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South Vietnam
The Formative Years

This illustrated booklet, published by the United States Information Service, Saigon, was jointly written and researched in South Vietnam by the United States Embassy, the United States Operation Mission (AID), the Military Assistance Advisory Group, and the United States Information Service. It is not intended as a comprehensive historical account of Vietnam's first ten years as a Republic, nor to reflect official U.S. views but rather as a short reference to social, political, and economic events occurring in that period.

The Situation in 1954

When Ngo Dinh Diem came into power as Prime Minister in 1954, he inherited what was generally regarded as a hopeless situation. His country had been ravaged by thirteen years of war and foreign occupation. The end of hostilities brought about in Geneva in 1954 made of Vietnam a divided land—divided geographically, ideologically, politically, and economically. When the French withdrew from Vietnam, governmental authority disappeared with them; moreover, there were large parts of the country over which even the French had been unable to exercise control for years. These areas provided safe haven and secret bases for the Viet Minh Communists. These Viet Minh Communists left behind them arms and trained cadres when they withdrew above the 17th parallel in 1954. Many informed observers of the Vietnamese scene gave the Diem government only about six months before being replaced by total chaos and Communism. That, it is well to recall, was in 1954.

What did Diem have to work with against these odds? The French, of course, had left to Vietnam an economic and social infrastructure in agriculture, commerce, education, transport and communications. However, this base was badly disrupted and wasted by war. Moreover, it was French owned, operated,

The nation had been ravaged by thirteen years of war and foreign occupation, and large areas of the country were inaccessible to the government.





In addition to the problem of national disorder in 1954 was the monumental challenge posed by the influx of nearly a million refugees from the North.

and oriented. The new Vietnamese Government had few trained administrators or professional people and little experience in running the affairs of the nation. In addition, the political authority represented by the Diem government was weak and divided, and challenged on every side by factionalism and by armed groups anxious, if not to hold the reins of national power, at least to have a free hand in pursuing their own narrow and profitable interests. Finally, overlaid on this difficult situation of national disorder, was the monumental challenge posed by the influx of nearly a million refugees from the North who chose the uncertainty of flight and freedom rather than the certainty of Communist domination and oppression.

Restoration of Political Stability

Clearly, Diem's first task was to restore the power and authority of the central government. To do so, he had to gain control over the military forces and over several autonomous armed groups. He succeeded in asserting his authority over the military forces only after narrowly averting a coup d'état in the Fall of 1954. He mastered the police after fighting pitched battles in the streets of Saigon in the

Spring of 1955. Then he challenged the armed groups, the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai ; he integrated some of their forces into the army, others were demobilized, but military action was necessary to eliminate completely the threat from these groups.

Once the authority of the government had been established, Diem's next task was to lay the basis for orderly administration and to begin to establish the institutions of government. A republican form of government was chosen by national referendum in October 1955 and Emperor Bao Dai was replaced by Diem as Chief of State. Thus, the Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed on October 26, 1955, with Diem as its first President. In March 1956 in the first national election based on popular suffrage ever held in Vietnam a Constituent Assembly was elected to draft a constitution. The latter was promulgated on October 26, 1956, and on the same day the constituent assembly became the national assembly. The constitution, modeled largely on the United States and Philippines constitutions, provided for a popularly elected executive and legislature, and an independent judiciary. Within two years a measure of political stability was created from chaos by what has been called the Diem « miracle ».

In August 1959 the constitutional three-year term of the National Assembly expired and the second national election was held to elect an Assembly for another three years. In April 1961 President Diem was reelected by an outstanding majority in a nationwide election which was generally considered to be free and fairly carried out.

It must be underscored that these democratic institutions are only embryonic. Political progress has been slowed by war, subversion, communist terror and sabotage, and a tradition of authoritarian government that is close to 3,000 years old. President Diem believes that the threat of Communist sabotage and subversion, coupled with the pressing economic demands and the lack of political maturity of a developing country require Vietnam to progress slowly toward the achievement of democracy. He has also the belief that the Vietnamese people must develop a political system shaped from their own traditions and circumstances rather than trying to graft Western political institutions on an Asian culture.

During this period of nation-building, from 1955 to 1960, the Communist threat was always present. However, with an eye to the experience of the free world in Korea, it was seen as coming from the North. The regime in North



Rice production in the period 1955 to 1961 increased from 2.8 million M/T (paddy) to 4.6 million.

Vietnam, in open contravention of the Geneva Agreements, proceeded to build up a large conventional army. The defensive efforts of the South were accordingly directed at improving its capability to deal with a possible overt attack from the North. At the same time the government's energies in the economic field were concentrated on the creation of economic institutions and on long range projects to develop the country's industry, agriculture and commerce.

Economic Progress : 1955-1961

The period from 1955 to 1961 was one in which half a country, and half an economy, succeeded not only in surviving but in moving toward viability. Facing up to the fact that South Vietnam had primarily an agricultural economy and would have to build its future on an agricultural basis the government opened to industry an increasingly important role which culminated in the recently enacted and very liberal investment law. The country's accomplishments in both agriculture and industry can be documented. Rice production in the period 1955 to 1961 increased from 2.8 million M/T (paddy) to 4.6 million. Rubber production



The most impressive accomplishment in agriculture was the opening of new lands for colonization and resettlement.

Motorization of fishing junks and establishment of fresh water pisciculture stations resulted in a substantial increase in commercial fish production. Below: Launching of fishing motor-boats at Ben-Da (Cap St. Jacques).



increased from 66,300 M/T to over 79,143 M/T in this period. In 1961, these two commodities alone comprised almost 85 percent of Vietnam's exports.

The cultivation of the so-called fiber crops is comparatively recent but has significant future potential. Jute production, for example, increased from 325 M/T in 1955 to 2,441 M/T in 1960 and kapok from 186 M/T to 256 M/T. Production of ramie and kenaf was introduced in 1959 and in the short period of three years, 350 hectares were planted in ramie and 7,700 in kenaf with a realized production of 110 M/T and 7,800 M/T respectively. These crops together with jute and abaca provided the major cash income to 41,000 farm families. In addition to the fiber crops, programs to increase production of tea, lacquer, coffee, bananas and copra have been undertaken by the government. Considerable progress has also been made in the propagation of new varieties of sweet potatoes and in the commercial production of onions, potatoes and other vegetables.

In 1955, buffaloes had to be imported from Thailand for use in working the fields; Vietnam exported buffaloes in 1961. Even more spectacular has been the record in pig raising. The first year, 1960, that live pigs were exported, the earnings were over \$2 million, surpass-

ing in value all other exports except rice and rubber.

In the area of farm improvement, by July 1960 over 80 extension agents were working in 32 provinces. As of June 1961, 574 4-T Clubs (the Vietnamese version of our own 4-H program) with a membership of 20,681 rural boys and girls were active in 2,339 villages. Prior to 1955 the 4-T club did not exist in Vietnam.

Perhaps the most impressive accomplishment in agriculture has been the opening of new lands for colonization and resettlement. By 1961 more than 200,000 people had been resettled, each family receiving 5 hectares of land of which one had been cleared or reclaimed mechanically. The settlers were made up of refugees from the North and farmers from the over-populated poorer coastal regions. In this regard the one million refugees who arrived from Communist Vietnam in 1955 had all been resettled by 1960 and enabled to become once again contributing members of society. This is a tribute to the government's initiative and administrative capability when we consider that this represented approximately one twelfth of the population of the Republic of Vietnam.

In the five year period from 1955 to 1960 77,000 new hectares were plowed and 72,000

disked for seed bed preparation. Local irrigation projects were carried out in 23 provinces on 250,000 hectares of land. Much of the accomplishments in agriculture can be attributed to the Agrarian Reform laws of 1955-56. In accordance with these laws, the government took over all farm holdings in excess of 100 hectares for redistribution to small farmers. Although the program is far from complete, many hundreds of thousands of farmers have already benefited. A rent control law was passed in this same period providing that not more than 25% of the main crop could be paid to landlords as rent.

By the end of 1960 the government's farm credit program had loaned over 3 billion piasters to over one million farm families, a National Agricultural College had been established with a student body of approximately 300.

Ninety seven district farmers associations were serving 778 villages and 292 farm cooperatives has been established with a membership of over 110,000 and a paid-in capital in excess of 50 million piasters.

In the area of fisheries, construction of fish landing facilities, motorization of fishing junks, establishment of fresh water pisciculture stations and the establishment within the govern-

ment of a separate Fisheries Directorate, all resulted in a substantial increase in commercial fish production from about 100,000 tons in 1955 to about 250,000 tons in 1961.

The period 1955 to 1961 also saw the laying of an industrial base in a country which had until that point almost no industry whatsoever. The table at Inclosure 1 lists the 51 major firms established in Vietnam during the period 1955 through 1961. Additionally, over 70 plant expansions were recorded during this period.

Perhaps the most spectacular industrial progress occurred in the area of textiles, which in the short period of 1958 to 1961 attracted 560 million piasters in investments, second only to agriculture in which 620 million piasters was invested during the same period. Two modernized cotton yarn factories increased production from zero in 1956-57 to 1,274 M/T in 1960 and over 3,000 M/T in 1961. In the period 1957 to 1961 cotton fabric production increased by 75% and the production of rayon fabrics almost quadrupled. New factories reduced the imports of refined sugar from 25,547 M/T in 1954 to zero in 1961 while increasing production from 573 M/T to 58,000 M/T.

In summary, in the period 1955 to 1958, cumulative piaster investment in industrial development was on the order of VN \$150



By the end of 1960, an industrial base was laid in a country which had until that point almost no industry whatsoever. More than 50 major firms were established and 70 plants expanded. Above: A visit to the VINATEXCO Plant in the Saigon Suburb.

million. By the end of 1960 the figure had increased tenfold to VN \$1.6 billion with a foreign exchange savings to Vietnam the equivalent of \$35 to \$40 million annually.

With the division of the country at the 17th parallel, the Republic of Vietnam lost its traditional fuel supply. It has proceeded to exploit its only coal mining area, bringing production from zero in 1955 to 57,350 M/T in 1961. Further exploitation of the coal producing area is planned through the creation of an industrial complex with German and French aid, which will include construction of a thermal power center, a high voltage power network, a coal reduction plant, a carbon gas processing plant, an ammonium sulfate factory and a calcium carbide plant.

Finally, the period 1955 to 1961 saw substantial accomplishments in the creation of the economic and social infrastructure which must support a modern economy and a progressive society. The transportation and communications system in Vietnam was almost completely destroyed during the 13 years in which the country was at war prior to independence. The railroad, for example, was operating on only 908 kilometers. By August 1959 through traffic over the entire length of 1406 kilometers was possible for the first time in 12 years. The

period also saw the completion of three major arterial highways totalling 354 kilometers, and the reconstruction or rehabilitation of bridge structures on the three remaining major routes. The result has been to connect with all-weather roads the plateau area in the northern half of the country with the coastal area and both these areas with the Saigon complex. In the southern or delta area, communications depend primarily on 1500 kilometers of primary and 1,000 kilometers of secondary canals, many of which had become unusable through neglect over the war years. Since 1955, 14.5 million cubic meters of infill have been dredged to reopen and to maintain these canals at an operating cost which has decreased from 121 piasters per cubic meter in 1955 to 8.2 piasters in 1960-61.

In the 1957 to 1961 period, a separate National Water Supply Agency was established and a total of 894 wells were drilled throughout the country in villages, resettlement areas, military installations, government housing projects, hospitals, schools, and agricultural experimental stations.

In 1955, electric power generation was only about 250 million kwh. The estimated generation in 1961 was 410 million kilowatt hours, including electricity generated by industrial plants for their own use. In addition, the govern-

ment is financing a 33,000 kilowatt thermal plant through a loan from the US Development Loan Fund (under a reparations agreement, Japan is constructing a hydro-electric plant with 80,000 kilowatt capacity).

In addition, approximately 3/4 of the more than 200 districts the country had district health facilities ranging from maternity clinics and infirmaries to small aid stations. Also training facilities and courses were developed, capable of producing annually 120 professional nurses with three years training and 100 assistant nurses with one year training; more than 450 nurses from provincial hospitals received three-month refresher courses. In the period from 1955 to 1961 the number of doctors graduating from medical school increased to over 60 each year as compared to 15 each year for the whole of Indochina prior to 1954.

Beginning in 1958 the government mounted a major program to eradicate malaria. By 1961, more than 1,300,000 dwellings had received 5,000,000 sprayings providing protection to almost 6,000,000 people.

By 1962, there were 1,300 prospective elementary teachers in normal school and the enrollment of secondary teachers at the Saigon and Hue faculties of Pedagogy had increased from 101 in 1955 to 855. Two new universities, one

in Dalat and one in Hue opened during this period. Enrollment in the technical-vocational schools should increase to over 8,000 on completion of 4 modern new schools.

When President Diem assumed power in 1954 he faced the task of building an adequate governmental information structure where none had existed before. His approach was two-fold: development of a standard, western-type mass media structure and the further development of social movements and organizations capable of being used to communicate ideas. The basic purpose was to open channels of communication which the government could use to inform the people of its plans, intentions and desires as well as to energize their support and develop their awareness of Vietnam as a country.

Vietnamese governmental social movements or organizations work through the various organizations in the country, such as the Republican Youth and the Women's Solidarity Movement. In the absence of a well-developed mass media structure and with a people not conditioned to mass media appeals, social movement information is far more effective. Often in Vietnam, it is the only way to reach the rural illiterate. Therefore, a large share of the communication effort in Vietnam is being



Enrollment in the technical-vocational schools has increased to more than 8,000 Above: The inauguration Ceremony of the Quinhon Technical School.

The period 1955 to 1961 saw the completion of three major highways totaling 354 kilometers. Below is the Saigon-Bienhoa highway.



carried by social movements. Work to harness these organizations has progressed to a considerable degree. Several organizations now exist which have chains of command running from Saigon to the most remote hamlet. In these hamlets local members of the organization carry on their work of informing local peoples of the governmental programs and stimulating support for them.

In 1954 radio was not effective in reaching the Vietnamese audience because radio receivers were virtually non-existent in rural Vietnam and only one fourth of the people living in the larger cities and towns had radio receivers. In 1954 there were two radio broadcasting stations in the Republic of Vietnam and these were both located in Saigon. In 1958 expansion of broadcasting facilities was begun. The government broadcasting network now consists of Radio Saigon, the principal station, and six regional stations. Expansion of radio facilities, now near completion, will extend the primary signal area in Vietnam to roughly 85 percent of the population.

Health, Education and Welfare

In the area of health and sanitation, the government had by 1961 established over 3,500 hamlet health stations operated by the villagers

themselves who have been trained in the use of 13 basic first aid drugs which they dispense. These stations handled 12 million consultations a year. At the district level by 1961 the government had provided training to a total of 472 district health workers and 118 sanitary agents.

In 1954 there were five daily newspapers. This number has been increased to a total of 16 Vietnamese language dailies and 10 Chinese language dailies. However circulation of these daily newspapers is still confined generally to the major cities.

In 1954 there was no local film industry in Vietnam. A capability has slowly been developed culminating in the establishment of the Motion Picture Center in Saigon. The center now produces motion pictures, documentaries and film clips for use in the 162 commercial theaters throughout the country as well as the rural areas where 16mm projectors are employed ; the government currently has some 750 of these 16mm units at its disposal.

The above data is limited primarily to accomplishments from 1955 through 1961. This period saw the rebuilding of war-damaged transportation and communication systems and at the same time the beginning almost de novo of land reform and industrialization. A solid base for national strength and growth was

created ; its accomplishments established the fact that, given an era of peace, Vietnam definitely has the potential in both human and material resources to build a sound economy with the possibility of increased living standards for its people. By 1961 many national public programs had been firmly established and their benefits were beginning to be felt by larger and larger numbers of people. However, at this point, in the second half of 1961, Viet Cong insurgent activity multiplied into a major, sustained onslaught on interlocking fronts — economic, social, psychological and political— once again frustrating and delaying Vietnam's political, economic and social progress toward a better future.

From Peace to War : 1960-1961

As was stated earlier, the Viet Minh Communists, when their forces were withdrawn to the North in 1954 in accordance with the Geneva Agreements, left an underground organization of thousands of agents and hundreds of arms caches behind in safe areas in South Vietnam. The Communists no doubt hoped and planned to take over South Vietnam by means of a nationwide election which, under the terms of the Geneva Agreements, was scheduled for

1956. With a majority of the population in their half of the country, the Communists felt they could depend on their rigid police state controls to provide guaranteed victory in any nationwide election. President Diem pointed out that so long as the Communists controlled North Vietnam, elections there could not be free. He took the position that since his government had not signed the Geneva Agreements, it was not bound to participate in a rigged election. He, therefore, refused to hold the elections called for by the Geneva Agreements.

It became very evident to the Communists that the Republic of Vietnam was not to be taken by political action alone. Moreover, the Republic of Vietnam's economic progress was seriously embarrassing the North. Accordingly, the Communists turned to guerrilla warfare in 1959 and in 1961 they launched what they surely hoped would be an all-out drive to overturn the Diem government by armed force.

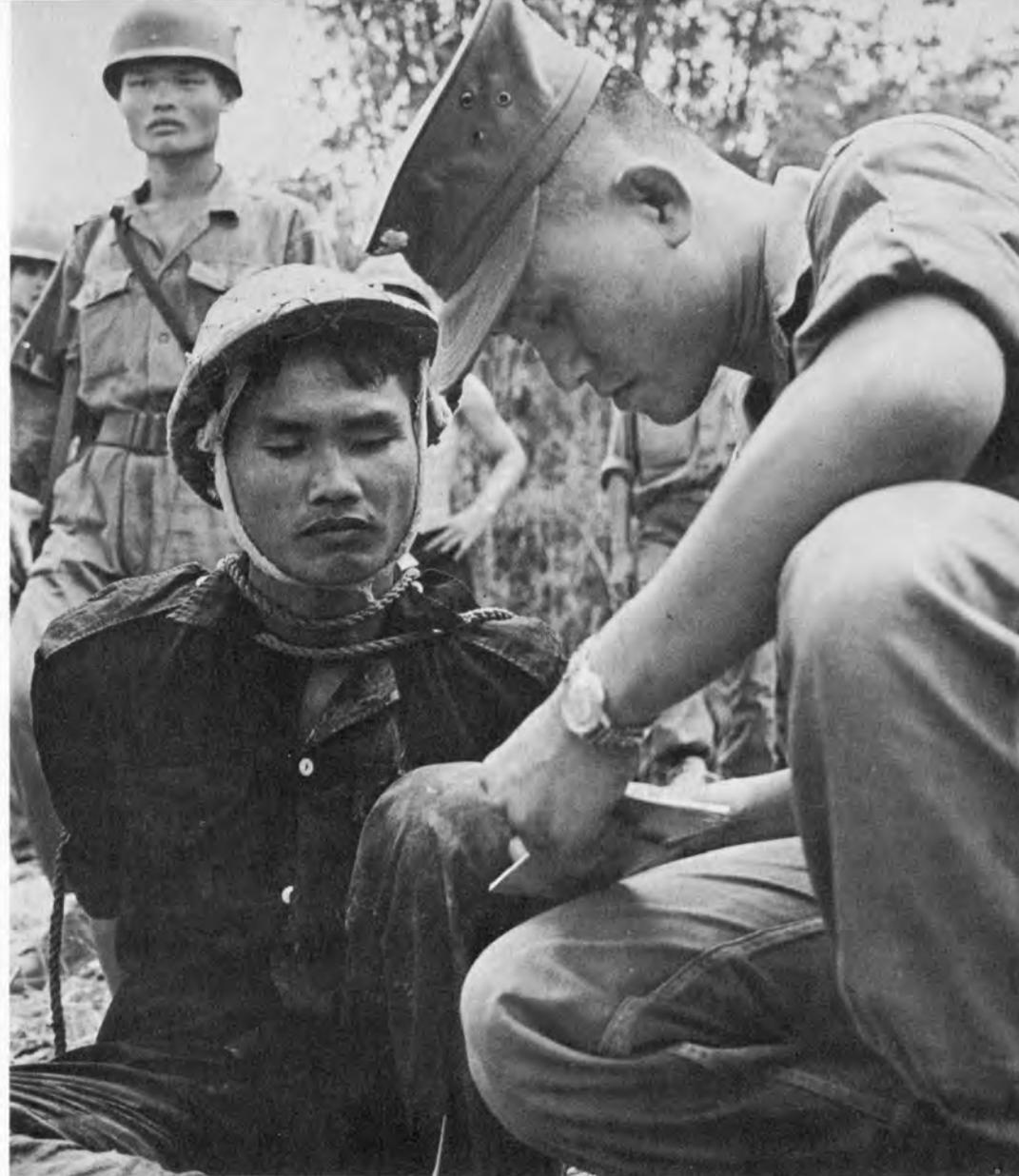
Out of this serious threat to the existence of the legitimate Government of the Republic of Vietnam have come several major benefits: one is the development by the government of a concept for building democratic institutions from the ground up and at the same time establishing channels for communication between the government and the people. This dramatic

revitalization of the Vietnamese Government's efforts to progress toward democratic institutions of an indigenous kind is embodied in the concept of « strategic hamlets. » This concept involves the mobilization of a total effort to overcome the Viet Cong subversive insurgency. It encompasses : (1) the provision of security to the populace by isolating them from the Viet Cong ; (2) the participation of the populace in its own defense ; (3) the provision of basic social needs with the assistance of the central government in such fields as medical care, education, sanitation and agricultural assistance ; (4) the injection of new life into the economy at the hamlet level ; and (5) the creation of a meaningful political life at the hamlet level through the free election of hamlet councils and officials. This concept has evolved as the Diem Government's response to the Communists. It is Vietnamese in origin and in execution. Although still in its early stages, its impact is already being felt—favorably by the people and adversely by the Viet Cong.

1962: Year of the Strategic Hamlet

The National Strategic Hamlet Program was officially launched by President Diem on 3 February 1962. Since that time over 5000 stra-

tegic hamlets have been reported as completed throughout the Republic of Vietnam. The planned total countrywide is slightly over 10,000 hamlets. Of significance in this program is the fact that these strategic hamlets, originally conceived as a defense against Viet Cong attack, have now become a means for effecting political, economic and social progress at the hamlet level. The government of Vietnam has recognized this fact and as President Diem stated, considers that the strategic hamlet is primarily the point of impact of a political and social revolution which will serve as a foundation for economic progress. The impact of the strategic hamlet program is not only being felt in the countryside ; it has served to mobilize the organization and energies of the central government toward the achievement of a central goal. Government procedures in Saigon are being streamlined, inter-ministerial coordination is being effected to a degree never before achieved in Vietnam, and a sense of purpose is permeating the governmental structure. Thus to ensure that all ministries of the government are geared to support the National Strategic Hamlet Program, the Interministerial Committee on Strategic Hamlets was formed. This committee is chaired by advisor Ngo Dinh NHU and includes all government ministries concerned. The objective of the Interministerial Committee



A Viet Cong (communist) prisoner, captured in the South Vietnamese Army's Dan Tien (People Forward) operation in Kien Tuong province, is interrogated by an army officer. Many Viet Cong are peasants impressed into the terrorists' ranks by threats and intimidation. The Viet Cong also use young children as fighters and bearers.

is to orient the government and its services toward the rural Vietnamese. This Interministerial Committee is in effect, directing the social, political and economic revolution now beginning to get underway throughout the rural areas of the Republic of Vietnam. 1962 is known as the year of the Strategic Hamlet in the Republic of Vietnam.

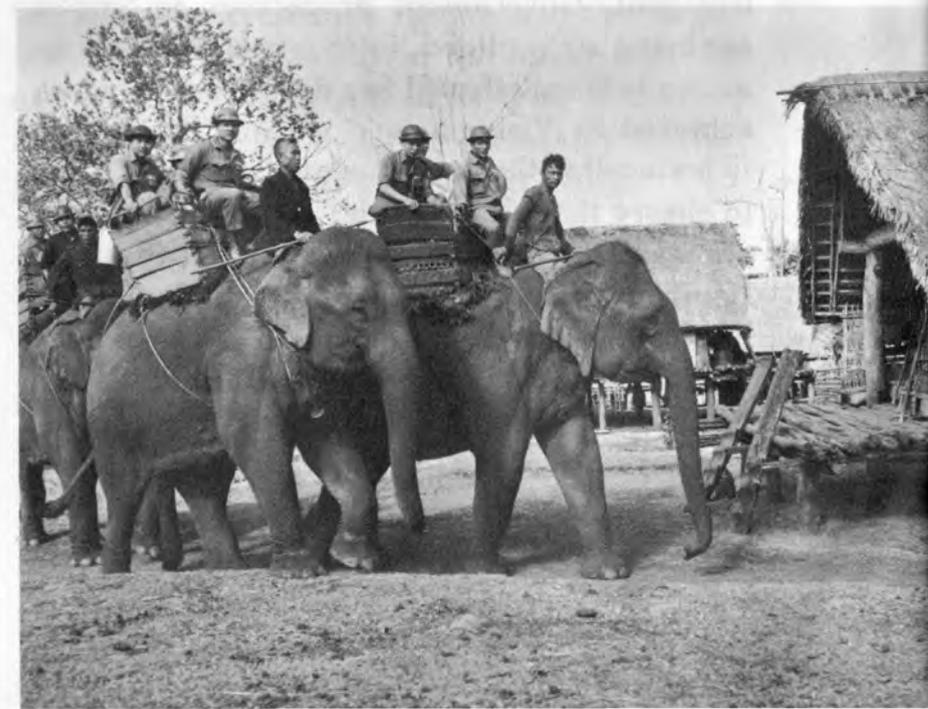
The threat posed by Communist insurgency and subversion has had another important effect: an increased interest and concern on the part of the Government for the welfare of minority ethnic groups — the Montagnards, and a concomitant realization by the Montagnards that physical and economic security lies with the established government and not with the Viet Cong. Government programs for the protection, welfare, and advancement of the Montagnards are developing new relationships of mutual respect and confidence between the Government and these ethnic groups.

Politically it is significant that a government has taken direct action to improve the situation of the individual in the hamlet. The strategic hamlet is now an administrative and political unit which it was not one year ago. Before a Province Chief can designate a strategic hamlet as completed certain criteria must be met within the hamlet. One of these prerequisites is a free



Training facilities and courses produce annually 120 professional nurses with three-year training and 100 assistant nurses with one-year training.

Elephants carry malaria eradication teams into the remote hinterlands of South Vietnam in an intensive malaria-control campaign designed to improve living conditions for Vietnam's villagers.



election in which a Hamlet Chief and Executive Committee are chosen. The rural Vietnamese living in a hamlet is receiving his first taste of democracy. He now has a definite voice in the management of his hometown. He elects the hamlet chief and council, formerly appointed by the village chief. The government has publicly stated its intention to expand this practice to villages, districts and provinces when the security situation permits.

At the same time that the strategic hamlet symbolizes the prospect for a new political life at the basic level of the national edifice, one can note at least the beginning of a limited expansion of political life at the national level. In 1962 it was decided, because of the internal security situation, to amend the Constitution so as to extend the tenure of the Assembly from three years to four years. It is fully expected that national legislative elections will be held in 1963. In the meantime, another constitutional amendment has been adopted providing for government ministers to appear before the Assembly to answer questions on policies and programs. While questions posed to the ministers by Assembly members are submitted in advance, the Assembly's new authority to raise such questions represents a small but definite increase in the Assembly's functions. In this connection, it might be noted that the

ministerial appearances before the Assembly during the 1962 Fall session created considerable public interest, as demonstrated by much fuller public galleries to observe the proceedings than have been customary.

One of the major steps taken by the Vietnamese Government in recent years has been the establishment of a National Economic Council. The Constitution had called for the establishment of such a body; in March 1961 legislation implementing this constitutional provision was passed and the Council was formed in January 1962. The Council consists of representatives of all sectors of the economy, including both employer and employee groups. It provides a forum for public discussion of national economic issues and problems and for influencing government policy in the economic field.

Also in the economic and social field the strategic hamlet has generated an increased emphasis by the government on projects and activities which will benefit the rural Vietnamese directly. The government has clearly recognized that the 85 percent of the population who live in the hamlets, villages and district towns are the key to a successful conclusion of this counterinsurgency war.

To finance these additional projects directed



Over the sharpened stakes surrounding the strategic hamlet of Long Dien in Phuoc Tuy Province stands a watchtower on guard against Viet Cong attack.

Children live with more confidence in the strategic hamlets. Each strategic hamlet is guarded by units of the newly formed Self-Defense Corps against communist terror tactics.



at the hamlet level while still fighting a war and continuing long range economic and social projects is a difficult task. The government has recognized the need for action and as a consequence, essential projects which could not otherwise have been undertaken will be paid for by resorting to deficit financing. In addition the government has adjusted the value of its currency to give a higher level of government income from US aid.

The government, with the advice and assistance of the US, has moved with determination to reorient and redirect the thrust of its effort to support the strategic hamlet operation. In some cases ongoing programs were sharply accelerated, in other instances entirely new projects were initiated. These programs some of which are discussed below, have already dramatically improved the situation of the rural Vietnamese in many areas since the upsurge of Communist subversion and insurgency.

Full implementation of a rat control program in the ten lowland provinces of Central Vietnam where the rat situation was most serious saw 100,000 packages of rat poison distributed free of charge early in 1962. An estimated 15 million rats were killed. Popular reaction to this program was spectacular and recent harvests in some of these areas are almost doubled



The rural Vietnamese living in a hamlet is receiving his first taste of democracy. He now has a definite voice in the management of his hometown.

over last years crop due largely to rat and insect control. Later in the year a second campaign was completed with an estimated additional 8 million rats killed. This program will be implemented countrywide in 1963. No wide-scale rat control program previously existed.

A large scale field control campaign against potato late-blight and vegetable cut worms was initiated in 1962 with insecticides sold at half price. The campaign was effective and additional campaigns are planned in 1963.

Rural credit loans through the National Agricultural Credit Association amounted to over 900 million piasters in 1960. Only 363 million were loaned in 1961 due to the deteriorating rural security situation. However 560 million were loaned in 1962 representing an improvement in security conditions as well as increasing efforts to extend loans. The program will be expanded in 1963 with a particular effort made to reach the poorer families in the hamlets.

The year 1962 saw the continuation of the Malaria Eradication Program. Through this activity continued to be restricted somewhat by the security situation, work was expanded due to sprayings arranged for completed strategic hamlets and for Montagnard resettlement areas where populations were concentra-

ted under secure conditions. Expansion of activities is envisioned in the months ahead.

Extension of education in rural areas continued with several new technical and teacher's training schools opened during the period in the provinces. The following table gives figures on elementary and secondary educational facilities, as well as plans for expanding elementary facilities in strategic hamlets in the months ahead

Elementary Schools (Public and Private)	1961-62	1962-63
Number of Schools	7272	7,326
Number of Pupils	1,428,112	1,512,205
Number of Teachers	28,449	29,710
Number of Classes	30,287	31,077
Secondary Schools (Public)	1961-62	1962-63
Number of Schools	494	514
Number of Pupils	229,360	253,250
Number of Teachers	7,146	8,126
Number of Classes	4,207	4,124

In addition, the proposed construction of about 1,300 classrooms in strategic hamlets for both Montagnards and Vietnamese in 1963 will permit the addition of 144,000 additional pupils (elementary). Additional facilities will also be provided for Montagnard Teacher Training.

The village health program already described has made great progress since 1961 in impro-

ving rural health conditions and contributing thereby to the Strategic Hamlet Program. At the end of 1961 there were approximately 3,500 hamlet health stations. In 1962, almost 1,000 new stations were established each operated by a Hamlet health worker who has received one month's training at the provincial hospital.

At the district level a standard plan for district health centers has been established and 30 more of these centers are now under construction. Also, an additional forty-six sanitary agents and 31 district health workers were trained.

At the province level the program for the improvement of medical and surgical services at provincial hospitals is beginning to bear fruit. Four standard plan surgical suites are in operation, ten have had preliminary acceptance and 15 more will be completed within a month or two. These are equipped with surgical equipment and nursing care equipment. American surgical teams, composed of six people each, are already working in four provinces. Several other friendly countries have expressed a desire to send surgical teams to Vietnam to work in these installations.

One of the most significant and important proofs of the government's ability to change traditional policies and practices where the situation demands such changes is demonstrated

by the government's activities on behalf of the Montagnards which was briefly discussed previously. An estimated 150,000 have already sought asylum from Viet Cong by placing themselves under GVN protection. In the late spring of 1952 VN \$20 million was advanced from the President's own Special Funds to the Commissariat General for Land Development. These funds were used to purchase rice, salt, hand tools, blankets, seeds, and other essential items which are estimated to have benefited 134,555 Montagnards in 18 provinces. Administratively, the Government has moved quickly to establish reception centers and dispensaries for the refugees and to provide the means for training administrators, and public servants such as nurses, midwives, and agricultural agents among the Montagnards to serve in the relocation areas and in existing villages.

In the information field, considerable progress had been made in 1962. As a necessary corollary to improving the broadcast signal, the GVN has turned its attention to the problem of increasing the number of radio receivers, particularly in rural areas. This effort involves increasing the number of personal radios, which currently total an estimated 500,000, two-thirds of which are in the Saigon-Cholon area, as well as increasing the number of communal-type listening sets.



From out of the hills of Central Vietnam come the tribal people, fleeing the brutality and oppression of the communist Viet Cong guerrillas. Approximately 150,000 Montagnards have left their remote and isolated homes to find security and better living in the relocation centers and strategic hamlets, where they are provided with medical care and temporary food, clothing, and shelter by the Vietnamese government.

Radio listening in strategic hamlets, where the main emphasis is now being placed, is for the most part by means of the community listening set and public address system. The current total number of these community listening sets is about 1,700 with an additional 4,500 on order.

As previously noted the circulation of the daily newspapers generally has been confined to the major cities. Circulation in rural areas has been difficult due in part to the economics of publishing in Vietnam and in part to the extensive efforts of the Communists to prevent widespread distribution and reading of newspapers in rural areas. To meet the need for newspapers, particularly those carrying local news of the more remote areas, the GVN has embarked on the ambitious project of establishing a district newsheet in every district where security permits. Approximately 200 are in operation or will be established in the near future. Heart of the district newspaper center is a kit which consists of a radio receiver with which to transcribe dictate speed news broadcast each morning from Saigon, a mimeograph machine with supplies, and a three-wheeled motor scooter. District editors three times a week (or weekly in some cases) copy the dictate speed news onto a stencil, add local news, mimeograph several hundred copies of the newsheet and

then distribute it on the motor scooter.

It is interesting to note that the National Motion Picture Center has turned out 25 films in 1962 dealing directly with the strategic hamlet. To get these movies along with others out to the hamlets mobile units are used which have equipment to show movies, broadcast radio over loudspeakers, make and play tapes, and display printed and photographic materials. Over 200 such units including tri-Lambrettas, jeeps and boats manned by trained operators, will soon be traveling on scheduled itineraries to strategic hamlets.

In support of the efforts of the civilian ministries of the Republic of Vietnam the Armed Forces are also reorienting their attitude toward the civilian population. The Joint General Staff is stressing the partnership of the soldier and the farmer through command channels. The word has gone out to the troops in the field. This represents a radical departure from the role of the soldier in the Orient and while the transformation will not occur overnight, progress is being made.

Three civil affairs companies have been activated. These are the only military civil affairs units ever formed in RVNAF. These companies, consisting of 72 cellular teams composed of technical specialists direct their



The proposed construction of about 1,300 classrooms in strategic hamlets for both Montagnards and Vietnamese in 1963 — as the one already built at Tan Thong Hamlet — will permit the addition of 114,000 additional pupils.



The Army of the Republic of Vietnam is not only fighting against the Communists, but also helping the rural people to build schools, rebuild bridges, and improve their hamlets.



Teams of plant protection are sent in the rural areas to teach the farmers and the montagnards how to kill rats and insects. Photo shows a team at work at Dalat.

efforts towards assisting the civilian populace in conjunction with the national strategic hamlet program. This represents a significant step forward in the efforts of the government to create a favorable image of the Armed Forces in the eyes of the populace. These teams, currently assigned in all four Corps areas, assist in the construction or maintenance of strategic hamlets by providing support and assistance in such areas as communications and security, medicine, information and education. As a part of this program each unit of the Armed Forces of battalion size or larger will sponsor a strategic hamlet. These units will provide funds and whenever possible, soldier skills, labor and other assistance.

In addition to the above achievements during 1962, and perhaps more important, are the programs readied for 1963 which are summarized below. Some of these are already beginning to be implemented.

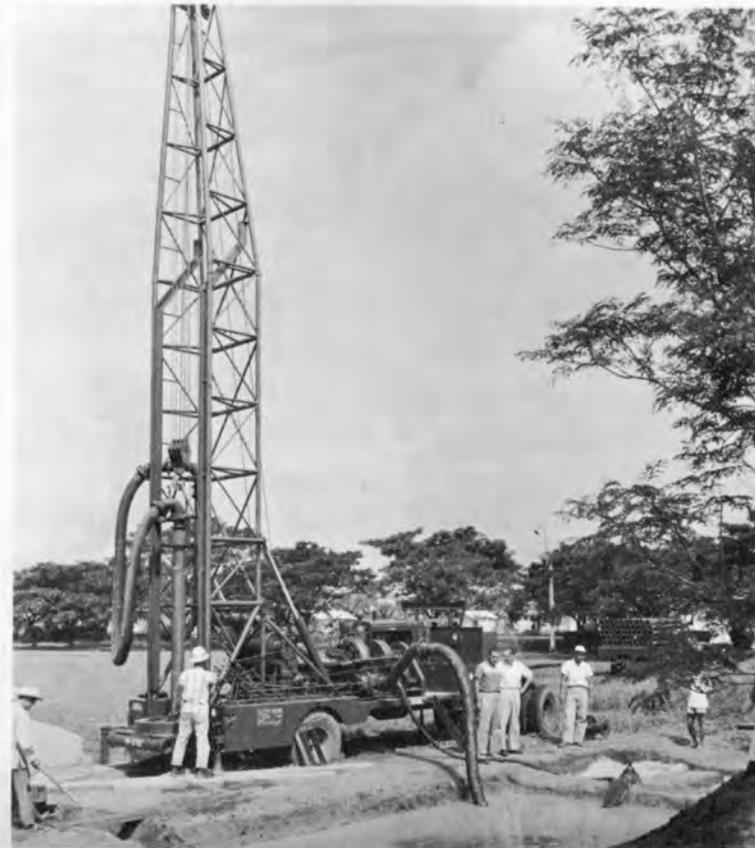
Additional Montagnard relief and rehabilitation for all Montagnards being resettled throughout the country as well as plans for improving educational facilities and agricultural production capabilities for the Montagnards.

The Hamlet Self-Help Program is a key program for fostering democratic processes in



Improved breed piglets are made available on loan and cement is furnished to poor farmers to build pigsties and compost pits.

With this U.S. - donated well-drilling machine, up to 500 strategic hamlet wells will be dug in areas where water is scarce.



the hamlets and harnessing hamlet energies for improving social and economic conditions by helping the people help themselves. The program is based upon hamlet citizens selecting by ballot small social and economic improvement projects they wish to carry out in their hamlets, donating their own labor but securing locally unavailable funds, materials and technical advice from the provincial level. These projects not only provide social and economic benefits but develop a rice roots appreciation for democratic processes. As of this date an estimated 4,777 self-help projects are planned or underway consisting of such items as market places, access roads, fish ponds, wells, fruit trees and small bridges.

Hog and organic fertilizer production programs are being implemented country-wide to include approximately 300,000 farm families. US PL 480 corn is sold as feed at low cost; improved breed piglets are made available on loan and cement is furnished to poor farmers to build pig sties and compost pits. Proceeds from corn sales will cover internal handling costs and be used as capitalization for farmers' cooperatives. This program has already started on a pilot basis in Phu Yen Province and has been warmly received. The Viet Cong have responded by raiding the first hamlet to receive

piglets and corn. This program is based on the premise that the quickest way to increase rural income is through encouraging livestock production and developing an organic fertilizer source from compost.

A fertilizer distribution program began January 1, 1963, which will see chemical fertilizers distributed to 150,000 farm families in the poorest provinces of Central Vietnam. An extension program will augment this effort.

The 1963 insect control program kicked-off countrywide in January with the distribution of 15,000 sprayers and insecticide. Insect control is aimed at controlling plant pests and giving higher crop yields quickly.

Up to 500 strategic hamlet wells will be dug in areas where water is scarce. Assistance is planned for hamlet people in the construction of homemade windmills to pump water for irrigation and drainage. A prototype windmill widely used in Thailand has been obtained which is being copied in Vietnam.

A fishing facilities improvement program for 5,000 families will begin which involves distribution of fish boat motors to fishing village cooperatives and assistance in the construction of additional boats and the acquisition of material for weaving nets.

Conclusion

In summary we can say that in 1954 President Diem inherited a divided and war-torn land, menaced externally and internally by communism. During the period 1955 to 1961 great strides were made. Governmental systems were established, an economic base was formed, agricultural production was increased and long range development projects were beginning to bear fruit. At that moment the Viet Cong struck with guerrilla warfare and the government, recognizing this changed situation, realigned their policies. This realignment resulted in the Strategic Hamlet Program which projects the government and its services directly into the battle line at the hamlet level. Through this program, the rural Vietnamese are being afforded the means to protect themselves from the Viet Cong. By issuing thousands of weapons to individual citizens in the hamlet the government has demonstrated its trust in the people. The people have in turn shown that when given the means they will fight to

protect themselves and their homes. The strategic hamlet barricades, backed up by hamlet militiamen, are a clear sign to the Viet Cong that they are not wanted. Economic and social improvement projects have been developed and implemented as part of this program. These projects reach the hamlet immediately and give tangible proof to the rural Vietnamese citizen that his government has an interest in his welfare and that his home and family can prosper in security when the Viet Cong is eliminated.

All plans and measures undertaken by the GVN depend for their fruition upon the competence, dedication, skill, and touch of the officials at the various levels of implementation. They have not all been well executed, but given the situation of virtually no governmental structure in 1954, it is a remarkable achievement that so much has been accomplished in eight years. The structure and efficiency of the government continues to improve.





United States Information Service