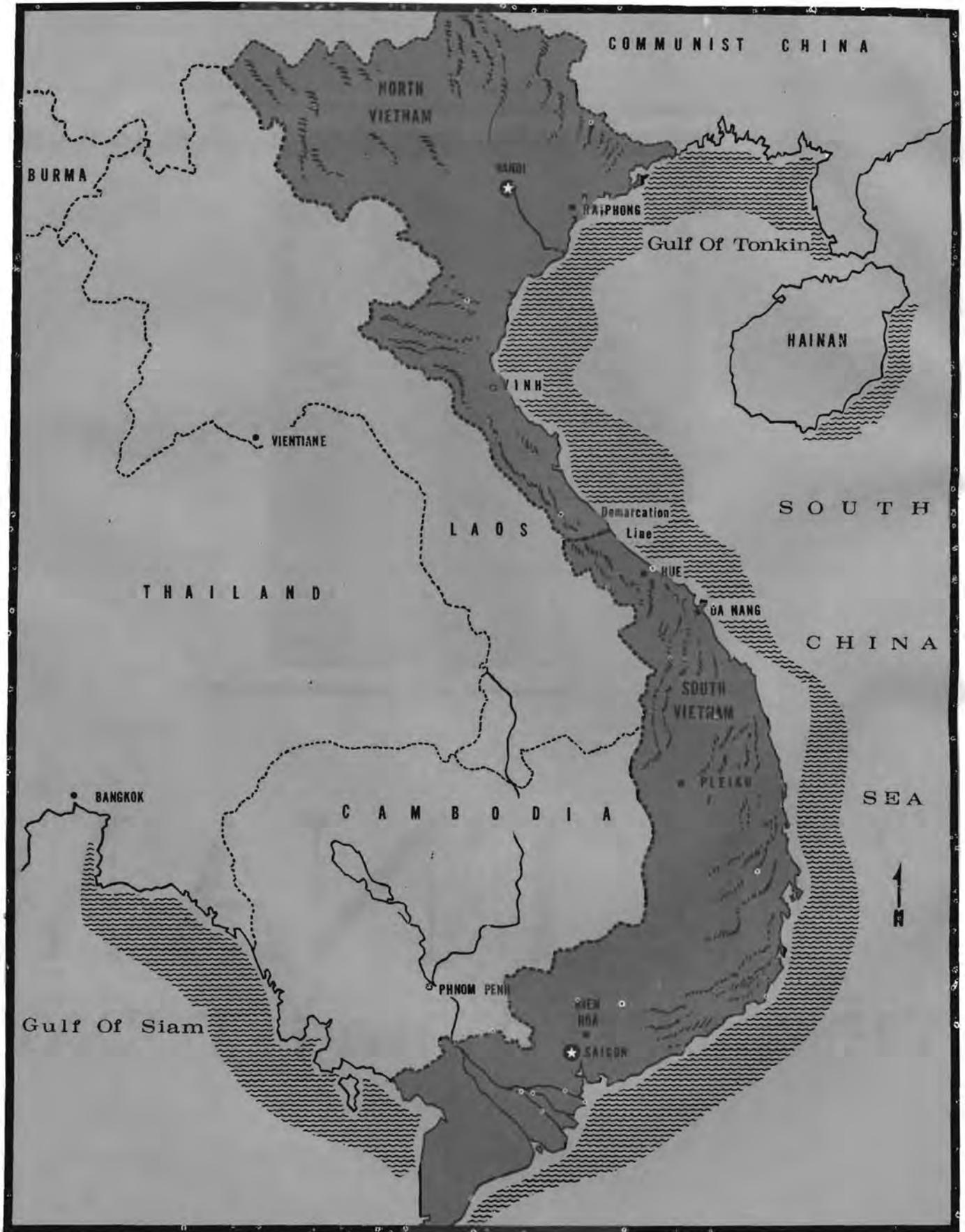




VIETNAM

YESTERDAY and TODAY



VIETNAM, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

(A REFERENCE PAMPHLET)

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FOREWORD

Thousands of soldiers and civilians have been killed in South Vietnam since the mid-1950's. The government of South Vietnam says they are victims of North Vietnam's "war of subversion" against it. North Vietnam says the fighting is a "people's war" to overthrow an unpopular government.

This much is immediately clear: the Vietnamese conflict is a threat to world peace. It is also said that because of the nature of the conflict there could be another "Vietnam" tomorrow, elsewhere in Asia, or in the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America.

This reference pamphlet, tracing the history of the Vietnamese people to the present day, is intended to provide the reader with the background information necessary to appraise the Vietnam crisis for himself.



Known as one of the "rice bowls" of Asia, Vietnam rewards its hard-working farmers with a bountiful crop, as this picture shows.

I—THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Vietnam, North and South, flanks the eastern coast of the southeast Asian peninsula jutting into the South China Sea. Long and narrow, it curves down in a rough S-shape for 1,100 miles (1,750 kilometers) from Communist China in the north, pinches at the waist to less than 50 miles (80 kilometers), and broadens southwestward into the Gulf of Siam. Vietnam shares its western border with Laos and Cambodia, and with these two nations was known as French Indo-China for about a century before World War II.

The Annamite mountain chain stretches nearly the length of Vietnam, linking the country's two large delta regions—those of the Red River in the far north and the Mekong River in the extreme south. Land area totals 127,000 square miles (330,000 square kilometers).

In this tropical and predominantly agricultural country, an estimated 80 percent of the 31 million people are farmers. They are concentrated in the deltas and are scattered in villages and hamlets of the lowland coastal areas. Rice is the major food crop. Rubber is an important export product in the lightly industrialized, mineral deficient south. The less fertile north has coal and ores for its nascent industrial base. Fishing is of great importance.

A short, handsome, fine-boned people, at least 85 percent of the population are ethnically Vietnamese, called Annamese in earlier centuries. The largest minority is Chinese, perhaps numbering one million, mostly in the south. There are some three million indigenous peoples, collectively called "Montagnards" (mountaineers) by the French, who live in the semi-isolation of the highlands. In the lowlands live several hundred thousand people of the same stock as the majority of people in neighboring Cambodia. Buddhism, infused with Confucianist precepts, is the dominant religious faith of the country. An estimated two million people are Roman Catholics.

Politically, there are two Vietnams, divided into almost equal parts at the 17th terrestrial latitude by the international conference at Geneva in 1954, marking the end of a long period of French rule in Indo-China. In the north is the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) or Communist North Vietnam, with some 17 million people. Hanoi is the capital. The Republic of Vietnam or South Vietnam has over 15 million people. Saigon is the capital.

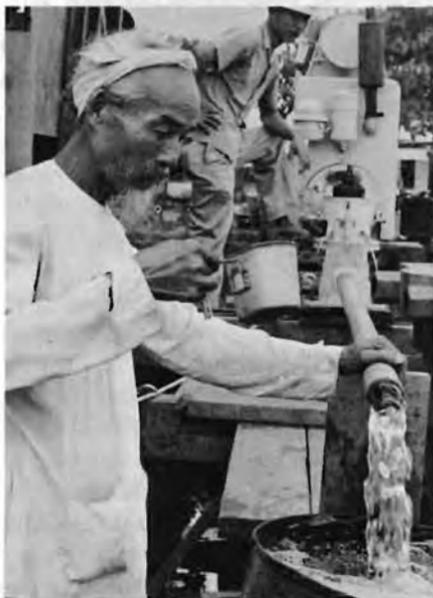
Vietnam has been divided many times in the past, as a brief look at its history shows.



These are some of the faces of Vietnam: smiling, contemplative, grateful, disturbed. They reflect the tribal diversity of Vietnam, North and South.



Inhabitants of the village shown in the background paddle their boat along one of Vietnam's many canals. The canals not only irrigate the numerous rice paddies, but serve as vital transportation and communications links as well.





An important event in the ancient history of Vietnam is represented in this painting on wood which depicts the legendary sisters Trung Trac and Trung Nhi leading a revolt against the Chinese in 39 A.D.

II—HISTORY TO 1802

Legend says the kingdom of the Viets was founded in northern Vietnam in 2879 B.C. and ruled by the Hong Bang dynasty for 26 centuries. Early Chinese accounts speak of Viet states to the south around 500 B.C. The ancestors of the present Vietnamese people seem both physically and culturally to have been a mixture of Sino-Tibetan and an early Indonesian or Malay type.

In 207 B.C., according to historical records, a number of small states in the Red River delta region were conquered by a Chinese general and combined with two Chinese provinces to form the independent kingdom of Nan Yueh or Nam Viet.

Armies of the Han dynasty of China overthrew that kingdom in 111 B.C. and made it a province. The Vietnamese people were to be ruled by the Chinese for more than 1,000 years. Despite their exposure to Chinese customs and culture, the Vietnamese not only retained their national identity but fought for it. One armed revolt, in 39 A.D., was led by two sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi. The fact that they succeeded in defeating the Chinese and ruled briefly is marked by anniversary celebrations to this day.

In 618 A.D. the province was made a protectorate-general and renamed Annam, meaning "pacified south." Though more liberal policies

were adopted and the people enjoyed increasing prosperity, the Vietnamese rebelled again and again. Then in 938, as China's Tang dynasty tottered, a Vietnamese general drove out the Chinese army and the free and independent Great Viet State (Dai Co Viet) was born.

The Vietnamese were to remain free for 900 years, with the exception of a 20-year interlude of Chinese occupation in the 15th century. The Vietnamese beat off Chinese invaders in the 11th century and three invasions by the Mongol armies of Kublai Khan in the 13th century. Nevertheless, the monarchs of the Viet state thought it prudent to maintain good relations with the Chinese at the price of tributes and a tacit acceptance of Chinese suzerainty.

Vietnam prospered and expanded southward. But central control of the kingdom was difficult and for much of the period between the 16th and 19th centuries the country was divided into northern and southern kingdoms. It was unified again in 1802 under Nguyen Anh, a member of the southern aristocracy, who became Emperor Gia Long.

Before the end of the century, however, the country was once more ruled by foreigners, this time Europeans.



Under French rule, Vietnam's resources were developed until, as this picture shows, it was supplying much of Asia and many other parts of the world with the products of its rice paddies.

III—FRENCH INDO-CHINA

A French naval squadron steamed into the port of Tourane (now Da Nang) in August, 1858, launching an era of French domination that was to last for nearly a century.

The government of the Second Empire in Paris was motivated by commercial reasons, colored by military and religious considerations and by a desire for prestige. Tourane was seized after the Vietnamese imperial court at Hue had rejected France's demand for establishment there of a French consul and a commercial agency, and a demand for guarantees of religious liberty for missionaries and their converts.

The French captured Saigon in 1861 and six years later the southern part of the country known as Cochin China was annexed as a colony. Vietnam's independence was ended in 1883 when French control was extended to the north. The central section, Annam, and the north, Tonkin, became protectorates.

Neighboring Cambodia had become a French protectorate in 1867 and Laos was annexed by France in 1893. These lands and all Vietnam were merged into the Indochinese Union under a French governor-general in 1899.

Each of the three Vietnamese regions was governed somewhat differently. Cochin China was first under military rule, then a civil governor and a colonial council. The council was elected chiefly by French functionaries and residents. The colony sent a representative to the French Chamber of Deputies. Tonkin was governed similarly. In Annam the emperor was still nominally in power but French rule was only a little less direct.

France developed the country's resources and introduced elements of European culture. There were extensive programs of public works, public health and sanitation. A network of roads was built to connect separated parts of the country, and many new crops were fostered and vast areas

of farmland irrigated. A small middle class emerged, mainly of businessmen and intellectuals. How much the living standard of the average Vietnamese was raised, however, remains a matter of dispute.

But one thing was clear: the Vietnamese were no more satisfied to live under French rule than they had been under the Chinese. The Trung sisters were revered with other Vietnamese heroes of the past.

Nationalist feelings mounted, particularly after World War I. But plots and uprisings failed, as did the attempts by various reform groups to win concessions from the French. Extremist organizations were formed, among them the "Association of Revolutionary Vietnamese Youths," led by a young Moscow-trained Communist known by the alias of "Nguyen Ai Quoc"—later as "Ho Chi Minh." This was in 1925.

In that same year, 12-year-old Bao Dai ascended the throne upon the death of his father, the emperor. When he returned to Vietnam in 1932, after completing his education in France, the Vietnamese hoped he would persuade the French to adopt more liberal policies. One of his aides was Ngo Dinh Diem, a provincial official, appointed minister of the interior and to a Vietnamese-French commission studying proposed reforms. Diem resigned within a few months when he became convinced that the French did not intend to make any genuine concessions.

Meanwhile, in 1930, Nguyen Ai Quoc had succeeded in banding together several contending Communist groups as the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). At the time, the most important Vietnamese political group was the Vietnam Nationalist party, modeled after the Kuomintang in China. After the Nationalists organized a military mutiny and the Communists had taken part in a series of peasant uprisings, the French took severe counter actions and all political parties were broken up or driven underground.

Political life in Vietnam was outwardly tranquil in the latter part of the 1930's. For a brief period there was renewed hope that the Popular Front government in Paris would grant concessions to the Vietnamese, but nothing came of this. Though some steps were taken to associate the Vietnamese with French administration in a consultative capacity, France did not envisage self-government in Indo-China.

IV—WORLD WAR II, AFTERMATH

An event which was to prove as fateful for Vietnam as the long-ago capture of Tourane by the French came in September of 1939 when Nazi Germany's military machine attacked Poland. Britain and France promptly declared war on Germany and soon most of the world was engulfed in the hostilities.

France was crushed in less than a year and a dictatorship known as the Vichy regime was established to govern the country. Vichy accepted the occupation of Indo-China by Japan, Germany's ally, although French officials were permitted to administer the colonies.

In March, 1945, seeing that defeat at the hands of the Allies was imminent, Japan imprisoned the French authorities and granted independence to Vietnam under Japanese "protection" with Emperor Bao Dai (then in France) as head of state. The surrender of Japan a few months later was the development that the veteran Communist Nguyen Ai Quoc had been planning and waiting for since the fall of France in 1940.

A congress of Vietnamese nationalist exile groups had been held at Chinghsi, China, in May, 1941, under the auspices of the Kuomintang government. The exiles formed the Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam, later known as the Viet Minh, on May 19, with Nguyen Ai Quoc as general secretary. Thus he finally had attained the goal he had announced to the Comintern's executive committee back in 1924 when he said his immediate task was "the unification of various Vietnamese nationalist groups under Communist leadership." The non-Communists who comprised the majority of the new Viet Minh united nationalist front were unaware of their leader's political orientation, that in 1927 he also had declared: "I intend to form an Indochinese national revolutionary movement, whose leaders will bring its members step by step to orthodox Communism."

Although the Nationalist Chinese authorities had supported formation of the Vietnamese exile organization, they soon became suspicious of Nguyen Ai Quoc. They imprisoned him and set up a new organization. But, finding it necessary to gain intelligence information about the Japanese in Vietnam, the Chinese released Nguyen in 1943 and he again became head of the group. It was at this time, to conceal his identity, that he took the alias Ho Chi Minh.

Meanwhile, Ho's aide, Vo Nguyen Giap, had been forming guerrilla units in northern Tonkin, implanting secret agents and building an intelligence network. Throughout Vietnam, Communist cells were organized which were to prove invaluable to Ho after Japan suddenly surrendered on August 13, 1945.

Vietnam at this time was a political and military vacuum. The government of Bao Dai which the Japanese had set up existed in little more than name. Aside from a handful of French officials and troops imprisoned by the now withdrawing Japanese, there were no Allied troops in Indo-China. Under an agreement by the Allies, Nationalist Chinese forces were to arrive and occupy Vietnam down to the 16th parallel in September and French troops were to take control of the south later the same month. But in mid-August all was fluid and chaotic in Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh acted swiftly, working through the clandestine Indochinese Communist party and the Viet Minh national front. His goal was to establish himself as a political power by seizing as much of Vietnamese territory as he could before the arrival of Allied troops.

On August 16 the Viet Minh announced formation of a "National Liberation Committee for Vietnam." Three days later Ho's guerrilla forces took control of Hanoi. Next, a mission was sent to Hue, seat of Bao Dai's government, demanding surrender of the imperial seal. Bao Dai abdicated, believing—as did most of the Vietnamese people—that the Viet Minh was a genuine national front organization which enjoyed the support of the Allies. Ho's forces took control in Saigon and much of the countryside. On August 29, in Hanoi, a provisional government was proclaimed. On September 2, Ho proclaimed the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam," with himself as president.

With the arrival of Allied troops, President Ho was in a vulnerable although strategic position. To win support by the Chinese and the French, and among the Vietnamese people as well, he arranged the disappearance of the Communist element in the Viet Minh united front. In November, the Indochinese Communist party announced its dissolution. Those Communists who might wish to continue their theoretical studies were advised to join what was announced as the Association of Marxist Studies.

President Ho next moved toward negotiations

with France on the future status of Vietnam by holding elections in January, 1946, for the country's first legislature, the National Assembly. The Viet Minh, as the major political organization, won most of the 444 assembly seats, 70 seats having been allotted to opposition parties by prior arrangement.

In March the assembly held its first meeting and approved Ho and his ministers. When a second meeting was held in October only 291 members were present, including 37 opposition members. Questioned about the absence of so many legislators, a Viet Minh minister announced they had been arrested for "common law crimes." The legislature had contracted further when it met again on November 8 to approve the DRVN's first constitution by a vote of 240 to 2.

In early 1946 France and the new government had begun negotiations over their future relationship. On March 6 an agreement was signed in which France recognized the DRVN as a "free state with its own government, parliament, army and treasury, forming part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union." A referendum was to be held to decide whether Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China would be united. Further, France would station 15,000 troops in the north, to be withdrawn gradually by 1952.

A second meeting was held in April to prepare for a final settlement in Paris, but differences of interpretation arose over the March agreement. In July, President Ho led a delegation to a conference at Fontainebleau; again there was no progress. Before Ho left France, both sides agreed to cease "all hostilities and acts of violence," of which there had been an increasing number.

In October a new postwar constitution was approved for France, but it did not provide for fully independent member states within the French Union. In November the DRVN constitution was approved, but it did not mention membership in a French Union.

Incidents of armed violence culminated in a French cruiser shelling the northern port city of Haiphong. Then on December 19, 1946, President Ho ordered a general attack against the French in Hanoi and French garrisons in north and central Vietnam.

The Indochinese war was on. It would last seven and one-half years.



A French paratrooper prepares to join up with other French and Vietnamese paratroopers during the war of Indo-China, which lasted more than seven years.

V—THE INDO-CHINA WAR, 1946-1954

The pattern of the fighting in which several hundred thousand soldiers and civilians were to be killed was set almost immediately. Faced with superior French forces, Ho's troops withdrew from the major cities and towns to the countryside and highlands. They adapted the guerrilla strategy of Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung, attacking isolated units, engaging in sabotage and harassing the enemy while avoiding major battles.

The French, meanwhile, tried to rally all non-Communist nationalists, but the nationalists were skeptical and withheld their support. After two years of negotiations, France in 1949 approved self-government for Vietnam within the French Union. Bao Dai, who briefly had held the figurehead post of supreme councillor under the new DRVN and then gone into exile, became chief of state. France also negotiated similar agreements with Cambodia and Laos. In 1950 all three countries became Associated States of Indo-China and were accorded diplomatic recognition by more than 30 nations.

A new and perhaps decisive factor in the Indo-China war was the emergence of Communist China in late 1949. When DRVN guerrilla forces successfully attacked a number of French posts on the Chinese border in 1950, direct contact between

the two regimes was possible for the first time. Peking provided the DRVN with substantial military equipment and supplies and helped to train a growing Vietnamese army.

Politically, Ho Chi Minh attempted to broaden the base of nationalist support for his government and at the same time to strengthen the Communist party. In early 1951 it was announced that the Viet Minh united front was being absorbed by the new League for the National Union of Vietnam (Lien Viet), a more extensive nationalist organization. Also announced was formation of the Vietnamese Workers party (Lao Dong), dedicated to the doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung. The Communist direction of the DRVN leadership thus was made plain to all, for key members of the regime also headed the new Lao Dong party, and the party was the leading faction of the new Lien Viet nationalist front group. The advantages of these moves were that non-Communists had no choice other than to affirm their loyalty to the regime or go over to the French, and that the Communists could now move to act in the open.*

The DRVN guerrilla forces under General Giap suffered reverses in 1951 but gradually expanded their territory in 1952 and 1953. In the spring of 1953 several divisions of the DRVN army crossed into Laos as "volunteers" and linked with the pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces.

French and Laotian government troops were able to stave off defeat, but in early 1954 new Communist offensives were threatening in southern Vietnam, northeastern Cambodia, and central and northern Laos. Opposing forces concentrated at Dien Bien Phu, a French base on the Tonkin side of the Lao-Vietnamese border. Heavy use of Chinese Communist artillery and massive attacks by Giap's forces resulted in a stunning defeat for the defenders. The base was surrendered on May 8 and all French forces in northern Vietnam shortly were ordered south of the 16th parallel.

The Indo-China war was to be officially terminated 10 weeks later after lengthy negotiations around a conference table in Geneva.

* It will be recalled that the Indochinese Communist party supposedly had dissolved itself in 1945 in favor of the Association for Marxist Studies. In fact, it continued to operate secretly from 1945 to 1951, according to a history of the party written by Nguyen Kien Giang and published in Hanoi in 1960. The same man, Truong Chinh, was successively secretary-general of the ICP, chairman of the Marxist study group, and secretary-general of the Lao Dong party.

As in all wars, the conflict in Vietnam has produced its refugees. This Vietnamese peasant and his daughter hurriedly evacuate an area during heavy fighting.



The stern faces of victor and vanquished are shown in this photo, taken shortly after the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The French commander is turning over his garrison to the representative of the DRVN.



The Geneva conference opens in April, 1954. Negotiations on Indo-China began May 8, the participants including Communist China, Cambodia, Laos, the State of Vietnam (South), and the DRVN (North).

VI—THE GENEVA ACCORDS OF 1954

The war in Indo-China had been moving toward the conference table for a number of months before the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. In France, Vietnam and elsewhere, there were increased expressions favoring a negotiated settlement of the long, bloody conflict. On the initiative of Britain, France and the United States, a foreign ministers' conference including the Soviet Union was held in Berlin in February, 1954. The ministers agreed to hold a conference in Geneva with interested parties to discuss both the situation in Indo-China and Korea (where a cease-fire had been arranged the previous July).

The Geneva conference opened in late April, first taking up the question of Korea, but failed to make progress. Negotiations on Indo-China began May 8 (the day Dien Bien Phu fell), the participants including the four conference originators, Communist China, Cambodia, Laos, the State of Vietnam (south) and the DRVN (north). Agreements were reached on July 20 and 21.

In summary, the Geneva accords ended hostilities throughout Indo-China, partitioned Vietnam at the 17th parallel pending a countrywide election by mid-1956, pledged France to grant complete independence to Vietnam, provided for the total evacuation of French and State of Vietnam military forces from north of the 17th parallel and the total evacuation of DRVN forces from south of the parallel, banned the import of new weapons and any increase of troop strength, and provided for the free flow of refugees. The conference created a three-nation International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICC) in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. India was made chairman of the ICC, and Canada and Poland members.

Specifically, the Geneva accords were composed of two principal documents. The first was the "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam," signed on July 20 by the commanders of the French Union forces in Indo-China and the DRVN army (separate agreements covered Cambodia and Laos). It was this document which dealt with the cease-fire and its implementation.

The second major document was the "Final Declaration" of the conference, dated July 21 and unsigned. Taking note of the cease-fire provisions,

the declaration said that the military demarcation line was provisional and did not constitute a "political or territorial boundary." Political problems were to be settled "on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity." The whole Vietnamese people would "enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free elections by secret ballot." To ensure that "all necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July, 1956, under supervision of an international commission." The commission would be composed of ICC representatives.

The final declaration received the verbal approval of all those represented at the conference with the exception of the South Vietnamese and American delegates. South Vietnam said it would support the cease-fire but objected to partition of the country. The representative of the United States also expressed concern about the partition, but said the United States would do nothing to disturb the agreements. Further, he said, the United States would view "any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern as seriously threatening international peace and security." As in the case of nations "divided against their will," he said, the United States supported efforts "to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly."

The international Geneva conference thus ended with Vietnam's 31 million inhabitants divided into two approximately equal zones. But the Vietnamese were at peace for the first time in nearly a decade and free of foreign domination for the first time in almost a century.

The division of the country was to continue. The peace was not. Both developments were contrary to the Geneva accords. Controversy continues as to who was to blame for the absence of reunification elections and the outbreak of fighting.

The available evidence regarding these two questions may be better weighed against the background of political and economic developments in the two Vietnams after the Geneva accords.



Crowds gather in Saigon to celebrate the proclamation October 26, 1955 of the new Republic of Vietnam.

VII—THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

In mid-1954 the two Vietnams faced the awesome task of rebuilding their war-shattered economies and shaping their political structures. Irrigation and drainage systems, roads and bridges, railroads, power plants and industry had been ruined or damaged. Many peasants had abandoned their farmlands and crowded into the cities, adding to the large-scale unemployment. An estimated one million refugees were on the move, mostly from north to south. There was hunger, fear, uncertainty.

To solve their problems, the north and the south were committed to distinctly different philosophies of government and society. The north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the 64-year-old veteran revolutionist Ho Chi

Minh, became avowedly Communist. The south, led by Ngo Dinh Diem, a 53-year-old inveterate anti-colonialist, in a few months became the Republic of Vietnam, a constitutional democracy.

In the decade following the Geneva conference, the north was to make limited gains in industry but fail to solve its acute agricultural problem. The south, with its Mekong delta "rice basket," was to make great strides agriculturally but be less successful industrially. Both zones received massive aid from abroad, the north from the Soviet Union and Communist China, the south from the free world nations, especially the United States.

A. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

President Ho set up his government in Hanoi

in October, 1954. As the man who had led the fight against the French, his prestige was enormous. The masses of people knew him as the head of the Viet Minh united nationalist front and its successor the Lien Viet, not as a Communist. There is little reason to doubt that the vast majority of Vietnamese in the north were not Communists. Thus the Hanoi regime took pains to mute the Communist character and control of the government. Care was taken to conciliate various economic, religious and minority groups, and the Democratic and Socialist parties, representing businessmen and intellectuals, were permitted to function.

To win the allegiance of all possible elements in the population, it was announced in September, 1955, that the Lien Viet front was being superseded by the "Patriotic" or "Fatherland Front." This new and larger organization, it was intended, would also appeal to Vietnamese in the southern zone. The leadership of the Fatherland Front was again interlocked with that of the government and the Lao Dong or Communist workers party.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly that had been elected in 1946 had met in March, 1955, to approve a resolution which said it was the "sole parliament of the whole people" despite the division of the country. This 1946 assembly, its membership much depleted, would continue in office without another election being held until 1960. It actually convened only a few days annually, legislative business being transacted by a small "permanent committee." President Ho also continued in office without an election. He turned over the post of premier, which he had also held, to Pham Van Dong, formerly vice premier and minister for foreign affairs.

The government, in theory, continued to operate under the constitution approved in 1946. At that time, Ho had devised a liberal-sounding document to attract maximum popular support and to screen his intentions from the French and Nationalist Chinese, both of whom had troops on Vietnamese soil.

When Ho and the Communist party had consolidated their control in North Vietnam, a new constitution was promulgated in 1960 and elections held. The new constitution could leave no doubt in anyone's mind as to the character and direction of the DRVN. It praised Ho Chi Minh and the Lao Dong party, attacked "French imperialism," "U. S. interventionists," and

"Japanese fascists." The DRVN was to march "step by step from people's democracy to socialism," i.e. Communism. Extraordinary powers were granted the president and the "standing committee" of the assembly and the "people's supreme control organ." At the first election under the new constitution, a total of 458 candidates for the legislature competed for 404 seats.

Economically, the major action of the Hanoi government was land reform, a program started even before the Geneva accords. In 1955 and 1956 the land left by thousands of people who had moved to the southern zone, plus farms confiscated from "rich peasants" and landlords, was given to poor farmers. The land reform program and its "population classification decree" resulted in such widespread and violent opposition that before the program was reorganized some 50,000 to 100,000 people had been killed. Thousands more were arrested and sent to forced labor camps. President Ho publicly admitted in August, 1956, that the program had gone too far and promised

Ho Chi Minh, head of the Communist government in North Vietnam.



that corrective steps would be taken to deal with the program's inequities and the extremism of Communist cadres.

On November 2, however, the peasants of Nghe-An province rebelled. Hanoi dispatched an entire army division to quell the uprising, and it was reported subsequently that 6,000 farmers had been executed or imprisoned. The government hastened to make amends by abolishing land reform tribunals, instituting a "campaign for the rectification of errors," and freeing thousands of prisoners. Truong Chinh, secretary general of the Lao Dong party, was removed from office and so was the minister of agriculture. There followed a short period of elaborate self-criticism in the Communist party press and a relaxation of political controls and restrictions. Two years were to pass before Hanoi again pushed ahead with its program for banding farmers into "cooperatives," a primitive form of the Soviet collective farm.

In 1958 "socialist transformation" was accelerated economically and politically. There were good harvests and gains in industrialization. But 1960 brought serious setbacks to the entire economy. The government blamed "poor agricultural production . . . as well as weak points and shortcomings in economic controls." As target production plans were revised downward, the government openly worried about the failure of the collectives and admitted that private plots were giving the farmers 30 to 40 percent of their total income. In 1962 Hanoi spoke of "alarming" situations in crops and cattle herds, and in the following year a major shakeup of government posts centered in the agriculture administration.

North Vietnam's first five-year plan (1961-65) had called for an annual food production goal of 9.5 million tons by 1965. In 1963 this was revised to 7.1 million tons. Industrial goals similarly were scaled down.

Hanoi's trade deficits have mounted annually, as have its debts to the Soviet Union, Communist China and other Communist countries. The necessity to import more food is aggravated by a three percent annual population increase. Economically, in the opinion of foreign observers, Communist North Vietnam's future appears bleak.

Ho Chi Minh himself has been quoted as saying as much: "The standard of economic management is still low. The sense of responsibility is not high, the products are not of a good quality, and bureaucratism, waste and corruption are still rife." In Peking, Mao Tse-tung put it another way in 1964

in saying farewell to a group of French parliamentarians who were leaving for Hanoi: "Let me tell you that there is nothing interesting for you to see there," Mao said. "The North Vietnamese . . . are now living in wretched conditions."

B. REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The problems facing the new government in Saigon following the 1954 Geneva accords were in some respects similar to those confronting Hanoi, in other ways formidably different. Economically, both zones were in shambles. But politically, South Vietnam's situation was more difficult than that of North Vietnam. Whereas in the north the government was authoritarian and doctrinaire, the south was only beginning that transitional stage in which a newborn democracy seeks stability.

The new South Vietnamese government was led by Ngo Dinh Diem, a resolute nationalist who for 20 years had refused top governmental posts under the French, Japanese and Ho Chi Minh. Diem accepted the premiership and formed a cabinet in July, 1954. The situation then was so chaotic that it was generally predicted that South Vietnam would flounder within six months to a year.

Both regional and religious factors were at the root of the government's problems. The movement of a million persons exercising their choice of regime was almost exclusively from north to south, in which connection it should be recalled that there has been a historic division between the two areas. Many of those who came south, furthermore, were Communist agents intended to start the process of subversion. No such problem disturbed the regime in the north. Furthermore, those refugees from the north who were not Communist agents were largely Roman Catholic, who were among the most active individuals politically. When they got to the south, they found themselves in competition with the most active groups, both Catholic and Buddhist, there. The entire situation made for an atmosphere of conflict, in contrast with the disciplined regime in the north.

A national referendum was held in October, 1955, which permitted the people to choose between Diem and Bao Dai as chief of state. Diem won by an overwhelming majority and on October 26 he proclaimed the Republic of Vietnam with himself as president. Several months later the voters elected a national assembly, and a national constitution was approved. Emphasizing a strong



The use of modern equipment, such as this motor-driven irrigation pump, has spurred food production in South Vietnam.

executive, the constitution provided separation of executive and legislative powers, universal suffrage, civil rights, welfare assistance, et cetera. A central problem for the republic would be evolving the dynamic political institutions and practices which would breathe life into its formal governmental organization.

Economically, immediate tasks included the resettlement of 900,000 refugees from the north, increasing rice production, and launching a land reform program.

Land reform started in 1955 with ordinances establishing rent limits and providing security of tenure. Uncultivated land was requisitioned for settlement by refugees. The following year, a presidential decree limited individual ownership to less than 100 hectares and for the resale of excess land by the government in small plots, usually to the tenants already working the land. By 1960 more than 400,000 hectares had been distributed to 124,000 farmers, mostly former tenants, and an additional 600,000 hectares were subject to transfer by the government for redistribution. There were some complaints, however, that the program moved too slowly and was insufficiently extensive, but the growing guerrilla insurgency in the countryside is considered a factor here.

Agricultural extension services and training centers established in the provinces introduced new farming techniques and crops. Improved water resources, the use of chemical fertilizers and pest control programs are partially credited with increasing food production by 32 percent between 1955 and mid-1962, surpassing prewar records. Industrial crops, livestock and poultry, all showed

marked gains. The fishing industry boomed, the commercial yield of seafood rising from 57,000 tons in 1957 to 345,000 tons in 1963. Industrially, more than 50 large operations were started in the 1955-61 period and some 70 existing factories were expanded, a modest but encouraging start. Impressive advances were made in education, health and welfare, and in transportation, communications and public works. For example, thousands of new schoolrooms were built, the elementary school population rising from 400,000 to 1,500,000 between 1956 and 1960. Health dispensaries were installed in half of South Vietnam's 6,000 villages and hamlets.

Thus, the standard of living rose for the average South Vietnamese citizen in the years following the Geneva conference. The building of a politically viable democratic edifice, however, met with less success. The reasons for this are complex and a matter of some controversy.

The government of Ngo Dinh Diem had been given little chance to survive, much less succeed. That it did both was credited to Diem's executive talents and tough-minded determination. Of necessity, at the beginning at least, it could be argued that a strong centrally directed administration was required to wield the divisive elements of the new society into an effective and responsive whole. Further, there was the burgeoning guerrilla warfare in the countryside.

But the Diem government evolved into a palace regime, rather than one that sought to create a broad base of popular support. The aspirations of the villagers, the backbone of the agricultural country, were largely ignored, with

the result that the Viet Cong guerrillas often found a sympathetic audience among the people of the countryside. More and more, the Diem government spoke only for Saigon, rather than for the whole country, and discontent began to develop markedly, not only in the provinces, but among intellectuals and students in the capital.

In any case, public resentment was mushrooming by 1960, followed by disaffection and then outright opposition. An incident that was to lead to Diem's downfall occurred in mid-1963 in the city of Hue. Buddhists staged demonstrations there protesting restrictions imposed by the regime on the observance of the anniversary of Buddha's birth. During one demonstration shooting broke out and 12 persons were killed. Buddhist leaders said police and army troops had opened fire on a crowd; the government claimed Communists touched off explosions. When Diem failed to come to terms with the Buddhists, who were distrustful of Diem's adherence to Roman Catholicism, military leaders concluded that the now desperate fight against guerrilla forces in the countryside could not be won until there was political stability and public support for the government. In November, military leaders staged a coup d'etat in which Diem was killed.

The Military Revolutionary Council appointed a provisional government and issued a statement emphasizing that "the sharpest weapons to triumph over the Communists are democracy and freedom." The council said it would return a democratic government to power when the situation permitted.

Since that time, there have been a number of shifts in the leadership of the South Vietnamese government, initiated primarily by top-ranking military figures. Revolutionary councils have given way to provisional governments, three-man military commands, mixed civilian-military cabinets, and to military directorates. The changes and coups reflect a complex of military, political, religious and regional differences and rivalries—in short, a further groping by the entire society to develop a stable, representative government at the very time the nation is in a state of acute military insecurity.

The leadership in Saigon has made repeated attempts to evolve a formula for stable government, but it has been preoccupied almost exclusively with preventing the guerrilla forces in the countryside from completely overrunning all of South Vietnam.



Uniformed North Vietnamese students march through the streets of the North Vietnamese capital of Hanoi, carrying a portrait of Ho Chi Minh, president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.



Soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army, left, are equipped with modern weapons, receive extensive training in guerrilla warfare tactics.

With land reform initiated in 1955 in South Vietnam, impressive advances were made in education, health and welfare, transportation, communications and public works. Below, a malaria eradication team works in a remote area north of Saigon.



Below: A street scene during the rush hour in Hanoi.





South Vietnamese forces under attack by Viet Cong guerrillas unload supplies from a United States helicopter.

VIII—THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The international conference in Geneva had brought peace to Vietnam in 1954, but within a few years hundreds of people were being killed in South Vietnam—and then thousands. Vietnamese were fighting Vietnamese. Some said it was a “civil war” waged by southern patriots to overthrow the Saigon government. Others said it was a new kind of undeclared war, a “war of national liberation,” in which the Communist North sought to conquer its neighbor. Though the origins of the war—and the fact of the war itself—were at first obscure, by 1961 there was sufficient evidence to classify the war and reconstruct how it had come about.

The Geneva accords had called for a general election in mid-1956 to unify the two zones and

determine the country's form of government. The election was never held because Saigon refused to participate. Saigon argued that it had not been a party to the Geneva accords and that the Bao Dai government, which had been represented, rejected the final declaration prescribing an election. It also was noted that none of the conference delegations had signed the declaration, which rendered the treaty of doubtful validity in international law. But most importantly, it was a foregone conclusion that Communist North Vietnam was not prepared to allow elections that would permit free expression of the will of the people. Saigon regarded an election as an exercise in national suicide.

Hanoi protested loudly and at length, though there is reason to believe that the Communists re-

garded the election issue as academic even at the time of the Geneva conference.* Communist North Vietnam, buoyed by the triumph over France, was supremely confident that it would quickly build a strong state while South Vietnam would collapse under the weight of its economic and political problems. Instead, the new Republic of Vietnam, by late 1956, was experiencing a measure of security and progress and the Communist North was admitting that it had to suppress a peasant uprising. The North badly needed the South's Mekong "rice bowl," from which, under French rule, it had received several hundred thousand tons of food annually. Faced with these unexpected developments, Ho Chi Minh found it necessary to accelerate his timetable for bringing orthodox Communism step by step to Indo-China.

The year 1957 saw the start of a campaign of sabotage and murder by guerrillas in the countryside of South Vietnam. The victims were village chiefs, teachers, policemen, nurses and public health administrators. The number of deaths grew each year until by the end 1965, the use of terror had brought death to over 20,000 minor officials. The Saigon government termed these "assassinations in cadence" aimed at breaking down the authority of the central government in rural areas. It was charged that the campaign of terror was started by the "Viet Cong" (from Vietnam Cong San, meaning "Vietnamese Communist"), some 2,500 to 6,000 of whom had stayed south of the 17th parallel after the Geneva agreements, buried their weapons and radio equipment, and awaited orders from Hanoi. South Vietnam reported to the International Control Commission (ICC) that from 1954 to July, 1959, it had uncovered 3,561 caches of arms and ammunition. The Viet Cong guerrillas, Saigon said, were being augmented by thousands of Communists trained and equipped in the north and infiltrated into the southern zone via the "Ho Chi Minh trail" in Laos and by sea. By 1960 the Viet Cong forces were attacking in battalion strength and in the following year attempted to capture a provincial town of some size for the first time.

Hanoi hailed the guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government, but declined to identify itself with the guerrillas or the war. The state-

ments and actions of the North Vietnamese leadership in 1959, 1960, and 1961, however, indicated that Hanoi was more than an interested bystander.

President Ho Chi Minh, writing in the Belgian Communist party publication *Red Flag*, on July 10, 1959, stated: "We are building socialism in Vietnam, but we are building it in only one part of the country while in the other part we still have to direct and bring to a close the middle-class democratic and anti-imperialist revolution." General Vo Nguyen Giap, head of North Vietnam's armed forces, wrote in the January, 1960, issue of *Hoc Tap*, the Lao Dong party's journal, that "the North has become a large rear echelon of our army" and "the North is the revolutionary base for the whole country."

These views were given new emphasis in September, 1960, when the Lao Dong party held a congress which dealt largely with South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, in an address, said "the North is becoming more and more consolidated and transformed into a firm base for the struggle for national reunification." Le Duan, the party's first secretary, said it now was one of the "momentous tasks" of the party to "liberate the South." On September 10 the party congress adopted a resolution declaring that Hanoi had two strategic tasks: "... first, to carry out the Socialist revolution in North Vietnam; second, to liberate South Vietnam... these two strategic tasks are closely related to each other..."

Hanoi's next move was to announce on January 29, 1961, that there had been formed in South Vietnam on December 20, 1960, the "National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam" (NFLSVN), a national united front organization which would direct the Viet Cong guerrilla forces. Hanoi also announced that the NFLSVN had issued a 10-point "manifesto" calling for the overthrow of the Saigon government and establishment of a "broad national democratic coalition administration." The announced objective was the "peaceful reunification of the country." Hanoi was later to report that a leading contingent of the NFLSVN was the new People's Revolutionary party, which it said was a Marxist-Leninist group directly descended from Ho's Indochinese Communist party. The front's leaders were virtually unknown in South Vietnam, and it is a matter of record that no South Vietnamese of any stature, even among those who had opposed the Diem regime, joined the NFLSVN when it was founded or later.

* P. J. Honey, British specialist on Vietnam, recounts in his book *Communism in North Vietnam* that immediately after the Geneva accords one of his Vietnamese friends asked Pham Van Dong which side he thought would win the election. The high North Vietnamese official is said to have replied: "You know as well as I do that there won't be any elections."

Thus, Ho Chi Minh arranged for South Vietnam the apparatus which had proved successful in winning North Vietnam: the guerrilla army to do the fighting (the Viet Cong), the "national united front" to attract popular support (the NFLSVN), and finally the Communist party (People's Revolutionary party) which would actually lead and direct the army through the "front."

The military conquest of South Vietnam, it was planned, would follow the pattern that had led to victory over the French. That pattern had been clearly defined by General Giap in his 1961 book "People's War, People's Army," and earlier by the top North Vietnamese theorist, Truong Chinh in his 1947 book "The Resistance Will Win." Drawing heavily on Mao Tse-tung's earlier tracts on guerrilla warfare, it called for three successive phases. First, the enemy would be harassed and weakened by guerrilla tactics. Next, he would be engaged in mobile warfare by units up to battalion strength. Finally, in an all-out offensive by regular forces, complete military victory would be achieved.

Despite Hanoi's avowed intention to "liberate" South Vietnam, it has continued to insist there is no direct connection between it and the Viet Cong and NFLSVN. Saigon, however, has cited the statements of many captured Viet Cong who say their guerrilla operation is directed by Hanoi. North Vietnam, it is said, operates through the "reunification department" of the Lao Dong central committee and the "reunification commission" of the government's council of ministers. Directives are issued to the Viet Cong administrative structure in the south through the "reunification department." Hanoi's defense ministry and army, closely supervised by the Communist party, direct Viet Cong military operations in South Vietnam, it has been shown.

In May, 1962, the International Control Commission concluded its investigation of violations of the Geneva cease-fire agreement and reported to the conference co-chairmen, Britain and the Soviet Union. The commission (with Poland dissenting) reported that North Vietnam had contravened the Geneva accords by its participation in the war in South Vietnam. There was "sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt," the report said, that Hanoi was sending arms and men to South Vietnam.

During the previous year, 1961, it was clear that the Viet Cong had advanced in its three-stage plan to the point where South Vietnam was

in serious danger of being overrun. The Saigon government called for additional assistance from the United States. Washington had been aiding South Vietnam since 1954 under a commitment made by President Eisenhower. On May 31, 1961, South Vietnam and the United States issued a joint communique in which it was stated that the existing military defense and economic development programs would be expanded. Later that year, President Kennedy reaffirmed America's determination "to help Vietnam preserve its independence, protect its people against Communist assassins, and build a better life through economic growth."

The Viet Cong attacked in ever-increasing strength throughout 1963 and 1964. It is estimated that between 1959 and the end of 1964 North Vietnam had sent a minimum total of 40,000 military personnel into South Vietnam. Captured arms and ammunition plainly showed manufacture in a number of Communist countries including Communist China, the most vociferous supporter of North Vietnam. Hanoi

Members of the International Control Commission, below, inspect a photo-map showing the location of a Communist arms cache in South Vietnam. The Commission reported that numerous caches such as this were shipped from the North.



Above: Villagers of Kien Thien, in the Mekong Delta southwest of Saigon, pick through the wreckage of their former homes after a Viet Cong attack.

A Viet Cong arms cache is shown below after it was uncovered at Da Bia by Republic of Vietnam forces. The International Control Commission reported the cache was one of 3,561 found in the South.



Mr. Pham Tong mourns the death of his 8-year-old daughter, who was killed by Viet Cong guerrilla gunfire in central Vietnam.



began a massive buildup of regular North Vietnamese army units in the south in late 1965, at the rate of more than 4,000 troops monthly.

In the areas of the countryside that the Viet Cong control, they impose taxes on the peasants, extort food and shelter, draft South Vietnamese youth into military service, and commandeer labor. More than 700,000 South Vietnamese have fled from the Viet Cong and sought refuge in cities and military strongholds.

Many nations have provided South Vietnam with aid and assistance to feed, clothe and care for the people, and several countries have sent or offered both troops and military equipment. More than 40 free world nations have provided or agreed to provide aid to South Vietnam: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Republic of China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, the United States and Venezuela. Among nations sending troops or military support personnel are: Australia, Republic of China, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and the U. S.

In early 1966 it appeared that the Viet Cong and Hanoi were on the defensive, though it was possible they were readying a massive offensive. South Vietnam and the United States had stepped up combined operations against the guerrilla armies.

North Vietnamese territory was attacked for the first time in August, 1964, after Hanoi naval forces attacked U. S. destroyers in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. U. S. aircraft struck back, destroying several North Vietnam naval installations.

Limited aerial warfare against North Vietnamese infiltration routes and military targets was begun in February, 1965, by the U. S. and South Vietnam. It was felt in Saigon and Washington that North Vietnam would not agree to a negotiated settlement of the war until it saw victory was impossible. Air strikes against North Vietnam were suspended twice as evidence of a continuing desire for negotiations, but Hanoi ignored these gestures.



The peace and quiet that the people of Vietnam long for is represented in this scene. The United States has expressed its willingness to negotiate for peace while remaining determined to help the people of South Vietnam defeat aggression.

IX—PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

Anxiety over the Vietnam crisis and its threat to peace has been almost universal.

One of the most notable pleas for negotiations was contained in a statement by 17 non-aligned nations in 1965. This was welcomed in Washington, but rejected in Hanoi and Peking. The President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, said his country was ready for "unconditional discussions" with the governments concerned, though such discussions could not be predicated on America's abandonment of South Vietnam. Both Hanoi and Peking dismissed his offer as "a hoax" and "a swindle." The United Nations secretary general, U Thant, considered visiting Communist China and North Vietnam to discuss the problem; he was told by Peking to spare himself the trip, and Hanoi said the idea was "inappropriate." When the British Commonwealth nations formed a peace mission to Vietnam to be headed by Britain's prime minister Harold Wilson, Peking commented that Mr. Wilson was "a nitwit."

What is the stumbling block to negotiations? What do the opposing sides seek?

The goals of South Vietnam are clear. They were stated by Foreign Minister Tran Van Do on June 22, 1965. They are: (1) dissolution of the National Liberation Front and withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops, (2) self-deter-

mination for an independent South Vietnam, (3) withdrawal of foreign troops after aggression has ceased, and (4) guarantees for the independence and liberty of the Vietnamese people. These points reflect South Vietnam's stated determination to "fight Communist aggression with every force at its disposal" until the aim of preserving independence has been attained.

The viewpoint of the United States was stated succinctly by President Johnson during a press conference July 28, 1965:

"We do not seek the destruction of any government, nor do we covet a foot of any territory. But we insist, and we will always insist, that the people of South Vietnam shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the South, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision. And they shall not have any government imposed upon them by force and terror so long as we can prevent it."

Communist North Vietnam and Communist China have made clear their position, employing the following phrases:

The NFLSVN is the "only genuine representative" of the South Vietnamese people and it must have "the decisive voice" in the arrangement of South Vietnam's internal affairs. Before negotiations with the NFLSVN, the United States must withdraw its military personnel from South Viet-

nam and halt its aerial attacks on North Vietnam. The country then will be peacefully unified "without any foreign interference."

Further, North Vietnam repeatedly has threatened to send its armies across the 17th parallel into South Vietnam if the Vietnamese and the Americans do not cease their resistance. Communist China again and again has warned that it "will not stand idly by." The Soviet Union too has spoken of the possibility of "retaliation" and cautioned that the crisis is moving toward "a very dangerous brink."

It has long been obvious that the Vietnam question involves more than Vietnam itself—that Washington and Peking are in fundamental disagreement as to the courses of the world's peoples in the remaining decades of the twentieth century.

Peking sees itself as displacing the Soviet Union as the international capital of Communism and leading the "great revolutionary storms sweeping over Asia, Africa and Latin America." By following the prescriptions of Mao Tse-tung, Communism will triumph everywhere through "wars of national liberation." Peking has declared that the United States is its chief adversary and that Vietnam is a test case in the worldwide struggle to be waged. The Chinese Communist party's journal *Red Flag* stated on May 4, 1965:

"The Vietnam question is the focus of the present international class struggle and is a touchstone of the attitudes of all political forces in the world."

Washington's position was expressed in a statement by Secretary of State Dean Rusk on August 3, 1965. He spoke first of America's postwar role in defense of peace, of freedom, and of the right of free choice everywhere. He cited America's aid to Greece and Turkey in the face of Communist takeover threats following World War II, of the Marshall Plan for rebuilding a devastated Europe and the NATO defense alliance, of halting aggression in Korea, and support of the United Nations in preserving the Congo's independence. Then he said:

"Had we not done these things—and others—the enemies of freedom would now control much of the world and be in a position to destroy us or at least to sap our strength by economic strangulation. For the same basic reasons that we took all those other measures to deter or repel aggression, we are determined to assist the people of South Vietnam to defeat this aggression."

