

VIET-NAM BULLETIN

Vol IV, No. 5

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE EMBASSY OF VIET-NAM
2251 "R" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008 (Telephone: 234-4860)
Week of April 5-11, 1970

Politics

PRES. THIEU ON NATIONAL ISSUES

Saigon, April 3, 1970--The Press Secretary at the President's office announced Thursday:

On April 1, 1970, while attending a reception held by the Senate to commemorate the anniversary of the Constitution, the President of the Republic answered a number of questions of the local and foreign press, as follows:

Asked whether he believes or not that the recent Communist terrorist activities prelude a new general offensive the President replied:

- This is not a general offensive but only a high point as it is customary with the Communists previously.

- Naturally, during that high point, the Communists proved themselves inhuman to the extreme because not only did they continue their shelling and killing of innocent people, but also they bluntly advocated murdering religious people. The evidence is: on the night of March 31, the Communists killed 15 chaplains including 10 buddhists, 3 protestants and 2 catholics. In addition 3 other chaplains were wounded.

I strongly denounce to public opinion, at home and abroad the savage and cruel conduct of atheistic Communists who deliberately murdered religious people exercising their divine duty of concerning themselves with the souls of the soldiers.

Asked what he thinks of the war invalid who recently built housing facilities on sidewalks, the President replied:

- I have been informed about this matter and I have instructed the Prime Minister and concerned Minister to work out an appropriate solution. I fully sympathize with the war invalid about their conditions and needs because I always advocate assistance to those soldiers who have contributed their share in the fight against the Communist aggressors.

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- I am a soldier, therefore I understand the question more than anyone else. I am paying special attention to this matter.

- To say that to date the government has not taken care of the war veterans, war disabled, war widows or war orphans, is to distort the facts entirely and to pervert the truth. The government has a clearly defined policy of assistance to the war veterans, the disabled, the families of dead soldiers and to war orphans. The government has implemented part of this program throughout the country.

To say it more correctly the program has not been completed yet but it is not a matter of having neither a policy nor a programme.

The President appealed to the understanding of the concerned people because in the present conditions of war and nation-building, following the self-development and self-support policy under which Viet-Nam has to gradually assume ever greater and total responsibility, there is not one single priority problem, including that of caring for one million of in-fighting soldiers and their families, for peasants, for workers, for government servants and cadres. Therefore, even with goodwill the government cannot accomplish satisfactorily all the priorities at the same time.

I have heard that our war invalid displayed banners saying: "Land to the Tiller, Home to the war invalid". Not only do I entirely agree with this, but also I wish to remind that for long the government has preconized the erection of a village for the invalid, vocational training courses and job opportunities for the war disabled, before the distribution of land to the tillers. And I am still ordering that this policy be implemented.

- I want to appeal to the war invalid for their understanding and moderate action; Let them contact the Veterans Department and submit their aspirations so that a realistic solution can be worked out.

- I have ordered the Prime Minister and the concerned Ministers to consider if it would be necessary to carry out some urgent housing constructions in the city, then I will do my best to provide for the means.

- I have also ordered agencies responsible for public order to avoid discourteous attitude and actions towards the war invalid, but on the contrary that they thoroughly enforce the national law and order against the political instigators and the mercenary land dealers in the Capital and in other towns.

- I urge the war invalid not to let themselves to be exploited by the above-mentioned people. That will only cause further troubles to the nation and the Communists will take advantage of it without solving the problem in a realistic manner.

PRES. THIEU ON U.S. TROOPS REDEPLOYMENT

Saigon, April 2, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu at a reception at Dien Hong Conference Hall on the occasion of the Constitution Day's 3rd anniversary Wednesday afternoon said there was no plan envisaging the stopping of U.S. troop redeployment from Viet-Nam, starting next April 15.

The President explained further that before approving any new redeployment of U.S. troops, both the U.S. and the RVN governments always consider the situation based on the three criteria agreed at Midway Conference, i.e. the development of the ARVN, the progress of the Paris peace conference, and the de-escalation of the war on the Communist side.

To a question of a foreign correspondent, President Thieu said that the recent Communist shellings and attacks were only one of the enemy terrorist activities aimed at the population, not the beginning of a new offensive.

Dealing with the situation in Cambodia, President Thieu said that he could not predict what help from the RVN the Cambodian government would request. However, he continued to follow up closely the events at this neighbouring country and no decision has been made yet.

Dealing with local disturbances in recent days, the President urged everybody to respect the national laws.

He said the government has been much concerned about the lodging of disabled veterans and has been trying to meet their demand.

To the question whether there would be a common solution for Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia, the President said, "each country has its own policy and solution."

V.P. KY PRESIDES OVER VNAF STAFF OFFICERS' GRADUATION CEREMONY

Nha Trang, April 1, 1970--Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky Tuesday afternoon presided over the closing ceremony of the VNAF Staff officers class I in Nha Trang.

The Vice President on this occasion had a talk with the new graduate officers.

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND FIGHTING SPIRIT

Vice President Ky said, "We conceive of the Allied assistance as a 'must' in an emergency situation and for a limited period of time. In other words, never can we accept the eternal presence of any foreign army on our soil."

Concerning the build-up of the RVNAF, the Vice President stressed that to develop an army means to strengthen it, and the strength of an army is based on two main factors: technical knowledge and fighting spirit.

He added "the fighting spirit of an Army depends first on the just cause of the struggle and the leadership. We have a just cause, i.e. to fight the invasion of alien Communism, in order to safeguard the nation's freedom and independence. But we must admit shortcomings in the leadership field which should be corrected. An army can't be solidly built when there's a separation between military leaders and the simple combatants."

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Recalling the diversion of political tendencies and the lack of determination and clarity in the leadership, two factors leading to disastrous consequences harmful to the combatants' fighting spirit, the Vice President laid stress on the national solidarity which is in itself a force to complement the Army's strength.

SAVING IS NECESSARY

The Vice President said there must be saving measures such as concrete and substantial reductions in the national budget, and the realization of a simpler way of life in line with the austerity policy.

Vice President Ky opined that taxes must be studied so as to be levied on well-off people.

On this occasion, the Vice President urged more solicitude and assistance toward "those who actually participate in the struggle and the needy population."

CITY POLICY CHIEF ON STUDENT MAM'S ARREST

Saigon, March 28, 1970--Mr. Trang Si Tan, Director of City National Police Saturday morning said the arrest of student Huynh Tan Mam, Acting Chairman of the Saigon University Students' Union was made against an individual having connections with the Communists, and was not a retaliatory act.

At a meeting with newsmen and about 100 Saigon university students at the Information Ministry, the Saigon Police Chief said that documents seized by the Police proved that Mam had close connections with the Communists and had even attended a political course at their secret zone.

On this occasion, the Saigon Police Chief briefed the audience on the organization and activities of the Communist youth group of which Mam was a member and the shadowing of the group by the Police.

Mr. Tan also disclosed that 40 members of the Communist group were detained including Nguyen Ngoc Phuong, Tran Khiem, Nguyen Thanh Cong, Duong Van Day, Nguyen Tan Tai, Phung Huu Tran and Cao Thi Que Phuong and most of them were Communist party members.

Investigation for the case of student Huynh Tan Mam is underway, and he will be brought before the Court next April 2.

Mr. Tan also said that the detention of student Huynh Tan Mam was authorized by the office of the public prosecutor.

PRES. THIEU ON STUDENTS' STRIKE

Saigon, March 27, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu Thursday termed as illogical the students' strike to oppose the arrest of a few students having connections with the enemy.

President Thieu made the above statement to answer a newsman's question in Can Tho on the occasion of the promulgation of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

Sources from the President's office said during a meeting with newsmen Thursday, President Nguyen Van Thieu answered a number of questions as follows:

Asked about his impression on the recent message by Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky to the new Cambodian Chief of State the President said it was not an official reaction of the RVN, adding that Vice Pres. Ky only sent the message in his personal capacity.

To another question concerning the change of the rate of the piaster President Thieu said there was no such a change and such a decision must be worked out by the Executive and the Legislative.

To a question on whether the Republic of Viet-Nam had a secret agreement with Cambodia, President Thieu said no such accord was signed and that the RVN always respects the independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of that country.

Answering a question on the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Cambodia, President Thieu said the RVN is ready to re-establish friendly relations with Cambodia and the policy of South Viet-Nam is to always strengthen the bonds with all nations which respect the sovereignty of the Republic of Viet-Nam, especially neighboring countries.

To a question on an article recently carried by Doc Lap daily dealing with a plan on a peaceful co-existence with the National Liberation Front, President Thieu said the news "is totally groundless" and that was the reason leading to the confiscation of the daily.

PRES. THIEU MEETS WITH YOUNG AMERICANS FOR FREEDOM

Saigon, March 27, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu Thursday noon met with 11 university students of the Young Americans for Freedom Association in Can Tho.

Mr. David A. Keene, the youth leader, on this occasion, presented to the President the activities of his group which toured Saigon, Hue, Danang, the DMZ and Can Tho in the last five days.

Mr. Keene also said that his group's week-long visit to Viet-Nam aimed at a better understanding of the Vietnamese situation. His group, he added, upon its return to the U.S.A. will present to other American students facts of the Viet-Nam war.

Addressing the American youths, President Thieu said that himself as well as his compatriots are anti-war people, because of the sufferings the Vietnamese people have undergone during war time.

He expressed the wish that not only the U.S. university students but other U.S. citizens have an opportunity to make an on-the-spot tour of Viet-Nam to better understand the Viet-Nam issue.

President Thieu also said those who have criticized the Republic of Viet-Nam on some social evils must realize that any nation in the world is afflicted by corruption and even in Hanoi corruption is more than in Saigon.

The RVN President later dealt with progress on the building of democracy in Viet-Nam particularly at the infrastructure level.

The meeting took place at the Can Tho Administrative office after the promulgation of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

SEMINAR ON ELECTION OF CITY, PROVINCE COUNCILS OPENS

Saigon, March 31, 1970--Interior Vice Minister Le Cong Chat Tuesday morning presided over the ceremony opening the seminar on the elections of councils for Saigon, provinces and cities all over the country.

On this occasion, Vice Minister Chat said the election of these councils is one of the main tasks of the government in the total community development in the Capital, provinces and cities in the country to help build the national prosperity.

According to Mr. Chat, the election of the councils within the scope of the Pacification-Development plan this year aims at building solid communities in villages, hamlets and cities so as to defeat the Communists.

The two-day seminar gathered about 200 participants including the Secretary-General at the Prefecture, Deputy Province Chiefs, Mayors, Information Administration Service Chiefs in Saigon and the provinces.

Also present were inter-provincial inspectors, heads of CTZ Pacification Development Centers, CTZ Information Representatives, Chiefs of Army Corps' Polwar Blocs, CTZ Ethnic Development Directors and the inspectors of the Interior Ministry.

The participants were briefed on the law of the election of Saigon, provincial and city councils, the characteristics of the law, the importance of the election, security support and expenditures for the election organization.

The election of councils for Saigon, provinces and cities all over the country is scheduled for June 28.

"LAND-TO-THE-TILLER" LAW PROMULGATED

Can Tho, March 26, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu Thursday morning promulgated Law No. 003/70 fixing the "Land to the Tiller" policy and calling March 26, the "Vietnamese Peasants Day."

Addressing over 7,000 people gathered before Lam Son Square in Can Tho provincial capital, President Nguyen Van Thieu appealed to the people from all walks of life to unite in order to effectively implement the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

President Thieu stressed that the government's objective is to build a society of equity and prosperity in Viet-Nam.

However, President Thieu said the carrying out of the present social revolution requires the sacrifices of the whole people.

On the land reform policy, President Thieu said the landowner's sacrifice highlights the prevalence of Social justice in grass root areas.

Earlier, Mr. Cao Van Than, Minister of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development, presented achievements of the Land Reform program scored during the past 15 years.

Minister Than said in 1969 the land reform program was actively promoted thanks to the implication of administrative procedures regarding land distribution to peasants.

Minister Than said in 1969 the government granted 80,000 hectares of land to 40,000 peasants.

The Minister then read law no. 003/70 dated March 26, 1970 which includes 22 articles and six chapters.

On this occasion, two representatives of peasants and landowners expressed their happiness over the promulgation of "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

President Nguyen Van Thieu, Senate President Nguyen Van Huyen, Lower House Speaker Nguyen Ba Luong and Minister Cao Van Than presented medals to outstanding peasants.

President Thieu then cut the traditional ribbon dedicating the exhibit of agricultural, fishery and husbandry products at the provincial Administrative office.

Present at the ceremony were cabinet members, representatives of diplomatic corps, Representatives and Senators.

LAND REFORM SERVICE CHIEFS STUDY
"LAND-TO-THE-TILLER" POLICY

Saigon, March 31, 1970--Land Reform Service Chiefs all over the country met at the 1970 convention opened Monday morning at the Agrarian Reform Directorate General on Hai Ba Trung St., Saigon.

Mr. Cao Van Than, Minister of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development presided over the opening ceremony of the convention.

These Land Reform Service Chiefs studied the land-to-the-tiller policy and worked out a project to disseminate and nourish that policy.

Also attending the two-day convention were a number of ranking officials at the Land Reform Ministry.

INFO. MINISTRY REVIEWS ACTIVITIES IN
SUPPORT TO LAND REFORM POLICY

Saigon, March 31, 1970--Information Minister Ngo Khac Tinh Monday morning presided over the seminar reviewing information activities in support to the promulgation day of the land-to-the-tiller policy.

On this occasion, Minister Tinh urged information leading officials to study thoroughly the land-to-the-tiller policy so as to explain and disseminate all its necessary details to cadres and the people.

Present at the opening ceremony of the seminar were Mr. Chung Duc Mai, Assistant to the Minister and ranking officials of the Information Ministry.

LAND REFORM DIRECTOR-GENERAL EXPLAINS
"LAND-TO-THE-TILLER" LAW

Saigon, March 31, 1970--Land Reform Director-General Bui Huu Tien Monday afternoon said, the main objective of the recently-promulgated "Land to the Tiller" Law is to help the peasants. This does not mean, however, that the landowners' interests were ignored.

Mr. Tien made this statement while explaining Law No. 003/70 on the "Land-to-the-Tiller" policy at a seminar attended by leading information officials.

According to Mr. Tien the Land Reform law brings many privileges to the peasants while they get jobs to make a living they also become owners on the land they till. For their part landowners receive a fair reparation for their expropriated land, including 20 per cent in cash and 80 per cent in bonds which can be used for investment in industrial firms even at the private sector.

Earlier, Information Minister Ngo Khac Tinh guided Mr. Cao Van Than, Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development Minister, in a visit to the participants of the seminar.

Also present at the Land Reform seminar were Mr. Chung Duc Mai, Assistant to the Information Minister, and Mr. Truong Buu Dien, Assistant for Propaganda and Proselytizing at the Information Ministry.

RENT FREEZE TO PROTECT TENANT FARMERS EXTENDED

Saigon, April 1, 1970--To protect tenant farmers' rights under the Republic of Viet-Nam's new "Land to the Tiller" law, the government is extending its rent and tenancy freeze for an additional six months - until October 1970.

Under a formal decree issued in February 1969, land occupancy and rent rates were frozen for one year from the time an area became pacified. The extension forestalls possible rent increases designed to force tenant farmers off land they are eligible to claim under the recently enacted land reform law.

Freezing rental rates also enables tenant farmers to retain an additional income derived from increased productivity or higher market prices.

The new law, promulgated by President Nguyen Van Thieu March 26, authorizes tenant farmers to claim title to from one to three hectares, of rented land, with the government reimbursing the former owners. Relatives of war dead, retired servicemen, and other deserving citizens also are eligible to claim land titles under the new law.

Foreign Relations

PRES. THIEU: RVN RESPECTS CAMBODIA'S INDEPENDENCE, NEUTRALITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

Saigon, March 28, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu said Friday night a change of regimes in Cambodia could result in peace coming sooner to Viet-Nam.

Pres. Thieu's remarks were released by a press attache at the President's office.

If the new Cambodian regime holds to neutrality, Pres. Thieu was quoted as saying, a "better orientation" in the military situation of South Viet-Nam will result.

"The Communists in Cambodia would lose their bases and would be weakened and therefore peace might come sooner in Viet-Nam" the President said.

"Everybody knows that so far the Communists have severely violated the territory and neutrality of Cambodia by bringing in a very large number of troops and occupying Cambodian territory and making it into military bases in order to launch offensives into the Republic of Viet-Nam, the President said, "also, they have directly helped the Cambodian Communists to undermine Cambodia politically and economically."

Asked if there would be military cooperation between South Viet-Nam and Cambodia, President Thieu said:

"We will decide this when the government of Cambodia officially makes a request."

"The present government of Cambodia still holds to neutrality and does not intend to participate in any military alliance. Therefore, there is no question of military cooperation. The Republic of Viet-Nam always respects the independence and territorial integrity and neutrality of Cambodia."

To a press report recently carried by a daily saying that the President had a "new plan" with the Communists, President Thieu said the news "is totally groundless" and that was the reason leading to the confiscation of the daily.

The President on this occasion reiterated that he never accepted any coalition government with the Communists.

CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS MEET IN GENEVA

Saigon, March 27, 1970--Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam when presiding over a conference of RVN Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions in Europe and Africa held in Geneva Tuesday delivered a speech on the foreign policy of the RVN government.

Foreign Minister Lam briefed the audience on the RVN government's policies and its programs of action, especially the land reform program and the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

Regarding the RVN foreign policy Minister Lam said the basic principle of this policy is to increase diplomatic relations with foreign countries.

In the coming months, the Foreign Ministry's main tasks will be to follow up and support the Paris peace talks, to expand the presence of the RVN at many other foreign countries, and strengthen overseas information activities.

Minister Lam also urged the entire diplomatic personnel to increase their activities so as to fulfil the missions entrusted to them by the RVN government and people.

F.M. LAM ON FRENCH PROPOSAL OF
INT. CONFERENCE ON INDO-CHINA

Saigon, April 4, 1970--Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam said Thursday afternoon the Republic of Viet-Nam considered France's initiative about the holding of an international conference to solve the whole problem of Indo-China as unrealistic and inapplicable in the present situation.

To a reporter's question Minister Lam said the RVN government did not approve the opinion of solving the present war by the neutralization of South Viet-Nam.

Minister Lam stressed experiences showed that the solution of the Laos issue and the conflict in the Middle East achieved through an international conference had yielded no success.

According to the Foreign Minister the key problem is how to get the efficient international guarantee and supervision after commitment is recorded on the paper.

Concerning the calling of an international conference to discuss the whole Indo-China issue Minister Lam said the problem first of all concerns the nations in this area while the others which had no relation need not participate. Hence an international conference is not necessary.

Military

MILITARY SITUATIONS IN III, IV CTZs
TO BE IMPROVED: PRES. THIEU

Saigon, April 1, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu Tuesday predicted that as regards the present situation in Cambodia, military situations in the III and IV CTZs in Viet-Nam will be improved in months to come.

At a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development and the Ministry of Information, President Thieu said if the new Cambodian government remained neutral, the North Vietnamese Communists and their auxiliary forces could not take advantage of the Cambodian situation to mount offensives against South Viet-Nam.

President Thieu disclosed that under the pro-Communist of Sihanouk, Cambodia had repeatedly sold rice to the North Vietnamese. Consequently most of the rice confiscated by the ARVN and Allied troops in the III and IV CTZs came from Cambodia.

President Thieu said the present general developments are being favorable to the RVN, in the meantime, the Communists have met with increasing difficulties as a result of the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail and the situations in Cambodia and Laos.

President Thieu also bared a Communist scheme giving emphasis on pressure on the Laotian government to help the Pathet Lao set up a coalition government.

And as a result of this, the Communists will ask for a halt to the U.S. bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail so that they could send troops and supplies into South Vietnam through this route.

Referring to Prince Sihanouk's declaration, President Thieu said in order to serve his own interest, the Prince has no other way than to cooperate with the so-called "Indo-China Liberation Front" including Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian Communists.

But, President Thieu stressed, Prince Sihanouk can in no way exploit the Communists who are more cunning than him.

The Communists may take advantage of the Cambodian situation to wage another war.

Facing this situation, President Thieu appealed to the people to unite together in order to reach the ultimate victory.

President Thieu stressed that at the present juncture we have no reason to accept a coalition government with the Communists.

Having failed in the military field, the President said, the Communists have taken advantage of gaps in our general situation.

Dealing with the "Land to the Tiller" law, President Thieu said "it is a real impetus helping the people fight the Communists more successfully."

With this land reform law, the President added, the peasants will become owners of properties thus solving social injustices in rural areas.

On this occasion, President Thieu made known that in two or three months the government will conduct additional indoctrination drives in localities to help tenants, farmers and land-owners better understand the "Land to the Tiller" law.

Besides, President Nguyen Van Thieu denied rumors alleging that ARVN troops violated Cambodian territory.

Open Arms

747 REDS RALLY IN WEEK

Saigon, April 1, 1970--Open Arms offices throughout the country in the week ending March 28 received 747 more Communists who rallied the national cause, including 422 military cadres, 262 political agents and 63 other elements.

The IV Corps Tactical Zone topped the list with 506 ralliers.

Since early this year, 7,685 Communists have returned to the government side bringing to 148,088 the total number of the returnees since the launching of the "Chieu Hoi" policy, February, 1963.

Foreign Aid

WORLD VISION GRANTS 250 WHEELCHAIRS TO INVALIDS

Saigon, March 28, 1970--The World Vision has granted to Vietnamese War Victims and invalids 250 wheelchairs, worth approximately 10,000,000 VNP.

Major General Tran Van Trung, Chief of the Polwar Central Agency Friday morning received these donations at a ceremony held at the Viet-Nam Navy Club. The wheelchairs were carried by LST 454 from Da Nang to Saigon to be distributed to war victims and invalids.

Major General Trung on this occasion praised the World Vision's meritorious deed toward the Viet-Nam people and combatants.

Speaking next, Minister William Hunt, representing the World Vision presented a wheelchair as a token gesture to Major General Trung.

Present at the ceremony were Admiral E.Z. Walt, Commander of the U.S. Navy in Viet-Nam, Commodore Tran Van Chon, Viet-Nam Navy Commander and a number of U.S. and Vietnamese Navy officers.

Economics

IDC TO HOLD TRADE AGRICULTURE CRAFT-INDUSTRY FAIR IN SAIGON

Saigon, March 14, 1970--The Industrial Development Center (IDC) will hold a fair named "Trade, Agriculture, Craft and Industry Fair" in Saigon next July.

Sources from the IDC said the fair will be organized with the cooperation of the Land Reform, Fishery and Agriculture Development Ministry, the Vietnamese Confederation of Craft and Industry, the Saigon Chamber of Commerce, Craft and Industry, the Export Development Center and the Handicraft Development Center.

The fair aims at disseminating technique methods as well as equipment and apparatus in order to increase national production.

The IDC has invited all Vietnamese and foreign businessmen and industrialists who want to display their products or equipment at the fair to contact the IDC Research and Training office at No. 40 Nguyen Hue Street, Saigon from now till May 15.

Special Feature

S.V.N. TO HOLD VILLAGE & HAMLET ELECTIONS THIS YEAR

Saigon, March 28, 1970--An hour before the polls opened on March 11, villagers of Binh Nhut, Long An province, were lined up waiting to cast their ballots. This scene will be repeated in South Viet-Nam almost every Sunday this year as the three-year terms of village and hamlet councils elected in 1967 expired.

Although Binh Nhut's polls were scheduled to remain open from eight a.m. until four p.m. more than half the village's 17,744 registered voters had cast their ballots for village councilmen before noon. By closing time 93.6 per cent of the eligible electorate had voted.

The following Sunday, 90.6 per cent of the registered voters of Binh Nhut turned out to elect hamlet councilmen.

Voter turnout in the nation in early rounds of 1970 balloting reflects a pronounced upswing in citizen participation in local government. In the 1967 elections, in which 984 villages and 4,476 hamlets for the first time in years selected local leaders, 78 per cent of eligible voters cast village council ballots and about 79 per cent voted for hamlet councils.

This year local elections are attracting more than 90 per cent of the registered electorate.

Binh Nhut's village chief attributes the increased participation to greater security and a realization that the ballot box is the surest way to rid village councils of indifferent or incompetent officials.

During the first 1967 elections -- in March and April -- Viet Cong terrorists perpetrated 555 separate acts of violence. Six candidates were killed, one wounded, 18 abducted. Viet Cong sniper fire and mortar attacks on polling places killed 15 voters and 18 soldiers guarding the polls and 15 voters and 18 soldiers were wounded.

Terrorist anti-election activities so far this year have been few.

The 1967 elections represented a return to home rule for about 35 per cent of the nation's rural areas and about six million people. The local elective processes were badly disrupted in 1968 by the Communist offensives in February-March, May and August as well as by subsequent allied counter-thrusts to restore security to the countryside.

However, 1969 saw a resurgence of local political activity.

For four successive Sundays in March of that year, voters in an additional 35 per cent of the nation's rural communities -- 1.5 million men and women, representing nearly 90 per cent of the electorate -- elected 7,741 local leaders.

These elections also attracted an average of 1.7 candidates per office -- an increase over the 1967 average of 1.4. Many of the communities involved had just ended long periods of Communist occupation. Most were wrested from Communist control during the late 1968 "accelerated pacification campaign."

By the end of 1969, more than 90 per cent of the nation's 2,552 villages had popularly-elected councils, with additional villages scheduled to hold elections as soon as they were pronounced "reasonably secure" against Communist incursions.

In addition to replacing local officials whose terms are to expire, South Vietnamese voters this year will elect or re-elect 30 of the 60 senators in the senate and -- for the first time -- choose provincial and city councilmen.

Thus, South Viet-Nam peaceful democratic revolution, which began simultaneously at the local and national levels, moves into the intermediate levels of government. The rebirth of village and hamlet self-rule in 1967 was accompanied by national legislative and executive elections.

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