

# Vietnam Bulletin

VOL. V, NO. 8

FEBRUARY 22, 1971

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE EMBASSY OF VIET-NAM.

WASHINGTON, D.C.



Fishing Village

# South Vietnam's Fishing Industry

## Background

Over two thousand years ago, the King of Van Lang which later became Vietnam taught his subjects to tattoo their bodies in the wildest manner in order to scare away marine monsters when they went to sea fishing. Since then the population of thousands of villages along the Vietnamese 2,500 kms. coastline have learned a great deal more about how to live with and make a living out of the South China Sea. Even though deep in the heart of every Vietnamese fisherman, there is a traditional longing for an acre or two of peaceful land to which he can retire and, despite all the risks of a seafaring life, the fishing craft has been handed over from generation to generation. Today, South of the 17th parallel, there are nearly 300,000 full time fishermen and over 81,000 fishing boats compared to 243,390 fishermen and 53,750 boats in 1963. Nearly 50 % of the boats or 39,000 units are motorized. Fish catch has increased from 52,000 metric tons in 1955 to 463,000 metric tons last year. The following table eloquently proves the tremendous vitality and progress of the South Vietnamese fishing industry over the past few years :

Year	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Fishermen	243,390	245,520	243,500	253,770	270,408	272,300	277,188
Increase/Decrease %	0.8 %	- 0.8 %	8 %	6 %	0.7 %	1.7 %	
Total Number of Boats	53,750	56,470	58,420	65,150	76,190	77,959	81,955
Increase %	8 %	4 %	10 %	14 %	2 %	7 %	
Number of Motorized Boats	9,220	9,710	12,240	26,770	23,195	29,968	39,000
Increase %	5 %	24 %	27 %	30 %	23 %	23 %	
Fish Catch	378,670	397,000	375,000	380,500	410,700	410,000	463,844
Increase/Decrease %	4 %	- 5 %	1 %	7 %	-	13 %	

Source : Directorate of Fisheries.

## Fishing ports

Besides hundreds of tiny fish landing sites known as fishermen's villages dotting the South Vietnamese coast, there are over half a dozen major fishing ports, namely :

- Da Nang, 1,000 kilometers North of Saigon, population : 165,000 ;
- Qui Nhon, 700 kilometers North of Saigon, population : 52,000 ;
- Nha Trang, 450 kilometers North of Saigon, population : 57,000 ;
- Phan Rang, 350 kilometers North of Saigon, population 25,000 ;
- Phan Thiet, 200 kilometers North of Saigon, population 62,000 ;
- Vung Tau, 120 kilometers South East of Saigon, population : 42,000 ;

— Rach Gia, 338 kilometers South West of Saigon, population : 48,000 ;

— The Island of Phu Quoc, about 15 nautical miles off Rach Gia.

Most of the above-mentioned ports have the potential for development as deep-water ports for large modern fishing vessels. None of the ports has modern cold storage facilities. Rach Gia and Vung Tau are two major sources of fish supply to the capital city. Rach Gia is also a major shrimp producer. Phan Thiet is famous as the producer of *nuoc mam* (fish sauce) in Vietnam. In 1969, about 26,000 metric tons of fish were landed and 25 million liters of fish sauce were produced in Phan Thiet. About 20 million liters were sold to other provinces in the country. Fish sauce is also produced in Phu Quoc Island and Phan Rang.

## Fishing boats

Despite the noticeable progress during the past few years, the South Vietnamese fishing industry still has a long way to go to fully realize its potential for development. The main areas for improvement includes : large vessels and modern technique for off-shore fishing, fishing ports development including the construction of deep water ports, cold storage facilities, transportation by refrigerated trucks, fishermen training, and last but not least a rational and economical distribution system.

About 96 % of the existing boats are under five tons. Vietnamese fishermen operate only in a narrow belt of sea from the beach to approximately 20 kilometers off-shore. In many areas, even coastal fishery is limited by military restrictions. There are about a dozen large fishing vessels operating off-shore and landing their catch in Saigon, the only port where berthing of large boats is not limited to high tides. Most of these vessels were second-hand trawlers bought from Japan. It is thought that investment in these vessels may prove profitable in the short run but will not be adequate for competing with foreign fishing fleets or imported new vessels operating in the same waters. Facilities exist within the country to construct steel fishing vessels up to 300 gross tons or 110-foot long modern purse seiners. Estimates given by the existing shipyards for the construction of a 90-foot fishing boat are competitive with other yards in South East Asia. In addition it is estimated that about 40 % of the cost of construction would be for labour, hence, the government could save foreign exchange equal to at least 40 % of the cost of an imported new vessel, if the domestic ship building industry is developed.

The construction of ferro-cement boats is also a developing industry in Saigon and one of the Saigon shipyards is planning to build a series of

sixty-foot shrimp trawlers. A number of major fishing firms has shown great interest in this type of boat which reportedly is less expensive to build and to maintain than steel boats.

Over the past recent years Vietnamese fishermen have become more familiar with man-made fiber fishnets which are stronger and easier to handle, hence, more efficient than natural fiber nets. There are presently 14 firms producing fishnets with imported raw materials. This is considered adequate for the foreseeable future.

As mentioned earlier in this feature, the South Vietnamese fishing fleet had 39,000 motorized boats in 1969 compared to 9,220 in 1963, or an increase of over 320 % in six years. This is undoubtedly a factor contributing to the 22 % increase in fishcatch during the same period, despite the fact that fishing activities were more limited by the security situation in 1969 than in 1963 and the increase in the number of fishermen during that period was only 13 %. Presently three marine engine assembling plants are under construction and it is expected that within the next two years they will become greatly valuable in helping modernize the Vietnamese fishing industry.

### Export Potential

The export of fishery products have become one of the fastest growing branches of world trade. This growing trend has been reflected even in South Vietnam's past performance in the export of shrimp which rose from US\$239,352 in 1962 to US\$813,217 in 1965. Total fishery export earnings during that period were about 9 million US dollars or over 6% of total Vietnamese exports after rice and rubber. Fishery exports since 1966 have declined rapidly since 1966 due to the effects of the war and the inflated domestic prices of fishery products.

### Exports of Polynemus and other fresh sea fish\*

Year	Source	Destination	Quantity	Valeur (In Strait or US\$)
				St. \$
1961	An Xuyen	Thailand	551 MT	St. \$ 438,419
	Kien Giang			US\$ 29,675
1962	An Xuyen	Singapore	237 MT	St. \$ 298,592
1963	"	"	375	St. \$ 431,879
1964	"	"	472	St. \$ 529,778
	Kien Giang			
1965	An Xuyen	"	232	St. \$ 281,703
1966	"	"	165	St. \$ 200,026
1967	"	"	182	St. \$ 220,844

The export of fresh sea fish to Singapore has been suspended since 1968 because the price has become uncompetitive. Frozen shrimp, fresh and boiled, has been exported to the United States, France, the Netherlands, Hongkong, Switzerland, and Japan. But as shown in the table below the export of frozen shrimp has dropped drastically

since 1968 as security restrictions were imposed on the most important shrimp fishing areas such as Rach Gia, Song Ong Doc, and Bac Lieu:

### Export of Frozen Shrimp \*

Year	Quantity	Value in US\$
1962	308,386 kgs	239,352
1963	471,359 -	603,849
1964	338,952 -	404,547
1965	699,956 -	813,217
1966	620,862 -	696,985
1967	432,121 -	495,394
1968	78,307 -	140,790
1969	49,060 -	70,308
Total	3,081,026 kgs	US\$ 3,553,803

It is hoped that with the new exchange rate of the piaster and a steady increase in production through modern technique and better security situation, South Vietnamese fishery products will become competitive on the world market in the foreseeable future. The red snapper (Ca Hong Do) and other finfish may become one of the highly exportable products besides shrimp. Preliminary information collected by the United Nations FAO fish census boats off the coast of South Vietnam indicates that there is an abundance of these species in the South China Sea. The South Vietnamese Directorate of Fisheries also estimate that in Rach Gia alone the catch of red snapper and other finfish could reach 300 MT per month with existing facilities.

It must be admitted however that export-oriented fishery products must compete not only in price but also in quality, and presently no facilities exist at the fish landing sites for the preliminary processing of fish.

The following table computed by the Directorate of Fisheries shows South Vietnam's export potential for fishery products from 1970 through 1975, allowance being made for local per capita consumption of 30 kilos of fish per year and processing waste of about 20 % of gross weight:

Year	Surplus after consumption	Value in thousand US\$	
		Export	(1)
1970	18,100 MT	14,500 MT	10,000
1971	58,060	46,000	32,000
1972	102,000	80,000	56,000
1973	149,440	119,000	85,000
1974	198,400	158,000	111,000
1975	252,260	202,000	141,000

1. Export value computed on the basis of US\$ 700 per metric ton.

\* Directorate of Fisheries

The export of fish meal and canned fish is also a very realistic prospect since South Vietnam has an ample supply of the species that are likely to be canned : anchovy, sardines, squid and mackerel. There is also a strong interest in South Vietnam to produce these two commodities, primarily for domestic consumption but also for possible export in the future.

### Distribution and Marketing

Fish for the Saigon market is mainly supplied by Rach Gia and Vung Tau. Currently trucks leaving Rach Gia for Saigon carry about five tons of fish and seven tons of ice. As much as 35 % may be more or less spoiled and unsaleable as fresh fish upon arrival to the capital city. Such high rate of spoilage severely affects the income of fishermen. Insulated or refrigerated trucks will dramatically change the situation. At the landing sites the handling of fish is time-consuming and not up to hygienic standard. This of course is another factor affecting the price and quality of fish. As mentioned elsewhere, cold storage facilities must be installed in all the major fishing ports, and fresh water must be available to wash fish.

In Saigon a new, ultra-modern fish market in the Chanh Hung area has just been completed. This market, whose construction started in 1968 with U.S. assistance, has 37,500 sq. ft. of market area and 5,000 sq. ft. of cold storage area capable of holding 250 metric tons of fish. The existing fish market on Tran Quoc Toan street in the central area of Saigon is expected to be moved to the new market as soon as administration procedures are worked out. The new fish market will operate under the direction of the Saigon Mayor's Office and the Directorate of Fisheries.

Saigon retail price indices of shrimp and fish have gone up 93 and 44 % respectively in the past year. But it is common knowledge that the fishermen at the landing site get only about 20 % of the average retail price. Inefficiency in handling, spoilage through transportation, but mainly the lion's share carved out by middlemen account for the high and unstable prices of fish to the consumer.

### Looking to the Future

Ambitious plans and projects to develop the off-shore fishing industry are currently under study or implementation by the government with the assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United Nations F.A.O., the Asian Development Bank and friendly nations. Chiefly among these is the F.A.O. sponsored fish census which has been in operation since 1968. The census to be completed by December next year covers

the Vietnamese off-shore waters in three phases : (a) Phase I : the South China Sea from December 1968 to December 1969, (b) Phase II : the Southern portion of the Gulf of Siam from December 1969 to December 1970 and (c) Phase III : the Gulf of Tonkin from December 1970 to December 1971.

Two boats are currently conducting the census : The Kyoshin Maru operated by a Japanese contractor with a Japanese crew, an FAO fish technologist and two to three Vietnamese trainees, the Huu Nghi (Friendship), operated by a crew of 11 Vietnamese officers and men. This 120-ton trawler is a gift from the Dutch Government to South Vietnam. In the report on the first phase operation, the researchers conclude that « commercially profitable fishing grounds have been discovered in the South West and central areas of the surveyed zone. » They also confirm that in many areas the harvest may reach 1.5 to two tons per hour.

To increase catch and modernize handling facilities, the Directorate of Fisheries has recommended the following projects :

- Encouraging the private sector to develop an off-shore fishing fleet of several hundred to three hundred ton boats ;
- Expanding fishing ports to accommodate large vessels ;
- Dredging estuaries at Phan Thiet, Ninh Thuan, Rach Gia, Binh Tuy, Nha Trang, Quang Ngai, Vung Tau ;
- Building cold storage facilities at Vung Tau, Rach Gia, Da Nang, Phan Thiet, Qui Nhon and Nha Trang ;
- Improving fish transportation facilities with refrigerated trucks ;
- Training about 500 fishermen per year in off-shore fishing starting from 1971.

Vietnamese legend

THE DIALOGUE ON MOUNT NA-SON  
Adapted by George F. Schultz

The mountains of the province of Thanh Hoa, which are covered with dense forests for hundreds of miles, once served as an asylum for those hermits who chose to flee from the world in order to lead a life of meditation and solitude. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, an aged woodcutter was living on Mount Na-Son in the district of Nong Cong. Daily he went to the village, where he would exchange his load of wood for wine and rice; he never found it necessary to save a single sapeque. When met by the farmers along the way, he would speak to them about the cultivation of their mulberry trees. When asked his name and origin, he would only smile. In the evening, when the sun had set below the tops of the mountains, the woodcutter would slowly return to the little hut that was his home.

One day, during a hunting expedition, King Ho Han Thuong happened to cross the woodcutter's path. The latter was walking along singing some verses of his own composition. The king stopped to listen.

"Na-Son has jagged rocks and dark trees.  
I dress in leaves and adorn myself with orchids.  
On all sides blue peaks surround my abode.  
In the distance stretches the plain of green ricefields,  
Far from the whirl of horses and chariots.  
The world's dust does not touch these places.  
The tall grasses efface every vestige of war.  
The Earth buries the Court's decorations."

His song ended, the woodcutter arranged the flap of his tunic and disappeared in the forest.

The king was certain that he had encountered a sage and ordered one of his mandarins, Truong Cong by name, to invite the old man to his Court. The mandarin called to him, but the woodcutter was already deep in the forest. Truong Cong then set out to follow him.

The mist was already forming on the branches of the pines. Unused to the rugged terrain, Truong Cong had great difficulty in avoiding the vines and brambles that encumbered his path. The farther he advanced, the steeper the slope became. Greatly outdistanced by the woodcutter, the mandarin was soon lost in the unfamiliar surroundings. Raising his eyes, he saw that the shadows of the night had already invaded the mountains and that the trees had begun to blur. Somewhat uneasy, he would have liked to turn back; then a cock's crow from a neighboring bamboo thicket revived his hopes. At the thought that he must be near some human habitation, he raised himself on his stick and reached level ground.

The mandarin saw a small hut standing at the edge of a stream. Peach and plum trees with young, green trunks shaded its porch; here and there chrysanthemums were growing. Inside the hut he saw a rattan bed on which were lying a guitar, a flute, and a bamboo pillow. On the whitewashed walls, two songs were written in cursive characters:

"Love of Chess" and "Love of the Summit".

The woodcutter was seated nearby, teaching a blackbird to speak. He appeared surprised to see Truong Cong.

"This corner of the world is lonely and deserted," he said. "Why did you take the trouble to climb up here?"

"I am a servitor of the king," replied Truong Cong. "Knowing that you are a sage, His Majesty sent me here to invite you to come to the Court. An escort awaits you at the edge of the forest."

"I am only an old man who has fled from the dust of the world", replied the woodcutter, smiling. "I earn my living with the axe, and my friends are the deer and the fish and the moon and the wind. I know only how to quench my thirst at the spring, how to prepare the roots of the forest for food, and how to sleep soundly amidst the mist."

The woodcutter then invited Truong Cong to remain with him and to partake of his modest meal of rice and vegetable. The two men conversed until far into the night without once referring to the affairs of State.

But the following morning, Truong Cong repeated his invitation.

"The famous hermits of olden times were not indifferent to the welfare of the State," he said. "In their retreats, they awaited the propitious hour at which to offer their services to the sovereign. For example, La Vong abandoned his line in the waters of the River Vi in order to serve King Chu Van Vuong. Although your knowledge is immense and your talent is great, you conceal yourself deep in the forest. I beg you to reconsider so that those who wish to bring happiness to mankind will not be deprived of your services."

"Every man has his own vocation," replied the woodcutter. "Nghiem Tu Lang declined Han Quang Vo's offer and refused to exchange his peaceful life on the banks of the Dong Thuy for the duties of prime minister at the Court; my slight merit could never be likened to his. Up to now, Heaven has been kind to me, and I desire no more happiness than that given to me in this verdant haven. If I were ambitious to tread the narrow road to honors, not only would I blush with shame for my failure to keep faith with the ancients, but I would also lose the friendship of the monkeys and the cranes. I beg you to return alone and not to insist further in this matter."

"Must you find every action in the present world contemptible?" asked Truong Cong. "Our monarch is great and men come from beyond the four seas to visit him. Chiem Thanh (Champa) has relinquished certain territories in order to be recognized as his vassal. The North (China) has sent gifts and has withdrawn its forces. Lao Qua and Dai Ly have likewise submitted to his will. He now lacks only the counsel of sages in order to glorify his virtue and to make his reign comparable to those of Duong Nghieu and Ngu Thuan of the Golden Age. If you sincerely desire to live apart from the world, I must respect your wish. But if you will think of the common weal, you will not let this opportunity slip from your hands."

"Your words do me too much honor," replied the woodcutter. Then he asked,

"The present sovereign is of the Ho family isn't he?"

"That is correct."

"Did he not abandon Long Do in order to establish his capital at An Ton?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Although I have never set foot in the palace nor even in the capital," continued the woodcutter, "I have learned a great deal about the king. Lies, ambition, and luxury are the members of his entourage. He exhausted the people to build the Fortress of Kim Au. He emptied the national treasury to construct the walls of Hoa Nhai. Gold is thrown about like so much withered grass and jade, like dirt. Meanwhile, corruption buys titles and rank and opens the gates of the prisons. The masses are murmuring with dissent, and rebellion flares up on the bank of the River Day. The North has taken advantage of the situation to demand the cession of Loc Chau. The Court mandarins imitate the sovereign and become his accomplices in crime. That is why I fled from the world and concealed myself in the mountains and forests. Why should I return to drown in the tumultuous torrents of politics and thus throw the precious stone of Con Son into the flames?"

Unable to reply to these arguments, Truong Cong remained silent. He departed then and reported the woodcutter's words to King Ho Han Thuong. After a moment of anger, the monarch seemed delighted to receive an honest man's opinion. He ordered Truong Cong to supply himself with magnificent gifts for the sage and to go to his retreat a second time.

When the mandarin arrived at the summit, he saw that weeds and grass obstructed the approaches to the hermit's hut. On the stone wall, he noticed two verses that had been freshly brushed thereon with pine resin:

"At the mouth of the Ky La, poetic inspiration will be suddenly shattered;  
Beneath the summit of Cao Vong, misfortune will overtake the stranger."

No one understood the significance of these prophetic words.

When the king learned that the sage had vanished without a trace, he became furious and ordered his troops to set fire to his mountain. The trunks of the giant trees crackled in the heat, and the rising smoke obscured the horizon for many miles. A black crane was seen to leave the conflagration and trace great circles in the sky before disappearing in the direction of the sea.

Several years later (in 1407), the Minh (Chinese dynasty: Ming, 1368-1628) invaded Dai Ngu. The Ho armies lost battle after battle and were forced to retreat to the province of Nghe An. Ho Qui Ly was captured at the mouth of the Ky La River and his son Ho Han Thuong, on Mount Cao Vong; their last faithful followers fell at their side. In this way, the prediction contained in the couplet inscribed on the stone wall on the summit of Mount Na-Son came true.

The ephemeral Ho dynasty, which ruled Dai Ngu from 1400 to 1407, is not considered a legitimate dynasty by Vietnamese historians. Ho Qui Ly, the first Ho king, usurped the power in the year 1400. One year later, he assumed the title of thai-thuong-hoang (supreme emperor), and his son Ho Han Thuong became king.

Ho Qui Ly tried to maintain that he was a descendant of Ngu Thuan, one of the five legendary emperors of the Golden Age of Ancient China; therefore, he changed the name of Dai Viet to Dai Ngu. He was no ordinary man; but as an usurper, he did not have the support of the people and failed in his effort to establish a lasting dynasty.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NO UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL NORTH VIETNAMESE POW'S - FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY -

Saigon, February 4 - There was no unconditional release of all North Vietnamese prisoners of war as alleged by some Saigon dailies, sources from the RVN Foreign Affairs Ministry affirmed Wednesday.

In its communique issued Feb. 3, 1971, the RVN Foreign Affairs Ministry made the clarification to deny inaccurate newsreports carried by some Saigon dailies on the issue of exchange of POWs with North Vietnam and the RVN government's unilateral release of disabled and incurable disease-stricken POW's.

The communique said on December 10, 1970, the RVN government had suggested to the NVN authorities the release of all North Vietnamese POW's now detained in South Vietnam in exchange for the release of all the South Vietnamese and Allied POW's detained by the North Vietnam outside the Republic of Vietnam all across the Indochinese peninsula.

The RVN negotiating delegation had put forth this proposal at the Paris peace talks.

The communique said on the occasion of Tan Hoi Lunar New Year, the RVN government for humanitarian reasons, last December 22, 1970 unilaterally decided to release a number of North Vietnamese disabled and incurable disease-stricken prisoners of war who had previously expressed their desire to be repatriated to North Vietnam.

The release, the communique added, took place on January 2, 1971 at an area 4 kms from Hien Luong bridge on the Ben Hai river and 37 North Vietnamese POW's were authorized to rejoin their families.

Later, on January 26, 1971, always for the humanitarian reason the RVN government declared its willingness to release all the North Vietnamese disabled and incurable disease-stricken POW's if the NVN authorities evidenced their readiness and gladness to receive them.

At the same time, the RVN government requested the North Vietnam authorities to release all the disabled and incurable disease-stricken prisoners of war they are holding, in line with the 1949 Geneva convention on POW's issue.

According to the communique, for fear of retaliation by the North Vietnam authorities after their repatriation, the North Vietnam POW's held in South Vietnam have thus far refrained from expressing their desire to return to North Vietnam.

The communique also said that all the above said humanitarian acts were just the initiatives of the RVN government on the POW's issue. No problem of unconditional release of all North Vietnamese POW's was involved, the communique affirmed.

#### VICE PRES. KY CALLS FOR "MARCH ON NORTH VN"

Saigon, February 9. - Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky Monday called for a "March on North" to complete the historical mission of re-unifying the homeland.

According to the Vice President, Vietnam can in no way emerge as a strong nation unless the Northern and Southern halves are unified.

Vice President Ky, on this occasion, said that the incursion of ARVN troops into Lower Laos, "helps end the war in theory until Vietnam is strong enough to conclusively put an end to it in practice."

Vice President Ky made the statement when he received a souvenir gift presented by the RVN pilots who participated in the bombing of North Vietnam in 1965, at his private residence at Tan Son Nhut air base.

Vice Pres. Ky emphasized that once reunified, Vietnam will become a power in Southeast Asia. Its national resources if properly exploited will help not only meet the national needs but also satisfy those of the neighbouring countries.

The Vice President affirmed that a revolution in the Southern half and reunification of Vietnam as a whole is a vital necessity of the Vietnamese people.

According to Vice President Ky, the military operation launched by RVN Armed Forces to destroy the Communist sanctuaries in Laos is a necessity, strategically but it requires high prudence.

If necessary, he added, the RVN Armed Forces may cross the northern 17th parallel to flush out the Communist North Vietnam rear supply bases in the area.

## NEW UNIVERSITY TO BE SET UP

My Tho, February 13. - The Tien Giang university, the first community university in Vietnam will be set up to meet the demands for the cultural, social and economic development of six provinces in the Bassac river area.

Dr. Nguyen Luu Vien, Deputy Prime Minister concurrently Education Minister made the above statement Thursday in his visit to Nguyen Dinh Chieu High School in My Tho in the presence of over 300 notables and educational delegations of Long An, Go Cong, Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa, Kien Phong and Kien Tuong provinces.

Dr. Vien made known that the Tien Giang University will be built in Ben Tranh district on the My Tho Saigon route. The construction study and plan will be worked out by experts of American community universities.

Asked about a "new university formula" Dr. Vien said the Education Ministry has sent experts to the US since February last year for studies and research on the usefulness of community university.

On this occasion, Prof. Do Ba Khe who just returned from California University, outlined to the guests the main characteristics of a community university.

According to him, to meet the development demands and ability of the localities, the Tien Giang University will include professional branches namely pedagogy, agriculture and fisheries, animal husbandry, agricultural products, canning industry, electricity, mechanics, commerce, business administration, nursing, dentistry, midwifery and city planning besides popular subjects.

Besides, said Prof. Khe, Tien Giang University will also have a supplementary education program for ex-servicemen and adult education program reserved for those who want to better their profession and knowledge.

Dr. Vien finally disclosed that the Education Ministry will defray half of the construction cost of this university while the rest will be contributed by local inhabitants.

VIET-NAM BULLETIN

Vol. V, No. 8  
February 22, 1971.

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A weekly publication of the Embassy of Viet-Nam  
2251 "R" Street, Washington D.C. 20008  
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BULK RATE

Vol. V, No. 8  
February 22, 1971.

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