu, whose language is of the Katuic group in the Mon Khmer stock.

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<sup>9</sup> Georges Condominas, Nous avons mangé la forêt, Paris, 1957, pp. 13-19.

Rai: The Rai sometimes are called Seyu. Their language is Malayo-Polynesian.

Rengao: This group is referred to also as Reungao and Rongao. There has been some disagreement as to whether the Rengao constitute an ethnic group separate from either the Sedang or the Bahnar. Kemlin treats the "Reungao" as a subgrouping of the Bahnar,<sup>10</sup> as does Guilleminet.<sup>11</sup> Devereux considers the Rengao a mixed Sedang-Bahnar group.<sup>12</sup> SIL research suggests that among the subgroupings are the Rengao Homong, Kon Hongo, Sedang-Rengao, and Bahnar Rengao. Their language is Northern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Rhadé: This group is known as Rade, Raday, Rde, and Ede, but the French transcription, Rhadé, is the one found most frequently in the literature. Jouin reports the following subgroups: M'dur, A'dham, K'tul, Epan, Blo, K'ah, K'drao, H'wing, and Bih.<sup>13</sup> In the present Memorandum, the author's research has led him to classify the Krung (whom some consider a separate group) as a subgroup of the Rhadé. The Rhadé language is of the Malayo-Polynesian stock.

Rion(?): Thomas reports the existence of this group, which he calls the Rien, whose language is of the Koho group of the Mon Khmer stock.<sup>14</sup> There is not enough information about them to prove that the Rion are a distinct ethnic group.

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<sup>10</sup> J. E. Kemlin, "Alliances chez les Reungao," Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. 17, Hanoi, Saigon, Paris, 1917, pp. 1-119.

<sup>11</sup> "Recherches," pp. 12-13; and Coutumier de la tribu Bahnar, pp. 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> G. Devereux, "Functioning Units in Ha(rh)ndea(ng) Society," Primitive Man, Vol. 10, Washington, D.C., 1937, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> B. Jouin, La mort et la tombe: l'abandon de la tombe, Institut d'Ethnologie, Paris, 1949, pp. 132-193.

<sup>14</sup> D. Thomas, "Mon-Khmer Subgroupings in Vietnam," Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota, 1962 (mimeographed), p. 6.

Roglai: According to the SIL, these are also known as the Radlai, Adlai, Raglai, and Orang Glai. They are divided into the Northern Roglai, found in the uplands west and south of Nhatrang and below Dalat, and the Southern Roglai, who live in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. A third, little-known, and smaller grouping sometimes called the Cac Gia inhabits an area northeast of Phan Rang. Roglai is a Malayo-Polynesian language.

Sedang: This group is also known as Hadang, Hoteang, Rotea, and Hotea. Devereux cites the name as Ha(rh)ndea(ng).<sup>15</sup> SIL investigators report some subgroupings -- the Daksut Sedang, Kon Horing Sedang, Kotua (Mangbuk) -- and Devereux lists as another subgrouping the Danja. The Sedang language is classified as Northern Bahnaric of the Mon Khmer stock.

Sop(?): Bourotte describes this group as living on the Dong Nai (Donnai) River in what is now Lam Dong Province.<sup>16</sup> Their language is of the Koho group in the Mon Khmer stock. There is not enough evidence, however, to show that the Sop should be classified as a distinct ethnic group.

Sre: Sometimes called the Cau Sre, they speak a language belonging to the Koho group in the Mon Khmer stock. The author's findings indicate that the Sre can be considered a distinct ethnic group.

Stieng: According to SIL investigators, the Stieng are subdivided into the Bulach, Budip, and Bulo; their language is of the Southern Bahnaric group of the Mon Khmer stock.

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<sup>15</sup>"Functioning Units," pp. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup>Bernard Bourotte, "Essai d'histoire des populations montagnards du Sud-Indochinois jusqu'à 1945," Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises, Vol. 30, Saigon, 1955.

Takua(?): This group reportedly is known also as Kotua, Duan (possibly a confusion with the group already noted), Quang Tin Katu, and Langya, designations which SIL investigators describe as tentative. The language of the Takua would be of the Northern Bahnaric group in the Mon Khmer stock. Available evidence does not permit their being classified as a distinct ethnic group.

Tala(?): The Tala are reported to speak a Koho language of the Mon Khmer stock. More information is needed to show whether they are ethnically separate or a subgroup of another group.

Todra(?): Also known as Didrah, Kodra, and Podra, the Todra speak a language reported by the SIL to be of the Northern Bahnaric group in the Mon Khmer stock. Further ethnographic research is needed to determine the classification of the Todra.

Tring(?): Phillips' ethnic map places the Tring east of Dalat in Tuyen Duc Province. Their language is of the Koho group in the Mon Khmer stock. More ethnographic information is needed to show whether the Tring are a separate group or a subgroup.

#### POPULATION

No complete population census has ever been conducted in the highlands. The figures on Table 1 therefore represent only estimates from various sources. First, there are the official figures released by the Special Commission for Highland Affairs. The only estimates to be broken down by province, they are based on figures reported to provincial officials in 1965. The unofficial figures given in this table were gathered from a variety of sources. Members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics furnished estimates they had arrived at in the course of their field research

among a number of the highland groups. Missionaries in the highlands also contributed figures, and the author provided estimates received from local authorities and local highland leaders. These estimates, like the official figures, were compiled in 1965. FULRO's figures for 1966 were released by Mr. Y Dhe Adrong, head of the FULRO delegation that negotiated with the GVN and participated in the Highlander-Lowlander Solidarity Conference held in Pleiku in mid-October 1966. The government figures are markedly lower than those in the other categories: Whereas the official total is 642.855, the unofficial estimates run to 927,000, and the FULRO figure is 842.635.

SOURCE: SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR HIGHLAND AFFAIRS	CHAM	CHRU	HRUY	JARAU	MONOM	HMONG	PACOH	TEI-01	RENGAO	SEDANG	STIENG	STRIENG	TAKUA	TOTALS
														WE*
<b>Region I</b>														
1. Quang Nam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,200	9,038
2. Quang Ngai	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54,577
3. Quang Tin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,500	12,277
4. Quang Tri	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,884	-	-	-	-	-	-	24,254
5. Thua Thien	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,921
<b>TOTAL</b>								6,584	-	-	-	-	2,700	109,067
<b>Region II</b>														
1. Binh Dinh	4,550	-	450	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,491
2. Binh Thuan	11,409	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,897
3. Darlac	-	-	-	5,2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68,750
4. Khanh Hoa	-	-	-	-	-	14,177	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,429
5. Kontum	-	-	-	10,9	2,150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68,654
6. Lam Dong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,747
7. Ninh Thuan	15,474	939	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28,196
8. Phu Bon	-	-	798	22,1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,693
9. Phu Yen	-	-	6,385	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,064
10. Pleiku	-	-	-	96,1	-	13,553	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	102,570
11. Quang Duc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19,208
12. Tuyen Duc	10	4,059	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,730
<b>TOTAL</b>	31,443	4,998	7,633	134,5	2,150	27,730	-	9,123	26,120	-	1,120	-	-	480,429
<b>Region III</b>														
1. Bien Hoa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,367
2. Binh Long	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,815
3. Binh Tuy	851	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,649
4. Long Khanh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,528
5. Phuoc Long	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,528
6. Phuoc Tuy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	851	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53,359
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	32,294	4,998	7,633	134,5	2,150	27,730	6,584	9,123	26,120	36,701	1,120	2,700	642,855	

**COMPARATIVE TOTALS**

Special Comm. Figs.	32,294	4,998	7,633	134,5	2,150	27,730	6,584	9,123	26,120	36,701	1,120	2,700	642,855
Unofficial Sources (SIL, Hickey, missionaries, etc.)	50,000	15,000		150,0	5,000	40,000	15,000	15,000	40,000	30,000			927,000
FULRO Estimates	50,000	15,000		150,0	5,000	35,000		15,000	40,000	30,000	1,120		842,635

\*Name unknown to linguists of SIL and to the author.  
thus marked is in doubt concerning language and lang.  
in reality include language groups of two distinct 1.

III. NEEDS AND DESIRES EXPRESSED  
BY THE HIGHLANDERS

At the end of the nineteenth century, having brought most of the highlands under their control, the French proceeded to set up an administrative system in the highland area. The largest administrative units, the provinces, were divided into districts, some of which were further divided into cantons. Villages, the smallest administrative units, retained their traditional leadership. Once established, the French system found acceptance. Though some of the older highland leaders recall that they resented and resisted the demands for corvée labor for roadbuilding, they concede that by and large the French left them alone, and indeed protected them against the Vietnamese, as the policy of the French was to restrict Vietnamese migration into the highlands. Thus, in 1925, at the beginning of the rush for land on which to establish plantations in the highlands, the able French administrator L. Sabatier sent a report to his government pointing out that, since contact with the Vietnamese had always been harmful to the Highlanders, it would be preferable to import Javanese coolies to labor on the new plantations.

In 1954, at the time of the Geneva Agreements, the highlands had the status of a Crown Domain (domaine de la couronne) directly under the control of Emperor Bao Dai. Subsequently when the Republic of South Vietnam was formed and the government of Ngo Dinh Diem assumed control of the highlands, the Vietnamese for the first time became responsible for administering the area. There was little to prepare them for this task. They had suffered from a shortage

of administrative talent in the lowlands, and the more remote highlands held no lure for their civil servants. More important, the Vietnamese were unfamiliar with the Highlanders and their ways. Their common designation for these dark-skinned people, who spoke strange languages, wore hardly any clothes, and did such bizarre things as filing their teeth, was moi (the Vietnamese word for "savage"). Most Vietnamese believed the Highlanders to be racially inferior to themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Total assimilation of the Highlanders in the Vietnamese cultural sphere was the unwritten policy of the Diem government, which issued decrees and instituted practices designed to impose on the Highlanders the social institutions and cultural traits of the Vietnamese. From the GVN's point of view, this was to be a civilizing process; but to the Highlanders it was an attempt to destroy their traditional way of life and their cultural identity.

Moreover, the government ignored the Highlanders' claims in its Land Development Program, which sought to resettle lowland Vietnamese by giving them land in the highlands, and in the Highland Resettlement plan, under which Highlanders were forced off their ancestral land and into "reservations." Two decrees, in 1958 and 1959, deprived Highlanders of the right to own the land they farmed. The

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<sup>1</sup> The North Vietnamese government, in assuming administrative control of the northern highlands, had the advantage over the South Vietnamese government of dealing with people who were racially akin to the Vietnamese, and who by Vietnamese standards were relatively advanced. Also, they benefitted by the long history of cultural contact between the northern Highlanders and the Vietnamese.

Highland Law Courts established by the French to arbitrate disputes among Highlanders were relegated to insignificance as Vietnamese legal codes were introduced for the first time. Instruction in highland languages was banned under the Diem regime, highland place names gave way to Vietnamese designations, and highland military personnel had to adopt Vietnamese names. In addition to such general legislation, local administrators set policies of their own. A province chief in Darlac forbade the Rhadé to enter Ban Me Thuot wearing their traditional loin cloths, and required them to be dressed in shirt and trousers. In Pleiku, a province chief ordered Jarai refugees to build their new houses on the ground, Vietnamese style, rather than on piling as was their custom.

Early in 1958, as a result of these measures, a group of highland leaders from Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac, and Tuyen Duc provinces formed the "Bajaraka" Movement.<sup>2</sup> In May, they organized a special committee, which was to carry their complaints to the GVN. They drew up a request for a "Special Charter" that would give the Highlanders greater autonomy, and transmitted it to President Diem in September. On September 9, they called for a general strike in Ban Me Thuot, and a five-hour demonstration resulted. On September 15, Security Police arrested all seven of the leaders: Y Bham Enuol (Rhadé), Paul Nur (Bahnar), Nay Luett (Jarai), Y Ju Eban (Rhadé), Touneh Yoh (Chru), Siu Sipp (Jarai), and Y Thih Eban (Rhadé).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The name is a combination of the key letters in Bahnar, Jarai, Rhadé, and Koho.

<sup>3</sup> Today, Y Bham Enuol is leader of the FULRO movement; Paul Nur is Commissioner for Highland Affairs in the GVN; Nay Luett is in charge of Special Projects in the Commission for Highland Affairs; Touneh Yoh is Deputy District

Outraged by the Highlanders' action, President Diem ordered the Highland Students' Section of the National Institute of Administration (NIA) abolished, and between 1958 and 1964 no Highlanders were admitted to the school that trains young citizens for government service. Highland civil servants were dispersed throughout the lowlands. And the government requisitioned all crossbows, the traditional highland hunting weapon, for fear that these would be used in a revolt.

#### FIRST EXPRESSIONS OF NEEDS AND DESIRES

Six of the seven highland leaders served sentences of from two to five years. Y Bham Enuol, the last to be released, came out of prison early in 1964. In the wake of the FULRO revolt of September 1964, in which he took part, he emerged as head of this dissident movement. The following year he published a document relating to the history of the highlands in which he cited the discontents that had led to the rebellion and added other grievances against the GVN.<sup>4</sup> Among them were inequalities in the civil administration, in the army, and in public health facilities: Salaries for highland civil servants were lower than those for their Vietnamese equivalents, Highlanders were not readily promoted in the military and were not accepted for

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Chief in Don Duong District, Tuyen Duc Province; and Y Ju Eban is a FULRO leader. Y Thih Eban was Finance Chief for Quang Duc Province until he was jailed following the December 1965 uprising. Siu Sipp was killed by the Viet Cong after his release from prison.

<sup>4</sup> Y Bham Enuol, "Extraits de l'Histoire des Hauts-Plateaux du Centre Viet Nam, Pays Montagnards du Sud," Zone d'Organisation, November 1, 1965 (mimeographed).

officer training, and Vietnamese nurses ignored highland patients. Y Bham Enuol also noted the lack of schools and of scholarships available to highland students, and he concluded by saying that none of the promises made by President Diem in Ban Me Thuot during a 1955 Oath Ceremony had been fulfilled.

From the time of the 1964 rebellion, FULRO leaders recorded these and other grievances and "aspirations" in a series of notes and later at meetings with GVN representatives. They wanted greater participation in political life. Explicitly, they asked for a highland leader (or leaders) to be placed high in the GVN hierarchy. They also suggested having a body of representatives from all highland ethnic groups meet periodically in Ban Me Thuot to discuss the needs of the population, and they requested that more of the administration in the highlands be placed in the hands of the indigenous people.

FULRO leaders asked, furthermore, that measures be taken to resolve the land claims of the Highlanders, and that foreign aid be channeled directly to the highlands rather than through Saigon. On the premise that only Highlanders could pacify the highlands, they proposed formation of a highland army or "military force" under the command of indigenous officers, who would receive guidance from Vietnamese and foreign military advisors. Finally, they wanted a highland flag to be flown under the national flag.

Several of the early communications went so far as to ask for highland representation abroad and to demand removal of the Land Development Centers from the highlands, but these requests soon were deleted from the list. A number of FULRO statements in the year following the revolt

contained sweeping demands -- the most extreme of them for complete autonomy of the highland area between the 17th Parallel and Dong Xoai, Phuoc Long Province -- but they appear to have been the work of radical elements in the movement and did not long remain among FULRO's "aspirations" (the French term favored by its spokesmen).

After the rebellion of September 1964, the GVN organized a conference for highland leaders. The aim of the conference, which was held in Pleiku in mid-October, was to permit highland representatives to present the hopes and demands of their people and to give GVN officials an opportunity to explain the government's intentions. The delegates, selected so as to represent the people of Pleiku, Darlac, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Khanh Hoa, Phu Bon, Ninh Thuan, Quang Ngai, Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, and Kontum provinces, included a number whom the Highlanders looked upon as leaders; others were politically innocuous civil servants.

General Nguyen Huu Co, then the Commander of II Corps, presided over the meetings, as each provincial delegation presented its "aspirations." After several days of meetings and informal discussions, there was consensus among the delegates that the needs and desires of the Highlanders were best expressed in the presentation of the Darlac delegation.<sup>5</sup> Briefly stated, this called for a GVN policy that respected the customs and traditions of the Highlanders and for programs aimed at raising the Highlanders' standard of living. More specifically, the Darlac delegates asked for a committee of highland representatives to be set up in every province, in addition to a national committee

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for the complete text.

that was to be located at the Prime Minister's office. With this went a request for additional appointments of Highlanders to such positions as deputy province chief and provincial service chief for the ministries; a Highlander was to have a voice in selecting these officials to prevent the appointment of corrupt men. Highland administrators who had been dispersed to the lowlands after the general strike of September 1958 should be returned to the highlands, so the delegates argued.

In military affairs, they requested that all camp commanders of the Civilian Indigenous Defense Group program be replaced by ARVN officers who were Highlanders, and that command of any units (such as Regional Force units) made up of highland personnel be turned over to highland officers. This, in turn, necessitated increasing the number of NCO and OCS candidates from among the Highlanders. The delegation asked, furthermore, that those who had been sent to Camau to participate in Father Hoa's "Sea Gull" project be allowed to return to the highlands.

As a step toward solution of the Highlanders' land claims, the Darlac delegation asked for the cancellation of the GVN's Decree No. 153 (1956) and Official Letter No. 981 (1959), both of which severely restricted the Highlanders' freedom to obtain land title. Also, the delegates wanted the highland languages to be taught in primary schools along with Vietnamese. Finally, they added a request for government-run guest houses in provincial and district capitals.

The above were proposed as short-range measures that could be implemented quickly. A list of "long-range aspirations" followed, some of which overlapped with those already discussed. The most important was the request for a Special

Statute, a kind of "bill of rights," for the Highlanders relative to the administrative, military, economic, cultural, and educational aspects of their societies. Some of these demands were subsequently spelled out: In administration, they were for free elections of deputies for any future National Assembly; representation at the Prime Minister's office as well as at lower levels; rules and regulations governing land development; restoration of the indigenous place names used by the French, instead of the Vietnamese names introduced by the Diem regime; and the return of the Highland Law Courts to their former status.

As for the military aspects, the requests were for more highland officers and NCOs for the ARVN; an additional highland military force of between 25,000 and 50,000 men, to be commanded by highland officers and permitted to fly a flag of its own; provisions that would allow highland officers to arbitrate any difficulties involving highland military personnel; and a special code of procedures for compensating the families of highland civilians killed as the result of war action.

Economic requests included the issuance of two bulldozers to every highland district, the training of greater numbers of technical cadres, and establishment of marketing and agricultural cooperatives for Highlanders in every district. In the field of education, the specific demand was for scholarships and financial aid, and for special consideration to highland students in secondary schools and universities. Finally, the bill of particulars included more public health installations and the training of additional public health workers. In the course of the

conference, the delegates also added a request that foreign aid destined for the Highlanders be administered and distributed directly by highland provincial authorities instead of being channeled through Saigon.

Just before the meetings ended, Premier Nguyen Khanh arrived in Pleiku to meet with the GVN officials in charge of the conference and discuss the requests of the Highlanders. The following day, he addressed the final gathering, and, emphasizing the need for unity within the country, denounced those forces among the Highlanders that had created disturbances. He then went over every request. He promised that his government would act on all of them, with the exception of those concerned with the direct administration of foreign aid and with the formation of a highland military force. Before coming to Pleiku, General Khanh announced, he had signed a decree establishing a Directorate for Highland Affairs. It was to be directly under the Prime Minister, thus satisfying the Highlanders' request for representation at a high level of the central government.<sup>6</sup>

In December 1964, a group of fourteen highland leaders (representing the Rhadé, Jarai, Bahnar, Mnong Rlam, Sedang, and Chru) met in a seminar under the chairmanship of Major Ngo Van Hung, the then Deputy Director for Highland Affairs, to discuss the need for land registration, which the delegates based on the following grievances:

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<sup>6</sup> Although this decree removed the existing directorate from the control of the Ministry of Defense and placed it directly under the Prime Minister, its actual function changed little, and it remained essentially a liaison agency.

1. In many areas, privately-owned lands had been expropriated by local authorities wishing to set up Land Development Centers for Lowlanders on these lands.

2. In other areas, Lowlanders had abused their authority and taken advantage of the Highlanders' lack of experience to obtain concessions, such as the lease or purchase of tea and coffee estates.

3. Highlanders whose fields were within areas being cleared by local authorities had been promised compensation in the form of land, but these promises were never carried out.

4. Highlanders whose lands had been sequestered for public works programs (such as roads, bridges, district headquarters, and the Danhim dam) had received less compensation than did Lowlanders in similar circumstances.

The participants in the gathering were agreed that these practices had to be remedied, and reached accord on a set of land registration measures. These specific proposals were preceded by statements expressing the respect of both Highlanders and Lowlanders for state-owned lands and for the laws and regulations governing them, at the same time as they affirmed the right of both groups to develop waste lands and use state-owned lands in accordance with those regulations. The seminar also called for equal status for Highlanders and Lowlanders in their claim to lands which they cultivated and used for farmsteads. It was noted that Highlanders, because of their "underdeveloped economy," should be exempt from taxes for periods to be

determined by local circumstances (that is, by the extent of cultivated areas and available resources in each locality).

The seminar then recommended that Land Registration Committees be set up at province, district, and village levels, and outlined the specific organizational structure for each. At the province level they recommended:

Chairman: Province Chief

Vice Chairman: Deputy Province Chief (a Highlander)

Secretary: Chief of the Land Reform Service

Members: Two highland representatives, appointed by the Highlander Advisory Council, and two Lowlanders

For the District Land Registration Committee they proposed:

Chairman: District Chief

Vice Chairman: Deputy District Chief

Secretary: Representative of the Land Reform Service

Members: One Highlander and one Lowlander

(Qualifying the second recommendation, the seminar stipulated that, if both the district chief and his deputy were Lowlanders, the district chief was to choose a highland leader of good repute to serve as vice chairman; if both were Highlanders, a lowland civil servant would be named vice chairman.) Finally, the Village Land Registration Committee was to be set up as follows:

Chairman: Village Chief

Secretary: A civil servant appointed to this function

Members: One representative from each hamlet

The seminar concluded that land registration could be effected in three stages. The first would deal with areas where sedentary agriculture predominated, security was relatively good, and the administration was well established.

The second would be for areas with a roughly equal distribution of swidden and sedentary agriculture, in which security varied and the administration was not well established. The third would be the reverse of the first, with swidden agriculture predominant, security bad, and the administration nonexistent.

At the Convention for Administrative and Military Affairs, held in Saigon in March 1965, delegates from sixteen provinces,<sup>7</sup> many of whom had participated in the Pleiku conference of October 1964, again presented a list of the Highlanders' aspirations.

They began by asking that the requests submitted to the Pleiku conference be realized. Several of those already noted were repeated, some with modifications. In administration, the delegates proposed the creation of Provincial Highland Advisory Councils that would assist the province chiefs in problems dealing with the highland population; the Directorate for Highland Affairs was to be raised to the status of a Special Commission. The earlier request for a highland military force was rephrased, and the revised proposal stipulated the formation of three Main Force units, up to regimental strength, to be composed of Highlanders and placed under a highland commander with technical assistance from Vietnamese officers. Highland Civil Combat Forces were to be transformed into such Main Force units.

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<sup>7</sup> Quang Tri, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Pleiku, Kontum, Darlac, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Lam Dong, Phu Bon, Binh Tuy, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long.

The request for the direct receipt of foreign aid was changed to read that foreign aid funds intended for the highland population were to be administered by the proposed Special Commission for Highland Affairs under the supervision of the central government and with the advisory assistance of local authorities.

In August 1965, FULRO representatives made formal contact with GVN officials in Ban Me Thuot, and eventually, in response to a FULRO statement of October 23, entered into negotiations on six (later increased to eight) points outlined in that document. The stipulations were:

1. A "special status" for the Highlanders.  
2. A General Commission for Highlanders, which was to be located in Ban Me Thuot and was to have Vietnamese and foreign advisors.

3. A highland military force, whose strength would depend on the security needs of the highlands at any given time. This force would be composed of highland personnel, with Vietnamese and foreign advisors.

4. The return to the highlands of highland military personnel and civil servants serving in the lowlands; those who wished to do so were to be permitted to remain in the lowlands.

5. A more equitable share for Highlanders in governmental and foreign aid.

6. A highland pennant to be flown with the national flag.

7. Willingness to forgo any previous demands for autonomy of the highlands if the "special status" (Point 1) were effected.

8. Participation of a highland delegation in any future international conference concerned with South Vietnam.

At about the same time as FULRO and government spokesmen were thus entering into negotiations, non-FULRO representatives also made a formal presentation of the Highlanders' hopes and needs. As the result of a directive from General Vinh Loc, the present II Corps Commander, a highland delegation consisting of representatives of the Bahnar, Rengao, Sedang, Halang, and Jarai ethnic groups met in Kontum on October 7, 1965, with the Kontum Province Chief. Paul Nur, then the Deputy Province Chief for Highland Affairs, submitted the "aspirations" of these groups, which, in general, closely resembled the points discussed at the Pleiku conference and later at the meetings in Saigon. Mr. Nur emphasized the need to solve the land claims of the Highlanders, and to improve and increase highland agriculture. Other demands included greater participation in the administration, military units composed of and led by Highlanders, a highland flag, the restoration of the Highland Law Courts, and the teaching of highland languages in the schools.

The aforementioned discussions between FULRO and GVN representatives in Ban Me Thuot continued until mid-November 1965, when the GVN broke them off. On December 17, extremist elements within FULRO launched the brief but violent revolt that resulted in the death of thirty-five Vietnamese in Thu Thien District, Phu Bon Province. Numerous Highlanders were arrested, and, after a trial, three leaders of the revolt were executed at Pleiku.

Contact between the negotiators was reestablished in May 1966. As the talks resumed and progressed, FULRO scaled down its demands to the four concerned, respectively, with the special status, a highland pennant, a highland military force, and the Commission for Highland Affairs to be established in Ban Me Thuot. The last request had been largely satisfied with the announcement, on February 21, 1966, of the formation of a new War Cabinet which included a Commissioner for Highland Affairs. Paul Nur, a Bahnar who had been Deputy Province Chief at Kontum, was named to the post. He and other Highlanders from the staff of the new commission (which replaced the old Directorate for Highland Affairs) participated in the GVN-FULRO talks that began in May.

In June 1966, Commander of II Corps General Vinh Loc was reported to have agreed to the four points and to have forwarded the document containing them to Premier Ky's office, which reviewed them and then returned the paper to the Commission for Highland Affairs. Mr. Nur and his deputy, Colonel Touprong Ya Ba, objected to the rephrasing of certain passages and once more submitted the document to the Premier's office. On August 8, 1966, in a letter to General Vinh Loc, Premier Ky agreed to the four points in principle, but indicated that the matter of the pennant would have to be resolved by a highland assembly to be convened in Ban Me Thuot by the Highlanders themselves.

#### CURRENT EXPRESSIONS OF THE HIGHLANDERS' ASPIRATIONS

As is apparent from the foregoing discussion, the wants and needs expressed by the FULRO leadership are much

the same as those articulated by the non-FULRO leaders. Indeed, as already indicated, the non-FULRO group has made no representations since October 1965, and some of its leaders have said openly that "the aspirations of FULRO are the aspirations of all Highlanders." This has been particularly true since the meetings between FULRO and GVN representatives at which the original requests of FULRO were first limited to six, then briefly raised to eight, and finally scaled down to four points. In the recent past, the goals of the two main groups have become even more closely welded. FULRO, in line with the GVN's agreement to its four points, put up four candidates in the September 1966 elections for a Constitutional Assembly, and two -- Ksor Rot of Phu Bon Province and Y Wick Buon Ya of Darlac Province -- were elected. They joined the other four Highlanders in the Assembly to incorporate a Highlanders' Bill of Rights in the proposed constitution. At the Highlander-Lowlander Solidarity Conference held in Pleiku in mid-October 1966, the Bill of Rights was again emphasized. Paul Nur, Special Commissioner for Highland Affairs, outlined some of the GVN's achievements in furthering the Highlanders' social and economic development since the Pleiku conference of October 1964. Then, addressing himself to the FULRO representatives, he said to them, among other things:

. . . you insist on asking the government to reaffirm the favors and supports the government has granted to the Highlanders by requesting the government to publish a legal document or decree which guarantees a Bill of Rights for the highland people as a substitute for the message released by the regime of General Nguyen Khanh. On the

contrary, we believe that a policy or status becomes valid only when the government is really determined to put it into execution.

Following Nur's speech, Mr. Y Dhe Adrong, the chief of the FULRO delegation, addressed the gathering in the Rhadé language (Nur had spoken in Vietnamese). His talk was concerned primarily with the Bill of Rights, which, he thought, the Highlanders should be granted "in exchange for our blood" (referring to those who had died fighting the Viet Cong). He placed particular emphasis on the Highlanders' claim to landownership and their right to speak their own languages and become literate in them.<sup>8</sup>

In December 1966, staff members of the SCHA prepared a draft of the Bill of Rights and sent it to Y Bham Enuol. The latter, who has been living in exile in Cambodia since 1964, has let it be known that, even if he finds the document acceptable, he will require very firm guarantees that the GVN would honor its commitment to it before he will consider returning to Vietnam.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B for the complete text of Y Dhe Adrong's speech.