Co-Author
George L. Harris
Robert J. Catto
Frederic H. Chaffee
Frederica Muhlenberg
Frances Chadwick Rintz
Harvey H. Smith

Research and writing were completed on
September 1, 1962

SEPTEMBER 1962

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price $2.00
FOREWORD

This volume is one of a series of handbooks prepared by Foreign Area Studies (FAS) of The American University, designed to be useful to military and other personnel who need a convenient compilation of basic facts about the social, economic, political, and military institutions and practices of various countries. The emphasis is on objective description of the nation's present society and the kinds of possible or probable change that might be expected in the future. The handbook seeks to present as full and as balanced an integrated exposition as limitations on space and research time permit. It was compiled from information available in openly published material. Extensive bibliographies are provided to permit recourse to other published sources for more detailed information. There has been no attempt to express any specific point of view or to make policy recommendations. The contents of the handbook represent the work of the authors and FAS and do not represent the official view of the U.S. Government.

An effort has been made to make the handbook as comprehensive as possible. It can be expected, however, that the material, interpretations, and conclusions are subject to modification in the light of new information and developments. Such corrections, additions, and suggestions for factual, interpretative or other change as readers may have will be welcomed for use in future revisions. Comments may be addressed to—

The Director
Foreign Area Studies
The American University
5010 Wisconsin Avenue NW.
Washington, D.C. 20016
PREFACE

This volume is a major revision of the Area Handbook for Vietnam prepared by the Foreign Areas Studies (then the Washington Area Human Relations Area Files) in 1957. Subsequent political, military, economic and social developments in South and North Vietnam have materially changed the national outlook of the peoples in both sections of the country.

The Geneva Agreement of 1954 partitioned the country at the Demarcation Line near the 17th parallel into two distinct political entities: the Western-oriented South and the Communist-aligned North. Under the terms of the Agreement, national unification was envisaged by popular elections to be held in 1956. The South did not sign the Agreement and flatly rejected the election proposal, contending that the conditions in Communist North Vietnam made free elections impossible. This rejection shattered Communist hopes of gaining control of the entire country through the electoral process.

The Communists, supported and directed by their regime in North Vietnam, then set out to create a military crisis by initiating an intensive campaign of terrorism and subversion against the government of South Vietnam. The political strength of President Ngo, however, is indicated by his having been returned to office in 1961 by a vast majority of the 7 million voters who went to the polls. By 1962 the beleaguered South, with United States aid and advice, was beginning to show definite signs of improvement in the effectiveness of its countermeasures. The defensive effort, however, has hampered the implementation of planned social welfare programs, delayed needed political reforms and retarded many economic rehabilitation measures.

The problems of studying a country while it is undergoing crises of various types presents obvious difficulties. In many areas the information obtainable is fragmentary and often biased or contradictory. The task of studying North Vietnam was particularly complicated by the problem of evaluating data from Communist sources, often the only ones available on certain subjects. Moreover, the pace of events in Vietnam and in the neighboring Southeast Asian countries was rapidly dating the study even as it was being written.

Grateful acknowledgment must be given to various area specialists who helped in the preparation of this survey. Parts of the manuscript were checked by them for factual accuracy, but the character and complexity of the subject matter make it impossible that error could be entirely avoided. Particular credit is given to
Dr. Jason Finkle who served as research consultant and who reviewed or prepared drafts for the political background chapters. Dr. Frank M. LeBar assisted in the revision of the chapter on Artistic and Intellectual Expression. Dr. James B. Hendry contributed valuable criticism and advice on economic matters. Dr. Ralph F. Turner offered suggestions and criticisms for the chapter on Public Order and Safety. Dr. John D. Donoghue revised several sociological chapters, advised in the field of social anthropology and provided a preliminary draft for part of the chapter on Education. Mr. Randolph Carr assisted in the preparation of material for several sociological chapters, as did Miss Arlene Feld on the Foreign Policies chapter.

A glossary is included as an appendix to the survey for the reader's convenience. The terms in the glossary are not in every case defined in the text. An attempt was made to avoid the use of non-Vietnamese foreign terms. In using Vietnamese words or titles, diacritical marks were omitted. The place names used are, wherever possible, those established by the United States Board on Geographic Names for South Vietnam as of 1962 and for North Vietnam as of 1951.
## VIETNAM

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section I. SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. General Character of the Society</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Historical Setting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Geography and Population</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Languages</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Structure</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Family</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Social Values and Patterns of Living</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Artistic and Intellectual Expression</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Education</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Religion</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Public Information and Propaganda</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Labor Force (Exclusive of Forced Labor)</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Forced Labor</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Labor Relations and Organization</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Health and Sanitation</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Public Welfare</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Attitudes and Reactions of the People</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Bibliography</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SECTION II. POLITICAL BACKGROUND | |
| Chapter 19. Constitution and Government | 219 |
| 20. Political Dynamics | 245 |
| 21. Public Order and Safety | 265 |
| 22. Foreign Policies | 291 |
| 23. Subversive Potentialities | 311 |
| Section Bibliography | 333 |

| SECTION III. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND | |
| Chapter 24. Character and Structure of the Economy | 341 |
| 25. Agricultural Potential | 349 |
| 26. Industrial Potential | 379 |
| 27. Public Finance | 401 |
| 28. Banking and Currency System | 415 |
| 29. Domestic Trade | 425 |
| 30. Foreign Economic Relations | 441 |
| Section Bibliography | 461 |

| SECTION IV. MILITARY BACKGROUND | |
| Chapter 31. The Armed Forces | 409 |
| Section Bibliography | 505 |

Glossary | 507 |
Figure 1. Vietnam's Position in Southeast Asia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vietnam's Position in Southeast Asia</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>French Acquisitions in Indochina in the Nineteenth Century</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relief of Vietnam</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Geographic Regions of Vietnam</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Annual Rainfall in North Vietnam</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Annual Rainfall in South Vietnam</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vegetation of Vietnam</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Executive Branch of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, 1962</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Administrative Divisions of South Vietnam</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Administrative Divisions of North Vietnam</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chief Rice-Growing Districts of Vietnam</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Secondary Agricultural Resources of North Vietnam (including fish)</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Secondary Agricultural Resources of South Vietnam (including fish)</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Main Mineral Resources of Vietnam</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ports, Railways, Roads and Airfields of South Vietnam, 1960-61</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ports, Railways, Roads and Airfields of North Vietnam, 1960</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Organization of South Vietnam's Department of National Defense, 1961</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rank Structure and Rank Insignia of South Vietnam's Army, 1961</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rank Structure and Rank Insignia of South Vietnam's Navy, 1961</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>General Organization of the Military High Command of North Vietnam, 1961</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rank Structure and Rank Insignia of North Vietnam's Army, 1961</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION I. SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE SOCIETY

Vietnam, a country with 2,000 years of cultural and political history, forms the eastern flank of the Indochinese Peninsula. It is bordered to the North by China, to the east and south by the China Sea and to the west by Laos and Cambodia. Late in the nineteenth century, Vietnam became a part of the French colonial empire. For nearly 80 years it remained under French domination, and not until 1954, when the Geneva Agreement ended 8 years of warfare against France, did Vietnam gain full independence. As a result of the Agreement the country was partitioned at the Demarcation Line near the 17th parallel, dividing it into two distinct political entities, each claiming to be the legitimate government of the entire country. To the south is the Republic of Vietnam, aligned with the Western powers of the Free World; to the north of the Line the country is governed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, firmly aligned with the Communist countries.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Vietnam was almost a model of what has been termed the "traditionalist society." Economic life was sustained by agriculture, and peasant communities were cohesive social units which prescribed the behavior of their inhabitants. The rice-growing peasant rarely traveled far from his own village, limiting his personal contacts to members of his own family and community. With the exceptions of Saigon, Hanoi and the imperial capital at Hue, few places in Vietnam could be classified as urban.

Through centuries of foreign contact, alien domination and military penetration, the Vietnamese have held tenaciously to their own national identity. The cultural impact of a long succession of Chinese invasions and periods of domination is evident in Vietnam. Chinese Confucianism, however, gave the Vietnamese a moral unity and a clearly defined pattern of authority which, far from assimilating them with the Chinese, enabled them to rearticulate and preserve their identity in relation to their larger and vastly more powerful neighbor. Moreover, the tightly knit clusters of families at the core of the Vietnamese village constituted self-contained units of social conservatism strongly resistant to external influences.

French colonial rule, coming in the late 1800's and lasting for less than a century, obviously could not remake Vietnamese society. Nevertheless, the French impact altered or weakened critical parts
of the system, precipitating the decline of Vietnamese traditionalism and giving rise to new ideas, new attitudes toward authority and new social relationships.

Vietnamese resistance was never completely suppressed, but it could not prevail against French military might. Emperor and mandarins could either oppose the French and face certain defeat or cooperate. For the most part, after the establishment of the protectorate in Annam in 1883, the tenure of Vietnamese emperors depended upon the colonial administration. Similarly, those mandarins who retained their positions, instead of withdrawing or resisting, found that they had become no more than agents of the French. Demoralized, many of them developed a cynical disregard for the responsibilities of their positions and became increasingly self-seeking. Their value to France was that they represented a continuity with traditional patterns of authority, but their subordination to France undermined their attachment and that of the people to the traditional order which France wanted to preserve.

The economic changes wrought by the French had even more far-reaching effects. The colonial program required increased production, more extensive taxation and new forms of economic organization to produce revenue for the government and profits for investors. Higher taxes and the French monopolies on salt, opium and alcohol burdened the village economies. The appearance of large-scale agriculture, rubber plantations and large landholdings by absentee entrepreneurs required the services of landless peasants who were brought great distances to work in these burgeoning enterprises. Prosperous Vietnamese landowners moved to urban areas, leaving their rice fields to be tilled by the growing number of tenant farmers and hired laborers.

Exploitation of the Mekong Delta, the rice bowl of present-day South Vietnam, did not begin until late in the nineteenth century when the French colonial administration opened up large areas by digging complex systems of canals to provide drainage and transportation. Large landholdings and tenancy became characteristic of the area, and after 1900 the Mekong Delta began to produce a substantial surplus of rice for export. A relatively small group of Vietnamese closely associated with the French obtained large holdings in this area and acquired substantial wealth by exploiting the land. The worst abuses of landlordism and tenancy developed here. The Vietnamese beneficiaries emerged as a new group in the society. Most were mandarins or of mandarin families, but although they did not lose their traditional respect for learning, their status was no longer primarily based upon learning but upon wealth. Furthermore, the knowledge they and especially their
children sought came not from the Confucian classics but from the science and literature of Europe. It was from the ranks of this Westernized incipient middle class that many of the leaders of Vietnamese nationalism were to come.

In externals the Vietnamese village changed remarkably little. Moreover, it continued to be a focal point of social, moral and religious life, for it had remained isolated from many of the transformations which were most strongly felt in the cities and towns. The foundations of the traditional village order, however, had been undermined. The villager found himself at the bottom of a pyramid the higher levels of which were crumbling under the weight of an alien authority. As it was impressed upon him that the traditional values and precepts were losing force with his superiors, he himself began to question them. French intervention in local affairs depreciated the authority of the village elders by reducing their powers of independent decision. Colonial economic demands imposed new burdens on the peasant without, however, providing corresponding rewards and incentives. The effect was not merely to rouse the resentments with which the Vietnamese had always reacted to foreign rule, but also to alter the character of the aspiration for independence. The weakening of the institutional bases of Vietnamese traditionalism cleared the way for modern nationalism, which was taking shape in the minds of the educated urban elite.

Unlike historic Vietnamese nationalism, which was aimed only at eliminating foreign rule and restoring the old order, the independence movement of the twentieth century looked not merely to the end of foreign rule but to the creation of a new social and political order. Differences quickly developed among the nationalists about means and ends, and the struggle still goes on in Vietnam in the conflict between the South and the North.

**REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

The Republic of Vietnam, commonly referred to as South Vietnam, is approximately the size of the state of Washington. It has a total population of about 14 million. Most of the people live in the fertile delta of the Mekong River, which forms the southernmost part of the country, or in small deltas along the narrow coastal plain between the Chaîne Annamitique and the South China Sea. About 85 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, rice being the principal crop. Except for some million Chinese and 350,000 Cambodians, most of whom are located in the Mekong Delta, the inhabitants of these lowland areas are nearly all ethnically Vietnamese. The Central Highland area north of Saigon forms a fertile plateau which is sparsely populated by various indigenous tribal groups known collectively as montag-
Montagnards. An estimated 500,000 to 700,000 montagnards are scattered over an area twice the size of the Mekong Delta and Central Lowlands combined. Although the government is attempting to integrate them into the mainstream of national life, these peoples generally live as primitive agriculturists, out of contact with the bulk of the lowland population. The majority of Vietnamese are nominal Buddhists. A sizable number belong to the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao politico-religious sects, and a substantial minority are Roman Catholics as are President Ngo and his family. The montagnards subscribe to various animistic beliefs.

When Ngo Dinh Diem became Premier of the State of Vietnam in 1954, South Vietnam was in a state of near anarchy. Traditional authority had been undermined by French colonial rule and 8 years of bloody strife. Ngo Dinh Diem faced not only the determined opposition of powerful special interests, which had benefited under the colonial administration, but more importantly the opposition of a well-organized Communist network which had gained wide popular support for its aggressive anticolonialism. After the establishment of the Republic in 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem, as President, was able to overcome many of the immediate economic and political problems with substantial support from the United States. Beginning in 1958, however, increasing Communist subversion and terrorist activity curtailed government programs for agricultural development, land reform and social welfare.

In 1962, South Vietnam was a society in transition. The essentially agrarian economy was expanding even though the struggle with the Communists, who were being directed and supported from the North, was still going on. South Vietnamese efforts, bolstered by United States material and technical assistance, were showing some progress in meeting the Communist challenge, but no end of the conflict was in sight. The government was confronted with the dilemma of being forced to spend a major portion of its budget to meet the military and subversive threat at a time when economic and social welfare programs were needed to win the support of the peasantry. It seemed clear that the ultimate resolution of the conflict would depend on the capacity of one side or the other to gain the support of the rural population.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The Communist North—the Democratic Republican of Vietnam—is somewhat smaller than South Vietnam in total land area. It has, however, a larger population by some 2 million than the South and only a little more than half as much arable land. The heaviest concentration of population is in the fertile delta of the Red River, which is the historic center of Vietnamese civilization. The delta is
bounded by high mountains which are inhabited by various *montagnard* groups. As in the South they have traditionally lived apart from the Vietnamese in the lowlands. There may be as many as 2 million *montagnards* in the highlands of North Vietnam, and under the Communist regime they have been given nominal autonomy in special administrative zones under close government supervision. North Vietnam, in contrast to the South, does not have any large area of fertile land for agricultural expansion, and continuous pressure is applied to the rural population to increase the food supply and at the same time produce industrial crops to support the regime's program of industrial development. As in South Vietnam the people are Buddhists, Roman Catholics or animists, all religions which the Communist regime is attempting to undermine.

The Democrat Republic of Vietnam was founded in 1945 immediately after the defeat of Japan in World War II. The Communist aims of its leaders had been kept in the background during the war years, and the popular movement they led included many non-Communist nationalists.

The Communist character of the new regime, however, was more openly revealed as the leaders consolidated their position in the north. The elections which brought into office the first government of North Vietnam were not repeated until 1960, and in their near unanimity for the Communist-approved candidates, they were a tribute to the efficiency of the Communist organization rather than a demonstration of popular choice.

By 1962 the North Vietnamese regime had established a totalitarian society modeled on Communist China. Its major economic aim was the development of heavy industry, and it had expanded the country's industrial base at the cost of heavy pressures on the people. The standard of living remained low, and peasant antagonism had reduced food deliveries to the urban centers. Groups still existed which could be troublesome to the regime, but the tight controls exercised tended to obscure the extent of dissatisfaction. Nonetheless, the regime was able to support and direct an intensified guerrilla war against South Vietnam with the intention of destroying the Republic, a purpose which was openly revealed when it established the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam as the vehicle (see ch. 20, Political Dynamics; ch. 23, Subversive Potentialities).
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL SETTING

Throughout 2,000 years of recorded history—to which legend adds 2,000 more—the Vietnamese have been sustained by a feeling of unity based on common origin, language and cultural heritage. During centuries of Chinese domination this sense of distinctiveness sharpened into a militant nationalism which was to be given new content and greater intensity by the events of the modern period.

Much of Vietnam's history is the story of its relations with China, its vasty larger and more powerful neighbor to the north. The Vietnamese for many centuries have both admired China for its culture and feared it for its power. During the thousand years (second century B.C. to tenth century A.D.) that the Vietnamese were ruled by China, they accepted much of the dominant culture without themselves being absorbed. Winning free of Chinese control in A.D. 1038, they thereafter cherished their independence all the more in the knowledge that it was precariously held more or less at the whim of China.

The Vietnamese on various occasions held off invading Chinese armies, but they were well aware how much their successes owed to the circumstances of periodic Chinese internal division and weakness. Their relative freedom, however, owed most to hard bargaining and the payment of tribute. Negotiating from weakness, the Vietnamese became adroit bargainers, expert in obtaining through compromise and patience the best terms at the lowest price.

In their long resistance to Chinese political domination, they came to regard China as the traditional enemy. This old antagonism profoundly affects their thinking, and many continue to see danger in any relationship with China. The attitude no doubt is an important factor in the strenuous efforts of the Communist regime in North Vietnam to justify to the people the degree to which it depends on Communist China for material aid and political support.

The Vietnamese are proud of their history and of the military accomplishments of the past. To the prowess of their ancestors they attribute not only successful resistance to Chinese encroachment but also the extension of their territory to the present boundaries of North and South Vietnam by victories over neighboring kingdoms to the south and west. Although they regard themselves as a peaceful people, they assign high importance to valor and fighting ability in their survival as a nation.

Government in Vietnam traditionally has been authoritarian
and highly centralized. The long period of Chinese rule was followed by an uneasy independence under a succession of Vietnamese emperors presiding over a powerful bureaucracy of the Chinese type. Revolts were numerous and, with brief periods of reasserted Chinese control, one dynasty fell to be replaced by another but the outcome was always a transfer of authority without basic change in the system. In the nineteenth century, undivided and centrally administered political power was retained by the French colonial administration. Those in power had changed, but the essential character of authority had not.

The French, much more than the Chinese before them, remained alien to their subjects. The Vietnamese, as they always had, reacted to foreign control with reluctant acquiescence and, when they could, with open resistance. French rule, exercised during World War II by the representatives of the Vichy regime, continued at the sufferance of Japan until 1945 when it was ended by Japanese imperial declaration. After Japan's surrender the French returned to a position which the events of the war years had made irretrievable. In the Indochina War, which broke out at the end of 1946 and ended nearly 8 years later in French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the French found themselves confronted by the skillful and determined Communist leadership of the Viet Minh. The Communists found their opportunity in the general opposition to the continuation of any form of foreign control. In the forefront of the increasingly bitter struggle, the Viet Minh attracted the active or passive support of most of the population.

With the achievement of independence and the partitioning of the country in 1954, Vietnam entered a new phase of conflict. The struggle was between the non-Communist government in the South, supported by the United States and its allies, and the Communist regime in the North, backed by the Soviet Union and Communist China. What was ultimately at stake was the political future of the whole Vietnamese people and major strategic advantage in Southeast Asia for one or the other of the larger contenders in the Cold War.

**LEGENDARY AND HISTORIC ORIGINS**

Legend establishes the first Viet kingdom in what is now North Vietnam. According to one story, Lac Long Quan, the first Vietnamese king, was the descendant of a line of Chinese divine rulers. He married Au Co, the daughter of a Chinese emperor whose forces he drove out of Vietnam. This union produced 100 sons. The king and queen then parted, dividing their sons between them. The king went south; the queen, north, into the mountains near Hanoi. The eldest of the boys accompanying Au Co was
chosen king. Taking the name Hung Vuong, he founded the Hong Bang dynasty, the dates of which are given as 2879 to 258 B.C. This legendary account, which probably was not developed in literary form until after A.D. 1200, differs in substance from Chinese mythical history but shares some themes and figures with it. The resemblance suggests not only Chinese influence but an effort by the Vietnamese chroniclers to show that in origin and antiquity Vietnam was in no way inferior to dominant China.

The first historical records concerning the Viets in the Red River Delta were written by the Chinese after they had conquered the area in the second century, B.C. Still earlier Chinese accounts mention a number of Viet states south of the Yangtze River in about 500 B.C. The inhabitants of these states would have been one of the many tribal peoples in south China at that time. Basically Mongoloid, like the Chinese proper, they seem also to have showed, both physically and culturally, the results of mixture with southern peoples of an early Indonesian type. Some of the Viets remained in China and over the centuries were integrated into the developing Chinese civilization, the dynamic center of which was in north China. Others, however, pushed south into the Red River Delta where they encountered a mixed Indonesian population with which they both fought and mingled. In the course of time, there emerged a number of small, competing states which, by about 200 B.C., had been united under a single ruler as the Kingdom of Nam Viet.

The Vietnamese were still too close to their complex origins to be the homogeneous national community they were to become after nearly a thousand years of adaptation to Chinese cultural influence and resistance to Chinese political control. They possessed their own language, however, and a culture which unequally combined elements from the continental north and the oceanic south. Chinese pressure was to shape it further and to instill in the people a sense of common identity in relation to outsiders.

**CHINESE DOMINATION**

The overthrow of the Hong Bang dynasty in 111 B.C. by the armies of the Han dynasty of China marked the end of the legendary period of Vietnamese history. The Red River Valley and a coastal strip to the south became Giao Chi, the southernmost Chinese province, and for the next 900 years the events in the area were part of the history of imperial China. The Chinese found the Viets organized on feudal lines. Villages and groups of villages led by hereditary local chiefs were in vassalage to provincial lords who in turn owed allegiance to the king to whom many of them were related. The primitive agriculture of
the people included some knowledge of irrigation but not the plow and the water-buffalo, which were introduced by the Chinese. Fish and game supplemented the cereals raised in the fire-cleared fields. Bronze had made its appearance in the form of a few ceremonial objects, but the principal agricultural tool was the stone hoe, and the people hunted and fought with spears and bows and arrows.

Chinese rule was not initially oppressive, and the Vietnamese feudal chiefs, although required to recognize the authority of a few Chinese high officials and pay taxes to the Chinese throne, were left largely undisturbed. Chinese agricultural technology and intellectual culture were readily accepted. Life in the delta was enriched but not overwhelmed, and when a growing Chinese officialdom began to expand its direct controls, the local aristocracy rallied against the alien encroachment on their hereditary prerogatives. Armed revolt in A.D. 39 briefly threw off the Chinese yoke. The struggle was led by two sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, who ruled jointly until A.D. 43, when, with the defeat of their forces by the Chinese, they drowned themselves. The memory of the warrior queens has been preserved in Vietnam as a symbol of resistance to foreign oppression.

The revolt was harshly suppressed, and those of its leaders who were not killed were exiled or degraded. With the old feudal order in ruins, direct Chinese rule was imposed and only subordinate places in the bureaucracy were left to the Vietnamese. The process of Sinicization could now begin in earnest. That process remade many aspects of Vietnamese life, but there were also important areas of thought and action over which it simply spread a Chinese gloss without essentially altering the resistant material beneath. This was especially true of the peasantry for whom the Chinese presence meant mainly the payment of taxes and the giving of labor service.

Chinese language and learning were essential, however, to any who aspired to office under the Chinese. Thereafter, educated Vietnamese were largely Chinese in formal culture, but their native roots were also preserved through their continuing contacts with the ordinary people whom they helped the Chinese to govern. In a parallel process, Chinese officials, acquiring land and wealth and marrying Vietnamese, developed local loyalties and personal ambitions which rendered increasingly remote the claims on them of Peking and their Chinese homeland. Out of this mingling of cultures and convergence of interests, there was to emerge a new elite, owing much to China but distinctively Vietnamese and consciously national in character.

Chinese domination survived the collapse of the Han dynasty in
A.D. 220 and the period of confusion which followed. When the Tang dynasty was established in A.D. 618, the province of Giao Chi was made a Protectorate-General and renamed Annam (Pacified South). Under more liberal policies, the country thrived, the population increased, reclamation and resettlement of the Red River Delta proceeded more vigorously and many new villages were established.

Prosperity and the continued penetration of Chinese influence did not, however, check the growth of incipient national feeling. The Vietnamese were frequently in revolt, and although these uprisings were usually short-lived, they produced an array of national heroes and heroines celebrated in Vietnamese history and still venerated at many village and city shrines and in the ceremonies of a number of the religious cults.

INDEPENDENCE

The disorders preceding the fall of the Tang dynasty provided the opportunity the Vietnamese had long sought. In A.D. 938 one of their generals, Ngo Quyen, drove out the occupying Chinese forces in the battle of Bach Dang. Independent, at last, the victors called their new state Dai Co Viet (Great Viet State), although the Chinese continued to refer to it as Annam, a term resented by the Vietnamese. Chinese attempts to retake the Red River Valley were defeated and by the year A.D. 946, though by no means entirely secure and out of danger from the Chinese, independent Vietnam became an historical reality. It succeeded in maintaining itself as an independent nation for more than 900 years with the exception of a 20-year interlude of Chinese reoccupation early in the fifteenth century.

The Dinh Dynasty (968–980)

The formation of stable institutions of government which could function without the sustaining influence of a foreign occupying power proved difficult, and during the latter part of the tenth century there were no less than a dozen autonomous local leaders in the Red River Valley. One of them, Dinh Bo Linh, defeated his rivals in 968 and proclaimed himself king and emperor.

Aware of the superior power the newly established Chinese Sung dynasty could bring against him, Dinh Bo Linh embarked on a course which was to establish the basis for future relations with China for many centuries. He sent an embassy to the Sung Emperor, requesting confirmation of his authority over the outlying province. This embassy agreed to accept, on his behalf, the title of vassal king and to send a triennial tribute to the Chinese.
Court. Acceptance of Chinese suzerainty was softened by the understanding that the Chinese would not attempt to restore their authority over the country. Moreover, Dinh Bo Linh was permitted to call himself emperor at home and in dealing with countries other than China. Peace with China was maintained during most of the reign of the Dinh dynasty. Relations with the Champa to the south, however, were unfriendly, and the two kingdoms were in frequent conflict.

The Ly Dynasty (1009–1225)

The Dinh dynasty did not outlast the first emperor, whose throne was usurped. The Ly dynasty, established in 1009 after an interval of confusion, ushered in a period of population growth, prosperity and stability. A strong, efficient central administration was organized. Public revenues were used to complete the drainage and resettlement of the Red River Delta and to build new dikes, canals and roads. More land was opened up for rice cultivation to feed the expanding population. An army was created which not only repulsed a Chinese invasion in 1076 but also checked aggression from the kingdoms of Champa and Cambodia.

This was a time of great cultural achievement. The first literary examinations were held, and a college for prospective civil servants and an imperial academy were founded. Buddhism flourished and many of the better educated Buddhist priests filled high official posts.

The Tran Dynasty (1225–1400)

In 1225 the throne was seized by the Tran dynasty which held it for 175 years of repeated military crisis, including prolonged conflict with the Chams. Three invasions by the Mongol armies of Kublai Khan—in 1257, 1284 and 1287—were repelled. The Vietnamese victory under General Tran Hung Dao in the last of these encounters is one of the most celebrated in the annals of the country's history. After the Mongol withdrawal, the Tran monarch sent a mission to Kublai Khan and reestablished peace as a tributary of China.

The Chinese Interregnum (1406–28)

Economic crisis following on the devastation of war was intensified by the aggrandizement of big landlords at the expense of the peasantry and by incompetence and corruption in the bureaucracy. An ambitious regent, Ho Qui Ly, took advantage of the situation to usurp the throne, thereby giving the energetic emperor of the newly installed Ming dynasty in China the occasion to intervene on
the pretext of restoring the Tran dynasty. Within a year of the Chinese invasion in 1406, Dai Co Viet was again a province of China.

Under the Ming the country was heavily exploited, and radical measures were instituted to Sinicize the Vietnamese. Within little more than a decade oppression had brought into being a powerful movement of national resistance.

The Le Dynasty (1428–1788)

The leader of the movement to restore independence was Le Loi, an aristocratic landowner in the province of Thanh Hoa. Employing guerrilla tactics, he waged a 10-year fight against the Chinese, defeating them in 1427. Shortly after the Chinese left the country he ascended the throne under the name Le Thai To. His dynasty lasted for 360 years.

The Le rulers, adapting the Confucian Chinese model, gave the government the form it retained until the French conquest. The emperor was at once the father of the nation-family, the absolute temporal monarch in whom all powers of the state resided, the religious head of the realm and intermediary between it and heaven, the highest realm of the supernatural. The work of administering the country was carried on by a civil bureaucracy—the so-called mandarinate. Ranked in nine grades, the mandarins were recruited in public examinations in which knowledge of the Chinese classics and skill in literary composition were the central requirements. Six administrative departments were created: personnel, finance, rites, justice, armed forces and public works. A board of censors kept watch over the administrative officials and advised the emperor of any infractions. Beneath the official bureaucracy the villages had considerable freedom to manage their local affairs through councils of elders who were responsible for public order, implementation of official decrees, the collection of taxes and the recruitment of conscripts for the army.

During the early years of the Le dynasty, the kingdom grew more powerful than it had ever been. The triennial tribute to China was paid regularly, and relations with the Chinese were peaceful. At the same time war was vigorously pushed against the kingdom of Champa; when it was finally conquered in 1470, all Cham territory north of Mui Địn (formerly Cap Varella or Varella Cape) was annexed. The Vietnamese gradually absorbed the remainder. Champa disappeared as a political entity, and all that remains of this once advanced culture in present-day Vietnam is a small rural ethnic minority and impressive ruins in the Central Lowlands.
The power and prestige of the Le dynasty declined after the death of Le Thanh Tong in 1487. In 1527 General Mac Dang Dung usurped the throne and established a new dynasty for which he was able to purchase the unenthusiastic approval of the Chinese. Shortly thereafter another powerful family, the Nguyen, set up a descendant of the deposed Le dynasty as head of government in exile south of Hanoi—an event which marked the beginning of a century and a half of regional strife and of division between the North and the South which lasted until the latter part of the eighteenth century. In this struggle, the place of Nguyen was taken by another family, the Trinh, which in 1592 defeated the Mac ruler and reinstalled a puppet Le emperor on the throne in the North. Meanwhile, the Nguyen were able to reassert their authority in the region south of the 17th parallel.

Both the Trinh, who controlled the Le emperors at this time, and the Nguyen, who ruled as independent autocrats, continued to give nominal recognition to the legitimacy of the Le dynasty and, through it, to the ideal of the unity of the nation. In 1673, after half a century of bloody and inconclusive fighting, a truce was concluded which lasted for 100 years.

The South under the Nguyen became a center of Vietnamese expansion. The remaining coastal territories of the Chams were gradually absorbed and, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a series of short but decisive wars were waged with the Cambodians who then occupied the Mekong Delta and most of the south-central portion of the Indochinese Peninsula. The acquisition of the vastly fertile Mekong Delta represented a gain of major proportions for the land-hungry Vietnamese. By the end of the eighteenth century Vietnamese control extended to the limits of contemporary South Vietnam.

The Tay Son Uprising (1776-1802)

Late in the eighteenth century three brothers of a Nguyen family in the village of Tay Son in central Vietnam led an uprising against the ruling Nguyen (to whom they were not related). The youngest of the brothers, Nguyen Hue, who is recognized by Vietnamese historians as a military genius, drove the Nguyen lords out of the South in 1774. When he had consolidated his position, he attacked the Trinh in the North, defeating them in 1786. A year later he abolished the decrepit Le dynasty and proclaimed himself emperor of a reunited Vietnam. A new Chinese invasion attempt was repelled by him in 1788.

The Arrival of the West

The pioneering voyage of Vasco da Gama to India in 1498 showed the way from Europe to Asia by sea. The Portuguese
ships which followed drove rapidly eastward, establishing, sometimes by peaceful means but often by force or the threat of force, a line of trading and missionary outposts which in two generations extended from Goa, through Malacca, the Indies and Macao, to Nagasaki. The Spanish, meanwhile, coming across the Pacific from their holdings in the New World, were installing themselves in the Philippines and seeking to challenge the Portuguese monopoly of the coveted spice trade. Other European powers—Holland, England and France—were to join the maritime procession eastward, overshadowing the Portuguese in a sanguinary competition at first for trade and later for colonial possessions.

The European wave reached Vietnam in 1535 with the arrival in Vung Da Nang (which Europeans also called Baie de Tourane or Da Nang Bay) of the Portuguese captain Antonio da Faria. For a century the Portuguese, trading through the port of Faifo (later named Hoi An), a few miles to the south, dominated European commerce with Cochin China, as they called Vietnam. Confronting a strongly organized state power and a sophisticated, resourceful officialdom, they could not, as in the Indies, impose their will or deal purely on their own terms. In the Nguyen, locked in conflict with the Trinh, they found a market for Western weapons and advice. The Dutch, coming in 1636, similarly purveyed to the Trinh. The English and French finally got a commercial foothold in the latter part of the century, but after the truce between the North and the South, Vietnamese interest in armaments, which had made up the bulk of the trade, subsided. The European merchants had been badly hurt by the ferocity of the Western political and economic rivalry of which they were the agents in Asia. Trade declined and after 1700 almost ceased.

The first Catholic missionaries entered Vietnam in the sixteenth century, and with the near halt in trade in the eighteenth century, they remained almost the only Europeans in the country. Prominent among them were the French, who had been left a relatively clear field by the decline of Portuguese power and the preoccupation of the British and the Dutch with India and the Indies. In both North and South Vietnam the Confucian officials had their misgivings about the new religion. They suspected it as the possible forerunner of conquest, and they feared the effect upon the traditional order of a doctrine which founded its morality in the will of God rather than on a concept of duty to family and state and which put the dictates of private conscience above the commands of secular authority. Missionary activity was forbidden, but only at intervals was the ban enforced. Christianity spread among the poor, and Jesuit scholars trained in the sciences were welcomed at the northern and southern courts where they were
able to make their influence felt among the privileged and educated.

France and the Early Nguyen Dynasty (1302–58)

The rule of the Tay Son was brief, and with its fall the West, through the agency of the French, assumed a new and larger role in the affairs of the country. Early in the rebellion Nguyen Anh, the last descendant of the southern Nguyen lords, escaped annihilation by the Tay Son with the aid of a French missionary, Pigneau de Behaine, Bishop of Adran. In 1787 the Bishop, who had hopes of placing a Christian prince on the throne of Annam, arranged an alliance in which France promised military aid in return for extensive commercial concessions and the grant of the port of Tourane (now Da Nang) and the island of Poulo Condore (now Con Son). When disagreement in France blocked the promised assistance, Pigneau privately organized a small force of Frenchmen to help Nguyen Anh. The bloody struggle which followed ended with the defeat of the Tay Son in 1802 and the installation of Nguyen Anh as the Emperor Gai Long. With the founding of the Nguyen dynasty, the country was especially named Vietnam; the new dynasty lasted until the abdication, at the end of World War II, of Bao Dai.

Gia Long, who disliked Christianity as a revolutionary doctrine, never accepted the faith as Bishop Pegneau had hoped, but, out of gratitude to him, he did not persecute Christians as his successors did. In general, he followed a policy of aloofness from the West which succeeded primarily because, at the time, the Napoleonic wars were occupying all France's attention.

Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc, Gia Long's immediate successors, were unfriendly to Europeans and suspicious of the motives of both the traders and the missionaries. Cruel and indiscriminate repressions and persecutions were launched against both the missionaries and the sizable convert communities.

THE FRENCH CONQUEST (1858–83)

The Conquest of the South (1858–67)

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century pressure was mounting in influential French quarters for positive action to establish a position for France in Vietnam of the kind other European powers enjoyed, or were acquiring, elsewhere in Asia. The missionaries had been roused to an angry militance by the imprisonment or execution of some of their number and by the periodic persecution of Vietnamese Christians. The imperial ban had not halted missionary activity in the country; but it was clear that the authorities would never cease to obstruct Christianity
unless forced to do so. Considerations of French national prestige and military advantage were also present, as was the desire for a share of the economic benefits to be had from an aggressive policy in Asia. In November 1857 all these factors coincided in the minds of the leaders of the Second Empire to bring an order to a French naval squadron to take Tourane. The city was captured in 1858, and the French thereafter turned their attention to the South. Inflicting heavy losses on the Vietnamese, they took Saigon at the beginning of July 1861. In June of the following year the Vietnamese ceded Saigon and the adjacent area to France and agreed to pay a war indemnity. They also promised not to cede territory to any other power without French permission. The western part of the southern delta, which was virtually cut off from the rest of Vietnam, was annexed by France in 1867, thus completing the territorial formation of what later became the French colony of Cochinchina.

The Conquest of the North (1867–83)

The French next turned their attention to the Red River, having found the Mekong unsuitable as a trade route to China because of its rapids. A treaty was signed in 1874 which opened the Red River to French traders, but Chinese pirates largely nullified the value of the concession. In 1883 an expeditionary force brought northern Vietnam under French control, and the signing of a Treaty of Protectorate on August 25 formally ended Vietnam’s independence.

CONSOLIDATION OF COLONIAL RULE (1883–1900)

The treaty of 1883 and one of June of the following year established French protectorates over northern Vietnam (Tonkin) and central Vietnam (Annam). Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) had been in French hands since the conquest in 1858 and now, with the abrogation of what was left of the country’s independence, the name “Vietnam” itself was officially eliminated. In Annam, the emperor and his officials were left in charge of internal affairs, except for customs and public works, but they functioned under the eye of the French, who had the right to station troops in the area. The protectorate over Tonkin made few concessions to the appearance of autonomy, and French resident officers in the larger towns directly controlled the administration.

These developments did not go unchallenged. The Chinese denied the validity of treaties made with the Vietnamese without their approval. The French defeated a Chinese force sent in to win control of a part of Tonkin. China in 1885 formally recognized the French position and agreed to open its southern boundary to
French trade. The Vietnamese were more difficult to cope with. Under the 12-year-old Emperor Ham Nghi, a general uprising flared against the French. It failed and Ham Nghi was exiled in 1888, but active resistance continued in northern Vietnam until the end of the century.

The basic governmental structure of French Indochina was completed around 1900. Each of Vietnam's three regions was treated differently. Cochinchina became a French colony, first under military rule and then, after 1879-80, under a civil governor and a colonial council. It also sent a representative to the French Chamber of Deputies. The colonial council, which deliberated on the budget, was elected chiefly by French functionaries and residents. In the administrative apparatus, only subordinate positions were open to Vietnamese. A similar pattern obtained in the protectorate of Tonkin, which had likewise been separated from the imperial authority. In the protectorate of Annam, where the emperor was still nominally in power, French rule was only a little less direct.

In 1867 Siam, which in successful competition with Annam had long dominated Cambodia, recognized a French protectorate over the Cambodian kingdom in return for two of its provinces. In 1893 another Siamese subordinate, Laos, was annexed by France in an action which included a naval demonstration off Bangkok. These regions, together with Tonkin, Cochinchina and Annam, were organized as the Indochinese Federation under a French Governor-General (see fig. 2).

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

Early in the twentieth century nationalist movements began to develop. Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 gave impetus to nationalist sentiment among educated Vietnamese by demonstrating that an Asian nation with sufficient technical knowledge and equipment could prevail over a Western power. Despite the watchfulness of the French authorities, numerous anti-French secret societies sprang up, but most of them had no well-defined objectives and tended toward terrorist activities.

A distinguished member of the scholar class, Phan Boi Chau, is popularly regarded as the founder of nationalist movements. Vietnamese independence, he thought, could best be achieved by enlisting the support of the Japanese, and in 1902 he went to Japan seeking such assistance. Through his writings and leadership of a group of Vietnamese intellectuals who shared his exile, he gained a wide following. His activities were a source of embarrassment to the Japanese Government and he was expelled in 1910, but he continued his work from exile in China, where he succeeded in...
Figure 2. French Acquisitions in Indochina in the Nineteenth Century.
uniting most of the nationalist groups outside of Vietnam in the Association for the Restoration of Vietnam (Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi). He organized a government-in-exile under Prince Cuong De, a direct descendant of Gia Long and claimant to the throne of Annam. Despite intensive propaganda efforts, the movement was generally ineffective.

Another scholar, Phan Chau Trinh, also went to Japan but became convinced that assistance was unlikely to come from that quarter. Believing that the French could be brought to realize the necessity for reforms that would prepare the Vietnamese for eventual independence through technical education and industrial development, he presented a strong memorandum along these lines to the French Governor-General in 1906. His proposals were ignored, however, and when he continued to agitate for reforms and formed various study groups, he was imprisoned by the French authorities.

From the group of scholar-officials also came the leaders of an uprising in 1916 to which the young Emperor Duy Tan lent his support. The participants were executed or deported, and Duy Tan himself was sent into exile. After this disaster, scholar resistance subsided but did not disappear.

By the early 1920's a new socioeconomic group had emerged which had been made wealthy by the acquisition of newly developed lands acquired through cooperation with the French. Many of these persons sought the privileges of French citizenship for themselves and frequently sent their children to Europe to be educated. Some of them, however, still cherished nationalist sentiments, and a new type of nationalist leadership began to appear which advocated Franco-Vietnamese collaboration and gradual reform. Two such leaders, Bui Quang Chieu and Nguyen Phan Long, founded the Constitutional Party to press for constitutional government.

A number of nationalist groups found inspiration in the Chinese nationalist movement. Of these, the best known and most important was the Vietnam Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang—VNQDD) which adopted the methods and political program of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), but failed to create an effective organization within the country. An uprising staged at Yen Bay, northwest of Hanoi, in 1930 was severely repressed by the French. The VNQDD was nearly destroyed, and many of its members fled to Yunnan in southwest China.

After the Yen Bay insurrection, the leadership of the clandestine nationalist movement in Vietnam was taken over by the Indochina Communist Party. Formed in Hong Kong in 1930, it united several existing independent Communist groups under the
leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc, later known as Ho Chi Minh (see ch. 20, Political Dynamics).

REFORM AND FRUSTRATION

The thoroughness with which the Yen Bay uprising was repressed for a time inactivated the more militant nationalists. Some Vietnamese did, however, attempt to advance the cause of national liberation through reforms from above. They looked to the young Emperor Bao Dai as their best hope. Bao Dai had ascended the throne in 1925 at the age of 12 on the death of his father, Emperor Khai Dinh, but had not returned to Vietnam until 1932 after had completed his education in France.

Bao Dai was greeted with enthusiasm by the Vietnamese who expected that he would be able to persuade the French to install a more liberal regime. He attempted to reign as a constitutional monarch according to the terms of the treaty of 1884 establishing the protectorate, and he strove to modernize the ancient imperial administration at Hue.

Among his young collaborators was Ngo Dinh Diem, governor of Phan Thiet area in Binh Thuan Province, who was given the portfolio of Minister of the Interior and appointed head of the Secretariat of a Vietnamese-French Commission which was charged with the responsibility of implementing the proposed reforms. When it became obvious that the French had no intention of granting the Vietnamese administration real power and would make no concessions toward unification of the country, the youthful Emperor appeared to lose interest and Ngo Dinh Diem resigned his official position.

For a brief time in 1936, during the period of the Popular Front government in France, the Vietnamese had hopes that autonomy might be granted. The French Socialists, however, made no important concessions, and the colonial administration continued as before.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION (1940–45)

After the fall of France in June 1940, the Vichy government was forced to accede to Japanese demands which ultimately led to the establishment of Japanese control over all of the Indochinese Peninsula. While the negotiations were in progress there were clashes between French and Japanese forces along the northern border of Vietnam, and Japanese aircraft bombed the port of Haiphong. But after the Vichy government had signed an agreement with Japan permitting Japan to station troops in the area, the French colonial administration, which had remained loyal to Vichy, did not offer further military opposition.
The understandings between Japan and France kept the French colonial governmental structure intact. French troops continued their traditional garrison duties, and the French community maintained its privileged position with little change to indicate to the population the eclipse of French power in Indochina. This arrangement gave the Japanese the benefit of the services of the French officialdom and freed Japanese personnel for duties elsewhere.

An economic agreement was signed in 1941 which reserved all of the important exports of Indochina for Japan; these included rice, manganese, tungsten, antimony, tin and chrome. However, a shortage of shipping hampered the carrying out of this agreement, and the Japanese were unable to transport much of what they had acquired. Imports were even more drastically curtailed, and shortages developed in many items which the Vietnamese had been accustomed to import from Europe.

As a result of earlier repressive measures by the French, large numbers of Vietnamese were in political exile. Many of these—both Communist and anti-Communist nationalists—had been living in South China, in some cases for many years.

Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), a Communist since 1920 and founder of the unified Indochina Communist Party in 1930, was still in the forefront of the Vietnamese Communist organization in South China 10 years later. He had also persuaded some of the nationalist exile groups to join with the Communists in a united front organization, the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi), later called the Viet Minh. One of the first actions of the Viet Minh was to begin the formation of guerrilla bands, under the leadership of the Communist, Vo Nguyen Giap, to operate in Vietnamese territory against the French and the Japanese (see ch. 23, Subversive Potentialities).

During the same period the Chinese, who urgently needed intelligence on Japanese activities in Vietnam, attempted to make use of the anti-Communist Vietnamese exiles for this purpose. A new organization called the League of Vietnamese Revolutionary Parties (Vietnam Ca Doc Minh Dong Minh Hoi), usually abbreviated to Dong Minh Hoi, was organized and given some financial support by the Kuomintang. Although all the major Vietnamese nationalist groups—including the VNQDD and the Viet Minh—were represented in it, the new organization remained ineffective.

In 1942 Nguyen Ai Quoc was jailed by order of Chiang Kai-shek for Communist activity, but Vo Nguyen Giap continued his work of forming guerrilla groups, implanting agents and setting up intelligence networks throughout the country. From jail, Nguyen Ai Quoc offered to put this organization at the disposal of the Chinese whose need for intelligence was still not being met. When
they accepted, he was released, taking the name of Ho Chi Minh to conceal his Communist identity.

Ho Chi Minh was expected to work through the Dong Minh Hoi, but in fact, he worked only through the Viet Minh and used the funds which the Dong Minh Hoi received from the Chinese Nationalist Government to strengthen his Communist organization. His organization produced some intelligence of use to the Chinese, and Vo Nguyen Giap's guerrilla bands engaged in minor forays against the Japanese. In return, Ho Chi Minh received a small amount of aid from the United States for counteraction against the Japanese. This later formed the basis for his claim that the Viet Minh organization enjoyed Allied support.

Working in this way, Ho Chi Minh effectively strengthened the organization of Communist cells throughout Vietnam and, in the subsequent struggle for leadership as the war came to an end, the superior organization of the Communists gave Ho Chi Minh complete control of the Viet Minh. Capitalizing on the anticolonialist propaganda organized by Moscow, Vietnamese Communists claimed to be fighting only against economic misery and for national liberation. They were not recognized by Vietnamese as representing an alien force except by those with superior education and keen political insight (see ch. 20, Political Dynamics).

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE REGAINED

When it became obvious in March of 1945 that they were losing the war, the Japanese suddenly interned all French officials and soldiers bringing an abrupt end to French rule in Indochina. At the instigation of the Japanese, the Emperor Bao Dai (then in France) proclaimed the independence of Vietnam under Japanese “protection.” He formed a new government at Hue in the central part of the country with Tran Trong Kim, a French-educated Vietnamese patriot, as Premier. The new government proclaimed a political amnesty and attempted to create a Vietnamese administration to replace the French administration which had been suddenly withdrawn. However, difficulties of communication due to Allied bombings, famine throughout the North as a result of failure of the rice crop, lack of financial resources and the continued presence of the Japanese made it impossible to establish an effective government.

Meanwhile at Hanoi in the former protectorate of Tonkin, the Viet Minh went into action. Ho Chi Minh began to refer to the Viet Minh guerrilla units as the “National Liberation Army” and announced the formation of a “Committee for the Liberation of the Vietnamese People” with himself as President. Although the Japanese had handed over administrative authority in the area
to Bao Dai's viceroy, Phan Ke Toai, Viet Minh partisans and agents took over control by a show of force.

At Saigon in the South, where Communist organization had been disrupted by French strict control measures and where various small nationalist groups had received Japanese encouragement, the United National Front was formed and took over administrative functions from the Japanese. It was, however, not able to assume effective control because of a division of opinion among its members on a course of action. The Viet Minh exploited this situation by launching a powerful propaganda campaign which portrayed the Viet Minh as a strong resistance movement which had won the support of the Allies. In ignorance of the organization's actual composition, the United National Front agreed to accept Viet Minh leadership.

While these events were taking place, Tran Trong Kim resigned as head of Bao Dai's government at Hue. Bao Dai, unable to form a new government, decided to abdicate in the belief that a united and independent nation offered the only possibility of preventing the return of French control. Recognizing only the nationalist character of the Viet Minh and assuming that it had Allied support, he abdicated in its favor on August 23, 1945, and handed over his imperial seal and other symbols of office to Ho Chi Minh. To the tradition-minded Vietnamese this clearly indicated that a great and historical shift of power had taken place.

On September 2, Ho Chi Minh formally announced the formation of his provisional government and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To facilitate negotiations directed toward gaining international recognition of its legitimacy in Vietnam, Communist domination of the provisional government was carefully concealed and emphasis placed on the "democratic" character of its nationalist aspirations.

THE RETURN OF FRANCE

The Vietnamese, in general, were strongly opposed to a continuation of French rule after World War II and expected the Allies to support their independence. Nationalist China opposed the return of France to Indochina, and the United States favored the formation of an international trusteeship; France, however, supported by Britain, eventually prevailed in Allied councils, and it was agreed that France would reoccupy the area. As a preliminary step, the British were to accept the surrender of the Japanese south of the 16th parallel while the Chinese performed a similar duty north of it.

The first British troops arrived in Saigon on September 12, 1945, and the first French troops landed about 10 days later. Almost
immediately Vietnamese of almost every political persuasion rose up in defense of their newly won independence. The British assisted the French and also ordered Japanese troops to help put down the resistance. By the end of November all strategic points within Cochinchina had been taken. Even then Vietnamese resistance in the South did not stop; guerrilla forces were organized and continued to clash with French units.

In the meantime, the Chinese forces occupying the North during the fall of 1945 found that the Viet Minh government was willing to cooperate with them in the expectation of support for its nationalist aspirations. The Viet Minh ostensibly dissolved the Indochina Communist Party, reorganized their provisional government, held elections for a National Assembly (in which a number of seats were reserved for the Chinese-sponsored VNFQDD and Dong Minh Hoi leaders) and formed a nationalist coalition government headed by Ho Chi Minh. But in February 1946 a Franco-Chinese agreement was concluded whereby China agreed to the return of the French to Indochina in exchange for the surrender of all of France’s extraterritorial rights in China.

Faced with the loss of Chinese support, the Viet Minh were forced to consider negotiation. In March 1946 France concluded an agreement with Ho Chi Minh, recognizing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a “Free State” within the Indochinese Federation and the French Union. The new state was to have its own national assembly, manage its own finances, and maintain its own army. The agreement called for a plebiscite to be held in Cochinchina that would permit the people of that region to decide whether or not to join the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Details of the new state’s relationship to France were to be decided by a future agreement.

As a result of this agreement French forces were permitted to land in the North. Bao Dai, who had been acting as Supreme Councillor to Ho Chi Minh, was sent on a “goodwill” mission to China where he remained in exile, thus eliminating the possibility that he might provide a rallying point for groups not thoroughly aligned with the Viet Minh.

Differences between the French and Viet Minh forces immediately developed, which were to make settlement impossible. Despite their commitment to a plebiscite, the French established an “Autonomous Republic” of Cochinchina. They also set up a separate administration for central Vietnam. A delegation of Viet Minh representatives headed by Ho Chi Minh traveled to France to attend a conference at Fontainebleau which only served to demonstrate that no basis for negotiation existed. In September 1946, however, Ho Chi Minh personally signed a modus vivendi

AGO 10041B
on behalf of his government which was designed to facilitate the resumption of French economic and cultural activities in return for French agreement to introduce a more liberal regime.

The *modus vivendi* did not include recognition of Vietnamese unity or independence and was opposed by many within Ho Chi Minh’s regime. French actions to enforce customs controls in October aroused further hostility. In November shooting broke out in Haiphong, and the subsequent French bombardment of the city reportedly killed more than 6,000 Vietnamese. The French demands which followed were so completely unacceptable to the Viet Minh government that it decided to risk a long war of liberation rather than to accept. On December 19, 1946, it launched the first attack in a new war to expel the French. In this act of resistance against foreign troops, the Viet Minh had the active or passive support of a majority of Vietnamese.

**THE INDOCHINA WAR (1946-54)**

The war touched off by the Viet Minh attack lasted for 8 years and caused the Vietnamese unending misery. It was financially disastrous to the French and lost them more than 35,000 killed and 48,000 wounded. The United States is estimated to have given aid through France and directly to the State of Vietnam totaling over $4 billion. Large sums were also spent by Communist China and the Soviet-bloc countries on assistance to Ho Chi Minh’s regime. The war which started out as a colonial reoccupation became, after the Communist victory on the Chinese mainland in 1949, a part of the worldwide struggle between communism and democracy.

In the early months of 1947 the French military forces reestablished their control over the principal towns in Tonkin and Annam and cleared the road between Haiphong and Hanoi. This forced the Viet Minh to resort to the guerrilla tactics which became the chief characteristic of the war. Ho Chi Minh’s armed forces made use of the jungle to neutralize French mechanized mobility and power. By selecting their objectives and retiring when they met superior strength, they presented a problem with which the French could not cope. After 3 years of fighting, the Viet Minh controlled large areas in the North, the Central Lowlands and the South; the French had firm control only in the large cities.

Early in the struggle the French sought to encourage the Vietnamese anti-Communist nationalists to take a stand against the Viet Minh and to cooperate with France, but the effort failed as the nationalists claimed the French would not clarify their policy with respect to future Vietnamese unity and independence. In 1947 some of the anti-Communist nationalists in Saigon formed
a Front of National Union and appealed to Bao Dai to return from exile in Hong Kong and head a national government. The French, seeing another opportunity to make the nationalists an effective counterforce against Ho Chi Minh, offered Vietnam "liberty within the French Union." Bao Dai, fearful of becoming a pawn of the French, cautiously agreed only to represent Vietnam in negotiations. Violent Viet Minh reaction to these maneuvers included the assassination of prominent nationalist leaders.

Negotiations with France dragged on for 2 years, but in March 1949 France finally approved of self-government for Vietnam within the French Union. Bao Dai assumed the role of Chief of State, but the principal nationalists (including Ngo Dinh Diem) failed to unite behind him since they claimed that the French did not offer real independence. Although the new government was permitted administrative autonomy and an army of its own, strong safeguards to protect French economic interests were maintained, and the foreign policy of the new state was coordinated with that of France.

There were now two governments in Vietnam, both claiming to be the government of the entire country. During this period Ho Chi Minh rid his government of the moderates whom he had accepted earlier and showed himself to be completely Communist. Propaganda emanating from the government, however, continued to be solely nationalistic in tone.

After the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists by the Communists in China at the end of 1949, Communist China became the first state to recognize the North Vietnamese regime as the government of all Vietnam. Other Soviet-block countries quickly followed suit. In February 1950 Great Britain and the United States recognized the State of Vietnam headed by Bao Dai as the government of Vietnam. When France concluded agreements with Laos and Cambodia similar to that with Vietnam, the three countries became the Associated States of Indochina and were accorded diplomatic recognition by more than 80 other foreign nations. In May 1950 the United States announced a decision to give aid to Vietnam through France, and a United States Economic Mission arrived in Saigon.

In early 1950, after North Vietnam began to receive assistance from Communist China, offensive action was initiated against the French Union Forces which were defeated in a number of strategic locations. In 1951 the advances of the Communist forces in Vietnam were temporarily halted with the aid of American equipment, but in 1952 the Communists started a new offensive in several areas. Vigorous counterattacks brought no decisive results and a military stalemate followed; where tanks could go, the...
French Union Forces held, but in the mountains and in the mud of the rice paddies North Vietnam consolidated its control.

**THE GENEVA AGREEMENT**

While the military battle was raging, steps were being taken to bring a negotiated end to the Indochina War. Ho Chi Minh had let it be known that he was ready to discuss peace, and France was admittedly unable to continue the war. In February 1954 the Big Four meeting at Berlin agreed that a conference should be held to seek a solution for Korea and the Indochina War. Representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Communist China, Laos, Cambodia, the State of Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam met at Geneva in April. Two days after the opening of the conference a Franco-Vietnamese statement declaring Vietnam to be fully independent was made public.

At the end of May the supposedly strongly fortified position that the French had established near the small mountain village of Dien Bien Phu fell after an unexpectedly heavy attack from Viet Minh forces. This decisive defeat and popular pressure in France for a rapid conclusion of the Indochina War hastened negotiations. A military truce, agreed to on July 21, partitioned the country at the 17th parallel. It also provided for the total evacuation of Vietnam north of the 17th parallel by the military forces of the French and the State of Vietnam as well as for the evacuation of the South by the Viet Minh forces. Imports of new weapons were limited to replacement levels. The agreement stipulated a period of 300 days during which freedom of movement was to be allowed for all persons wishing to move from one sector to the other. An International Control Commission, with representatives from India, Canada and Poland, was formed to supervise the truce arrangements. In addition, a protocol supplementing the Conference agreements scheduled free elections for 1956 to reestablish the unity of the country with preliminary discussions to begin in 1955.

Final negotiations for the armistice were made directly between the French High Command and the Viet Minh. The truce agreement was reached over the objections and without the concurrence of the State of Vietnam which advocated United Nations control until such time as free elections could be held. The United States did not concur, but agreed to observe the substance of the agreement and stated that a grave view would be taken to any attempt to use force to upset it. France then proceeded to complete the transfer of the remnants of its administrative and military control to the State of Vietnam with its capital at Saigon.
government of Ho Chi Minh transferred its capital to Hanoi and moved steadily to achieve its program of communization north of the 17th parallel. Despite the Geneva Agreement, a well-organized Viet Minh underground network remained in the South (see ch. 19, Constitution and Government; ch. 20, Political Dynamics).
CHAPTER 3
GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Vietnam, extending from 23°20' to 8°30' north latitude, is a long, narrow country which forms the eastern coastal rim of the South-east Asian Peninsula bordering on the South China Sea (see fig. 1). The Philippines lie some 800 miles directly eastward. Vietnam has a common border with China in the north and with Laos and Cambodia in the west, with mountain ranges generally delineating these inland borders. From the southern tip of the country, the coast extends generally northward in an S-curve for nearly 1,500 miles. Near the middle of the curve, the country is little more than 25 miles wide, but at either end it widens irregularly to a maximum of 300 miles in the North and 130 miles in the South. Its total area is 127,000 square miles, about the size of New Mexico. Saigon, the most important city in the South, is approximately 900 miles by air from both Hong Kong and Rangoon and about 1,000 miles from Manila.

In 1954, at the Geneva Conference, the country was divided provisionally into approximately two equal parts: 66,200 square miles in the South and 60,800 square miles in the North (see ch. 2, Historical Setting). The Demarcation Line runs along a small river, the Song Ben Hai, from its mouth to the village of Bo Ho Su, and from there due west to the Laotian border. Because the Song Ben Hai is very close to the 17th parallel, the Demarcation Line is usually referred to as the 17th parallel.

The most important geographic features are the two large delta areas which form the widened northern and southern ends of the country—the Mekong Delta in the South and the Red River Delta in the North. These fertile alluvial plains, favored by the heavy rainfall, make Vietnam one of the world's great rice-growing areas. The narrow strip that connects them is made up of mountainous plateaus and a fertile coastal strip. Other mountains ring the Red River Delta area in the North (see fig. 3).

The climate is hot and humid; subtropical in the North and tropical in the South where the monthly mean temperature is about 80° F. throughout the year. The monsoons, blowing generally from the south in the summer and from the north in winter, profoundly influence the climate and rainfall. However, the strength and direction of the wind, as well as the amount and timing of the rainfall, vary considerably from place to place because of differences in latitude and the marked variety of relief. Nevertheless, warm climate and heavy rainfall favor the rapid growth of vegetation in all parts of the country.

The population in mid-1960 was approximately 30 million, with
14 million living south of the 17th parallel and 16 million north of it. The average population density for all of Vietnam was, therefore, about 236 per square mile. This figure, however, gives little indication of actual distribution. Although only 10 percent of the people live in urban communities, the population is heavily concentrated in the delta areas where some provinces have more than 2,000 persons per square mile. In contrast, the uplands and mountainous regions, comprising approximately three-fourths of the country's total area, are sparsely settled, some areas being almost uninhabited.

The natural land routes into Vietnam are from the north rather than from the west. The predominant Mongoloid component in the racial inheritance of the Vietnamese people is believed to have come into the country from China down the Red River and its tributaries in the centuries before the Christian era (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups). The existence of these routes, and also the ease with which Vietnam could be reached by sea from coastal China, enabled China to exert a dominant role in Vietnamese history (see ch. 2, Historical Setting). Although some contact with the Hindu civilization of India was made early in the Christian era, these relations were impeded by the dense jungles of Thailand and by the length of the Malay Peninsula which made the sea route difficult.

The land boundaries of Vietnam evolved over the course of centuries and, except in the Mekong Delta in the South, generally run through mountainous, sparsely settled and relatively inaccessible regions. The boundary with China, well delineated for several centuries, was formally defined in the Franco-Chinese treaties of 1887 and 1895. By about 1800 the boundaries with Laos and Cambodia had been established by Vietnamese conquest and settlement at approximately their present-day limits. Between 1858 and 1893 the French gained control of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam and formalized the boundaries between them by treaty and administrative decision. Vietnam was arbitrarily deprived of its name and divided into three parts: the colony of Cochinchina, which was composed of the Mekong Delta area; the protectorate of Annam, the central portion of Vietnam; and the protectorate of Tonkin, which included the provinces of the Red River Valley in the North (see ch. 2, Historical Setting).

The boundaries with Laos and Cambodia, though based in part on the administrative convenience of the colonial power, also reflect ethnic and geographic divisions and were not a source of dispute with neighboring countries for more than a half century. Since World War II, however, friction has developed with Cambodia over the administration of Dao Phu Quoc (formerly
Figure 3. Relief of Vietnam.
Ile de Phu Quoc or Phu Quoc Island) in the Gulf of Siam which was assigned to Cochin­china by the French authorities in 1939. The South Vietnamese Government has become increasingly concerned with its boundary with Laos, Communist guerrillas reportedly having been using that country as an approach route and a sanctuary in operations against South Vietnam.

MAJOR GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

Vietnam varies greatly in its topography. Five geographic regions may be distinguished: the Mekong Delta, the Chaîne Annamitique, the Central Lowlands, the Red River Delta and the Northern Highlands (see fig. 4).

Mekong Delta

The 2,800-mile-long Mekong is one of the great rivers of Asia. From its source in the high plateau of Tibet not far from the head­waters of the Yangtze of China and the Salween of Burma, it flows through Tibet and China to the northern border of Laos. There it separates Burma and Laos and, farther downstream, Laos and Thailand. Flowing through Cambodia, it bifurcates at the capital, Phnom Penh, at the apex of the delta, the broad base of which is in Vietnam to the south and east on the South China Sea. The southern branch, the Song Hau Giang (formerly the Fleuve Bassac or the Bassac River), flows directly to the sea; the larger northern branch splits into four parts about 50 miles before reaching the sea.

The heavily silted Mekong is navigable by sea-going craft of shallow draft only. These can proceed as far as the rapids at Kompong Cham, about 70 miles above Phnom Penh. Thereafter frequent portages are required, and the river journey to Luang Prabang in central Laos takes about 37 days in the dry season and 27 days in the wet season.

A tributary, which enters the Mekong at Phnom Penh, drains the Tonle Sap. This large fresh-water lake, which was once an arm of the sea, covers approximately 1,000 square miles in central Cambodia and serves as a regulating reservoir to stabilize the flow of water through the lower Mekong. When the river is in flood, its silted delta outlets are unable to carry off the flood waters, and they back up into the Tonle Sap, expanding the lake to cover as much as four times its low-water area. As the river flood subsides, the water reverses its course and flows from the lake to the sea. The effect is to reduce significantly the danger of serious floods in the Mekong Delta. The first major one in 30 years occurred in October 1961, when the volume of water was too
Figure 4. Geographic Regions of Vietnam.
Figure 4—Continued.
great for the Tonle Sap to hold. The disaster was worsened by being unexpected.

In Vietnam the delta proper, approximately 26,000 square miles in area, was built up by the five branches of the Mekong, which total about 300 miles in length, and the system of three small rivers—the Song Vam Co (formerly the Song Vaico or the Vaico River), the Song Sai Gon (formerly the Rivière Saigon or the Saigon River) and the Song Dong Nai. The low, level plain, nowhere more than 10 feet above sea level, is very fertile, and cultivated land extends to the immediate shoreline in the vicinity of the river mouths. More than 9,000 square miles of delta land are under rice cultivation (see ch. 25, Agricultural Potential). Drainage is effected chiefly by tidal action which differs greatly from place to place. The difference between high and low tides is about 3 feet on the Song Hau Giang and double that along the northern branches of the Mekong and the Song Sai Gon. The southernmost tip of the delta, known as the Ca Mau Peninsula, is covered with dense jungles and the shoreline by mangrove swamps.

Mud banks prevent navigation for deep-draft ships on the rivers in the delta area except for the Song Sai Gon which can accommodate ships of up to 19 feet of draft as far as Saigon, 50 miles inland. About 1,500 miles of canals crisscross the area, and, of that total, almost 1,000 miles constitute primary canals connecting main waterways. All the canals carry a heavy burden of traffic, and an extensive system of roads also serves the area.

A plan, which is being studied by the United Nations through its Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), envisages a series of dams on the Mekong River system which will provide electrical power, enable irrigation of large areas of land, aid in flood control and promote navigation on the river. This vast project—more extensive than the Tennessee Valley Authority—would provide important benefits to the four riparian countries—Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam—which have given it their wholehearted approval and cooperation.

Although the planning was initiated in 1951, it was only after the Geneva settlement of 1954 that conditions permitted any on-the-ground surveys. After preliminary exploration was completed, a report was submitted to the United Nations in 1958 which stressed the great potential of the Mekong and recommended a comprehensive 5-year program for gathering the specific data which would be required for definite project planning. It cited five areas where dams would appear to be most effective: two well upstream near Vientiane on the Thai-Laotian border; one at Ban Khone near the Laotian-Cambodian border; one at Sambor
about 100 miles south of Ban Khone; and one between Phnom Penh and the Tonle Sap in Cambodia. A smaller dam, capable of producing 25,000 kilowatts of power per hour, was recommended for a small river, the Se San, in Vietnam. It was estimated that these dams would have a power capacity of about 13.7 billion kilowatt-hours and would permit the irrigation of 2.5 million acres.

By June 1961, 12 countries had contributed $13,700,000 for the detailed survey needed. The survey is to be completed by 1963, and it is estimated that the entire project could be completed by 1970, financing and other circumstances permitting.

Chaîne Annamitique

The Chaîne Annamitique is the southernmost spur, over 750 miles in length, of the rugged mountains which, in Tibet and China, separate the watershed of the Yangtze from that of the Mekong. Originating in Laos, it extends southeastward to the area at the Vietnamese-Laotian border where the headwaters of the Song Ca arise. Thereafter, following a course which is generally parallel with the coast, it continues southeastward, forming the border between Vietnam and Laos and, later, between Vietnam and Cambodia until it reaches the Mekong Delta where it terminates about 50 miles north of Saigon. To the east the chain falls off steeply to the narrow coastal plain; to the west it slopes more gradually to the valley of the Mekong in Laos and Cambodia. The northern portion of the section extending into Vietnam is narrow and very rugged; the southern portion forms a plateau area, known as the Central Highlands, which is about a hundred miles wide and 250 miles in length. The peaks of the Chaîne Annamitique range in height from about 5,000 feet to the 8,521-foot height of Ngoc Ang, which is about 75 miles inland from Mui Batangan (formerly Cap Batangan).

The Central Highlands, an area covering 18,600 square miles, consists of two distinct parts. The northern part, called Cao Nguyen dac Lac (formerly the Plateau du Darlac), extends some 175 miles north from the vicinity of Ban Me Thuot to the Ngoc Ang peak. Irregular in shape, it varies in elevation from about 600 feet to 1,600 feet with a few peaks rising much higher. This area of approximately 5,400 square miles is covered mainly with bamboo and tropical broad-leaf forests interspersed with farms and rubber plantations. The southern portion of the Central Highlands, much of it over 3,000 feet above sea level, includes about 4,000 square miles of usable land. Da Lat, a modern hill city in the center of the area, is overlooked by Monts Lang Bian with an elevation of 7,380 feet. The forest growth is predominantly of
evergreens at higher elevations and bamboo on the lower slopes. Coffee, tea, tobacco and temperate-climate vegetables flourish in the fertile soil.

A north-south highway starting in Saigon runs through the Central Highlands to Da Nang (formerly Tourane). The southern section, extending through Da Lat to Ban Me Thout, is a good hard-surfaced road, but the central section is being rebuilt and the northern section is extremely tortuous. Several good roads lead eastward to the coast, but only three routes lead westward to the Mekong Valley in Cambodia and Laos. The only railroad in the entire area is the spur line which connects Da Lat with the Trans-Vietnam Railroad which runs north and south along the coastal plain.

The sparsely settled plateaus, with their extensive forests and rich soil, are particularly important to South Vietnam for expansion room from the densely populated lowlands. The rivers have a considerable hydroelectric potential (see ch. 26, Industrial Potential).

The portion of the Chaîne Annamitique north of the plateau area bounds on the west the three northern provinces of South Vietnam and the three southern provinces of North Vietnam. The entire area is narrow and very difficult to traverse. Except for two roads south of the 17th parallel and two roads north of it—all of which cross the range into Laos—no roads exist in the almost 500-mile length of this sector.

**Central Lowlands**

The Central Lowlands extend along the sea from the Mekong Delta northward to the Red River Delta. On the landward side, the Chaîne Annamitique rises precipitously above the lowlands and, in some areas, is nearly 40 miles inland; elsewhere it veers shoreward and at point crowds in to the sea. In general the land is fertile and is extensively cultivated. The chief crop is rice, and considerable sugar cane is also grown. Fishing is good along the entire coast and is particularly important as an industry in the southern section near the Mekong Delta.

The Trans-Vietnam Railroad formerly ran almost the entire length of the country along the shore, but north of the 17th parallel much of it was destroyed during World War II. A good hard-surfaced coastal road also ran from Saigon to Hanoi, but it is now blockaded at the 17th parallel. There are a number of good harbors along the coast, but Da Nang is the only deep-sea port. Vinh Cam Ranh (formerly Baie de Cam Ranh or Cam Ranh Bay), one of the finest natural deep-craft harbors in south Asia, offers a sheltered anchorage for all types of ships in any weather.
From the Mekong Delta an infertile coastal strip, generally narrow and covered with shifting sand dunes, extends northeastward some 100 miles to Mui Dinh (formerly Cap Padaran or Padaran Cape). This region has less rainfall than any other part of Vietnam.

From Mui Dinh northward the coastal plain remains narrow for about 100 miles to Mui Dieu (formerly Cap Varella or Varella Cape) where a mountain spur presses against the shore. In this section there are occasional stretches of quite fertile land where rice is grown.

From Mui Dieu to Vung Da Nang (formerly Baie de Tourane or Da Nang Bay), about 250 miles north, lie the most extensive and fertile plains of the Central Lowland coast where two rice crops are grown a year.

From Vung Da Nang to Hue, about 50 miles to the north, mountain spurs jut into the sea at several places. From Hue to the 17th parallel—50 miles to the north—and beyond, much of the shore is fringed by a narrow line of sand dunes backed by an intensively cultivated flat fertile area.

Red River Delta

The Red River rises in Yunnan Province in China and has a total length of 730 miles. Its two major tributaries, the Rivière Claire and the Black River, give it a large flow of water—during the rainy season, as much as 800,000 cubic feet per second or twice as much as the maximum of the Nile River. The delta itself, an ancient gulf silted in by the vast amounts of alluvium carried by the Red River, has an area of over 5,750 square miles. It is indented by the many small mouths of the Red River and by the Song Ma which flows into the southern part of the Gulf of Tonkin. Hanoi, the capital and chief city of North Vietnam, is on the main stream of the Red River; Haiphong, the chief seaport in the North, is on one of its lower tributaries. An extensive network of canals crisscrosses the delta.

The entire delta region, backed by the steep rises of the Northern Highlands, is very low, most of it not more than 10 feet above sea level and much of it 3 feet or less. The whole area is subject to frequent flooding. Extensive embankments have been built over the centuries to channel the water into the rice fields which support one of the densest populations in the world.

The mud flats and mangrove swamps of the delta offer few landing places for small craft, and the river mouths do not exceed 1,500 feet in width. The port of Haiphong, situated 10 miles inland, has a narrow, dredged channel 20 feet deep, and there are docking facilities for ocean-going vessels. It serves all of the
delta area. A rail line runs from Haiphong to Hanoi and from there follows along the Red River Valley to Lao Kay and then continues to Kunming in China. A second line, the Trans-Vietnam Railroad, runs from China through Lang Son to Hanoi and southward to Saigon, although in mid-1962 the section between the 17th parallel and Hanoi was inoperable. An extensive motor road system also serves the delta.

Northern Highlands

The mountains ringing the landward sides of the Red River Delta are low in the southeast and high in the north, northwest and west where they are extensions of the Chaîne Annamitique. This area, known as the Northern Highlands, is approximately 40,000 square miles in extent. The streams of the Red River system have cut deep gorges in these mountains which do not afford extensive areas for cultivation. The largest town, Lao Kay, has a population of less than 10,000 people. Except in the east, the roads are few and steep. The streams, navigable by small boats, offer difficult but important routes.

From Mon Cay on the coast, rolling hills extend northwestward along the Chinese border. They are easily crossed, and the area has been the historic route of migration and invasion from China. In the north, where they rise to sharp peaks and forested plateaus, they constitute the watershed between the Rivière Claire and the Lung Chiang in China. The Claire flows generally southward to join the Red River about 35 miles northwest of Hanoi. West of the Red River the terrain is broken and rises steeply. The 10,000-foot massif between the Red and Black Rivers and the somewhat lower ridge between the Black River and the Song Ma are crossed by difficult mountain trails.

CLIMATE

The seasonal alternation of the monsoons determines both the rainfall and the temperature throughout the year, although geographical features alter patterns locally. During the winter monsoon, the high-pressure area in the interior of the continental land mass forces dry, cool air outward toward the sea, producing Vietnam's dry season. During the summer monsoon, the heated air of the Gobi Desert rises causing moist air to flow inland from the sea, depositing heavy rainfall in its passage. Even the northeast winter monsoon, blowing down along the China coast and across the South China Sea, picks up considerable moisture which makes this season in most parts of Vietnam "dry" only by comparison with the wetter southwest summer monsoon. Typhoons,