

# REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM



## COUNTRY STUDY

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## REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

### Country Study

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## PRESIDENT'S PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROGRAM

Remarks by Dwight D. Eisenhower, the President of the United States, presented at the White House Conference on a Program for People-to-People Partnership, at Washington, D.C., on September 11, 1956.

"Ladies and Gentlemen:

"I appear before such an audience with mixed emotions. There are so many of my friends among you that on the personal side I feel like coming to sort of a family gathering with all of the enjoyments we normally accord on such occasions.

"When I look at the cross section of American brains and ability here—some of you experienced widely in the fields in which I expect to talk—I must say I am very diffident if not embarrassed.

"But I am emboldened to talk to you because the purpose of this meeting is the most worthwhile purpose there is in the world today; to help build the road to peace, to help build the road to an enduring peace.

"A particular part of the work that we expect to do is based upon the assumption that no people, as such, want war—that all people want peace.

"We know this to be a true assumption, but we know also that in certain portions of the world it is not understood as such. Some people are taught—and they are captive audiences—that others, including ourselves, want war; that we are warlike, that we are materialistic, that we are, in fact, hoping for cataclysms of that kind so that a few may profit, they say, out of the misery of the world.

"For my part, and I have been around a long time and therefore more or less acquainted with all of the wars that the United States has fought. To the glory of American businessmen I have never heard one single one—ever—refer to war in any terms except those of regret and hope that war will never occur again.

"If we are going to take advantage of the assumption that all people want peace, then the problem is for people to get together and to leap governments—if necessary to evade governments—to work out not one method but thousands of methods by which people can gradually learn a little bit more of each other.



"The problems are: How do we dispel ignorance? How do we present our own case? How do we strengthen friendships? How do we learn of others? These are the problems.

"The Communist way, of course, is to subject everything to the control of the state and to start out with a very great propaganda program all laid out in its details—and everybody conforms. They do this in every walk of life, in everything they do; and for a while it seems to score spectacular successes.

"Of course, its great weakness is that in times of stress, whenever the love of freedom, for example, grows greater in a population than the fear of the gun at their backs, then the dictatorships fall. Indeed, in war, when the fear of the machine gun in front grows greater than that of the machine gun behind, the dictatorships' armies begin to disintegrate.

"Our way is a different one. We marshal the forces of initiative, independent action, and independent thinking of 168 million people. Sometimes it appears slow and awkward—weak. But the fact is that since all crises are met and action taken according to the will of the great majority, the tougher the going gets, the tighter is bound the whole; the more effective becomes the whole.

"Today, we have this problem that I have stated: that of creating understanding between peoples. Here are the people that we hope will lead us. Governments can do no more than point the way and cooperate and assist in mechanical details. They can publish certain official documents.

"But I am talking about the exchange of professors and students and executives, the providing of technical assistance, and of the ordinary traveler abroad. I am talking about doctors helping in the conquering of disease, of our free labor unions showing other peoples how they work, what they earn, how they achieve their pay and the real take-home pay that they get.

"In short, what we must do is to widen every possible chink in the Iron Curtain and bring the family of Russia, or of any other country behind that Iron Curtain, that is laboring to better the lot of their children—as humans do the world over—closer into our circle, to show how we do it, and then to sit down between us to say, 'Now, how do we improve the lot of both of us?'

## PREFACE

Strange lands, customs and people confront our military personnel in the accomplishment of their worldwide mission. One of these little known countries, Vietnam, often described as the "gateway to Southeast Asia," has only recently emerged as an entity from what was once known as Indo-China.

According to legend, Vietnam was already in existence about 3,000 B.C., although it did not emerge as an independent state until approximately 400 B.C. Throughout its existence its people have fought to maintain their identity, and today, as before, they again are struggling against superior numbers and overwhelming odds. Among the many achievements to her credit, Vietnam and her people can count the thwarting of Communist conquest and a successful fight against Communist subversion as an outstanding contribution to the defense of the Free World.

The drive and determination demonstrated by the people of Vietnam since 1954 presages the successful development of a geographic, political, and economic haven for those who believe in the basic principles of the rights of man.

This study is intended to supply you only with basic information so as to arouse your curiosity and to inspire you to further reading and study, since the successful accomplishment of your mission will depend to a great degree upon your knowledge of the historical background, the traditions and customs of Vietnam and a thorough and sympathetic understanding of her people.



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## CHRONOLOGY

- 3000 B.C. circa    Legendary founding of nation which eventually became Vietnam.
- 213 B.C. circa    Chinese invasions of Tonkin area began.
- 163 A.D.            Chinese complete their domination of the peoples of the Tonkin delta region; name the area Vietnam.
- 931                People of Vietnam achieve independence from Chinese, but continue to pay tribute for freedom.
- 1428                Emperor Le Loi drives all Chinese from Vietnamese soil.
- 1802                Emperor Gia Long assumes office as ruler over all of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochín China. French influence begins.
- 1863                Cochín China annexed as French colony.
- 1883                Annam and Tonkin declared to be French protectorates.
- 1941                French (Vichy) grant Indo-China "dominion status."
- 1945                Vietnam declared itself independent under Emperor Bao Dai.
- Emperor Bao Dai abdicated in favor of Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh.
- 1946                French reoccupy Saigon and sign agreement with Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
- December: complete breakdown of relations between the two Governments. Fighting erupts.
- 1948                French recognize State of Vietnam with Bao Dai as Chief of State.

- 1950                Democratic Republic of Vietnam, under Ho Chi Minh, is recognized by Communist China and other Communist nations.
- State of Vietnam, under Bao Dai, recognized by the United States and Great Britain.
- 1954                Defeat of French by Vietnamese Communist forces. Geneva Agreement dividing Vietnam. Establishment of Republic of Vietnam in area south of 17th parallel and of Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Communist) in area north of that line.
- 1955                Ngo dinh Diem elected President of the Republic of Vietnam as the result of October referendum.
- 1956                Promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam.
- 1957                President Ngo dinh Diem paid official visit to United States on invitation of President Eisenhower. Other countries which the President of Vietnam visited in an official capacity during the year were Thailand, Australia, Korea, and India. The Colombo Plan Conference of delegates from 21 countries was held in Saigon in October.
- 1958                President Ngo dinh Diem distributes land certificates to 1,819 landless farmers. United States provides 46 million piastres for administration of agrarian reform program. France agrees to provide financial assistance to Vietnam for purchase of French-owned rice lands.
- 1959                United States and Vietnam sign agreement for co-operation in research on peaceful uses of atomic energy. Japan signs reparations and loan agreement with Vietnam. Laos and Vietnam sign series of co-operative agreements. General elections held; 120 of the 123 members elected to the National Assembly are known to support the President.





## CHAPTER 1

### The Land and the People

#### Section I. Geography

The Republic of Vietnam, the southeastern section of the former French entity of Indo-China, extends for approximately 700 miles along the axis of its crescent shape. At no point is it wider than 150 miles. Its boundaries are with the Communist-controlled area in the north, Laos and Cambodia in the west, and the South China Sea in the south and east. The Republic of Vietnam has an area of 65,726 square miles, which is slightly smaller than the State of Washington.

The area has three main landform divisions: the southern section of the rugged Chaine Annamitique, the coastal plains, and the Mekong Delta. The southern section of the Chaine Annamitique consists mainly of heavily dissected hill lands, rolling to hilly plateaus. The hills are generally rounded and 300 to 600 feet higher than the surrounding broad valleys. The plateau areas have rolling surfaces and are predominantly 1,000 to 3,000 feet above sea level. Local relief may be as much as 1,300 feet in this area. The coastal plains are generally less than 25 miles wide. The surface is generally level, but becomes gently rolling towards the highlands. In places, mountain spurs extend to the sea and divide the coastal plain into sections. Sand dunes, 10 to 60 feet high, are common. The delta area is characterized by a flat, poorly drained surface, crisscrossed by numerous tributaries of the Mekong and a dense network of canals and smaller streams. The elevation of the delta generally does not exceed 20 feet above sea level; slopes are generally less than 1 percent. The northern section is dominated by stands of evergreen forest, and the marshy Mekong Delta is one of the world's leading rice producers.

#### Section II. Climate

Climatically, the nation may be divided into two regions; the northern and the southern. During the winter monsoon (November



through March) the northern area is subject to moist trade winds from the north Pacific Ocean which cause the characteristic cloudy, rainy season. Heaviest precipitation occurs during October and November; up to 50 inches of rain may fall during these 2 months. The southern area, separated from the cloudy domain to the east by the Chaine Annamitique, has its dry season with comparatively fair weather at this time. Saigon receives an average of 8 inches of rain during those months. During the summer monsoon season (June through September) conditions are nearly reversed. Very heavy rainfall (50 inches in Saigon) prevails in the south. The northern section experiences variable conditions in summer. Several typhoons can be expected to affect the coast each year, usually between July and November. Summer-like conditions prevail during the transitional periods. Mean daily temperatures for a representative northern area location are 90° F. in June and 72° F. in January. Mean minimums are 78° F. in June and 65° F. in January. At Saigon, in the southern area, the mean daily maximum in April is 95° F., the minimum 70° F. in January. The absolute minimum temperature recorded at Saigon is 57° F.

### Section III. Population

#### Ethnic Origin and Minorities

The vast majority of the approximately 12,000,000 people now inhabiting the Republic of Vietnam are Mongoloid in origin. They are the descendants of nomadic tribes which migrated from eastern Tibet several centuries before the Christian era and settled in the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam. This ethnic group today comprises about 85 percent of the population.

The remaining 15 percent of the population is composed mainly of six minority groups: the Chinese, the mountain tribesmen, the Cambodians and Chams, the Indians and Pakistani, and the Europeans. The largest group, the Chinese, number approximately 850,000, of whom about 600,000 reside in the Cholon district of Saigon and the rest mainly in other urban areas. They play an extremely important role in commerce at every level, in the import-export trade, and in banking. Recent Government policies are designed to make the Chinese a more integral part of the Vietnamese community, where until now they have kept very much to themselves and frequently retained alien citizenship.

The half-million members of a number of mountain tribes are probably descendants of the original non-Mongolian inhabitants of



Modern Saigon displays a blend of West and East in architecture and costume.

Vietnam. They now inhabit the highlands, living as dry-rice farmers or as nomadic hunters and having little contact with the Vietnamese and other lowlanders.

The Cambodians (or Khmers) and Chams are the remnants of two peoples who once divided the rule of what is now the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, and part of Laos. About 400,000 Cambodians inhabit the part of the Mekong Delta south and southwest of Saigon, while about 35,000 Chams still remain in four isolated areas north and northeast of Saigon. Both peoples are now predominantly farmers.

Indians and Pakistani number perhaps 4,000. A few are employed in Government service; more are active as merchants, moneylenders, and owners of rice land. There are probably no more than 10,000 Europeans, mostly French, now in Vietnam.

#### Socioeconomic Factors

**Economic Conditions.** Despite a marked increase in an urban working class in the Republic of Vietnam, the overwhelming majority of the population continues, as always, to be farmers, either working their own small plots or as tenants. Superimposed on this traditional economic base of peasant subsistence farmers, there is developing a



nascent middle class, and a group of wage earning industrial and commercial plantation workers, comprising not more than 10 percent of the total population. The economic elite, most solidly represented in Saigon and in the old imperial capital of Hué, is composed partly of wealthy business industrialists or landowners, Westernized intellectuals, and highly placed Government and religious figures.

Economic and sociological conditions separating the economic class levels are more pronounced in urban areas than in rural. In rural areas the difference between members of the upper classes and the farmers is less apparent; lodging, food, and material comforts of the rural upper class are often only slightly better than those of the farmer; the values, attitudes, and social habits are closer to those of their poor neighbors than to their urban counterparts. Some difference between the upper class rural schoolteachers or local civil functionaries and other villagers may be seen in dress and language—the shoes, Western trousers and shirts, and bilingualism of the former setting them apart. Although urban upper class men seldom wear traditional Vietnamese turban and tunic, unless for a special religious ceremony or unless the individual is aged and conservative, this costume is frequent among that class in the villages.

Thousands of Vietnamese earn a livelihood as paid plantation laborers, as unskilled coolie labor, or performing highly skilled tasks as rubber tappers, or operators in plantation processing plants.

Members of the urban working class work as coolies on the docks, on construction jobs, and in factories doing the lifting, carrying, and hauling that are done mainly by machines in the West. Others operate bicycle or motorized rickshas, drive small French taxis, work as plumbers, carpenters, and painters, and at other skilled and semi-skilled occupations. An increasing number of men are now working in small machine shops in order to meet the growing demand for miscellaneous metal products. This economic class, although of approximately the same composition as during the period of French colonialism, is expanding.

The decade of war and insecurity of the countryside caused many families to abandon their farms and seek the relative security of the city. Vacant lots, alleys, and canal banks became sites for their flimsy shelters. Large slum quarters quickly sprang up in addition to the thousands of houseboats in the canals. The city of Saigon, in particular, absorbed several hundred thousand of these displaced peasants. With the reestablishment of security throughout many of the provinces the Government now is encouraging these former farmers to return to their land and restore the rich rice-growing areas to production.

Vietnam's economic development has been hampered by a slow rate of capital accumulation and a tendency of local businessmen to invest their capital in short-term commercial transactions rather than long-term production investments. The Government has instituted several programs intended to develop the economy of the country and eventually to reduce its dependence on the importation of manufactured goods. To encourage local industry, an Industrial Development Center has been created, with revolving funds of both Vietnamese currency and United States aid funds, to provide medium- and long-term loans to private investors. In the immediate future, however, the Government must continue to import fairly large quantities of low-cost, United States-financed commodities so as to generate counterpart funds to the United States contribution to the Vietnamese national budget.

In the realm of agriculture, a land reform program has been instituted, aimed at breaking up the large rice-land holdings. The Government is also encouraging peasants from over-populated areas of central Vietnam to settle the high plateau regions and cultivate industrial cash crops which will diversify agricultural production.

Government labor policies are formed by presidential advisors and are administered by the Department of Labor, which has labor offices in the provinces. As a counter to possible Communist influence with labor, the Government is aware of the value of trade unions, and the Department of the Interior is authorized to legalize the status of local and national unions. The largest labor union in the Republic of Vietnam is the *Confédération Vietnamiennne du Travail Chrétien* (CVTC), which has an estimated membership of over 300,000. The Government also has begun to encourage employers (especially planters) to enter into collective agreements with the workers.

Although unemployment is high and under-employment is a continuing problem, the labor situation in general appears to be calm. Price levels and cost of living have remained relatively stable for the last few years, and pressure for wage increases has been light. As a means of holding down prices and averting strikes, the Government has come out officially against wage increases. Minimum wage rates are established by the various provinces and vary from about 24 piastres to about 51.8 piastres per day. Classes of workers who are affected by the minimum wage laws vary; in some provinces, farm workers and domestics are excluded. Many enterprises, including the Government, pay a low base pay and supplement it with various allowances, including those for a family, for seniority, etc. Plantation workers are generally furnished with housing and a rice allotment, plus some form of medical treatment, in addition to their base pay. Rice allotments are generally sufficient for the average families; other



foodstuffs are purchased at company-owned stores. Labor Day (May 1) and Constitution or Republic Day (October 28) are paid holidays, and, as a matter of custom, an extra bonus is usually paid at the New Year holiday, which falls between January 15 and February 15, according to the lunar calendar.

**Social Strata.** The structure of Vietnamese society has been repeatedly altered during a long history of foreign political and cultural domination; however, it still contains vestiges of traditional prestige factors. In ancient Vietnamese society, the majority of the people were commoners, vassals of hereditary nobles who ruled over one or more villages and who were, in turn, subject to lords dependent upon a grand seigneur only slightly more powerful than they. A long period of Chinese rule (111 B.C. to 968 A.D.), followed by centuries of vassalage, resulted in the adoption of Chinese political, administrative, and social systems, and the virtual obliteration of most of the ancient Vietnamese institutions. Chinese social structure was keyed to a centralized empire presided over by a ruler who was at once civil and religious head, pontiff, judge, and intermediary between heaven and his subjects. In principle, there were no true social classes, as all subjects (except the royal family) were ranked equally below the emperor. There were, however, preferred social categories because Confucian doctrine ranked the individual according to profession, with scholars ranking first, followed by farmers, artisans, merchants, and soldiers.

The trickle of European traders and missionaries into Vietnam during the 18th century, followed by French intervention and conquest (1802-96), had a tremendous influence on Vietnamese culture. The traditional emphasis on education as the chief determinant of social position began to give way to class differences of an economic order, and race or nationality played a part in the composition of the new elite. In less than a century, Vietnam was transformed into a Western-type class hierarchy composed of a foreign economic and political elite, a native landed upper class, and the emerging middle class, and proletariat.

The upper class, currently embracing only about 3 percent of the population, includes Westernized intellectuals, professional people, and highly placed Government and religious figures, most of whom are also either landowners or descendants of the old landed aristocracy or old Mandarin families. Wealthy Vietnamese businessmen, industrialists, or landowners, while they are part of the economic elite, find only a precarious footing in the upper social classes unless they are Western educated or are connected with the traditional socially elite families.

In the villages and rural areas considerable respect is still accorded teachers, Catholic priests, Buddhist bonzes, and all educated persons. All schoolteachers are accorded upper-class status in rural areas; in urban areas they are likely to be counted in the middle class.

In the urban areas particularly, an expanding middle social class is developing, corresponding to the economic middle class. In this class are found most civil servants; commercial officeworkers such as secretaries, stenographers, and translators; schoolteachers; shop-owners and shop managers; and noncommissioned officers and company-grade officers of the Armed Forces.

Many of the traditional social customs are common among all strata of Vietnamese society. Some of these have been modified by the acceptance of certain Western social concepts, particularly among the wealthy, educated upper classes in the urban areas, but even here such acceptance is in many cases conditioned by the values and attitudes instilled by deep-rooted Vietnamese culture.

The Vietnamese concept of the universe and man's place in it, and the great importance of the family and the village, are conditioned to a great extent by religion. To the Vietnamese, the physical world, the social order, and man's place and condition in both are essentially preordained and unchanging. This destiny concept puts a high valuation on stoicism, patience, adaptation, and courage in the face of adversity. Religious beliefs may affect social customs in ways which would not normally occur to even the most sympathetic and perceptive Westerner. One example would be the belief, derived from religious and philosophical concepts, that parts of the human body possess their own hierarchy of value or worthiness, the head being almost sacred and the feet the reverse. As a result of this, it is a gross insult to perform such acts (natural for a Westerner) as patting a child on the head or crossing the legs while seated so that one's foot points at an individual.

The Vietnamese are intensely proud of their civilization and of their national identity. Their basic social outlook, however, revolves around the family and the village. Within them there is total responsibility for the care of the less fortunate. The preeminence of the family extends throughout every level of Vietnamese life. Not only are ancestor worship and veneration of elders a deep motivation of much social behavior, but there is unspoken acceptance of the family as the most important unit in the culture. The individual has an absolute obligation, to be violated only at the risk of serious dishonor, to care for members of his family before other individuals and to prevent any of them from being in want.

The position of women in Vietnamese life is determined by the Confucian order, in which they are totally subordinate to men. In



practice, particularly among the urban middle class and in connection with the family financial affairs, the wife may exercise a great deal of responsibility. Except among the Westernized upper classes, however, the wife does not participate so actively in social affairs as her husband.

An important social diversion for many Vietnamese is gambling, from childhood to old age and at every social level. Government operated national lotteries constitute an important source of revenue. Soccer, and bicycle and horseracing were, until recently, favorite spectator sports and another important form of legalized gambling; on a more private level, such games as cards, chess, and Chinese mah-jong were frequently accompanied by heavy betting. However, at present, the Government discourages gambling and is urging its citizens to refrain from all games of chance as being unproductive luxuries. A realization currently pervading Vietnam is that the economic rehabilitation of the country depends, for success, upon the concerted cooperation of all its citizenry. This leaves little room for participation in the more frivolous activities.

**Education.** Through all the changes the Vietnamese have seen in the last 150 years—from the rule of their own emperors through that of French governors to the present Republic of Vietnam—one major constant has been a deep reverence for learning. Under the Confucian system the brilliant scholar stood at the head of the occupational hierarchy; this position brought economic, social, and political rewards.



A reverence for learning is one of the wellsprings of Vietnamese culture.

Before the French came, Vietnam was run at all levels of administration by officials called Mandarins, who were chosen on the basis of education alone. The aristocracy of learning was the only aristocracy of any continuing importance in old Vietnam; learning, especially of Chinese philosophy and history, was not only prized for its own sake, but was the main road to wealth, power, and social standing.

Primary education was carried on by the village schoolmaster, whose home generally served as the village school. Here almost all boys learned at least a few hundred Chinese characters, and many went on to the works of philosophy and history which formed the core of Confucian scholarship.

The civil service examination was the crucial part of the traditional Vietnamese educational system. Tens of thousands of students each year would attempt the first examination, the *khao khoa*; only a few thousand of these would go to the provincial capital for the *tin hach* examination given every 3 years. Even to gain the lowest of these degrees was a high honor and marked its recipient for life, while bringing honor to his family as well. In ever-decreasing numbers as they climbed the ladder, scholars could progress through the third examination, the *huong thi* (which could result in one of the coveted degrees of *tu tai*, "Budding Genius," or *cu nhan*, "Promoted Man") to the last and highest examination, conducted by the emperor himself. Those who survived this final test received the highest degree, the *tan-si*. Even those who received only a fourth-class *tan-si* were assured of lifelong distinction. Only three men could win a first-class *tan-si* in each triennial examination; this was the pinnacle of success. However poor and humble their parents, they were now members of the top rank of the Vietnamese elite.

With the coming of the French, the formal educational system changed considerably. Both the Confucian and the French systems were pyramidal in that a series of successive winnowings sharply reduced the number of persons who went on to each higher level of study. The French system also retained the close connection between high standing in the civil service examinations and the award of responsible Government positions. Nevertheless, the French system and two major policies in particular were responsible for the breakdown of the Confucian order and of Confucian scholarship. First, beginning in the 19th century, the French encouraged the Vietnamese to write their own language in the Latin alphabet. Second, in the early years of the 20th century they "reformed" the civil service examinations, making European rather than Confucian learning the requisite for success. As a result of these policies, Confucian studies lost the prestige which had formerly led young men to give them the years of arduous study they demanded.



The present school system, administered by the Secretary of National Education in the national Government, retains substantially the form of the French school system. The Government is attempting, in evening classes, to raise the literacy rate among older people. Primary schools, the first 3 years of which have been compulsory for children of both sexes since 1952, have a 5-year curriculum of reading, writing, arithmetic, natural science, principles of morality, composition, drawing, manual training, physical education, and domestic science. The Department of Education favors a "progressive" approach, and there are experimental village schools where an attempt is made to blend book learning with everyday living. Most Vietnamese teachers, however, were trained under and use the French system which stresses teacher authority, class discipline, and rote memory.

The 4-year course of the first division of the secondary school system is divided into classical and modern sections. Students of both sections study a number of basic subjects taught in Vietnamese, but those in the classical section study classical Vietnamese literature and Chinese characters, while those choosing the modern section study history, French, and English. The 3-year course of the second division continues the general pattern of the first, but gives students the option of continuing their language studies or of substituting programs of natural science or of mathematics and philosophy.

The goal of secondary education is the stiff baccalaureate examination, passed by about one of every 200 students entered in the elementary schools. The baccalaureate is required for admission to the 5-year university program or to the advanced technical schools; it confers upon its holder something of the status and respect formerly accorded the "Budding Genius" under the Mandarin system.

In addition to public schools at the primary and secondary levels, private schools (both religious and secular) educate many students. These schools follow the public-school curriculum and are regulated and subsidized by the Department of Education. There has also been a special school system for Chinese. Under a recent agreement the French Government will continue to operate its own primary and secondary schools leading to the French baccalaureate. In addition, there are a number of normal schools, which provide high school teachers; an industrial technical school, and other specialized governmental technical schools; and a school of applied arts, where the traditional fine arts of Vietnam are taught: goldsmithing, lacquer work, cabinetwork, and pottery making.

At the university level, the National University of Vietnam, in Saigon, is the most important institution, with a student body of about 1,500. The Faculty of Law is the most important college,

teaching not only jurisprudence, but also many subjects which an American university would place among the liberal arts. The university also has a Faculty of Medicine, a Faculty of Letters teaching Vietnamese literature, philosophy, and history, and advanced Schools of Engineering and Education. Its scholastic standards are high. There are also universities at Dalat and Hué as well as several technical schools of university rank, including an Institute of Public Administration operated in Saigon by Michigan State University.

Higher education in foreign countries is greatly sought after by advanced students. The Vietnamese Government grants passports for study abroad to students taking courses not offered in Vietnam, and in any year at least 1,000 to 1,500 Vietnamese students will be studying abroad: perhaps half of this number in France, a smaller group in the United States, and substantial numbers in Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, India, and Indonesia.

**Religion.** The religious atmosphere in the Republic of Vietnam is characterized by a tolerance for and acceptance of various religious beliefs. The Constitution, adopted in October 1956, states that the country shall have religious freedom, and no one religion is designated as official.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity are the prevalent religions in Vietnam. The Vietnamese also believe in an extensive spirit world. The Vietnamese find nothing unusual or wrong with holding several religious beliefs and practicing their various ceremonies and rites.



The Buddhist Pagoda de Souvenir is a landmark in Saigon's Jardin Botanique.



Confucianism, a philosophy brought to Vietnam centuries ago by the Chinese, not only has served as a major religion, but also has contributed immensely to the development of the cultural, moral, and political life of the country. Introduction of French political and educational policies, as well as the upheavals of World War II and the post-war period have weakened Confucianism as a religion in Vietnam, although its cultural patterns continue to influence the Vietnamese way of life.

Confucianism is primarily an ethical philosophy which establishes relations between people; for example, the relation between sovereign and subject, father and son, wife and husband, younger to older people, friend to friend. It thus imparts a harmonious unity to the political and social fabric of Vietnamese life. According to Confucian doctrine, disorders arising in a social group spring from improper conduct on the part of its individual members. Achievement of harmony through adaptation therefore is the first duty of every Confucianist, the dominant theme of society, and the key to the Vietnamese outlook on life.

To insure the required harmony in society, the Confucianist is enjoined to conform to a body of high moral relationships, *phan* and to observe certain principles of etiquette and ritual, *li*. Early Confucian scholars in China, taking for granted the Chinese family system, concluded that the awe and respect felt for the father was the natural force upon which all society was built and that all society could be brought into proper order on the basis of filial piety, or *hieu*. Correct conduct was not a matter of compulsion, but was derived from a sense of virtue which all were expected to maintain. This virtue was instilled through constant and long observance of suitable models of deportment. Thus, a superior, whether an emperor or a father in his home, demonstrated benevolence and responsibility, teaching by the example of his virtuous conduct.

When he dies, the Confucianist is revered as an ancestor who is joined forever to nature. His children honor and preserve his memory in solemn ancestor rites. At the family shrine containing the ancestral tablets, the head of each family respectfully reports to his ancestors all important family events and seeks their advice.

Although Confucianism still colors Vietnamese life, nearly nine-tenths of the people today regard themselves as Buddhists. This does not mean, however, that they practice Buddhism to the exclusion of other religious beliefs and doctrines. Rather, Buddhism apparently satisfies emotional needs that are beyond the range of practical Confucianism.

In Buddhism the individual finds a larger meaning to life in the identity he establishes with eternity—with the past, the present, and

the future through cycles of reincarnation. In the hope of eventual *nirvana*—of oneness with the universe—there is for him consolation in times of bereavement, and joyous sanctification in the meaning attached to weddings and births.

Buddhism was founded in India about 500 B.C., by Gautama Buddha, who taught the futility of all striving for worldly goals and the importance of attaining salvation through achieving a state of *nirvana*, or union with the mystical One who pervades the universe. According to his teachings, each individual must live through an indefinite number of incarnations, his state of being in each incarnation being determined by the state of enlightenment attained through study, self-discipline, and virtuous conduct in the preceding incarnation. After successively raising his state of being through successive lives, the individual may escape from the cycle of life, death, and re-birth, to attain *nirvana*.

Buddhism has two major branches, both represented in Vietnam. One is the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle and the other is the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle. While Hinayana Buddhists follow the teachings of the Gautama Buddha himself, Mahayana Buddhists—in the majority in Vietnam—consider Gautama only one of many Buddhas (Enlightened Ones) who are regarded as manifestations of the fundamental divine power of the universe. Theoretically, any person may become a Buddha, but those who actually attain Buddhahood are rare. Saints who earnestly strive for such perfection are known as *bodhisattvas*. A pantheon of superhuman beings—Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—are thus recognized and venerated in Mahayana temples.

Taoism, another religion of some importance in the Republic of Vietnam, resembles Confucianism and Buddhism in having come from China many centuries ago. Beginning as a speculative philosophy centering, in a manner somewhat resembling Buddhism, on the notion of man's oneness with the universe, Taoism in Vietnam today has become a religion whose priests are regarded by the people as skilled diviners and magicians and as outstanding adepts in controlling the spirit world through intercession with Taoist gods. Their priesthood is a family calling, taught by father to son.

Christianity came to Vietnam with the very outset of Western penetration in the 16th and 17th centuries, mainly through the efforts of Spanish and Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries. As a result of persistent missionary efforts (frequently in the face of persecution by emperors who feared Western political and economic control), approximately 10 percent of the population of the Republic of Vietnam are Catholics—the highest proportion of Catholics of any Asian country except the Philippines.



The wealthier and more formally educated classes in the cities contain a greater proportion of Catholics than do other Vietnamese groups. Starting with the initial advantage of a Western education in church schools during their early years, Vietnamese Catholics find it easier to obtain foreign scholarships and to make the most of Western training.

American Protestant missions have operated in Vietnam since World War I. Their activities, until recently, were limited, in the main, to the mountain tribes of the high plateaus. With the gradual rise of American assistance and influence, there has been an increase in Protestant activity in the lowlands. Baptist, Mennonite, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Seventh Day Adventist missions now exist in several cities, and some Vietnamese Protestant students are now being sent to the United States for advanced theological training.



One of the churches in Saigon for the Catholic 10 percent of the population.

With this diversity of religious activity, the most startling commentary on the picture of religion in Vietnam is the growth of certain indigenous sects which have arisen in the recent past, the most important being the *Cao Dai* and the *Hoa Hao*. The *Cao Dai* doctrine draws heavily on both Christianity and Buddhism, while its ritual is strongly influenced by traditional Vietnamese spirit worship. Founded in 1919, the *Cao Dai* faith has its great cathedral and the seat of its administrative organization at Tay Ninh, a city about 90 kilometers northwest of Saigon. The number of *Cao Dai* adherents has been variously estimated, but 500,000 supporters appear to be a reasonable approximation. The *Hoa Hao* sect, on the other hand, is essentially a reformed Buddhism founded in 1939 by a young man named Huynh Phu So, who, within a year, gained more than 100,000 converts to his new doctrine. The *Hoa Hao* religion has proved to be very attractive to the peasants in southwest Vietnam who like the simplicity of the rituals, the animistic ideas blended into the worship, and the absence of the necessity to construct elaborate temples or pagodas in which to conduct religious ceremonies. At the high point of its popularity shortly after World War II, *Hoa Hao* believers numbered approximately 2,000,000. Huynh, the founder, was killed in 1947, however, and no leader of comparable stature has emerged.

### Language

The origins of the Vietnamese language are not well-defined, but they undoubtedly go back to an ancient period. During the centuries of Chinese domination (111 B.C. to 938 A.D.) the Vietnamese tongue became so strongly subject to Chinese influence that today no less than one-third of the vocabulary is Chinese in origin. Like Thai (Tai) and Burmese, the language is tonal. Major differences in Vietnamese dialects are in vocabulary, pronunciation, and use of the tones.

At an early date a simplified form was given by the Vietnamese to the Chinese characters by the invention of *chữ nôm*. The transcription of *chữ nôm* into the Latin alphabet (Romanization) was begun by Jesuit missionaries in the 16th century as a phonetic transcription of the spoken language. This paved the way for the replacement of the ancient characters by the Latin alphabet today, because the Vietnamese language, in its tonality, adapts itself to this phonetic transcription. The replacement was a gradual process, taking place slowly over the last three centuries. Since about 1920 it has become the national written language of Vietnam, and in large measure is responsible for the spread of popular education and the intellectual development of the country.



The modified Latin alphabet of modern Vietnamese, with its mass of diacritical marks, is recognized as cumbersome by Vietnamese and foreigners alike, but attempted reforms of the written language have proved unsuccessful.

Today Vietnamese is spoken by a speech-community of about 25,000,000 people; most of these are of course citizens of Vietnam, but there are sizeable colonies in Cambodia, Laos, and New Caledonia. In the United States Vietnamese is taught at the Foreign Service Institute, Washington, D.C., at the Army Language School, Presidio of Monterey, Calif., and at Yale, Columbia, Cornell, and Georgetown Universities. In Saigon it is taught to foreigners at the Vietnamese-American Association and the School of Modern Languages.

## Health

Health is a major problem in Vietnam, although the Government, with the assistance of United Nations and United States health organizations, is making progress in improving health and sanitation standards. Traditional Vietnamese attitudes toward disease and sickness are closely linked to conceptions of the spirit world and its influence upon daily life. Consequently, most Vietnamese have developed a resignation to pain and other effects of disease. Modern medical practice, however, has gained a ready acceptance among those exposed to Western influence. One exception has been among Vietnamese women, whose traditional modesty makes it difficult for them to accept examination and treatment by male physicians, although they have quickly (particularly in rural areas) appreciated the advantage of modern obstetrical practices.

Professional medical practitioners are scarce and concentrated mainly in urban areas. Under French rule, the Vietnamese became accustomed to French health officers and doctors; they continue to respect foreign doctors in general, although they feel more at ease with Western-trained doctors of their own nationality. Even before the arrival of the French, there were educated Vietnamese who dismissed with skepticism the spirit theory of medicine and its sorcerers and village priests. This educated minority furnished the so-called Chinese doctor (who might be either Chinese or Vietnamese), using methods of treatment and herbs and drugs developed systematically by the Chinese through thousands of years of practical experience and experimentation. The Chinese doctor is sometimes the village scholar who practices medicine as a sideline; more often he is a professional practitioner who maintains a shop on the market place. His remedies are often exotic (powdered tiger teeth or rhinoceros horns), but many contain ingredients found in the prescriptions of Western-trained doctors. These men continue to play an important part in

Vietnamese medical care. Western-trained doctors and other medical personnel remain in short supply despite slowly increasing numbers of graduates from the medical school in Saigon.

The average Vietnamese probably consumes daily less than two-thirds the calories consumed by the average American, but problems of actual starvation seldom exist. The Vietnamese is largely a vegetarian, meat being a luxury reserved for special occasions. The Vietnamese diet is usually deficient in proteins, vitamins, and minerals, a situation which lowers general resistance to infectious diseases and is responsible for the occurrence of rickets and beri beri.

Rice is the staple food. The Vietnamese generally prefer polished white rice, a variety in which the outer husk (containing most of the vitamins and protein) has been removed and only the starchy interior remains. The second most important food is corn, which sometimes serves as the staple food in the absence of rice. This basic diet is supplemented with a variety of local fruits and vegetables when available; the chief sources of protein are soy beans and fish, and a pungent sauce (*nuoc mam*) made from salt-pickled fish. With the assistance of several American and international agencies, the Government has undertaken projects to increase the cultivated acreage and the variety of food products grown in the country.

The problem of malaria is sometimes exaggerated; many are inclined to classify different fever-producing ailments under this category. Actually, it is serious only in the upland regions, the so-



Rice is the staple food in Vietnam, which also produces a surplus for export.



called malaria belt, which takes in more than half of the area of Vietnam but less than one-tenth of the population. Large parts of the densely populated lowlands areas, including the city of Saigon, are free of malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Target date for the complete eradication of malaria from the Republic of Vietnam is 1965, and 1,400 trained malaria fighters are working in 47 teams against the disease.

Control of insects and rodents is another problem, as is public and individual sanitation. The average village has neither a safe water supply nor any regular system for disposing of garbage and human excreta except through its collection and use as fertilizer; measures taken to protect food from insect contamination are few.

Since achieving independence, the Republic of Vietnam has assumed full control of all health establishments. A Department of Public Health, established in the national Government, includes a Sanitary Police Service. The department is charged with the direction of hospitals, with health protection, and public sanitation. The Government has continued or instituted intensive programs of public health treatment and education, and fully utilized the still scarce medical and hospital facilities through hospitalization, outpatient clinics, and mobile health units. Assisted by the United States, the Vietnamese have dug nearly 2,000 wells throughout the Republic, so that even smaller communities now have access to fairly clean drinking and cooking water.

## CHAPTER 2

### History and Government

#### Section I. Historical Summary

The recorded political history of Vietnam, that is the territory now encompassed by both the Communist-held area in the North and the Republic of Vietnam in the South, began in 213 B.C. In that year the forces of the Chinese Empire invaded the area of the Red River Delta and began the subjugation of the scattered nomadic tribes (the Giao Chi) which had settled there after migrating from eastern Tibet. China completed its conquest by 186 A.D. To the newly conquered peoples the Chinese gave the name, "Vietnam"—the Southern People; to the area itself they later gave the name "Annam"—the Pacified South.

At variance with these first written records, however, are the legends, still believed by many of the peoples of Vietnam, which set their origin several centuries before the Christian era. According to these tales, a dragon mated with a goddess and from that union came the hundred venerable ancestors of all Vietnamese. This legend has served as a powerful bond in giving the Vietnamese a sense of a common heritage and cultural unity, and has provided a symbol around which they could rally in the face of foreign invaders. Until 1955 the coat-of-arms of the nation centered around a dragon carrying the country on its back. Today, whether he lives in the north or south, each Vietnamese refers proudly to this story of his origins.

Following their conquest of northern Vietnam in the second century, the Chinese so dominated their new subjects that by the seventh century the Vietnamese had adopted Chinese civilization in the fullest sense. They proved to be such apt pupils, in fact, that by 950 A.D. they had developed enough strength to rid themselves of the yoke of physical occupation by the Chinese. For only a few years in the 15th century were the Chinese able to reoccupy the country—this time when Kublai Khan's forces effected a briefly successful invasion. From then until the mid-19th century, Vietnam enjoyed virtual free-



dom and independence, marred only by the fact that China demanded, and was strong enough to enforce, the payment of annual tribute. It was during this period also, from 1428-1865, that Vietnamese cultural life went through its most brilliant development. Under the guidance of the dynasty founded in the former year by the Emperor Le, a code of law was written and remained in effect until late in the 19th century. Arts and crafts, agriculture, and commerce were all encouraged and grew. In addition, the nation became strong enough to push southward and to conquer the once great Kingdom of Champa. The Khmers, or Cambodians as we now know them, were also defeated and forced to retreat to their present boundaries. Finally, by 1780, the Vietnamese occupied all of the territory which today comprises the two Vietnamese regions.

Politically speaking, the Le dynasty went through periods of strength and weakness. Internal dissensions developed out of which grew powerful opponents to the ruling family. Chief among the families which sought to take over the ruling power were the Trinh and Nguyen who finally reduced the Le to puppet status and divided the country between them, the Trinh controlling the north (Tonkin), and the Nguyen the center and the south. Late in the 18th century, both of these families were defeated and driven from power by the revolt led by another Nguyen family, which took over control of the entire country. In 1802 the last scion of the original Nguyen family, Nguyen Anh, managed, with the aid of the French Government which had become interested in the country through the medium of missionaries, to overthrow his namesakes and to regain the throne and rule over the united nation. This man, assuming the title of Emperor and name Gia Long, was granted formal recognition by the Chinese Emperor, a recognition which included an end to the payment of Vietnamese tribute to China.

With the assumption of power by Gia Long, Vietnam entered into that period of its history which saw the beginning of Western influences in the form of technical ideas and administrative services as well as the introduction of Western religious and political ideologies. Gia Long's successors were far less sympathetic than he, however, to these new trends, and their attitudes often resulted in severe repression and persecutions against those who responded to Western ideas and to the Christian missionaries in particular. This active antagonism, plus French colonial aspirations, resulted in French military intervention and eventual conquest of Vietnam. In 1863, by military action touched off by savage attacks on French missionaries, the French annexed Cochinchina; in 1874, they invaded Tonkin and Annam, the two other provinces making up Vietnam, and within 10 years had consolidated their ruling position over the entire country.

From then until the period of World War II, the country was a part of French Indo-China and only in 1954 did Vietnam again achieve independence from foreign domination.

As had been the case when they were under the hand of China, the Vietnamese were almost always in a state of revolt against the French. Although never totally successful, these rebellions gave strength to the age-long Vietnamese desire for political autonomy and provided a proving ground for the development of modern Vietnamese nationalism. Vietnamese cultural autonomy, however, was not so aggressively maintained. The French viewed their dominance as enabling them to fulfill their mission of bringing French culture to less civilized areas. A result of this was that many traditional Vietnamese patterns of political, social, and intellectual life were weakened or changed.

All of Vietnam, together with Cambodia, Laos, and the French leasehold in China, was placed in a French Indo-Chinese Union headed by a French Governor General. Each of the three major divisions of Vietnam (Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina) were treated differently from an administrative point of view. Tonkin was administered by French nationals with native subordinates, and was subject to a modified French legal code. Annam, while administered the same way, was allowed to use a modified version of the code of law as devised by the Emperor Le Loi in the 15th century. Cochinchina became an assimilated colony under French law, sent its own delegate to the French National Assembly in Paris, and had its own Colonial Council (elected chiefly by the French civil servants working in the area). Regardless of these administrative differences, however, all three parts of Vietnam were closely supervised by French officials and virtually no responsibility or power was given to the Vietnamese themselves. Opposition was firmly and efficiently suppressed by a police network operating under a strict set of regulations. Vietnamese, for example, could not travel, hold a meeting, or publish anything without police permission.

Perhaps the most far-reaching of all influences resulting from French rule of the country was the introduction of Western political and educational concepts, which to a considerable extent replaced the Chinese-style educational system and Confucian teachings. The introduction of Western-style schools, combined with the abolition of the power of the Mandarin class of local officials, resulted in the training of generations of Vietnamese who knew more of the French Revolution and its principles than of their own native history. Eventually these people came to desire the development of their own nation along Western lines, and to believe that the French were impeding this development. Opposition to French rule found a disciplined and well-organized outlet in the activities of the Communists,



and outlet which was a major instrument in the final overthrow of the French in Indo-China and the establishment of the present political structure of the country.

Although their administrative policies led to deep resentments against them, the French did much to advance the standards of living in Vietnam. They built roads and railroads, canals, dikes, churches, hospitals, and scientific institutions. They sent many Vietnamese to France for advanced education, and they did much to develop the industrial potential of the nation. The famous Pasteur Institutes were established in Hanoi and other cities to aid in public health problems and were largely instrumental in stopping the recurrent outbreaks of epidemics of smallpox, cholera, and other diseases which plagued the nation. They trained native civil servants who were able, at the propitious moment, to assume the running of Vietnam as a modern nation. They served as the agents for the introduction of Western technology and ideas which are today guiding Vietnam during its latest development as an independent state.

Following the fall of France in 1940, the Vichy French regime acceded to the occupation of French Indo-China by the Japanese, an occupation which continued until 1945. During those 5 years, the Japanese promoted opposition to the French and spread their own philosophy of "Asia for Asians." During this period, certain religious sects in Cochín China, such as the Hoa-Hao and Cao-Dai, developed strength, and the Viet-Minh movement in Tonkin, under the Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, evolved as a major opposition group to Japanese control and developed a popular following as a champion of Vietnamese nationalist aspirations. Early in 1945, when the tide of war had turned against the Vichy regime in France, the Japanese entered the French troops and officials in Indo-China, and installed the Emperor Bao Dai as a puppet ruler over a united Vietnam, incorporating the old colony of Cochín China and the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin.

After the defeat of Japan in August 1945 the Viet-Minh forces under Ho Chi Minh created the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" and prevailed upon Emperor Bao Dai to abdicate his throne. The Ho Chi Minh regime, which claimed jurisdiction over all of Vietnam, had by the end of 1945 consolidated its control over at least the northern part (the Tonkin area). The French authorities, who returned to Vietnam in early 1946, gained control over most of the population centers, but found their authority over the country as a whole challenged by the Ho Chi Minh regime in the north. There followed 6 months of indecisive negotiations; during this period, French troops were permitted to land in the north. By December 1946 it became clear that no agreement could be reached, and on 19 December the

Viet-Minh forces attacked the French on a wide front. The war which resulted lasted for 8 years and ended with a conference in Geneva in July 1954, which divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel into two parts: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north under Communist control and the Republic of Vietnam in the south under the leadership of a renowned champion of Vietnamese independence, Ngo Dinh Diem. Today there is an uneasy truce between the two halves of the country, the one being governed from Hanoi, the other from Saigon.

The legality of the present Republic of Vietnam Government was confirmed in October 1955 by a referendum which offered the people of the nation a choice between Emperor Bao Dai as chief of a state patterned on the old regime, and Ngo Dinh Diem as chief of state of a republic. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of the latter, and the Republic was proclaimed with Mr. Ngo as President. Today the Government of the new State is heavily dependent upon the financial and material support of the United States. In spite of this dependence and of the fact that it controls only one-half of the territory of Vietnam, it is making considerable progress toward the difficult goal of establishing economic independence compatible with its status as an independent nation.

## Section II. Foreign Relations

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam, which has been in existence only since 1955, follows in its foreign relations the objectives of insuring and strengthening its independent status and, at the same time, maintaining and enhancing national prestige. To these ends, it has established diplomatic relations with other nations, and concluded treaties and agreements with outside powers which would be of aid to the development of Vietnamese industry, commerce, and economic life. This objective and the steps taken toward its achievement are, of course, common to every nation. To their efforts in these endeavors, however, the leaders of the Republic of Vietnam bring the values of a long background of similar negotiations between their country and foreign powers, chiefly with the Chinese and the French.

Although the Republic of Vietnam came into existence as a consequence of the Geneva Conference of 1954, the Republic as we know it now was accorded only a secondary position so far as representation was concerned at that meeting. Even though the Government of the Republic of Vietnam refused to sign or ratify either the treaties guaranteeing its independence or the armistice agreement—the former drawn up by the French Government, the latter by the various conferees at Geneva—the existence of these documents was taken by all to have established the independent status of the nation.



The Republic of Vietnam has been recognized diplomatically by all of the established nations of the world which are either neutral or oriented toward the so-called Western bloc. While not a member of the United Nations, it is represented on several specialized agencies of that body and regularly sends observers to United Nations meetings and to meetings of the Colombo Plan nations. It participated officially in the Bandung Conference in 1955. It is not a member of SEATO, although that organization guarantees the security of the country. A positive attempt to present the Republic of Vietnam's political beliefs has been undertaken. In 1957-58 President Ngo Dinh Diem and his colleagues began traveling to many Western countries and friendly Asian neighbors. Similarly, representatives of friendly nations have made visits to Vietnam. These continuing visits serve to indicate the permanence of the new state and its ever-increasing prestige in the community of nations.

Relations between Vietnam and the United States have been close, and United States moral and material support has been a significant factor in fostering the development and stability of this young republic. United States aid to Vietnam began as early as 1950, before the present boundaries became fixed. At that time, assistance was channeled through the French. Since September 1954, however, all aid has gone directly to the new republic. The value of this assistance totals many millions of dollars annually and includes a large measure of military equipment which is being used to improve the capabilities of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

Equally as important as the military assistance provided to enable Vietnam to maintain its political integrity has been the economic aid provided through the United States Operations Mission (USOM) to permit the development of a viable economic structure. The period of occupation during World War II, followed by 8 years of strife between the French Union Forces and the Communist-led Viet-Minh, caused a major disruption of normal economic life throughout Vietnam. Other countries, such as France and Australia, also have contributed to the rehabilitation of Vietnam's economy. Michigan State University, working under USOM, has a group of experts working in Saigon to assist in the training of young civil servants and to advise the Government of Vietnam concerning sound principles of governmental organization. In addition, United Nations teams and private relief agencies have been active in Vietnam to cope with some of the many problems facing this war-devastated country.

As a part of the rehabilitation of its economy, the Republic of Vietnam is reestablishing normal trade relations with various friendly nations, and increasing the quantity of its exports to create a more favorable balance of trade. Vietnam, however, has neither diplomatic

nor trade relations with the two neighboring Communist governments in Asia: Communist China and North Vietnam.

The major foreign relations problem facing Vietnam concerns its reunification at some future time with North Vietnam. The ideology of the Communist regime in North Vietnam is diametrically opposed to the basic fundamentals of the anti-Communist Government of the Republic of Vietnam. Any amicable settlement of the obstacles preventing reunification of Vietnam appears to be remote at present. Although the Government of the Republic of Vietnam favors eventual reunification elections, it contends that such elections must be postponed until the citizens living in North Vietnam are free of Communist coercion and possess the same freedom of decision enjoyed by those individuals residing south of the 17th parallel.

Another highly desirable development would be an improvement in relations between Vietnam and its neighbor, Cambodia. Traditional animosities between these two peoples have been aggravated since the dissolution of French political control within Indo-China, and the creation of independent states. Unsettled border disputes as well as outstanding financial questions (residual from the breakup of French Indo-China in 1953 as an economic entity) remain sources of friction and prevent the establishment of mutually advantageous friendly relations.

### Section III. Government Structure

The Republic of Vietnam is organized under the terms of a Constitution adopted in October 1956, which provides for the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in much the same way as such organizations in the United States. Actually, this separation of powers does not and cannot mean a rigid and mechanical partition of power.

The Constitution actually accords paramount authority to the executive branch. The President promulgates the laws, appoints and dismisses civil and military officials, concludes, and, after approval by the legislature, ratifies treaties and international agreements, and is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President is elected for a period of 5 years, as is the Vice President, who would succeed him should the Presidential office become vacant.

Below the Presidency is the Cabinet Council, which includes the heads of 15 executive departments, secretaries, and a few other leading officers of the Government. President Ngo retains the portfolio of Secretary of State for National Defense. Numerous other executive agencies, such as the National Bank of Vietnam, are directly controlled through the Presidency. Most of these maintain their liaison through the Office of the Secretary of State at the Presidency. This



official, next to the President and Vice President, probably is the most important member of the Government.

The legislature, known as the National Assembly, is unicameral, composed of deputies elected by direct suffrage by electoral constituencies. The present National Assembly has 123 members. The body passes laws (which are subsequently promulgated by the President) and approves treaties and international agreements. Deputies must be Vietnamese citizens in good standing and at least 25 years of age. The term of office for deputies is three years, with reelection permitted. Internally the Assembly is organized into a majority bloc and a minority bloc plus one small splinter group.

The judicial branch of the Government is not yet on a par with the executive and the legislative branches. The Constitution, in fact, makes no provision for the organization of a judicial system, although it does state that "The Judiciary shall have a status which guarantees it independent character." The administration of the courts and the interpretation of the law are currently handled by the Department of Justice as a part of the executive branch of the Government. The major judgeships are filled by appointees named by the President. When the Constitution was promulgated in October 1956, existing laws and regulations were to remain in force until modified or rescinded. The National Assembly is in the process of revising the



The Vietnamese National Assembly meets in the beautiful former opera house.

code of law for the nation, since justice is now administered under a code which is a combination of French and Vietnamese thinking. Within the terms of this code the judiciary has a good reputation. The Vietnamese code must reconcile basic concepts of jurisprudence and legal doctrine as conceived in the West with those traditional in Asia. Perhaps the major difference in these points-of-view lies in the difference between rights and duties, the West taking the stand that an individual possesses certain rights which he may claim; Asia, on the contrary, stressing the duties which each person must fulfill.

The territory of Vietnam is divided into 36 provinces, which constitute the second level of governmental organization, and four cities, Saigon, Hué, Dalat, and Danang (Tourane), which have provincial status. Below the provinces are districts, cantons, and villages. Each provincial administration, which is appointed by the central executive branch of the government, operates provincial courts, provincial budgets, and public properties lying within its boundaries. The head of a province is known as *Chef de Province* (Chief of the Province). He is responsible for public order and safety and for the administration of the provincial budget; he also presides over official ceremonies within the province.

Between the provincial chiefs in the northern and central sections of the country and the central government in Saigon stand special representatives of the President, each of whom has supervisory powers over the administrative operations of several provinces. As inspectors of these operations these administrative delegates can intervene with the main department of the central government in order to coordinate decrees emanating from Saigon with actual execution at the local levels. These men report directly to the President and give him advice as to provincial problems.

The districts within a province are organized along the same lines as the provincial administration, and their administrative structure is known as a prefecture. A district is made up of several cantons which, in turn, are composed of several villages. Each of these administrative divisions is a miniature organization of the agency above it in the hierarchy. At the district level, however, the pattern is complicated by the fact that the administration has attached to it an administrative delegate appointed directly by the President of the Republic upon the recommendation of the Chief of the Province.

At the local level the village is the significant organ of government; to at least 8 out of every 10 Vietnamese, the government is the administration which runs his village. This is the administration which controls the taxes he must pay, the public works he must maintain—the roads, the dikes, the telephone lines—and decrees which young men in the village shall undergo military duty when conscrip-



tion quotas must be filled. An old Vietnamese proverb which states that "... the power of the Emperor comes only to the bamboo hedge of the village" is indicative of the traditional resentment of interference in village life by higher levels of government. Actually, village life is administered today as it was long ago, by a Council of Notables, composed of the leaders and wealthy men of the community. These men elect their various officers, and the *Huong Chu*, or president, acts as the village representative when this is called for. The official who corresponds most closely to a mayor is the *Ly Troung*, who is usually the most junior member of the Council of Notables. This man keeps the village records and the village seal and is the only member of the council whose appointment requires approval from the Chief Prefect of the district administration. Thus, this man is at once a representative of the village and of the central government. In spite of his position, however, the line of communication between Saigon and a village would be through the President's Administrative Delegate to the Chief of the Province, to the Chief Prefect of the District, through the Elder of the Canton and finally to the President of the Village.

#### Section IV. Political Parties

In old Vietnam, power was something to be fought for, seized, and held exclusively—no one willingly shared it. There never developed a strong caste of feudal barons, and the emperor held all powers in the land. From time to time, however, ministers and advisors of the emperor came to wield tremendous influence, and the tradition developed of strongly entrenched, highly placed civil and military servants representing the chief executive. Vestiges of this political tradition remain in force even today. It is this view which contributes much to the emphasis in the Constitution of 1956, concentrating great power in the executive branch of the Government.

Political parties, or groups calling themselves such, have existed in Vietnam for over 30 years. Many of these groups were really little more than lobbying agencies for special interests, rather than political parties trying to appeal to the masses of the citizenry on the basis of party platforms or programs. Leadership of political efforts has always come from one of three classes of the population: the old Mandarins or administrators of the old regime (the group from which President Ngo comes), the landowning and business leaders, and the intellectuals. Other segments of the population have had no experience or training in political organization and behavior. The Mandarin or administrator group traditionally tends to favor a paternalistic or strong executive government on the basis of their belief that

the democracy of the West is not suitable for Asian peoples. The business interests give lipservice to the desirability of a multiparty government along French Republic lines, but tend to believe that Vietnam is not politically mature enough to operate this way. The intellectual group appears contradictory in its views of a political system. In the south these political leaders call for democracy as they have seen it operating in the West, but tend to decry specific measures intended to implement it. However, since Vietnam is a new country with no democratic traditions and with many problems and foes, its political leaders feel it needs a strong centralized government.

There are in existence in the Republic of Vietnam today two major political parties. They are pro-Ngo and are the NRM, *National Revolutionary Movement* (Movement Nationale Revolutionaire), and the RWP, standing for the *Revolutionary Workers' Party* (Parti Travailleurs). In addition to these organizations there are splinter groups which, when banded together, make up a small independent movement. In the 1959 elections Vietnamese voters gave President Ngo control over 120 of the National Assembly's 123 seats. His own party, the NRM, won more than 70 seats.

One of the first major problems President Ngo had to face when he took office was the quelling of open rebellion by three powerful sect groups, each seeking to defend its existing interests. Two of these, the *Cao Dai* and *Hoa Hao*, organized on the basis of special religious beliefs, displayed both verbal and military opposition to any opponent. The third, the *Binh Xuyen*, had grown out of an early band of river pirates and had come to control the state police system of Vietnam, receiving financial support from the operation of vice rings in Saigon. These groups had no political beliefs other than an opportunistic dedication to spoils and wealth by plunder and other illegal means. Upon taking office, President Ngo moved quickly to eliminate these three sources of trouble for his regime. He was almost totally successful and today faces no problem from that quarter.

Catholicism exerts a strong influence in Vietnamese politics south of the 17th parallel. The attitudes of the Catholic segment range from the strong nationalist and anti-French, anti-Communist views of President Ngo to a position of neutralism adopted by certain high-ranking members of the clergy. This influence has been seized upon by some politically dissident groups, and of course by the Communists in the north, for their own propaganda advantage. In a country where the majority of the population is Buddhist in sympathy, the concentration of a pro-Catholic group in the main centers of power could become a major political issue.



## Section V. Basic Issues

Most of the basic domestic problems facing the Government of the Republic of Vietnam result from the Government's efforts to develop a sound economy, and from the presence in the country of foreign ethnic groups.

A basic problem confronting the Government in its efforts to restore its war-shattered economy in 1955 was the predominant position occupied by the Chinese minority in business and commerce. To eliminate Chinese (and to a lesser extent Indian and French) preeminence in the economic sphere, the Government decreed that henceforth only persons of Vietnamese nationality would be permitted to operate 11 basic businesses which were considered essential to the livelihood of the average citizen. The subsequent withdrawal of large sums of Chinese-owned capital had a depressing effect on the economy initially, but recently business has shown signs of recovery from this shock and is expanding. Some Chinese have found it possible to continue their participation in restricted businesses either by becoming silent partners in concerns carrying the names of Vietnamese citizens, by assuming Vietnamese citizenship themselves, or by listing the business in the name of a Vietnamese wife. Thus the Chinese are now resuming participation in the Vietnam economy.

Another basic program established by the Government since 1955, which has had widespread effects, has been the encouragement of foreigners permanently resident in Vietnam to become Vietnamese citizens. Since the largest foreign minority is the Chinese, this program has affected them principally. At first, most of the Chinese population resisted attempts at "nationalization," but the latest reports from Vietnam indicate that a growing number of Chinese residents are reporting to the officials for the issuance of Vietnamese identity cards.

The nationalization program has also affected the Cambodian minority population resident in Vietnam. The Vietnamese consider the Cambodians settled within their national boundaries to be Vietnamese citizens and subject to Vietnamese civil law. The Cambodians within Vietnam, however, consider themselves as Cambodians, although they grudgingly accept the fact that they live under Vietnamese jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER 3

### Resources and Economy

#### Section I. Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries

Approximately 80 percent of the people of Vietnam derive their livelihood from agriculture. Production is concentrated mainly in two crops, rice and rubber, which are also the main exports. Local production of rice, vegetables, and fish makes the country largely self-sustaining in foodstuffs. Rice culture comprises three-fifths of all agricultural activity.

Rice is grown mainly in the Mekong River Delta and in the lowland areas of central Vietnam. Sufficient rice is produced to meet domestic needs and leave a surplus available for export.

Rubber, the most important source of foreign exchange earnings at present, is grown in the red-soil belt in the south. About 90 percent of the output is from large French-owned estates, while the remainder is grown on small landholdings by the Vietnamese.

Miscellaneous additional crops are grown on a limited scale. Corn, copra, tobacco, and sugar are among the more important of these secondary crops. Of lesser importance are tea, coffee, fruits, pepper, jute, kapok, manioc, and sweetpotatoes.

Livestock has increased in numbers during the last few years. The water buffalo is used mainly as a draft animal and only to a limited extent for meat. The Government is encouraging the raising of livestock complementary to the production of crops, so that farmers will have a full year's employment.

A land reform program, scheduled to be completed in 1960, calls for giving 2 million acres of land in farms of about 7 acres each to 312,000 tenant farm households. The Government is paying the landlords 10 percent of the land's value in cash and giving them bonds for the rest. Also, land rents for farmers who remain tenants have been reduced to 25 percent of the principal crop.

Forests cover more than 14 million acres of the area of Vietnam, and 86 percent of the trees are hardwoods. The remainder consists





Familiar countryside sight is the rice farmer and his sturdy water buffalo.

of mangrove and similar trees, pine, and bamboo. Most of the forests are not commercial. Stands of many valuable trees have been depleted as a result of heavy cuttings over a long period of years. The limited number of present industries based on forests resources make mainly sawmill products, some of which are made directly into furniture, crates and boxes, and other millwork, charcoal, and fuel wood. Local pine will be used in a scheduled paper manufacturing operation.

Fish form an indispensable part of the Vietnamese diet and are also rapidly becoming an important export item. Organized fishing, however, is on a small scale. A large part of the fish catch is used to manufacture *nuoc mam*, a protein-rich fish sauce, which is a staple of the Vietnamese diet. Another substantial part is either salted or dried. Improved fishing methods and modern equipment are being introduced, and facilities for transporting and marketing fish are being expanded. Interest in deep-sea fishing is increasing since a trial expedition showed that this activity can be profitable.

## Section II. Natural Resources

Mining is a relatively minor economic activity in Vietnam. Known mineral deposits of industrial significance are limited. Coal mines in the Nong Son coal basin located slightly southwest of Tourane were reopened in 1957.

Commercially valuable petroleum deposits have not been found in Vietnam. Clay deposits are numerous and are the basis of a small ceramic industry. Limestone deposits are few and scattered. Phosphate rock deposits are to be found on the Paracel Islands, and are being exploited by a Vietnamese firm organized early in 1959. Salt produced by the evaporation of sea water in 1958 amounted to 97,432 tons. This is the only mineral currently being exported. Glass sand is abundant along the central coast; molybdenite is found near Dalat; and lead, bismuth, gold, and copper are found in limited quantities in other areas.

## Section III. Industry

### Principal Industries

Light manufacturing and the processing of local agricultural and forest products are done on a small scale. Plants are mostly concentrated in the Saigon-Cholon area. About one-fourth of the 2,000 industrial establishments employing 60,000 persons are foreign-owned. More than half of the establishments are manufacturing consumer goods for domestic consumption.

The local textile industry is small, producing cotton cloth from imported yarn. Rayon and silk cloth is loomed in various parts of the country. A new weaving plant began operations in 1958, and construction of another weaving plant was begun during the same year. Preliminary steps have been undertaken for the establishment of a Chinese-owned spinning and weaving plant. There are no facilities for the manufacture of synthetic yarn.

Some of the other products manufactured are matches, cigarettes, sandals, soap, brick, and tile. Foundries and machine shops, printing and publishing plants, and sugarcane processing mills are operating on a small scale. Food industries produce beer, alcohol, ice, soft drinks, and fish sauce. Motorbikes and paints are examples of the newer industries now producing merchandise.

The Vietnamese farmer makes many of his own farm tools, but some agricultural implements, as well as other metal goods (certain machine tools, bicycles and parts, charcoal gas generators, and metal drums), are manufactured in the Saigon area. Repair and construction facilities for small vessels, a few mechanical workshops, engineer-



ing works, and some foundries and repair shops also exist. In the postwar period, especially since 1955, the construction industry has been active in Saigon-Cholon, particularly in erecting Government buildings.

Traditional handicraft industries, which constitute an essential factor in rural community life, are carried on by farmers and family groups throughout Vietnam. In addition to the preparation of foods and the distillation of alcohol, these pursuits include the making of embroidery and lace, fish nets, hammocks, rope and twine, rattan furniture, clothing, and a variety of articles for everyday use, such as mats and baskets. Other activities engaging the attention of the local population include the making of jewelry, religious figurines, bamboo fans, brass and copper articles, sampans, pottery, coconut products, peanut products and vermicelli. Lacquerware, mother-of-pearl inlay, carved ivory, and porcelain are other handicraft products.

### Industrial Development

Many of the obstacles to industrialization facing Vietnam are similar to those facing other countries in the early stages of development. Major obstacles are the shortage of domestic capital and the lack of personnel with domestic training and managerial experience. Others are the traditional negative attitude toward long-term investments with low returns on invested capital, the inability to obtain industrial credit, the shortage and high cost of electrical power, and inadequacies of transportation and communications facilities. The size of the domestic market renders uneconomic the establishment of many types of industries. Until local production costs are reduced it will remain difficult for Vietnamese products to compete with imports. As economic development progresses some of these problems will be moderated.

The present policy of the Government is to seek a gradual enlargement of the industrial sector and to emphasize the development of light industries producing for the domestic market as a complement to agriculture. This approach is based partly on the fact that the institutional arrangements and physical facilities necessary for rapid industrialization are lacking and partly because prospects for returns from agricultural development are considered better than from industrial development.

### Power

Electrical service is supplied principally by five privately owned companies, the four largest of which are French-owned. The fifth is owned by Vietnamese. The total energy production of these plants

in 1957 amounted to more than 224 million kilowatt-hours. In addition, individual industrial plants produced an amount equal to 25 percent of that figure. About 80 percent of the power consumption is in the Saigon-Cholon area. Of this amount, less than 20 percent was for industrial purposes. About 75 percent of the homes currently have no electrical service. The present high cost of electrical power is a factor restricting the development of new industries.

In anticipation of growing power needs expected from population increase and industrial growth, additional power facilities are planned. A long-term project to erect hydroelectric power facilities on the Dan Nhim River, 30 kilometers southeast of Dalat, is under consideration, and an additional 33,000 kilowatt thermal plant has been proposed for immediate construction for the Saigon-Cholon area.

## Section IV. Transportation and Communications

### Railways

The Government-owned railway system consists of 1,406 kilometers of main and branch lines, but service at present is not available along the entire length because sections of track that were torn up during hostilities have not been completely repaired or replaced. Reconstruction on the main line was completed in August 1959, a half year ahead of schedule.

Under a planned modernization program obsolete rolling stock is to be replaced and all steam locomotives will be replaced with diesel-electric engines, a few of which already have been delivered.

### Highways

Highways are the most important transportation medium in Vietnam, and are the only means of access to parts of the mountain region. Both passengers and freight are hauled, although the trucking industry is not organized for efficient handling of long hauls, and freight charges are expensive.

The highway system consists of approximately 8,700 miles of road, of which about 1,800 are bituminous-surfaced, 3,900 are gravel-surfaced, and 3,000 are earth-surfaced. Historically, roads have been divided into two broad categories: national roads and local roads. National roads are primarily hard-surfaced and are constructed on a crushed stone base. Widths are 10 to 12 feet. Shoulders are usually built 6 to 8 inches above road-surface level, with the result that surface drainage flows toward the center of roads. Roads are drained by ditches cut through shoulders at irregular intervals. Local roads are usually of gravel or earth construction and can be traveled only



by jeep or four-wheel-drive vehicle during the rainy season (June-October in the south, September-February in central Vietnam).

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam finances current maintenance and part of the war damage rehabilitation costs. United States aid finances major repairs and new highway construction. The following roads were under construction in September 1958: Saigon-Bien Hao, Ban Me Thuot-Ninh Hoa, and Pleiku-Quy Nhon.

### Water Transport

Waterways crisscross the area south and southwest of Saigon where roads generally are impracticable. The Vietnamese sectors of the Mekong River stretch 204 kilometers from the mouth to the Cambodian border. The Bassac River is 200 kilometers from the mouth to the Cambodian border. These rivers are interlocked with an inland waterway system comprised of 2,500 kilometers of canals. The rivers and canals permit medium-sized ships to navigate great distances throughout the delta area. The canal system also performs vital irrigation and drainage functions. However, silting and lack of maintenance during the long period of civil disturbance resulted in the system becoming unusable. Dredging and other repair operations are being carried on.

The bulk of Vietnam's commerce passes through the port of Saigon, located 45 miles from the mouth of the Saigon River. Other commercial ports, although of much less importance, are Tourane, Nha Trang, and Qui Nhon.

The Vietnamese merchant marine consists of nine small vessels ranging in size from 123 to 607 gross tons and one ship of 3,070 gross tons. These vessels are used largely in the coastwise trade.

Ships of foreign registry carry virtually all of Vietnam's ocean shipping. American, Danish, French, and Japanese account for the largest share of the tonnage.

### Air Traffic

Air Vietnam is the only scheduled Vietnamese carrier. It provides domestic service to 11 cities within the country, and international regional service to Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.

International air service to and from Vietnam is supplied by Pan American World Airways, Air France, Air Laos, Royale Air Cambodge, Transports Aeriens Intercontinentaux, Cathay Pacific Airways, and Thai Airways Company. Customs facilities exist only at Tan-Son-Nhut Airport in Saigon.

In addition to the 11 commercial fields, there are several private airports, mainly operated by plantations, and three flying clubs.



South of Saigon, most Vietnamese travel by boat on the rivers and canals.

### Communications

The telephone, radiotelephone, and telegraph systems in Vietnam are controlled and operated by the Government's Post, Telephone, and Telegraph Directorate (PTT). Only a few cities within the country are interconnected, including Saigon, by telephone. Long distance telephone service is available between Saigon and the United States, and to some other countries. Telegraphic service is available between Saigon and any place in the world.

With United States assistance Vietnam is developing a modern internal and external telecommunications system. The installation of an automatic telephone exchange was completed in Cholon in 1958, and a 2,000-line automatic exchange is being installed in Saigon, with the expectation that 4,000 more automatic lines will be installed later. Eventually, Vietnam will be linked with its neighbors both by telephone and telegraph, and it is expected that the new system will meet all governmental and commercial demands.

Radiobroadcasting is the responsibility of an agency under the direct jurisdiction of the President. Radio Vietnam is located at Saigon, with relay stations at Hué, Nha Trang, and Dalat. When an additional relay station is built as planned, most of the country will have access to radio programs. Battery-operated receiving sets are used throughout most of the rural areas where no electrical service is available.



## Section V. Program for Economic Development

Long-term economic development objectives are now being considered by the Vietnamese Government. Work on a 5-year Social and Economic Development Plan (1957-61) has been in progress, but it has not been officially adopted. France has programmed an amount equivalent to \$14 million in aid to Vietnam for expenditure over this same period. Part of this already has been spent. The emphasis of this program is on agricultural development and the expansion of light industries that will use local resources to make items for domestic consumption.

To promote development, the Government is concentrating on public investments designed to create basic facilities that are useful to the private sector, although the Government also has entered into some activities usually reserved to the private sector in the United States. Aside from expenditures for maintaining military and police forces, public funds are spent primarily for rehabilitation of the transportation and communications network, development of education, and various farm programs that are designed to increase agricultural productivity and to improve living conditions in the rural areas.

Major reliance has been placed on United States aid for financing economic development in the absence of local financial resources, and because external loans and private foreign investment to date have contributed little.

During the 3-year period from 1 July 1955 through 30 June 1958, the United States has supplied a total of \$976.6 million in the form of economic and technical aid to Vietnam. As of 30 June 1958 actual expenditures were \$786.5 million. In addition to the aid supplied by the United States and France, technical and material assistance also is provided by various other nations and by agencies of the United Nations. Under a reparations settlement reached with Japan in May 1959, Vietnam will receive the equivalent of \$39 million as a grant and \$16.6 million in loans.

Private foreign investment is being solicited, particularly for industries that are needed now, but that local private enterprise cannot carry out at present. Direct investments involving both a substantial capital contribution and management services for the efficient operation of the new enterprise have been emphasized. These considerations arise from the lack of capital and shortages of technical and managerial skills in the domestic economy.

An investment guarantee agreement, signed in November 1957 between the United States and Vietnam, insures American private investors in Vietnam against losses that may result from war damage, expropriation of property, or an inability to convert local currency receipts into dollars.

## CHAPTER 4

### Law and Order

#### Section I. Public Safety

Police and internal security activities in the Republic of Vietnam are under the direction of the Department of the Interior and are carried out by the Civil Guard, a national organization created by President Ngo in 1955 to replace the former system of regionally controlled police agencies. In the major cities there are municipal police forces which are integrated into the nationwide police organization.

When the Republic of Vietnam was established, the maintenance of internal security was a major problem for the Government. Roaming bands of Viet-Minh (Communist) forces which had infiltrated into the southern provinces were conducting guerilla operations against Government forces, and these bands also served as agents in the spreading of Communist propaganda and in the forming of Communist "cells" within the southern villages. The Government has, in large measure, eliminated this threat, though some dissidents are known still to be in existence. Allied to this difficulty has been the problem of controlling the dissident bands of bandits which escaped capture when the Government destroyed the core of the "secret groups," the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen. That remnants of these dissidents still present a minor threat to public order is seen in the occasional acts of terrorism or banditry which occur from time to time, especially in the southwestern provinces. On the whole, however, Government Security Forces are well able to maintain law and order throughout the national territory.

The Civil Guard is organized along the lines of the Army, having a Director General, with the rank of colonel, at its head. It is armed with equipment comparable to light infantry units. Civil Guard companies usually operate at the provincial level, but occasionally a larger unit is organized on a regional basis. At the village level, the community usually elects its own police officer, who is not affiliated with the Civil Guard, but who maintains liaison with its nearest organization. In the Saigon-Cholon area a special Prefectural Police is organized for the protection of public buildings and Government officials. The Civil Guard receives training along military lines and could serve as an important adjunct of the Armed Forces in an emergency.



## Section II. Armed Forces

### Top Control

The President of the Republic of Vietnam is Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. In the present Government, he is also the Secretary of State for National Defense, directing the activities of the Department of Defense. In this capacity, he is assisted by the Assistant Secretary of State for National Defense, who performs the day-to-day functions required of this office. This officer is responsible, subject to presidential approval, for the study and execution of all policies touching upon national defense. His duties are outlined in detail in the decree of October 1957 which reorganized the entire Armed Forces structure of the nation. He supervises, with the aid of a staff called the Cabinet Directorate, the organization, operation, support, and administration of all units, organizations, and services which make up the Armed Forces of the Republic. He prepares for presidential review all budgets, plans, and programs concerned with defense. To achieve his mission, he is advised and assisted by the heads of the offices of the three main branches of the Ministry of Defense as follows:

#### Central Organization---The General Staff

- General Inspection of Military Expenditures
- General Inspection of the Armed Forces
- Directorate of Accounting, Budget, and Fiscal

#### Ministerial Services---Directorate of Personnel

- " " Military Justice and Police
- " " Veterans
- " " Military Security
- " " Psychological Warfare
- " " Social Service
- " " Geographic Service

#### Logistical Services----Directorate of Quartermaster

- " " Ordnance
- " " Medical
- " " Military Post
- " " Technical Services of Navy
- " " Technical Services of Air
- " " Engineer
- " " Signal

The General Staff is a joint staff and is under the command of the Chief of the General Staff. This officer is charged with organizing, training, establishing, and coordinating the regular military establishment from the technical and command point-of-view. He is also charged with the preparation of plans for the national defense, maintenance of law and order, and the national security. He is assisted by a deputy who is called the Chief of Staff, and by General Staff Sections (G1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) as in the United States Army.

The Inspector General of Military Expenditures exercises the normal functions of a Comptroller as such an officer would be regarded in the United States, whereas the Inspector General of the Armed Forces is charged with almost exactly the same responsibilities as his United States' counterpart. The Director General of Accounting, Budget, and Fiscal affairs prepares the budget for each of the armed services, controls its execution when it has been approved, and accounts for all expenditures.

The Armed Forces of the Republic consist of an Army Command (the Vietnamese National Army), an Air Command (the Vietnamese Air Force), and a Sea Command (the Vietnamese Navy). A United States Military Assistance Advisory Group provides training and technical advice and material equipment for all three components of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

### Army

The Vietnamese National Army grew from the armed forces organized in 1947-1948 by the French under the name *Garde de Sud Vietnam* (GSVN). That force was a militarized police force made up of remnants of the French Colonial Army and some rifle regiments of the *Garde Indochinoise*. As political events made clear the fact that Vietnamese independence was not far away, the leaders of Vietnam and the French high commands agreed that an all-Vietnamese army should be established and trained. Various formal agreements were made, and in May 1952 the nucleus of a general staff was activated.

Because of the overwhelming dominance of the ground forces in the defense organization, the General Staff of the Army, in effect, coincides with the General Staff of the Armed Forces.

Staff structure and procedure in the army follow the pattern of the United States. Remnants of French influence are gradually disappearing as the army follows reorganization lines recommended by United States advisors.

The army of the Republic numbers about 138,000, most of whom are volunteers. Late in 1957 a conscription program was initiated



under which all physically fit young men aged 20 and 21 are required to perform 1 year of military service.

The Republic is divided, for military purposes, into five geographic military regions, while the area of Saigon is designated as a special military region. Command of each of these regions is vested in a senior officer.

The army maintains numerous training centers such as the Combined Arms Military School, where personnel in all of the various services receive advanced training; the Quang-Trung Training Center, which trains draftees, particularly those for light infantry service; and the Dalat Military Academy for training future Regular Officers of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

## Navy

The Vietnamese Navy (VN), which came into being in 1952 under French control, was officially activated in 1955 as an independent arm of the national defense establishment. The mission of this force is to patrol the long Vietnamese coastline and the extensive river and canal systems of the country.

The Deputy for Navy sits on the General Staff and is commander of the naval forces.

Subordinate to the Naval Deputy is the Chief of Staff of the Navy who heads a staff composed of five Bureaus: General Organization and Personnel, Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, and Psychological Warfare. The second Bureau, Intelligence, is not active, since the army provides this service for all Armed Forces. The fifth Bureau, Psychological Warfare, serves as public information office. On a par with the Naval Chief of Staff within the structure of the navy are the commanders of the Marine Corps, the Sea Forces, the Naval Training School, the River Forces, and Naval Shipyard.

The navy is small in size but is slowly developing into an efficient force capable of performing its mission. Personnel are all volunteers, although it is anticipated that some conscriptees now being processed will be assigned to naval duty as soon as major army requirements are fulfilled. The chief naval training station is at Nha Trang, and naval headquarters is at Saigon.

## Air Force

The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) was activated as an independent arm of the Armed Forces in 1952, but remained under French control until 1955. The chief function and mission of the service is to provide logistical and tactical support for the army.

Table 1. -- Vietnamese Army Ranks and U. S. Equivalents\*

Vietnamese Name	Usual Translation	Vietnamese Insignia	U. S. Army Equivalents
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
Thuong-tuong	General of the Army		General of the Army
Dai-Tuong	Lieutenant General		General
Trung Tuong	Major General		Lieutenant General
Thieu-Tuong	Brigadier General		Major General
Dai-Ta	Colonel		Colonel
Trung-Ta	Lieutenant Colonel		Lieutenant Colonel
Thieu Ta	Major		Major
Dai-Uy	Captain		Captain
Trung Uy	Lieutenant		1st Lieutenant
Thieu Uy	2nd Lieutenant		2nd Lieutenant
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
Chuan uy	Aspirant		None
Thuong si I	Warrant Officer I		Chief Warrant Officer
Thuong si	Warrant Officer		First Sergeant
Trung si I	Sergeant I		Sergeant 1st Class
Trung si	Sergeant		Sergeant
Ha-si I	Corporal I		Corporal
Ha si	Corporal		Private 1st Class
Binh I	Private I		Private E-2
Binh II	Private	None	Private E-1
Sinh vien si quan	Cadet		Officer Candidate

Note: Insignia of colonels and field grade officers is silver; that of company grade officers is gold; sergeants 1st class and sergeants wear silver stripes; corporals wear one silver stripe and two gold stripes; privates' stripes are gold; insignia is gold for aspirants, chief warrant officers and officer candidates; first sergeants wear silver.  
\*Vietnamese Air Force ranks are the same as those of the Army, except for the addition of the suffix "Khong-quan".



The Commander of the Air Force is also Deputy Chief of Staff for Air on the General Staff of the Armed Forces. His own staff is composed of the heads of the following major sections of the Air Force: Chief of Technical Services, Chief of Staff for Administration, Commander of the 1st Composite Squadron, Commander of the 1st Transport Squadron, Commander of the Nha Trang Training Center, the Flight Surgeon, the Commander of the VIP Squadron, and the Deputy Commander who is also in charge of Operations.

The air force numbers about 4,000 officers and men who are organized into five active squadrons, and the administrative and training

sections of the service. All personnel are volunteer, but as with the navy, it is expected that some of the new conscriptees being trained by the army will be assigned to the air force when army needs are filled. Lack of trained men has been and still is a major problem, but steady progress is evident in diminishing this deficiency.

Ranks in the Vietnamese Air Force are identical with those in the army. Nomenclature is the same except for the addition of the suffix "Khong-quan."

Table 2.--Vietnamese Navy Ranks and U. S. Equivalents

Vietnamese Name	Usual Translation	Vietnamese Insignia	U. S. Navy Equivalent
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
Hai-quan Dai-ta	Captain		Captain
Hai-quan Trung-Ta	Commander		Commander
Hai-quan Thieu-Ta	Lieutenant Commander		Lieutenant Commander
Hai-quan Dai-Uy	Lieutenant		Lieutenant
Hai-quan Trung-Uy	Lieutenant (J. G.)		Lieutenant (J. G.)
Hai-quan Thieu-Uy	Ensign		Ensign
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
Hai-quan Chuan-Uy	Midshipman		Midshipman
Thuong si I	Warrant Officer I		Chief Warrant Officer
Thuong si	Warrant Officer		Warrant Officer
Trung si I	Petty Officer I		Chief Petty Officer
Trung-si	Petty Officer		Petty Officer 1st class
Ha si I	Leading Seaman I		Petty Officer 2d class
Ha si	Leading Seaman		Petty Officer 3d class
Binh I	Seaman I		Seaman
Binh II	Seaman II		Seaman Apprentice

Note: Insignia for flag officers is not presently available.



## CHAPTER 5

### Helpful Hints

**Getting Along With the Vietnamese.** Courtesy and friendliness are basic characteristics of the people of Vietnam. An American in Vietnam, whether a tourist or a member of a military mission, should bear in mind that he is the foreigner there. He is a guest in the country and should conduct himself accordingly.

The Vietnamese is an Asian, and in common with other Asian peoples, places great importance upon his personal dignity and "face." To obtain the respect and friendship of the Vietnamese, the American in Vietnam also must act with courtesy, dignity, and friendliness. Attempts to learn as much as possible about his way of life and his language will be greatly appreciated by the Vietnamese and will go far toward increasing his natural friendliness toward Americans and the United States itself.

In general, effective relations with the people of Vietnam calls for the exercise of common courtesy and common sense. However, there are some social taboos, which are rooted in custom and religion.

For example, for a man to touch a Vietnamese woman other than to shake hands, or for such an obvious purpose as to protect her from danger, is considered to be in extremely bad taste. To point at a person or gesticulate overmuch while speaking also is considered bad manners. The Vietnamese, who is personally very reserved, does not indulge in boisterous actions, and considers them bad manners in other people.

Also, in almost every Buddhist home a small altar or "ancestor" will be found, and the back is generally not turned on this altar, out of respect for the forebears of the family.

**Language Training.** Instruction in both French and Vietnamese languages is available in the Saigon-Cholon area from private and public sources. The Vietnamese-American Association in Saigon offers beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses in Vietnamese at a cost of 200 piastres per month. Individual instruction from private sources usually costs 200 piastres an hour. An American's prestige



Parasols and conical straw hats protect Vietnamese women from sun and rain.

is greatly enhanced by an ability to speak Vietnamese. Other language instruction also is available through USAFI and university correspondence courses.

**Tipping.** Tipping for services rendered is largely a matter of personal judgment and desire. Taxi drivers and restaurant personnel normally are the only persons whom Americans will be expected to tip. Many restaurants charge for service and tipping in these establishments therefore is not necessary. Regarding the size of a tip, a small amount of piastres goes a long way in Vietnam. Five piastres (less than 10 cents) is considered a maximum tip for taxi drivers, regardless of the time and distance involved. Five percent of the total bill is considered ample in restaurants and cafes.

**Time Zone.** Vietnam is in the zone that has an actual time differential 9 hours slower (or behind) San Francisco, or 12 hours slower than New York City. However, Vietnam is "across" the International Date Line from the United States. During most of the day, this causes a date differential of plus-one day in Vietnam from the date in the United States (i.e., when it is 18 August in the United States, it is 19 August in Vietnam).

**Laws Pertaining to U.S. Personnel.** At present, all official United States personnel are accorded diplomatic immunity by special concession of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. Military personnel assigned to duty with the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam, are subject to U.S. military law. U.S. military members and their dependents, if involved in local incidents, are reported to Chief, MAAG, Vietnam, for appropriate disciplinary action. This arrangement is very satisfactory and Vietnamese Government officials have expressed a high regard for the prompt and fair manner in which Chief, MAAG, has handled the very few incidents that have occurred.

**Health Hints.** Saigon is a tropical city with a large population, and all the usual health problems of both the tropics and the Orient are



present. City water is treated at the source, but American doctors recommend treating drinking water further, either by boiling for 10 minutes or by using chemicals and filters. Once you are settled in Saigon and your servants are properly instructed and supervised, boiling water becomes automatic.

Although most houses have satisfactory sewage disposal, open disposal still is common in some sections. For this reason, all possible insect control methods as well as screening, where practicable, are recommended. Malaria isn't prevalent in Saigon proper, but precautions must be taken when visiting outlying areas. It is also advisable to treat vegetables to be eaten uncooked by soaking them in a solution of potassium permanganate, available in powder form at local drug stores.

**Finance and Banking.** No United States banking facilities are available for U.S. personnel in Vietnam. However, the American Embassy and MAAG disbursing offices will cash U.S. Treasury checks and travelers checks. The American Embassy's disbursing office also will cash personal checks drawn on stateside banks. Payments for these checks are made in piastres, the local currency. The official rate of exchange is 35 piastres for a dollar. There is a Vietnam Government-approved exchange rate of approximately 73.5 piastres per dollar for U.S. personnel and others with foreign currency. This advantageous exchange could be compared to a "tourist" rate.

There are limits on the amount of U.S. currency each service member is permitted to draw during any one month. The limits are \$75 per month for members not accompanied by dependents and \$100 monthly for members with dependents. U.S. currency, or personal checks made out only for the exact amount of the purchase, may be used in the MAAG commissary and post exchange.

**Weights and Measures.** The international metric system of weights and measures is used throughout Vietnam. Gasoline and other liquids are sold by the liter (0.95 quart), cloth is sold by the meter (39 inches), food and other items sold by weight are sold by the kilogram (2.2 pounds), while distance is measured by the kilometer (0.62 mile). Speed is measured in kilometers per hour (26 k.p.h. equals 15 m.p.h.).

Here is a simple conversion table for use by persons who drive their own cars:

*Distance conversion*

Kilometers-----	1	2	3	4	5	10	100	500	1,000
Miles-----	.6	1.2	1.8	2.5	3	6	62	311	621

*Gasoline conversion*

Liters-----	3.8	7.6	11.4	15.1	18.9	37.9	56.8	75.8
Gallons-----	1	2	3	4	5	10	15	20

**Auto Servicing.** Both American and European automobiles can be purchased from authorized agents in Saigon, normally below stateside prices. Spare parts and servicing for most American cars are adequate. Prices for spare parts are about the same as in the United States, but the cost of labor is considerably less.

Driving in Vietnam, particularly in Saigon-Cholon, is extremely hazardous because of constantly congested roads. Many Americans prefer to use military vehicles or commercial taxis rather than run the risk of accidents.



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*Thomas Spain*

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