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Political

LAND REFORM PROGRAM COMPLETED IN 1970

Saigon, January 22--President Nguyen Van Thieu declared last week in his televised address to the nation that the land reform program initiated by the Republic of Viet-Nam government will be completed in June, 1970.

The program, which aimed at distributing 415,000 hectares of expropriated land, will make only 1/5 of the total Vietnamese peasants land owners.

President Thieu revealed that a new decree intended to distribute land to the remaining 4/5 of the peasants will be submitted in the near future to the National Assembly for consideration and approval.

The decree, once approved by the Assembly, will make 800,000 tenants land owners.

According to the President, the 'Land-to-the Tillers' program will near completion by the end of 1973. He said the peasants' standard of living will be much improved this year through better irrigation, mechanization of agriculture, development of animal husbandry and fisheries, made possible with Agricultural Development Bank loans.

PRES. THIEU URGES INCREASE OF PRODUCTION

Saigon, February 27, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu last week urged the Vietnamese people to 'concentrate their efforts on production so as to bring about more income for their families and to contribute to the nation's prosperity.'

The President, accompanied by Madame Thieu, made the statement during a tour of Binh Tuy province. President Thieu praised local achievements in the production of 'nuoc mam' (fish sauce), and reiterated that the national objectives are directed to the development of farming, animal husbandry, and the fishing industry.

At a meeting with Binh Tuy officials and prominent citizens of the province, the Chief Executive pointed to the present progress 'which will lead the Republic of Viet-Nam to final victory.'

Pres. Thieu also urged provincial officials to give first priority to projects relating to the Pacification and Rural Development program which is aimed at restoring the security, building the infrastructure, and developing the national economy.

P.M. KHIEM RECEIVES GOODWILL DELEGATION

Saigon, February 27--Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem Thursday morning received the five-member goodwill delegation of Indonesia led by Sen. Kimbiankie.

Also present at the 30-minute meeting was Minister of State Phan Quang Dan.

MINISTER OF STATE DAN ON INDIAN POLICY

Saigon, February 20--Minister of State Phan Quang Dan recently said India should maintain its non-alignment policy and give equal treatment to North and South Viet-Nam.

Speaking at a dinner organized February 13 at the Majestic Hotel by the Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations to welcome the Indian Delegation of Parliamentarians and Journalists visiting Viet-Nam, Minister Dan recalled the recent statement of Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh who maintained that India's efforts are directed toward a peaceful settlement of the Viet-Nam conflict without outside interference.

'With its moral influence in Southeast Asia,' Mr. Dan said, 'India will play a great role in peace-making and peace-keeping in the years ahead. This role would be seriously jeopardized to the detriment of the world if India favored in any way the Communist side in the Viet-Nam conflict.' Minister Dan concluded he is confident that such will not happen.

V.N. CATHOLIC LEADERS SEND OPEN LETTER TO PARIS NEGOTIATORS

Saigon, February 20--Archbishop Paul Nguyen Van Binh and Danang Bishop Pierre Pham Ngoc Chi have sent an open letter to the delegation at the Paris peace talks, exposing the stand of the Vietnamese Roman Catholics vis-a-vis the present war and calling for a 'just and lasting peace' for Viet-Nam.

The letter reminded the delegations of the basic principles for a genuine peace:

Love must be the basis for the negotiations to facilitate the talks and bring about mutual concessions and results.

Man's dignity, freedom, and legitimate rights must be respected.

A peace agreement with clear and precise provisions should be signed the sooner the better, and its application supervised by an International Commission vested with the necessary powers and effective means of control.

Hatred and personal revenge must be discarded.

Relations between North and South Viet-Nam should be encouraged, and any activity hampering the reunification of North and South Viet-Nam must be suspended.

The peace treaty must include provisions relating to the disarmament of both regions; only the necessary forces will be kept to maintain the public order.

M.P. DESAI: SVN'S VICTORY IS INDIA'S VICTORY

Saigon, February 20--Mr. C.C. Desai, member of the Indian Parliament on a visit tour to Viet-Nam, recently said the South Viet-Nam's victory over the Communists will also constitute a victory for India.

Speaking at a luncheon offered by the Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations last February 10 at the Hoan My Restaurant, Mr. Desai highly praised the anti-Communist spirit of the Vietnamese people and the morale of the Indians residing in South Viet-Nam.

He said such a spirit will lead both Vietnamese and Indians to victory, for the victory of the Vietnamese people will also be that of India.

Mr. Chandra Datt Pande, another member of the Parliament of India, sternly condemned the Communists, and wished that South Viet-Nam would achieve final victory in its struggle against the Communists. He said since India is being threatened by Red China's aggressive designs. MM. Desai and Pande are members of the Indian delegation of Parliamentarians and Journalists visiting Viet-Nam last week at the invitation of the Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations.

TURKEY SUPPORTS SVN'S STRUGGLE

Saigon, February 20--Mr. Mustafa Karaer, Governor of Eskisehir State (Turkey), recently said that the people and government of Turkey fully support the anti-Communist struggle of the Republic of Viet-Nam.

At a meeting with the Chief of South Viet-Nam's diplomatic mission in Turkey, Governor Karaer said the people of South Viet-Nam have fought against Communist aggressors not only for their own freedom and independence, but also for the Free World.

The Governor stressed that the people and government of Turkey are ready to help the Republic of Viet-Nam denounce Communist crimes.

Last month, the Republic of Viet-Nam Embassy in Teheran organized a week-long exhibit of pictures on Communist crimes. Governor Karaer was present at the opening ceremony.

INFO. CENTERS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN PARIS, STOCKHOLM

Saigon, February 26--Information Centers will be opened shortly in Stockholm, Paris, and Munich, in order to give a more balanced and diversified picture of the situation in South Viet-Nam.

The Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations, a Saigon-based non-profit and independent organization is behind this project.

The Viet-Nam Council is active in 16 countries where it is encouraging members in these countries to help in its activities. The information movement began in South Viet-Nam in 1968 when a group of Vietnamese felt the necessity of giving more objective and accurate information abroad on Viet-Nam.

The Council has more than 200 members, and funds for its activities have been obtained through private contributions and the sale of its publications including the monthly Viet-Nam Magazine published in English, French and Spanish.

Economy

V.N. BUSINESSMEN INVEST HEAVILY IN NEW PLANTS

Saigon, January 22,--South Vietnamese private businessmen in 1969 gave their government a vote of confidence by investing nearly 3,000 million piasters (25.5 million dollars) in new industrial plants.

In addition to the construction of thirteen new production facilities, private sector entrepreneurs expanded several existing factories and broke ground at ten sites, involving a total investment of 4,500 million piasters (38.25 million dollars).

The thirteen new industries range from shipbuilding to animal feeds. Included are plastics, chemicals, detergents, dry-cell batteries, steel rolling, and construction materials.

Two flour mills representing the largest investment have been built at a total of 770 million piasters (6.5 million dollars). Plants for assembling diesel engines, gasoline engines and agricultural equipment show a growing interest in industrialization.

Increased security in the countryside enabled woodcutters to move more timber to sawmills, and improved techniques led to the highest lumber production since 1965 -- 286,000 cubic meters which bring tax revenues to 310 million piasters (270,000 dollars).

As a result, lumber prices dropped more than 20 per cent in many areas.

Feeds for animal breeding in South Viet-Nam represented one of the most remarkable increases in production facilities. In 1969, sixteen commercial mills produced 7,000 metric tons of feeds a month, while in 1968, there were only four plants producing 3,500 metric tons.

RVN READY FOR EXPO '70

Saigon, February 26, 1970--The Republic of Viet-Nam is ready for its participation in the 40-nation Expo '70 which will be held for six months in Osaka, Japan, starting March 14.

Prof. Nguyen Nhu Cuong, Assistant Minister of State for Reconstruction and Development, who is in charge of Vietnamese participation, said the budget for the South Viet-Nam's pavilion was increased from 5,700,000 VNP (\$48,000) to 48,000,000 VNP (\$400,000).

Prof. Cuong said the pavilion will portray the traditional culture of the nation, its present struggle for freedom, and its postwar economic potential.

About 50 square meters of the pavilion will be used to present Viet-Nam's ancient culture and civilization. The Ministry of State in charge of Cultural Affairs has sent to Osaka 50 valuable Vietnamese antiques for display.

A 100-square meter area will feature the progress and effort of the Vietnamese people in nation-building despite the war. Models of pilot hamlets, pictures, and Vietnamese agricultural and industrial products will be shown.

The rest of the pavilion will show various maps, pictures, and minerals depicting Viet-Nam as a country rich in potential resources and opportunities.

VN-JAPAN ECONOMIC COMMITTEE CREATED

Saigon, February 26--Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem recently signed a decree establishing the Vietnam-Japan Economic Cooperation Development Committee.

The Committee will study and submit to the government all proposals aimed at developing the economic cooperation between Japan and Viet-Nam and negotiate with the Japanese government on the reconstruction, economic and social development projects in which Japan can assist Viet-Nam.

The Committee will also submit to the government proposals to increase trade relations between Japan and Viet-Nam and encourage Japanese businessmen to invest in Viet-Nam.

The Minister of State in charge of Reconstruction and Development is Chairman of the Committee which includes eight members: the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economy, Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development, Public Works, Post and Communications, Social Welfare, and Health.

The Assistant Minister of State in charge of Reconstruction and Development is Secretary-General of the Committee.

The War

2,577 COMMUNISTS RALLY TO NATIONAL CAUSE

Saigon, February 25, 1970--Since the launching of the Xuan Dai Doan Ket Campaign (January 16, 1970), 2,577 Communists have rallied to the national cause throughout the country.

The returnees included 1,482 guerrillas, 893 political cadres and 202 other elements who brought in nine crew-served weapons, and a large amount of military uniforms, ammunitions and important documents.

Education

THE REBIRTH OF HUE UNIVERSITY

By Dr. Le Thanh Minh Chau
Rector of Hue University

Saigon, -- There are people who still believe that Hue is a dangerous place to live, and even to visit. When they see me, they want to know if students have invaded my office to lay down demands. They want to know how many times Hue has been rocketed in the last few days, or if it is safe for foreigners to walk in the streets. They are indeed surprised to hear that there has not been one single act of terrorism in Hue in the last 18 months. One can drive miles out of the city at one time. At the present moment, what stops visitors from going to the emperors' tombs or the beach is not the Viet Cong but rain. It is far safer to live in Hue than in congested Saigon with its traffic problems.

These people are also surprised to hear that the University of Hue is in full operation and is quietly expanding.

It is true that we had problems in the past. Although Hue is the former capital of Viet-Nam and the traditional seat of learning, higher education in the Western sense was new both to Viet-Nam and to Hue. The University of Hue was the second university in Viet-Nam and it was only founded in 1957. It started with a staff of six permanent professors, and with a budget large enough to operate a village elementary school. But Hue University was the first one created by the Vietnamese themselves since the inception of independence. It had youthfulness, confidence and enthusiasm.

It was also successful in arousing enthusiasm among its friends and supporters. It had the full backing of the Saigon Government. It was generously assisted by government agencies of the U.S., France, Germany, Canada and other Colombo Plan countries. It was further helped by private groups and foundations and its academic programmes were sponsored by Freiburg University in Germany. Within five years, its enrollment increased four times, its teaching staff six times, its budget ten times.

Then came the period of decline. The political and religious unrest which began in 1963 and which was renewed in 1968, slowed down the growth of the University and finally brought it to a dead stop. By 1967 all support had been withdrawn. The Communist Tet offensive, at the beginning of 1968, was the death blow. More than half its buildings were destroyed, its laboratories shattered, its libraries looted. The University was dead. But not for long. Out of that terrible destruction, that blood-letting, a new life, a new spirit was born. Students by the hundreds volunteered to clean up buildings and class rooms. Only two months after the siege the university opened again, although a number of class rooms were still without a roof. Students had to sit on the floor and there was practically no chalk or writing paper in the whole city.

The rebirth of the University was truly astonishing. Today, twenty months after the destruction, the buildings are completely renovated. They are in better shape than before. The laboratories are operating with new equipment. The central library has reopened. In spite of its policy of austerity and restrictions, the Saigon Government this year has granted the University its largest budget in history, representing an increase of 30% over last year's budget. The students get their share of this increase. They will receive 17 million piasters in grants and scholarships, which is 70% more than last year. There is also a dramatic change of heart among the supporters of the University. The Government of Canada which left a science auditorium unfinished for three years when it decided to withdraw its support from Hue has just come back with a grant of 15 million piasters to complete the auditorium. Together with Canada, other old friends of the University have returned. The U.S., France, Germany, Australia, Nationalist China are helping with professors, buildings, science equipment, books and scholarships.

This year enrollment of 3,700 sets a record. There are now five faculties: Science, Law, Medicine, Education and Letters. Within the last six months, the University has put into effect a central registration system, made attendance compulsory for students of three schools, upgraded its academic programmes in science, education and letters and added a new faculty of Applied Science.

But what is even more important is what we plan for the next five years which presents a new departure in higher education in Viet-Nam.

Hue University is committed to uphold the ideal of liberal education. In the past twelve years and in years to come we have been and will be producing scholars, philosophers, educators and future government leaders.

But a liberal education only is not enough. The country needs laboratory technicians, statisticians, engineers, and accountants. There is a great shortage of skills today. But this shortage will be considerably greater in the postwar period. This country cannot depend forever on foreign technical assistance. The alternative is that Viet-Nam must turn out twenty times the number of skills it now produces.

The University of Hue has a part to play. This is why we plan to update our academic programmes, to revise our curriculums, to improve our methods of teaching and testing. This year we have added new courses in economics and statistics, applied biochemistry, rock and soil prospection, hydrology and construction. But we plan to do more.

By 1974 we will be turning out not only more scholars and philosophers but also men and women who will have the knowledge and discipline to meet the needs of our country. Men and women who have a scientific background, and the feel of political science, languages, international affairs, business methods and policies ... men and women who will be the future leaders of Viet-Nam.

Civil Aviation

COMMERCIAL AVIATION IN VIET-NAM NOW VIABLE EXPANDING INDUSTRY

Saigon, February 19, 1970--More and more rural South Vietnamese people are leaving their ox-carts at home and taking to the air.

Aviation is becoming a viable, expanding industry that provides the people from the Delta to the DMZ with a further means of commerce, and thus a unifying economic and social channel.

Viet-Nam, in war, has been hampered by Viet Cong harassment and destruction of the roadways which are its life-lines.

Now, civil aviation in the Republic gives the people a freedom of movement they have never known before.

Commercial airlines on domestic runs carried 1,510,700 passengers in 1969, averaging nearly 4,200 a day. In addition, the planes carry fresh vegetables and flowers from Dalat to the big city markets; fish and shrimp from the coastal areas; as well as emergency rice shipments to deprived communities.

Newspapers and medical supplies are flown regularly to the provinces, providing the people in remote areas with a vital link to the Saigon Government.

The government-controlled airline, Air Viet-Nam, now has a fleet which includes two Boeing 727 jets, and a third is about to be added. It also operates seven DC-3s, six DC-4s, and a number of smaller aircrafts, including helicopters. In addition to its domestic service, the line flies weekly to Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vien-

tiane, Manila, Hong Kong, Taipei, Osaka and Tokyo.

Air Viet-Nam employs 3,000 personnel and has entered into contracts with allied governments for the training of technicians and air controllers in anticipation of increased domestic and international air traffic in the post-war years.

A barometer of the job to come is indicated by the seven per cent increase in cargo shipments alone in 1969 over 1968 -- 11,085,800 kilos (11,085 metric tons).

Although most of South Viet-Nam's 500 airports are military fields, 24 are served by Air Viet-Nam on a regular daily basis. With the aid of its allies, the government of Viet-Nam is embarking on a long-range program of up-grading its airports and improving technical and electronic facilities.

Special Feature Letter from Saigon (Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations, Feb. 26

THE JARS OF XIENG KHOUANG AND THE VIET-NAM CONFLICT

During the past fortnight, some 15,000 crack North Vietnamese troops, including elements of Hanoi's most celebrated divisions, completed a blitzkrieg invasion of the strategically located Plain of Jars in the war-torn Kingdom of Laos. The Communist thrust into the heart of the land-locked country, of course, was immediately given big play by the world press. It was presented as part of a new Communist plan to invade the whole of Laos that might necessitate a large-scale intervention by America's ground forces. Some newspapers even went so far as to see the end of the neutralist regime of Prince Souvanna Phouma.

If one looks at a map of the Kingdom of the Million Elephants and sees the central position of the Plain of Jars, one may necessarily think that the occupation of this strategic region can be conducive to a greater conflict in the country of the Lao and possibly the expansion of fighting to such so far untouched regions as the countryside around Vientiane and Luang Prabang, the two Laotian capitals. One may also reckon that from their new base camps at Muong Suoi and Xieng Khouang, the Communists can easily push in the direction of the Mekong valley and make their presence felt around the two political nerve centers to impose a solution on the growingly anti-Communist government of Premier Souvanna Phouma.

U.S. Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird's ambiguous statements in Washington, in the meantime, did not help to clarify the American position. Appearing on NBC's t.v. program 'Meet the Press', Laird said 'We do not have any ground forces committed to Laos. We have not had any committed to Laos since 1962, when the Geneva accords were entered into.' But Laird also said U.S. airpower was being used in Laos 'as an adjunct to the war in Viet-Nam,' implying that America's involvement there was tied to the safety and security of U.S. forces in South Viet-Nam. Laird clearly had left open all sorts of options for the U.S. administration.

Nothing Definite: Meantime, Communist statements made throughout Asia also did not contribute to shedding any light on their intentions in Laos. While Radio Peking claimed that the reoccupation of the Plain of Jars had been achieved by Pathet Lao forces only--a ridiculous proposition that nobody believes after seven North Viet-

namese soldiers told the press they had not seen a single Pathet Lao fighter prior to their capture on 14 February--Radio Hanoi warned that continued pounding of the centrally located plain by the big B.52 bombers may lead to an expansion of the war and to 'most serious consequences for which the U.S. will be entirely responsible.'

Of course, such an exchange had been heard more than once in the past. And a drastic deterioration of the situation in Laos must happen before either side may resort to some of the threats they have been making. For all the publicity given the recent fighting in the Plain of Jars, however, it can be said its intensity has not reached such a new degree as may be indicative of greater determination on either party to seek a definite tip of the balance in their favor.

Indeed, this is not the first time the Communists dominate the region best known in the past for its many gigantic burial urns. Prior to the royalist counter-offensive in the final days of last year, the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies had been the masters of the area for many years in the course of which they had converted it into a huge depot for arms, ammunitions, and other supplies necessary for prosecuting the war both in Laos and in South Viet-Nam. Royalist troops had an idea of the importance of this system of logistical bases when they seized over 60,000 weapons and thousands of tons of ammunition practically left undefended by the Communists some two months ago.

As the war in South Viet-Nam continued with setback after setback recorded by the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese allies without their being able to mount any major offensives, Communist generals in Hanoi must have traced the incapacity of their troops to score anything big to a deficient system of logistics of which the Plain of Jars is one of the main components, and also possibly to the inexperience of soldiers and officers sent to beef up the Communist ranks in South Viet-Nam.

Double Bird-Killing Stone: The thrust on the Plain of Jars, thus, must be viewed as a double bird-killing stone that should restore the full logistical capabilities of the Communist armies in Laos and in South Viet-Nam and give their green troops the opportunity to get a relatively easy baptême de feu and become real soldiers before reaching the battlefields of South Viet-Nam. The constant use of sapper tactics against royalist positions in the areas of Phonmokhet, Latbouk, Phong Savan, and Nongpet also may prove that Laos is being used as a training ground for North Vietnamese infiltrators before their dispatch to the more difficult fighting in the Southern part of the partitioned country.

By ordering the abandonment of the Plain of Jars, the Laotian government has not only acknowledged the impossibility of defending it but also appears to be conceding to the Communists the right to use part of its territory for the war in South Viet-Nam. Indeed, a few days before the blitzkrieg, Prince Souvanna Phuoma had suggested the neutralization of the strategic plain. The prince's suggestion, of course, was ignored by Hanoi. But in the dialogue of the deaf of North Indochinese politics, the proposal can be said to have not gone totally unheeded. If the North Vietnamese should refrain from pushing further west, they must without expressly saying so have accepted to return to the understanding of the past few years by which the eastern half of Laos was tacitly left to the Communists in exchange for peace or relative peace for the Mekong valley.

Confirmation of this theory will not be late to come by. If the troops of Meo General Vang Pao, whose number has been reduced to a mere 5,000, should stick to guerrilla tactics and content themselves with harassing the aggressor's forces, and

if the North Vietnamese should concentrate on obtaining a relative degree of security for their infiltration routes in the direction of South Viet-Nam, the danger would be minimal that fighting will expand toward the lowlands of Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Thakhet, and Savannakhet. A return to the de facto partition of Laos will then be evidently clear from the absence of major actions in the coming days.

Another reason may be even more compulsive in keeping the North Vietnamese troops from further expanding their control over a larger part of the Laotian territory. Indeed, although having about 50,000 men there, North Vietnamese generals cannot expect to digest the Laotian expanses without the concurrence of a portion of the local population. With the Pathet Lao army being more of a name than a real entity and unable to give Hanoi troops any assistance, even the 50,000 Communist troops will not be able to achieve anything if they should have to keep an eye on the entire landlocked kingdom.

More Fighting in RVN: With the Plain of Jars securely in their hands, however, Hanoi generals will be in a better position to pour more troops and war material into South Viet-Nam in spite of all the ordnance U.S. planes may expend to check this flow. As the situation may grow quieter in Laos, one may witness an increasingly important rate of North Vietnamese infiltration into the South and more and bitterer fighting in this war-torn Republic.

It is the opinion of more than an observer of the Vietnamese scene that a crucial test is being prepared by the Communists in Hanoi for the Vietnamization program. The Jars of Xieng Khouang will be left in relative peace while the ire of the God of War is to be turned to the border areas of South Viet-Nam. Viewing the Vietnamese situation in a different context, one of the world's leading experts on counter-insurgency, Sir Robert Thompson, was also of the opinion that the Communists are bound to starting a big military effort in South Viet-Nam soon. The disclosure was made by Sir Robert during a recent visit to Saigon to a number of British newsmen invited to the residence of Her Majesty's envoy here.

The recent fighting for the Jars of Xieng Khouang only makes sense in the larger context of Indochina.

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