



October 3 Election in Saigon

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IN THIS ISSUE

Government and Politics

President Thieu's Inaugural Address.....	3
Foreign Observers on Oct. 3 Election.....	5
APU Council Meeting to be Held in Saigon.....	6
Min. Lam on Denmark's Relations With North Vietnam.....	6
Vietnamese Graduates Encouraged to Return.....	6
VN\$ 200 M. Assistance to Typhoon Victims.....	7

Economics

The Vietnamese Agricultural Sector.....	8
---	---

Pacification Program

Security Comes to the Hamlet.....	11
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PRESIDENT THIEU'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Saigon, October 31, 1971

Addressing the nation at his second-term inauguration as President of the Republic, President Thieu spoke about the new phase of the war in which the nation has achieved enough stability and security to launch a vast economic program while keeping on guard to defend its achievements from Communist attacks.

Following is the summary of the President's address:

President Thieu stressed that a unique concern motivated his running for the Presidency four years ago and again this time , that is his determination to preserve South Vietnam from falling into Communist hands and his sense of responsibility to the Fatherland. His sole aspiration was to bring peace to the people of South Vietnam, a peace with guarantees of freedom and prosperity. The President also hoped to continue the various programs designed to build democracy and improve the society.

Recalling his victory at the polls, the President pledged to do his utmost to deserve the big vote of confidence. He vowed to:

- Protect the Fatherland
- Respect the Constitution
- Serve the interests of the Nation and the People , and
- Do his utmost to fulfill his responsibilities as the President of the Republic of Vietnam

Looking into the future, the President pledged to restore peace, to consolidate democracy, and to build prosperity.

The President considers the coming four years as a new phase during which all the people will continue to consolidate the defense of the country and still actively carry out the economic rehabilitation and development of the country.

On his first point, restoration of peace, the President firmly reiterates that South Vietnam is not the bellicose party, that it is ready to negotiate and to keep the door open for negotiation. We are awaiting the Communist side to reciprocate our many gestures of goodwill.

The President also repeated that both North and South Vietnamese "belong to the same race" and that there is an "urgent need for the two zones to rebuild what has been destroyed, to mobilize all natural and human resources so as to give back to the Vietnamese people a prosperous life in peace and leisure."

For this reason, the President proposes to the authorities of North Vietnam to "effect an immediate cease-fire over the entire territory in order to discuss peace in a serious and constructive manner."

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FOREIGN OBSERVERS ON OCT. 3 ELECTION

GEN. VANUXEM PRAISES OCT. 3 ELECTION

SAIGON, October 5 (VP)-- Lt. Gen. Vanuxem (retired) of the French Army, after an observation tour of voting sites on the October 3 election day, said Monday morning that he was very surprised at the large turnout of voters waiting at voting sites since early Sunday, and remarked that he witnessed many aspects which testified to the free and democratic character of the Presidential election.

The French General, along with Belgium Ambassador to Vietnam Marcel Connay and French Consul General to Vietnam Jacques De Folin spent all day touring voting sites in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area and Bien Hoa province.

At the Quang Trung Military Training Center, Vanuxem paid particular attention to the fact that there were votes of the Democracy slate in waste-baskets. Such a fact indicated that the Oct. 3 election was very democratic and free even at voting sites reserved for military men, the retired general added.

According to General Vanuxem, before the election day, he met with many officials who predicted an eventful balloting. "I was very anxious and anticipated disturbances", he said, "but nothing of the sort happened and the election took place smoothly and in perfect order."

Gen. Vanuxem also disclosed that he had interviewed voters who revealed to him that they only wanted security and order so as to continue their daily activities and that they voted for Mr. Thieu because they believed he would realize these aspirations for them.

MANUEL LIM (THE PHILIPPINES)

SATGON, October 23 (VP)-- Mr. Manuel Lim, Chairman of the Governors Council of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICOC) in the Philippines recently praised the Republic of Vietnam government for the successful organization of the October 3 Presidential election.

Mr. Lim made the remark in his letter of thanks to Foreign Affairs Minister Tran Van Lam for the warm welcome the RVN reserved for him when he was on an observation tour of the Oct. 3 Presidential ballot.

According to Mr. Lim, the Vietnamese people had exerted their civic right in a "democratic" spirit to elect the national leader as stipulated by the national constitution.

Mr. Lim made known these remarks from his own observation of such voting processes as ballot casting and counting at various precincts in Saigon.

Mr. Manuel Lim was once Chairman of Operation Quick Count in the 1969 Presidential election of the Philippines.
SENATOR CORDON BRYAN BYRNE (AUSTRALIA)

(EXCERPTS FROM AUSTRALIAN HANSARD)

....I left Australia on Friday last to attend as an observer at the Presidential Election. I was the only observer from the Australian Parliament.

The Parliament of Great Britain was represented by a Labor peer and two Conservative members of the House of Commons. The Japanese Parliament was represented. I think the Parliament of the Philippines was represented. I had the great privilege and distinction of representing the whole of this Parliament and perhaps the whole of Australia....

The International Press was represented by journalists from all over the world and were sent by their newspapers. No doubt they went at great expense, but this event was regarded as of such significance that it required the attendance of direct representatives of the International Press agencies. To my knowledge no representative of the Australian Press in the same category was there. However I had the opportunity, the only opportunity of anyone from this Parliament and perhaps from Australia, of observing just how the election was conducted and to what extent it did comply with democratic forms.

(continued on p.15)

APU Council Meeting

SAIGON, November 6 (VP)-- The Asian Parliamentarians' Union Council will open its 10th meeting next November 11 at Hoan My Hotel with some 100 delegates of ten APU member countries in attendance.

The three-day meeting will deal with a number of APU programs of action in the fields of politics, economy, culture, education, and transportation, drafted by APU members.

These programs, if approved at the APU 10th council meeting, will be brought before the APU's 7th General Assembly to be held in mid-November in Phnom Penh (Cambodia) for deliberation.

All decisions to be reached at the APU's 7th General Assembly in Phnom Penh will be considered as recommendations for the governments of each APU member country.

Observers from Australia, India and New Zealand will also attend the APU council meeting along with delegations from the Republic of Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Vietnamese Graduates Encouraged to Return

SAIGON, October 21 (VP)-- A Committee for Repatriation of Vietnamese overseas graduated experts will be set up in Paris by the end of this academic year's summer vacation, Education Minister Ngo Khac Tinh told Vietnam Press Wednesday upon his return from a ten-day tour of Canada and France.

According to Minister Tinh, the Committee will be run by the Vietnamese University Students Union in Paris with the cooperation of the friendly Vietnamese Students Unions of the neighboring countries of France.

The Committee will appeal to Vietnamese experts of all branches who have nearly completed their studies abroad, to return home to better serve in the national economic reconstruction post-war era.

Education Minister Tinh indicated that his Ministry will do its best to support the Committee's activities by facilitating all repatriation procedures.

Minister Tinh disclosed an average of 1,000 to 1,500 Vietnamese students are authorized each year to further their studies abroad. Particularly, this year the figure reached the 1,800 mark.

Min. Lam on Denmark's Relations with NVN

SAIGON, October 23 (VP)-- Foreign Affairs Minister Tran Van Lam said Friday that the new government of Denmark's establishment of diplomatic ties with North Vietnam was not a surprise for the Republic of Vietnam.

In an interview with Vietnam Press, Minister Lam explained that two years ago, under the government of Prime Minister Bauns Gaard, whose policy was inclined to the Free World, the opposition party in the Denmark Parliament had repeatedly proposed the recognition of North Vietnam. The most critical debate on this issue took place on September 1, 1971. Despite pressure from the leftist Representatives, the government led by Mr. Gaard continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam and not North Vietnam.

The September 21, 1971 election, however, entirely upset the Parliament of Denmark. The ruling party lost an important number of seats at the Parliament, and the new government was formed under the leadership of Mr. Otto Krag, of the former Social Democrat Party.

Mr. Krag is a politician who always advocated the recognition of both North and South Vietnam. Therefore, the new government of Denmark's establishment of diplomatic ties with North Vietnam is simply a consequence of the internal political situation in Denmark.

.....

Asked whether or not Denmark and Norway's recognition of North Vietnam reflects a common tendency of Scandinavian countries, Min. Lam said that among the three Scandinavian countries, Sweden was the first to establish diplomatic ties with North Vietnam (early in 1970). This was in line with the policy of the leftist Swedish government for the past ten years. Despite the fact that Sweden has been usually considered a leading nation of the Scandinavian countries, its two neighbors--Norway and Denmark--still maintained their own policy. The determination of these two countries in their foreign policy was chiefly due to the ceaseless efforts of the Republic of Vietnam in its information and diplomatic activities.

In fact, Min. Lam added, these three Scandinavian countries have been inclined toward a neutral policy. They believed that if they recognized both North and South Vietnam peace would be restored soon in this country.

Consequently, since 1968, these countries have advocated an assistance program to both parts to help reconstruct Vietnam when the war ends. A committee was set up for the study of a project called "Nordic Plan for Reconstruction in Vietnam".

However, this plan has not been carried out since their authors are waiting for the conclusion of the Paris peace talks on Vietnam.

To another question on the present trend of the Republic of Vietnam-Denmark relations, Minister Lim said the Republic of Vietnam established diplomatic relations with Denmark in 1957 as well as with Norway and Sweden. The Republic of Vietnam's ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany is now concurrently ambassador to these three Scandinavian countries. The Republic of Vietnam's diplomatic mission chief presented his credentials to the Denmark government in November, 1969. In Copenhagen, an Information office has been operating for over a year under the direction of the Vietnam-Denmark Friendship Association.

VN \$200 M Assistance to Typhoon Victims

SAIGON, October 26 (VP)-- The Cabinet Monday decided to extract VN\$ 200,000,000 from the National Budget for a fund to assist reconstruction in the typhoon-stricken provinces in Central Vietnam.

The decision was made following Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem's tour of the flood-stricken areas in Central Vietnam.

At 7:30 a.m. Monday, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem headed a delegation to five provinces in Central Vietnam ravaged by typhoon "Hester".

The delegation was briefed by Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, Commander of I Corps and Military Region I on the devastation by typhoon Hester in the MR I provinces.

According to Lt. Gen Hoang Xuan Lam, preliminary reports on casualties and material damages caused by the typhoon were as follows:

---Sixty-seven persons killed, and 91 others injured; 16,808 houses destroyed, 39,045 other habitations damaged to 50 percent.

---Besides, 361 schools, 53 first aid stations, 134 villages and hamlet offices, 79 resettlement centers, and 130 military housing quarters damaged.

---Further, 508 sampans were destroyed or sunk, bridges were damaged from 5 to 10 percent.

---Domestic animals were killed or missing from 30 to 40 percent.

---Crops were damaged from 45 to 100 percent.

Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem presented to each flood-stricken province VN \$5 million, and 50,000 iron sheets. Da Nang city was allocated VN \$ 1 million.

The delegation returned to Saigon the same day.

The Vietnamese Agricultural Sector*

I. Vietnam is an agricultural country with over 60% of its population engaging, partly or fully, in farming activities. Every year the contribution from the agricultural sector constitutes about 30% of the gross national product. Moreover, Vietnam is still in the early stage of development. Its agriculture does not only satisfy the domestic demand of agricultural products, but also contributes from 90% to 95% of the total value of products exported for foreign exchange.

The year of 1969 was marked by a remarkable progress in overall efforts to increase agricultural production. The rice output, after five consecutive years of decrease from 5.2 million tons in 1963 to 4.1 million tons in 1968, (+ 16.5 %), rose to 5.1 million tons in 1969. This was a 17.1% increase over 1968. Other agri-products such as peanut, coffee, tea, tobacco and pepper also showed considerable increase. Altogether, the 1969 crop production index increased by 11.8% in that single year.

As for animal husbandry, its production index increased 13.4% as a result of greater efforts in all fields, especially in poultry and swine raising. Fishery production increased 13% in 1969 (463,000 tons against 410,000 tons) owing to the progress in the motorization of fishing boats and the curfew lifting of formerly restricted fishing areas. With the security situation improved, the greatest progress was made in the production of log. In 1969, 463,000 cubic meters were cut as compared with 2861,530 cubic meters in 1968 — an increase of 61.6%. This is the largest amount of timber ever cut.

The following table summarizes the increase in agricultural production between 1968 and 1969:

TABLE I

Products	Percentage of increase between 1968 and 1969
Crop products	+ 11.8%
Animal products	+ 13.4%
Fishery products	+ 13.2 %
Forest products (log)	61.6 %

For the year 1970, preliminary reports show that agricultural production continued to make good progress.

Rice production went up to 5,651,000 tons, surpassing the 1969 season by more than 500,000 tons (10.5% increase). This was the highest yearly production since 1955. This production was reached as a result of better security, improved seeds and modern farming techniques.

Rice shipment to Saigon in 1970 was equivalent to 417,600 tons of milled rice, the highest figure in five years since 1964. This was 27% higher than 1963.

As for secondary crops, the acreage and the production showed an upward trend in comparison to the previous year. Corn production increased 3.9%, soybean 26.9%, banana 18.3% and fruit 15.3%.

The production figures of almost all industrial crops in 1970 also went up in comparison to 1969: Rubber increased 7.7%, tea 15.3%, coffee 26.7%, coconut 5.9%, and sugar cane 37.5%.

Livestock production in 1970 somewhat declined: water buffaloes decreased 9% (from 626,500 heads to 571,000 heads), cattle 7% (from 340,100 heads to 318,000 heads). However, swine population showed an 8% increase (from 3,741,300 heads to 4,087,000 heads).

As for poultry production, ducks increased by 16% (from 14,102,000 to 16,306,000), but chickens somewhat decreased.

The reasons for the livestock production decrease are twofold:

- The mechanization of agriculture has replaced draft animals with power-tillers and tractors;
- The flood in Central Vietnam killed a great number of them.

In the domain of fishery, there was a marked progress in many aspects: the number of fishermen and fishing boats have all increased; thus the volume of fish catch has also increased.

In 1969, the number of fishermen was 277,118; in 1970, it was 317,442, a 15% increase; whereas the number of fishing boats rose from 81,956 to 88,215, an 8% increase among which a 9% increase was noted for motorized fishing boats (from 39,001 to 42,603 boats).

Fishery production rose from 463,834 tons in 1969 to 577,450 tons in 1970, an increase of 24.4 %.

Rubber production increased by 7.7 % but the volume exported, as shown on export authorization requests, rose from 20,831 tons in 1969 to 24,669 tons, a gain of 15.5 %.

Besides rubber, exports of other products such as cinnamon, rice paper, fish sauce, and duck feathers also increased considerably. The total volume of agri-products exported in 1970 increased by 12.9 %; yet, there was a slight decrease in value due to the decline of rubber price on world markets.

Comparison between 1969 and 1970

	1969	1970	% of increase
Paddy (tons)	5,115,000	5,651,000	10.5 %
Corn (tons)	30,335	31,730	3.9 %
Soybean (tons)	5,965	7,570	26.9 %
Banana (tons)	182,760	218,460	18.3 %
Fruit	222,885	257,075	15.3 %
Rubber	27,050	29,780	7.7 %
Tea	4,990	5,650	15.3 %
Coffee	3,550	4,500	26.7 %
Sugar cane	321,445	442,125	37.5 %
Fishermen	277,118	317,442	14.6 %
Fishing boats	81,956	88,215	7.6 %
Motorized fishing boats	39,001	42,603	9.2 %
Fish production	463,834	577,450	24.5 %

* An analysis by the Ministry of Land Reform and Agriculture and Fishery Development.

However, looking back upon the achievements during the past decade (1959-1969), one must admit that generally speaking agricultural production in Vietnam was almost at a standstill, and for some particular products the situation was even worse. Indeed, the war has adversely affected agricultural production as it brought about abandonment of land, shortage of manpower, difficulties in agri-input supply, limitations on the dissemination of improved farming techniques to rural areas, and restriction of wood cutting operations. The results are self-evident: decrease of cultivated area and low production. In these ten years, cultivated areas of food crops increased only 7 % (2.6 million hectares vs. 2.4 million hectares) while industrial crop land decreased 5 % (175,025 hectares vs. 185,184 hectares). Food crops output increased only 3 % in ten years and industrial crops decreased 55%. Rubber, sugar cane, coconut and pineapple production was most severely affected.

	Production		% of decrease
	1959	1969	
Rubber	65,000 T	23,000 T	— 53 %
Sugar cane	1,000,000 T	464,000 T	— 54 %
Coconut	118,000,000 T (fruit)	59,000,000 T (fruit)	— 16 %
Pineapple	41,000 T	33,000 T	— 19 %

The production of rice — the staple food of the Vietnamese people — increased only 1 % in the past ten years while the population multiplied by more than 20 % in the same period. The rice situation would have been even more dreadful if the government had not taken positive efforts in the IR Rice Program.

In the field of animal husbandry, application of modern techniques and large-scale operations in secure areas somewhat compensated for the decreased production in the countryside. In ten years animal production increased 40 % or 3.5 % a year on the average, which is still too modest a figure. Nonetheless, in spite of a significant rise in 1969, the animal output of that year was still less than that of 1967 (— 5.4 %).

As to fisheries, there was an average yearly increase of 9.8 %, which was rather encouraging but still too inadequate to allow surpluses for export, except for a modest quantity of 6,068 tons exported to Singapore during the past decade.

The exploitation of industrial wood also decreased, or increased a little but very irregularly, except for the year 1969. Lumber production was barely enough to meet domestic demand, thus rendering exportation impossible in spite of an abundance of valuable forest resources that exist.

The quantity of charcoal produced was of little significance as the insecurity prevailed at production areas and as kerosene was used more and more as a substitute for charcoal (7,499 tons in 1969 compared with 105,605 tons in 1961).

This decreased production in the agricultural sector has seriously affected the national economy and the people's living in the past ten years:

— People's diet and its nutritional value were inadequate to maintain good health and provide work energy for the majority of the people;

— Importation of essential commodities such as rice, sugar and fruit, for which the country had been self-sufficient, thus putting a heavy burden on the foreign exchange reserve. In 1969, total foreign exchanges used in importing agricultural products amounted to US\$137,533,543 as compared with US\$33,495,057 in 1960, or an increase of 513.1 %.

— Foreign exchange earned from exportation of agri-products did not increase but considerably decreased: from a peak of US\$31,640,970 worth of agricultural products exported in 1960 to US\$ 10,001,864 in 1969, thus decreasing by 87.6 %.

II. As mentioned above, the sole reason for the agricultural sector being at a standstill in the past ten years was the expansion of the war — a war that was by no means fomented by the Republic of Vietnam. As far as natural resources are concerned, Vietnam possesses great potentialities in agriculture that few other small countries have:

— The areas presently under cultivation are less than 3 million hectares while the total arable land area is about 6 million hectares, which is about 35% of the national territory. Both soil and climate are favorable for growing a great variety of agricultural products in the Mekong Delta and the lowlands of Central Vietnam, and industrial crops in the Eastern Provinces of South Vietnam and in the Highland. With available pasture land and probable surplus of agricultural products, Vietnam is richly endowed for the development of a large-scale livestock industry.

— With 2,000 km of coastline and 1,600 km of rivers and streams, with motorized fishing boats that have been increased rapidly in number — by nearly 50 % — and with the whole off-shore fishing area that has not been exploited, the future of fishery development is very promising.

— The forests of Vietnam cover an area of approximately 6 million hectares with a reserve of 500-600 million cubic meters of all kinds of valuable and common timber, but only less than half a million cubic meters were cut in 1969.

— Another important factor that should not be overlooked is the eagerness that the Vietnamese farmers and fishermen have come to understand and accept the modern techniques used in farming, livestock raising, and fishing. Their response in planting high yielding rice, greater utilization of fertilizers, mechanization of agriculture and motorization of fishing boats are concrete examples. Indeed, the conservative mind of farmers has been a great obstacle to the development efforts of many developing countries.

To have an idea about the potentials for agricultural development in Vietnam, let's take the Republic of China (Taiwan) as an example for comparison.

In size, Taiwan is about one fifth of Vietnam (35,961 km² vs. 172,102 km²). In 1968 Taiwan had only one million hectares of planted area. Its forest area was only 2.3 million hectares as compared with nearly 6 million hectares of Vietnam. Its coastline was 1,600 km long as compared with 2,000 km in Vietnam. In sum, Taiwan is entirely inferior to Vietnam from the standpoint of natural resources but its agricultural production goes far ahead that of Vietnam in many respects, as shown in Table II below:

TABLE II

Products	Taiwan (1968)	Vietnam (1969)
Sugar	646,572 tons	Imported 132,400 tons
Banana	645,467 tons	183,760 tons
Pineapple	311,264 tons	33,255 tons
Fish	531,179 tons	463,844 tons
Wood	1,100,000 m3	462,722 m3

TABLE III

Comparison of the values of agricultural products exported by Vietnam and Taiwan

Year	Vietnam (1)	Taiwan (2)	Ratio of (1) to (2)
1960	US\$81,640,970	US\$115 million	71.3 %
1968	US\$10,555,339	US\$284 million	3.7 %

Because of circumstances beyond its control, Vietnam has not made noteworthy progress, but the existing natural resources will surely enable it to boost up agricultural production in the years to come.

III. The above description of the stagnation of agricultural production in the past ten years is not intended to create pessimism or to de-emphasize the role of agriculture in the overall policy of economic development of the nation. In fact, the progress or agricultural production made in the years 1969-1970 demonstrate the possibilities that exist. Endowed with great potential, agriculture has all of the qualifications to play an important role in the economic development of the country. The main problem now is that there must be an agricultural development plan. The reasons for this plan are multiple:

— First, a well-defined policy for agricultural development initiated and strongly supported by the Government is needed to assure necessary support and close coordination from government agencies outside the Ministry of Land Reform and Agriculture and Fishery Development.

— Second, there must be a high priority for the plan in the overall program of action of the nation at this present stage. National defense still plays an extremely important role, but with the decreasing war intensity and subsequent restoration of security, it cannot go on having an absolute priority as in the past. Agricultural development production would free the present economy from the following vicious circle: as the shortage of self-supplied essential commodities puts more

With less natural resources than Vietnam, Taiwan is beyond self-sufficiency in the main agricultural products. Besides, in 1968, Taiwan was able to export rice (US\$14 million), sugar (US\$51 million), pineapple (US\$19 million), banana (US\$57 million), tea (US\$12 million), lumber (US\$36 million), and plywood (US\$55 million). These are products that Vietnam can produce. In the same year, Taiwan agricultural activities brought back US\$284 million whereas in 1960 it exported only US\$115 million. Also, in 1960, Vietnam exported US\$81,640,970 worth of agricultural products. Thus, 9 years ago, Vietnam was not far behind Taiwan in this respect.

pressure on prices and inflation, the Government has to spend foreign exchange to import consumption commodities; after a short period of stability, the same shortage reappears as a result of low production, putting more pressure on prices and inflation, and the Government again has to resort to foreign aid to import more consumption commodities.

— Third, the planning work will point out needed studies which will be conducted to obtain programming information. Therefore, the development policy and objectives that are set forth will be realistic enough to meet the complex demand for domestic consumption and export market requirements (especially the problem of exportation at the present where there is a surplus of certain agricultural products in the world market).

— Fourth, under the circumstances of a developing nation, like Vietnam, which is short of capital, equipment, and technical manpower, planning will help the Government see the relationship and importance of all the various complex economic activities in the country. Thus, a proper allocation of these production factors can be assured.

— Finally, the plan will be a guideline for cadres of all levels to follow uniformly and to guide farmers, fishermen and businessmen in active production to attain the goals that have been set forth.

To make sure that the agricultural development plan is realistic, feasible and action-oriented, it must be started now and seen in the present environment. With changes of circumstances and with experiences gained from implementation, the plan can be adjusted and modified every year in accordance with the real needs and the dynamic concept of a continuous planning process.



SECURITY COMES TO HAMLET

The Republic of Vietnam's war-racked province of Tay Ninh, bordered on the south, west and north by Cambodia, straddles a major infiltration route for Communist troops and supplies. Within the province are jungled war zones that hide strong Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces, and Tay Ninh for years has been near the bottom of the list of pacified provinces in South Vietnam. The community closest to the border is Ben Soi, 100 kilometers northwest of Saigon, a remote hamlet cut off from the rest of the province by the Vam Co Dong River. For years Ben Soi has been near the bottom of the list of pacified hamlets in Tay Ninh.

Gradually, under the impact of an accelerated pacification program, security conditions are improving. More Tay Ninh hamlets than ever before now are rated "relatively secure." And even in distant Ben Soi, while much remains to be done before it can be called really secure, the hamlet has climbed one notch on the pacification grading scale — from D to C category — and living conditions are rapidly improving for its 2,900 peasants.¹

Physically, Ben Soi has changed little in hundreds of years. The clustered houses, made of hardened mud with thatched roofs, are open to the elements and to the chickens and dogs that wander in and out. Ox carts kick up thick clouds of red dust in the dry season and bog down in gumbo

mud during the monsoons. Aside from war's disruptions, the peasants' way of life has not changed much. They are poor, and everyone is hard-working in this rice farming community. Generally unaware of world events, culturally isolated behind their bamboo hedges, they are principally concerned with the age-old problem of getting enough food for themselves and their families. (Like Truong Thi Hoa, for instance. A widow in her 30s, she earns a bare living by minding the babies of neighbors working in the fields. Hoa knows nothing of what the war is all about and cannot name the president of her country or the chief of her village.) Ben Soi on the surface seems unchanged from the Buddhist community founded in the days when a Vietnamese emperor sat in the imperial palace far to the north — unchanged except for its shrapnel-riddled buildings, barbed-wire concertinas and sand-bag bunkers.

Troubled History

Ben Soi is one of 10,731 hamlets in South Vietnam, typical of many, but with a more troubled history than most — troubled by events since the Communists came. In early 1969 its community life was dormant, its economy stagnant, and the people lived in constant fear of the Viet Cong. But a year ago, in March 1969, a concentrated pacification program was launched by military, paramilitary, provincial service and central government personnel in Ben Soi. With it came not only improved security but a new community spirit that is sparking a number of self-help projects. Prosperity is not just around the corner, but living standards are rising.

Ben Soi is administratively part of Ninh Dinh village, but as Ninh Dinh has only this one hamlet, Ben Soi also can be counted as one of South Vietnam's 2,157 villages. Its people continue to call it by the hamlet designation of Ben Soi, for this name antedates by many generations its incorporation as a village. Vietnamese villages usually have from two to 10 hamlets, but Ben Soi's isolated position makes it difficult to govern by officials from any village across the river. It is accessible by land only from Cambodia; it can be reached only by ferry from the rest of the district. It sprawls over a wider area than most hamlets in III Corps Tactical Zone, the CTZ centered on Saigon. So now it governs itself as a hamlet-village, unique among the 19 hamlets within this most westerly of Tay Ninh's 11 districts.

Both Hamlet and Village

Ben Soi's location, remote from district centers and close to communist sanctuaries across the border, has made it prey to repeated Viet Cong incursions. For a quarter-century its people have known war, its economic disruptions, social tragedies, declining living standards, Communist terrorism and military attacks. For 15 years the hamlet has been victimized by the VCI, the Viet Cong infrastructure. This shadow administration is made up of underground cadres who direct terror rule tactics, collect confiscatory taxes, recruit villagers for guerrilla and labor squads, conduct propaganda campaigns and assassinate leaders. Kidnapings and other terrorist incidents for years were common in Ben Soi, and no official of the Saigon government dared enter the hamlet without military escort.

1. Under the Hamlet Evaluation System, pacification officials each month grade hamlets according to more than 80 criteria — enemy activity, defense capabilities, economic resources, development efforts, etc. After computer analysis of the data, each hamlet is rated either A, B or C if relatively secure, D or E if insecure, and V if Viet Cong-controlled. In March 1970, 88.5 per cent of South Vietnam's people lived in hamlets rated A, B or C.



A member of People's Self-Defense Forces (right) joins villagers in rice harvest while providing security.

Long exposure to intensive Communist propaganda, the scarcity of government services available in more secure communities, and the siphoning off of so many Ben Soi men recruited into the Viet Cong ranks — all these factors induced a number of the hamlet's residents to become VC sympathizers over the years. Others, while alienated by the cruelty of VC tactics, did not want to do anything to endanger the lives of the hamlet's men working or fighting for the Communists. And others — perhaps the majority — were political, knowing little and caring less about the merits of each side's cause in this internecine struggle, wishing only to be left alone to till their fields.

One man neither neutral nor apathetic is Nguyen Van Cu. He hates the Communists. Cu, a slight, toothless man with a thin grey beard who has lived in Ben Soi nearly all of his 70 years,

knows what it means to be at the mercy of the Viet Cong. He and his wife Canh, 58, work in the rice paddies. They do not own the land, but are paid 200 piasters a day (US\$1.70) to harvest the crop. To supplement their income Canh makes noodles to sell in the market. They have had eight children, but only three could be sent to school. In the spring of 1968 Viet Cong guerrillas raided Ben Soi and kidnaped their two oldest sons, who were soldiers on leave at the time from their Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units. Later, defectors from the VC ranks who came back to Ben Soi told Cu and Canh that their sons had been killed by the Communists.

"The Viet Cong always used to come into the hamlet at night for food or recruits or to give propaganda talks," says Cu's neighbor, Le Thi Kinh, a 36-year-old farmwife. "They came and went almost at will."

Conditions could hardly have been worse for Ben Soi short of actual occupation of the hamlet by Communist troops. But on March 7, 1969, the Viet Cong brought more trouble to the people by launching a determined attack on the hamlet with 400-man battalion. Le Thi Kinh remembers the day well.

"My house is on the outer perimeter where most of the fighting occurred," she says. "When the battle started I ran to town with my husband and children. After 15 days we came back. Our two oxen had been killed by the VC, but no one in the family was hurt. One Ben Soi man, a civilian, was killed and five were wounded. But the Viet Cong were driven out — our men killed 17 of them and captured many weapons. The soldiers in the Popular Force compound told me they had been called in helicopter gunships during the fighting when the Viet Cong

dug in. Many houses along the perimeter were destroyed. My houses has many bullet and shrapnel holes in it now. But since then the VC cannot get into our hamlet at night anymore and we feel much more secure".

Pacification Program

That battle marked the turning point in Ben Soi's fortunes. In its wake the central and provincial governments joined forces to bring assistance to Ben Soi in order to raise it on the pacification scale from the insecure D category. A 30-man Revolutionary Development team headed by Nguyen Van Cong, 30, was permanently assigned to Ben Soi. ² Cong, a native of Ha Tien with two years of RD experience there, called a community meeting and explained to the villagers the purposes of the campaign. Pacification, he said entails five major steps:

- * Providing continual security for the people to protect them against Viet Cong local forces;

- * Establishing representative local government in which the people can take an active part, by electing their own leaders;

- * Launching economic and social activities that will enable the people to better their lives and raise their standard of living;

- * Eliminating the underground VCI, a task in which the people can cooperate by identifying those shadow cadres who have been victimizing them;

- * Increasing the number of Viet Cong who reject Communism and rally to the government's side under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program of amnesty.

"The basic principle of pacification," said Cong, "is that the effort stems from the people. They must take the initiative in developing projects that will serve their needs. Pacification is a three-ways partnership of the people, the local officials and the central government, each contributing resources to the common effort.

2. A total of 48,000 Revolutionary Development teams can be (cadres) now are working in hamlets around the country, and another 100,000 are scheduled to be trained and assigned to duty during 1970. From 1966 through 1969, 3,000 RD teams were killed in action.

Most important is the growth of Community consciousness by the people."

Security Improved

Without security, the rest of the pacification program cannot succeed. In Ben Soi military commanders moved swiftly to improve security conditions. The RD team, armed with light weapons, set up a night-time outpost along the path usually taken by Viet Cong infiltrators. Modern, high-powered M-16 rifles were issued to the militia, first to the men of the Regional Forces (RF) companies and then to the Popular Forces (PF) platoons in the area, and the resulting increase in their morale and aggressiveness was immediately evident ³

In June the RF launched a series of heli-mobile operations and district sweeps that forced the Communists' main-force units to withdraw, and the area was declared militarily pacified — i.e., contested only by Viet Cong local-force units capable of being handled by militia forces. And in September General Do Cao Tri, the III CTZ commander, ordered the Special Forces and the CIDG warriors they had trained — Civilian Irregular Defense Group counter-infiltration troops guarding the border — to extend their area of responsibility to include Ben Soi. This was an important step, for the CIDG maintain the largest of all the forces in the immediate vicinity of Ben Soi. General Tri also made arrangements for quick-reaction help in case of an enemy attack to be provided by elements of the First Brigade of the 25th U.S. Infantry Division eight kilometers away.

The RD can bo and PF militia meanwhile were busy organizing the teenagers, elderly men and other draft-ineligible males of Ben Soi into the hamlet's own civilian

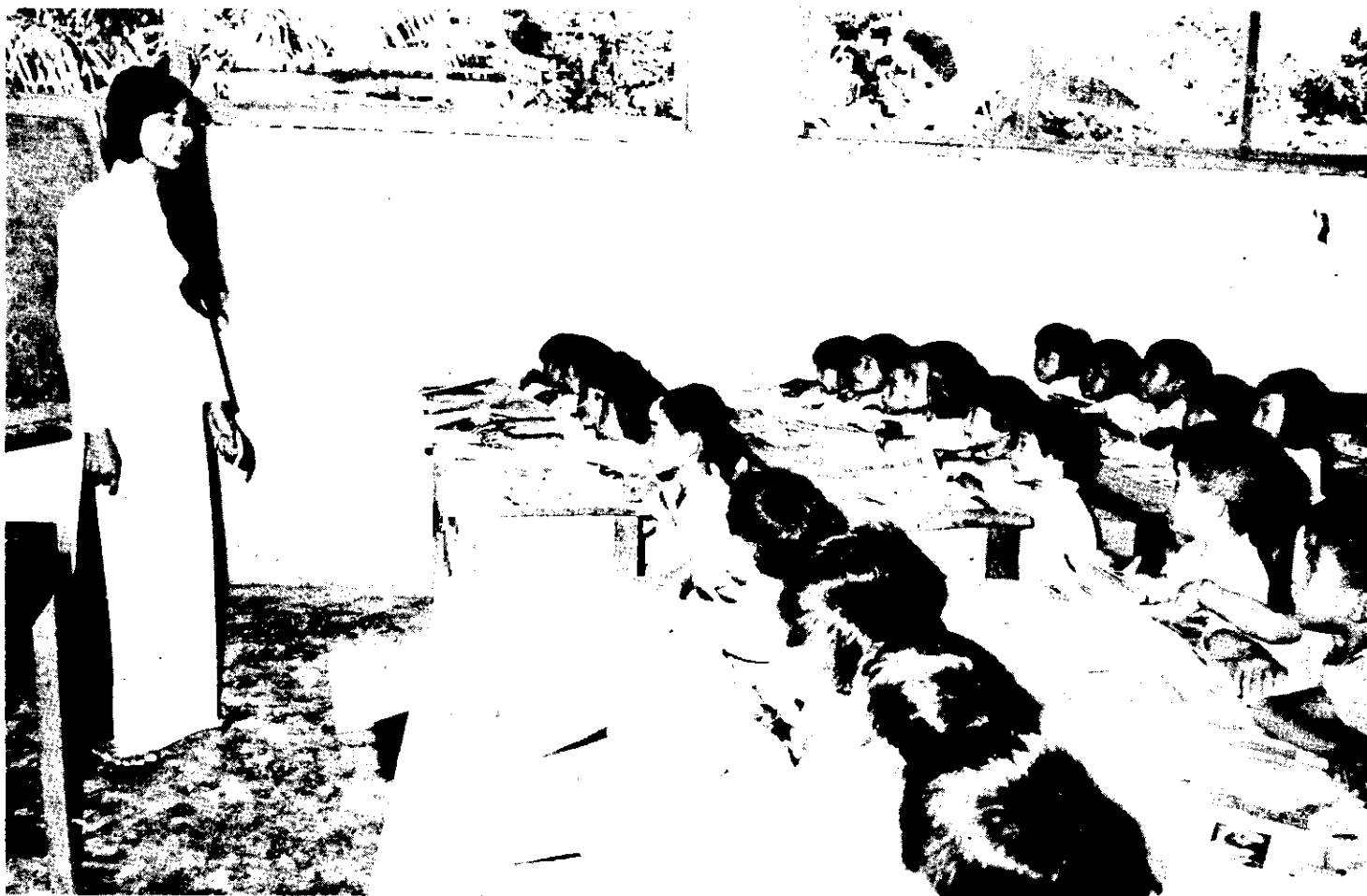
combatant corps, the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). Soon three PSDF platoons of 35 men each had been formed and trained, and 83 weapons were issued to them. Placed under the command of the village chief — who also commands the local PF platoons composed of draft-age Ben Soi men — the PSDF civilians were assigned the responsibility of creating an early-warning system for the hamlet. When the three-week unit training course was completed the PSDF platoons built outposts around the hamlet perimeter to guard against infiltration. Soon they began sending out squads on night patrols, a dangerous task usually left to the militia.

Boys 16 and 17 and men between 38 and 50, under Vietnam's national mobilization law, can be drafted into the PSDF, though many are volunteers. PSDF civilians are unpaid, but they get compensation if they are wounded, they and their families receive free medical care, and the family of a PSDF member killed in action receives 10,000 piasters' compensation. (The official exchange rate is 118 piasters to US\$1.) Their weapons are World War II rifles and carbines, as well as some shotguns, most of them reconditioned weapons turned over by RF and PF troops after they were re-outfitted with M-16 rifles. ⁴

Le Van Tho, 43, works a half-hectare of land he owns during the day, and at night he mans a listening post on PSDF duty. "I have five small children to raise," he says. "If our hamlet is attacked again, I want to be able to fight to protect them. I have practiced long hours with this carbine, and I think I will use it with good effect if the time comes. Once VC guerrilla bands could pass safely through Ben Soi, for without arms none of us dared try to stop them. Now that we have weapons the VC give the hamlet a wide berth."

3. RF and RF troops now are the military spearhead of the government's pacification campaign in the countryside. In March 1970 there were 270,000 men in RF companies and 260,000 men in PF platoons throughout the 44 provinces, compared with 468,000 men in the regular military branches. Under a US\$200,000 modernization and improvement program RF/PF recruiting has been stepped up, their pay and training have been improved, their weapons modernized and their missions expanded in scope. All RF/PFs now carry M-16s.

4. In all 44 provinces, well over 400,000 weapons have been issued and nearly 1,310,000 civilians have been trained to use them. Each weapon usually rotates among three PSDF sentries. The ratio of VC to PSDF killed in action is about one to one. Most PSDF units contain women volunteers — 870,000 in support roles and 130,000 in combat units defending hamlets and urban neighborhoods throughout the country. But Ben Soi has a large enough male population that women volunteers were not recruited for the PSDF platoons, at least not initially.



Giving the new generation a good start in life is villager's greatest aspiration, usually revolving around schoolrooms.

Security Rating Up

With Ben Soi's security improved, representative government established, self-help projects underway, the VCI crippled and the number of *Hoi Chanh* on the rise, pacification officials decided in November 1969 that the hamlet's rating should be moved up to C, and thus Ben Soi joined the ranks of hamlets considered relatively secure. A top-ranking pacification official described a C-rated hamlet this way: "There have been no recent Viet Cong attacks of any significance on the hamlet. The

Communist infrastructure, while it may still be there, has been suppressed. You can get into and out of the hamlet with relative ease. It has a functioning hamlet administration."

Ben Soi meets those criteria. The Communists have not left it alone, but the hamlet's defense forces have proved adequate. In August a VC band tried to move into Ben Soi along their favorite infiltration path, but the RD *can bo* in their new outpost alongside the path stopped them cold. In November a VC mortar round killed one PSDF and two nine-year-old boys. In December nine PF militiamen were killed when the Viet Cong hit an outpost two kilometers from Ben Soi, but again the enemy was prevented from entering the hamlet. Terrorist incidents continued to occur, but at a much reduced rate. On November 13 the VC kidnaped 12 women, three men and a CIDG trooper on Ben Soi's outskirts,

holding each for 20,000-piasters ransom. But kidnappings, or common, have become rare since then.

"On the whole," says a provincial RD chief, "the pacification of Ben Soi has gone much better than expected, although it is still considered a borderline case, potentially capable of going one way or the other. Much has been accomplished here, but much remains to be done. The VCI must be completely eradicated. Public health facilities must be improved. Roads in and around the hamlet are often impassable in the rainy season. More agricultural counseling is needed to boost production. Local defense forces must be strengthened and given better training and equipment."

A number of projects to overcome these deficiencies already are on the drawing board. "Ben Soi's future will be brighter than the past," says the village chief.

FOREIGN OBSERVERS ON OCT. 3 ELECTION (continued from page 5)

(SENATOR CORDON BYRAN BYRNE):

... I think it is my duty tonight in this very short time available to me to report faithfully, accurately, and objectively the results of my observations and to what extent I thought the election complied with the ordinary democratic forms of the electoral process.

....I went along to the main polling booth in Saigon and observed the opening of the ballot. Then I was moved by helicopter with some international journalists to the province of Binh Duong which is about 15 minutes by helicopter from Saigon. At this point we made observations

of the polling in a number of villages in that province. In the afternoon, I returned to Saigon and made a further personal on-the-spot inspection of a number of polling places in Saigon. I again inspected the closure of the ballot box and the counting of the ballots in Saigon town hall at five o'clock.

....The elections were conducted under the Presidential Law. I found that the election was conducted explicitly in terms of their own law. There appeared to me to be no departure from the statutory principles which were required to be observed.

....The method of voting in South Vietnam is different from ours. The voting cubicles were small cubicles enclosed with a black curtain which is impenetrable.

The voter went into the voting cubicle taking with him his brown manila envelope and the voting paper. It is impossible to see what went on in the voting cubicle. The voter may elect to put his ballot paper in the manila envelope or he may elect not to do so. He could do a number of things: he could put the ballot into the manila envelope, he could mutilate the ballot paper or he could discard it within the secrecy of the voting cubicle. I and the press inspected these cubicles. We went into a number of them in the country area and in Saigon.

The other canon is the integrity of the count. The count and the conduct of the election appeared to be in the hands of school teachers just as we have school teachers as our presiding officers. The presiding officers and poll clerks were mostly school teachers and other young men and women who were, no doubt, clerks.

They preside as polling officers. At night the scrutineers, in terms of the Presidential Law, were invited from among the people around and the ballot was counted. The envelopes were counted in the public view and were tallied just as we might tally an election if we went in and acted as scrutineers as we have done so often at elections. I would say that, from what I saw, this ballot completely complied with the conditions and canons which we would require in any electoral system. I could not fault it at all.

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