

VIET-NAM BULLETIN

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

September 28, 1970

Politics

PRES. THIEU ADDRESSES NATION-WIDE COUNCILLORS CONVENTION

Saigon, September 10, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu Wednesday presided over the opening ceremony of the nation-wide convention of the City and Provincial Councilmen, held at Independence Palace, sources from the President's Office announced Wednesday.

The convention gathered 540 out of 549 City and Provincial Councilmen elected in the June 28 elections throughout the country.

The eldest Councilman, 74, is of Dinh Tuong province and the youngest one, 25, of Binh Duong province.

Besides, among the Councilmen participating in the convention are 15 women, the eldest of them, 59, is of Phong Dinh and the youngest, 27, of the Cam Ranh City.

Opening the first part of the convention agenda, the RVNAF Joint General Staff Command briefed the audience on the military situation up to Wednesday and on the Communists' schemes at present and in the months to come.

Speaking next, the Director of the Central Pacification-Development Center explained the significance and purpose of the Pacification and Development policy and presented to the audience the PD achievements throughout the country up to the last week-end.

Then, the Economy Minister dealt with the national economic and financial situation and measures aimed at improving the national economy and finance.

After the briefing of the Economy Minister, the Councilmen had lunch with the Chief Executive at the Palace.

In the afternoon, the President's Office briefed the audience on the organization and management of the regional Administration.

Addressing the Councilmen at the convention on this occasion, President Thieu spelled out the vital factors of the present national situation and the prospects of the national future as well.

Dealing with the military situation, President Thieu said the Communists "are now being defeated and will never win over us militarily."

"Besides," the President affirmed, "the Communists are not able to control any portions of our soil and population."

Meanwhile, the President said, the RVN Armed Forces are growing stronger and stronger and are driving off the enemy from populated areas, and as a result, the Communists can in no way launch large scale offensives but scattered actions at village and hamlet levels.

However, the President added, our people and army are actively eradicating the Communist infrastructure cadres and now over 98 per cent of the rural population are living in security and start the development projects for a better life at the grass-root level.

Hence, the President added, although the Communists obdurately refuse to negotiate peace settlement, the present war will be ended however and peace will be surely restored by ourselves for the development and prosperity of villages and hamlets.

"To safeguard such a genuine peace", President Thieu said "all of us must destroy all Communist underground cadres at hamlets and villages and also actively participate in the development programs, strengthened with the spirit of community cooperation."

On this occasion, President Thieu laid stress on the fact that he will never accept a surrendering peace or a peace through coalition with the Communists.

"No inches of our soil, no hamlets will be abandoned to the Communist hands because we are winning over the enemy in every fields, thus we can in no way give up such successes," the President affirmed.

Touching on the building of democracy, the Chief Executive said that the essential factor for a true democracy is the active cooperation of the entire people. The President conceived that democracy consists of the obligations and rights of the people as a whole, and should create opportunities for people of all social strata, to enjoy such obligations and rights so that all the people could actively participate in the common cause.

"Consequently", President Thieu said, "we should create a democratic spirit and life, in which every government structures' activities must be linked together."

"It's in such a spirit, the Chief Executive said, the nationwide convention of City and Provincial councilmen is summoned, thus to give an opportunity to the councilmen to make friends with one another and then to open a democratic era for the relations between the central government and the local administration," the President said.

"So the convention is just a 'first hand contact' paving the way for the efficient and closer cooperation between the central and local administration in the future," the President stressed.

On this occasion, the Chief Executive requested the Councilmen to contribute constructive ideas to the organization and management of the regional Administrations which the President's Office previously presented to the Convention as primordial guidelines.

President Thieu also made known that he had decided to increase the power of the city and provincial Councils in an effort to help the councilmen easily fulfill their duties, at the localities.

Finally, President Thieu expressed the hope that the Councilmen will nurture the democratic spirit of the Convention so as to effectively serve the entire people. He also urged the Councilmen to strengthen their confidence in the ultimate victory of the Republic of Viet-Nam and to widely spread such a confidence among the entire people.

Also attending the event were Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem, all the Cabinet members and all the Presidential Assistants.

AUG. 30 SENATE ELECTION OFFICIAL RESULTS ANNOUNCED

Saigon, September 14, 1970--The Central Election Council (CEC) Monday morning made public the official results of the August 30 half-the-Senate election.

According to the announcement, Slate No. 11 with "Lotus Flower" as emblem and headed by Prof. Vu Van Mau with 1,149,597 votes, was declared officially elected. Also were Slate No. 1 with the "Sun" as emblem and headed by Senator Huynh Van Cao with 1,106,288 votes and Slate No. 3 with the "Lily" as emblem and headed by Senator Nguyen Van Huyen with 882,274 votes.

At a ceremony held Monday morning at the Supreme Court, Mr. Tran Minh Tiet, Supreme Court President concurrently CEC Chairman presented the CEC activities through its twelve successive sessions during the August 30-September 14 period. These activities included the control of invalid or claimed votes and the tallying of the results of vote countings throughout the country.

Mr. Tiet made known that the CEC counted only 11,270 invalid votes (or 2.3 per cent) out of a total of 4,298,962 votes throughout the country, adding that the CEC considered it an usual rate.

According to Chairman Tiet, four complaints lodged by Messrs. Nguyen Quoc Hoang (slate No. 6); Nguyen Cao Hach (slate No. 5); Nguyen Anh Tuan (Slate No. 2); and voter Luong Si Huynh were also satisfactorily settled by the Central Election Council.

The CEC Chairman also disclosed a number of complaints relating to the election campaign procedures, which were beyond the CEC competence, will be sent to the Senate's Office as documents for the validation of the elected Senators.

The Central Election Council included besides Supreme Court President Tran Minh Tiet as Chairman, Justice Nguyen Van Si, as Vice Chairman, Justices Tran Van Liem, Nguyen Van Thong, Senators Hoang The Phiet, Vu Minh Tran, Reps. Ho Ngoc Cu, Ho Ngoc Nhan, Vice Interior Minister Le Cong Chat and Luu Dinh Viep, Saigon Prosecutor General as members.

FOREIGN MINISTRY ON POW ISSUE IN RVN

Saigon, September 16, 1970--In a communique issued Tuesday, the Foreign Ministry said, for many years the International Red Cross Committee has been authorized to make regular visits to POW's jails in the Republic of Viet-Nam.

The communique was issued as a reply to Mr. M. Naville, Chairman of the International Red Cross Committee, who had expressed his regret that "the RVN government only applied the POW status to a number of detainees and only gave authorization with many restrictions to representatives of the International Red Cross Committee to visit the majority of other prisoners."

According to the Foreign Ministry, in addition to regular visits of POW's prisons, International Red Cross representatives and physicians have been authorized to visit all six POW's camps in South Viet-Nam.

The Foreign Ministry stressed that the RVN and Allied countries participating in the Viet-Nam war generously applied the criteria fixed by the Geneva Agreements on POW's.

Besides, representatives of the International Red Cross are also permitted to visit jails and installations where civil prisoners are detained, although the IRC activities did not include these visits.

The Foreign Ministry recalled that for the sake of humanity, last July 11, the RVN government released 62 North Vietnamese POW's with the cooperation of the IRC.

To date, the North Viet-Nam Communists and their auxiliary forces in the South have strictly prohibited the IRC help prisoners of war under their attention, under any forms whatsoever. Besides North Viet-Nam adamantly refused to disclose the names of POWs to the International Red Cross.

"PEACE IN FREEDOM" MOVEMENT SET UP

Saigon, Septeber 16--A new political organization named "Anti-coalition People's Movement for Peace in Freedom" initiated by a number of politicians and notables in the capital was recently set up with its office at No. 122 Hong Thap Tu Street, Saigon.

Among the founders of the Movement were former Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat, former Foreign Affairs Minister Tran Van Do, Lawyer Tran Van Tuyen, Senators Ton That Dinh, Huynh Van Cao, Prof. Vu Quoc Thong, Dr. Dang Van Sung, Rev. Hoang Quynh etc.

The Movement was set up with the aim to assert along with the "silent majority" throughout the country, the peace stand of the Vietnamese people and determinedly ask for the realization of a "Peace in Freedom" as an opposition to the slogans "Peace Now" and "unconditional Peace".

The Movement is trying to ask individuals and political organizations to sign a letter addressed to the American people, and to assert the Vietnamese people's peace stand and aspirations to be served as a basis for a Vietnam-U.S. cooperation policy.

Such a policy, according to the Movement, aims at mobilizing every effort with the maximum good-will to put an end to the war, to bring about a peace in freedom and democracy and to refute any forms of coalition with the Communists.

This policy also accepts U.S. President Nixon's advocacy of handing back all responsibilities of the anti-Communist fight to the Republic of Vietnam.

However, according to the Movement, the replacement of U.S. troops should be realized in parallel with the modernization of the RVN Armed Forces, the renovation of the national economy and the improvement of society.

RVN DELEGATION ATTENDS WACL CONVENTION IN JAPAN

Saigon, September 15--Dr. Tran Van Do, former RVN Foreign Affairs Minister Tuesday led an RVN delegation for the six-day convention of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), held in Kyoto, Japan starting Sept. 15.

The RVN delegation for the Kyoto convention included Amb. Nguyen Van Kieu, Advisor of the World Anti-Communist League; Vietnam Chapter, Dr. Pham Huu Chuong; Lawyer Nguyen Sanh, Mr. Hoang Tuy and students Ngo Vuong Toai and Nguyen Xuan Duc.

The main theme of the convention is "Mobilizing the Forces of World Freedom".

A spokesman of the WACL, Vietnam Chapter made known that Dr. Phan Huy Quat, Chairman of the WACL Vietnam, was invited to give a lecture on the topic "the Free World in face of the Soviet-Red China conflict" at the opening ceremony of the convention.

After the Kyoto convention, next Sept. 20, the RVN delegation will meet with Vietnamese overseas students in Tokyo and attend a parade of about 100,000 anti-Communist Japanese students.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tran Van Do and Phan Huy Quat will meet with Japanese politicians to campaign for the anti-coalition stand.

The six-day convention of World Anti-Communist League gathered 200 delegates of anti-Communist organizations and of 50 member countries.

Foreign Relations

GREEK AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS
TO PRESIDENT THIEU

Saigon, September 10--President Nguyen Van Thieu at 11 a.m. Thursday presided over a ceremony in which new Greek Ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. John Yannakakis presented his credentials, Press secretary at the President's office reported.

Mr. Yannakakis is the second Greek Ambassador to Vietnam since 1969. The first Greek Ambassador had presented his credentials to Pres. Thieu on June 16, 1969.

Amb. Yannakakis, 51, has assumed several important positions at the Greek diplomatic missions abroad and at the Greek Foreign Ministry.

President Thieu, in his reply to the greetings of Amb. Yannakakis said that although the RVN and Greek have quite recently established diplomatic relations, the ideals the Greek and the Vietnamese people are pursuing will help tighten these friendly ties.

The RVN President said the Communists still tie themselves to their dream of invading Indochina and they have overtly violated the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia.

However, the President added, the Laotian and Khmer people are gallantly fighting against the aggressors and their efforts for their own survival deserve the moral and material assistances from peace-loving peoples.

According to the RVN Chief Executive peace could not be restored in Indochina until the Communists withdraw all their troops from South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

President Thieu added that Communists are weakening in Vietnam. The brilliant victories of the RVN Armed Forces and the achievements of the RVN government in the field of Pacification-Development program have ensured security in all but hamlets and villages throughout the country and encouraged the people to actively contribute to the village development.

Despite the stubborn Communists are claiming for a coalition government and the unconditional withdrawal of the allied forces, the RVN President said, the Vietnam war is fading away day by day, and peace will be restored through the strength of the whole Vietnamese people and Armed Forces and amid the development and prosperity of the villages.

Finally, Pres. Thieu laid stress on the fact that the RVN people have been fighting and sacrificing for the defense of freedom not only for Vietnam herself but also for the whole South East Asia.

He then expressed the hope that friendly ties between Greek and the RVN will be much more developed and tightened.

He also asserted that the RVN people and government will closely cooperate with the Greek Ambassador in an effort to help him fulfill his duty.

Present at the event were Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam and Presidential Assistant Nguyen Phu Duc.

FOREIGN MINISTER TRAN VAN LAM LEAVES FOR NEW YORK

Saigon, September 13--On the occasion of the 25th UN General Assembly that will start on Sept. 15, 1970 in New York, Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam left Saigon Sunday morning for the United States to meet with the Foreign Ministers of the allied countries.

Minister Lam will also take this opportunity to see a number of Foreign Ministers and national leaders from non-Communist countries, members of the UN that do not have diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam.

Minister Lam will present the stand and right cause of the Republic of Vietnam, the national situation and achievements in democracy building and social reform.

Accompanying Minister Lam was Mr. Phung Nhat Minh, Chief of Cabinet at the Foreign Ministry.

On hand to bid farewell to Minister Lam at Tan Son Nhat airport was U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Ellsworth Bunker.

ASIA FOUNDATION HELPS BUILD FOREIGN MINISTRY'S RESEARCH OFFICE

Saigon September 14--The Asia Foundation has decided to grant U.S. \$ 15,000 to the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the construction and equipment of a study and research office at the Ministry's Training Center, No. 101 Pasteur Street, Saigon.

An amount of U.S. \$ 10,000 (VN \$ 1,180,000) was forwarded to the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the construction of the office.

The remainder U.S. \$ 5,000 will be used by the Asia Foundation for the equipment of the office at the proposal of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Sources from the Foreign Affairs Ministry said besides the above cash donation, Asia Foundation also presented the Ministry's Training Center with a large number of interesting books.

Military

RED UNITS IN MEKONG DELTA
ARE 70 PER CENT BELOW STRENGTH

Can Tho, South Vietnam, Reuter--U.S. intelligence sources here say North Vietnamese and Vietnam units in the rice-rich Mekong Delta are 70 per cent below strength, and credit this to American and South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia.

The sources told Reuter that the theoretical strength of guerrilla units now in the 14,250 square-mile (36,700 square kms) delta was just under 56,000, but actual strength was estimated at 17,000.

They added that to reach this figure the Viet Cong transferred men to the Delta from provinces to the North.

U.S. operations in Cambodia took care of 30 per cent of Viet Cong caches along the border area, and the South Vietnamese presence across the border has cut infiltration to a trickle, said one officer.

The sources said South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia are concentrating on blocking the traditional guerrilla infiltration route from South East Cambodia to the mountains of Chau Doc and the coastal province Kien Giang.

Elements of the South Vietnamese ninth division are at present sweeping an area along the Chau Doc - Cambodian border, while one South Vietnamese battalion has dug in amid the Chau Doc range and is sending heavily armed patrols into what is still regarded as hard-core Viet Cong territory.

U.S. advisors attached to the fourth military region headquarters here pointed out that Vietnamisation was further advanced in the Delta than anywhere else.

Officials of CORDS--civil operations, rural development support--count 88 per cent of the Delta's population of relatively secure, 71 per cent very secure, and nine per cent contested.

Of the three per cent of 155,000 people officially regarded as under Viet Cong control, 70 per cent live in the Southeast provinces of Kien Hoa, Vinh Binh and Ba Xuyen, bordering the South China Sea.

CORDS hopes to gradually whittle down these numbers with the same tactics that have apparently paid off elsewhere - recruiting villagers for the Part-Time People's Self Defense Force (P.S.D.F.) community development projects and election of village governments.

Both military men and civilians here see the P.S.D.F. as the major factor in delta pacification.

The force now has 1.4 million members in the Delta area--actually about 462,000

carrying arms.

Members of the force undergo a nine-week training course, then return to defend their own hamlets.

Their principal military use is as a force capable of repulsing small attacks and providing warnings of larger ones. But observers see member's principal contribution to pacification as their decision to stand in the open and be counted as government supporters.

Culture and Education

PRESIDENT THIEU PRESIDES OVER CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS

Saigon, September 15--President Nguyen Van Thieu Tuesday morning presided over the celebrations of the 1970 Children's Festival at Tao Dan Park.

On this occasion, President Thieu urged the children to show gratitude to the combatants who are fighting day and night to protect the people and, thanks to their sacrifices, the security situation has turned out better than in the previous year and peace is gradually coming.

President Thieu also said that in his inspection tour of various villages and hamlets all over the country he has realized that more and more schools are built even in remote areas and the organization of children into units has become stronger.

Finally the President made known that the government has been carrying-out a program for children which covers the building of schools and development of children organizations.

Earlier, Saigon Prefect Col. Do Kien Nhieu reported to the President on the children's camping during the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Before leaving, President Thieu toured the tents of the Armed Forces Children Group at the South Western corner of the park.

Present at the ceremony were Lower House Speaker Nguyen Ba Luong, Supreme Court President Tran Minh Tiet, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem, a number of Cabinet members, Senators and Representatives.

ECC ISSUES REMARKS ON VIETNAMESE CULTURE AND UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

Saigon, September 15--The extra-ordinary meeting of the Educational-Cultural Council (ECC) last week discussed the university autonomy, the secondary and primary education and the true situation of the Vietnamese culture.

The ECC decided to make public a memorandum on the education and culture in general, a recommendation on the university autonomy; and a recommendation on the secondary and primary education; and another memorandum on the true situation of the Vietnamese culture.

The above documents were only the first steps taken by the ECC in the drafting of an educational and cultural policy suitable to the situation in Vietnam.

The meetings opened last Sept. 7 were presided over by Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky.

The above documents will be forwarded to the Executive and the Legislative in accordance with the laws in force.

VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' SUMMER MEETING HELD IN ILLINOIS

Saigon, September 11--Nearly 300 Vietnamese students in the United States attended the five-day Summer meeting held late August 1970 in Illinois, near Chicago, dealing with issues concerning Vietnam, sources from the RVN Embassy in Washington reported.

The meeting was organized by the Vietnamese Catholic Students Association in the United States with the collaboration of other students. Professors Nguyen Xuan Vinh (Michigan University), Pham Chung (New Mexico University) and Rev. Cao Van Luan took turns in talking about such topics as "To serve the Fatherland", "Postwar development plan" and "Vietnamese University education and its trends of development."

Mr. Bui Diem, Ambassador of the Republic of Vietnam in Washington called on the meeting and dealt with the present national political, military and economic situations and answered the questions of the students.

The meeting ended with a variety show program with the collaboration of Vietnamese residents in Washington. The program was reported having yielded \$ 247.36 which went to the relief fund for Vietnamese orphans.

In addition, painting and handicraft products exhibition by painter Thai Ba and Vietnamese craftsmen also collected considerable proceeds for the assistance of victims in the Fatherland, the same sources said.

Special Feature

NUOC MAM : THE DEMOCRATIC FISH SAUCE

By Doan Bich

Saigon (MF)--Many of today's headlines in Vietnam stress democracy. People talk about a democratic way of life, a democratic society, a democratic economy and so forth. If we accept the dictionary definition that democratic means "pertaining to the entire people or appealing to the broad masses of the people", then Nuoc Mam is unmistakably the democratic fish sauce of Vietnam.

Like rice and tea, nuoc mam is part of the daily diet of the Vietnamese people, regardless of social class or religion. It is an essential part of the diet of all Vietnamese, from the president of the country to the most humble peasant.

Nuoc Mam, though only a sauce, is a very nutritional food, having a high content of vitamins and nitrogen. There are people who live in good health with only rice and nuoc mam for daily meals. Its reputation as a health food is known to all Vietnamese. They often use it for treatment of the sick and needy.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of nuoc mam is its controversial odour, which admittedly resembles a very pungent western cheese. Foreigners in Vietnam are often repelled by its odour, but once they become accustomed to it they enjoy the flavour. Vietnamese living abroad, however, save nuoc mam for family meals only as its capacity to win friends in foreign countries tends to be somewhat limited.

In the domain of folk culture, nuoc mam exerts a great influence. Proverbs abound, such as the saying "When a father eats too much fish sauce, his children will be born thirsty", meaning that one should think of the consequences of one's acts. A well-known Vietnamese fable tells the story of a penny-pincher whose children were fond of fish. He made a wooden fish and served it in a bowl of nuoc mam at every meal. He told his children to eat rice seasoned with the sauce while contemplating the wooden fish. Thus they were to imagine they'd had their fill of fish.

It used to be that the production of nuoc mam was a home industry. Today, however, it has become a national industry. Last year, over fifty million liters of fish sauce were produced in two principal areas: Phan Thiet province in Central Vietnam and Phu Quoc Island, some 40 miles off the coast of Ha Tien in South Vietnam. In addition, nearly 3,000 small factories are scattered along the coast. The most famous nuoc mam is produced in Phu Quoc where 52 factoried operate, 45 of them installations with an average monthly output of 150,000 liters.

The sauce is produced by a slow process of fermentation, during which the fish is kept from spoiling by the use of salt. A large factory has hundreds of large wooden barrels, three meters in diameter and four meters high, set on a foundation about one meter above the ground. Each large barrel is connected to a smaller one which holds the distilled liquid.

Fish freshly caught from the sea are marinaded in the large vats with one part salt added to three parts fish. A small quantity of sugar is added to temper the salty taste. Before placing the fish in the barrel, a layer of gravel and rice husks is spread on the bottom to serve as a filter. About six months are required before the sauce begins to form. It is allowed to run into the small barrel through the gravel filter. At first, the sauce is quite cloudy. It is then returned to the large barrel to be filtered several more times until it comes out clear. The first sauce thus obtained is the finest quality and may contain up to 35 % nitrogen.

After taking out the first batch, salt water is filtered through the barrel. Each filtering produces a progressively lower quality sauce than the one before. The poorest grades are used for cooking, and they of course have a lower nutritional value. The first quality nuoc mam is a clear liquid and nearly odourless. Actually, it is very difficult to obtain on the open market. Usually it is mixed with the second and third batches to produce a still excellent sauce in considerably greater quantity. According to local producers, however, for a supreme quality nuoc mam--rarely produced--the fish should marinade for ten years or more. Thus, with an inexpensive method of production and very little waste, nuoc mam is one of those rare commodities in life: something we like, something good for us and something inexpensive. No wonder it is the favourite food of Vietnam.



Nuoc Mam, the traditional Vietnamese fish sauce, being readied for the retail market in earthenware jars.

CULTURAL FEATURE:

Legends of Vietnam

We have published two Vietnamese legends by George F. Shultz: "The Vietnamese Myth of Origin" and "The Genie of Phu Dong" in our bulletin No. 2 and No. 4, Vol. III respectively. Here is another of Mr. Shultz's adaptations. We hope to print more of his writings in the coming issues of our publication.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SON TINH AND THUY TINH

Every year, during the monsoon season, the delta of the Red River of North Vietnam, formed over the centuries of alluvial soil, is subjected to severe floods. The reason for these annual inundations is attributed to a never-ending struggle between two equally powerful demons. The story that follows is an attempt on the part of the inhabitants to explain how this came about.

* * * *

The eighteenth (and last) King Hung Vuong of the Hong Bang dynasty, which had ruled over the Kingdom of Van Lang for many centuries, was the parent of a beautiful and talented daughter named My Nuong. When she reached a marriageable age, the princess' hand was sought by many kings and generals of the neighboring kingdoms. But all these suitors had been dismissed by her father, who was desirous of marrying his only daughter to a man of outstanding virtues.

One day, two young men happened to arrive at the royal palace at the same time. One of these visitors introduced himself as Son Tinh, the Demon of the Mountains, and the other, as Thuy Tinh, the Demon of the Waters. King Hung Vuong then asked the two demons to demonstrate their supernatural powers. When Son Tinh pointed his finger at an adjacent mountain, it crumbled in a cloud of dust. Thuy Tinh then blew an immense quantity of water out of his mouth; it changed to vapor and formed a heavy layer of clouds. It was evident that both suitors were very powerful and King Hung Vuong was unable to decide between them. His first thought was to gain time.

"You are equally worthy," he told the two demons, "but unfortunately I have only one daughter. I shall give her to the one who is first to arrive tomorrow morning with his wedding gifts."

The demons then departed to collect their presents and to prepare for their return to the king's palace.

The following morning it was Son Tinh, the Demon of the Mountains, who was the first to appear. He brought gifts of gold, silver, and jade from his mountains and wondrous animals from his forests; the king had never seen such a splendid array. Keeping his promise, he gave My Nuong to Son Tinh in marriage. The mountain demon left at once with his bride, taking her to his fastness on Mount Tan Vien (Round Parasol), in the province of Son Tay.

When Son Tinh arrived at the royal palace shortly thereafter with a collection of gifts not less precious than those of his rival only to find the princess gone, he became very angry and swore to wrest the lovely young woman from her husband's embrace. And when a demon, especially a demon as powerful as Thuy Tinh, acts under the goad of jealousy, terrible things can happen.

The water demon began to roar, setting all the elements of nature in motion. The rain began to fall in torrents, waterspouts moved in from the ocean, and huge tidal waves flooded the land. Amidst the fury, all the denizens of the deep marched against the citadel on Mount Tan Vien.

But Son Tinh was ready to meet the attack. He transformed the fauna of the highlands into an army of warriors and stretched an iron net across the river to stop the detriment of the people dwelling in the valley. The number of victims and the damage to the ricefields were fearful to behold.

The war dragged on for weeks and weeks and the higher Thuy Tinh raised his waters, the higher Son Tinh would raise his mountain. But in the end the water demon became discouraged and withdrew his forces towards the sea. All would have been well had the matter ended there. The following year, however, Thuy Tinh reorganized his troops and again flooded the villages and fields of the delta. And every year since then, in the seventh and eighth lunar months, the floods return to plague the inhabitants.



Miss Thanh Lan, 22, is a law student and a well-known TV and film actress in South Viet-Nam.

VIET-NAM BULLETIN is a weekly publication of the Embassy of Viet-Nam, provided free of charge to all persons and organizations interested in VN. All inquiries and requests should be directed to VIET-NAM BULLETIN, Embassy of Viet-Nam, 2251 "R" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. Tel: 234-4860.

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Vol. IV, No. 30
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VIET-NAM BULLETIN

A weekly publication of the Embassy of Viet-Nam
2251 "R" Street, Washington D.C. 20008
Telephone: 234-4860

U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Washington, DC
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BULK RATE

Vol. IV, No. 30
September 28, 1970

Mr. & Mrs. Burnett Potaski VN 5