South Vietnam's minorities, especially the ethnically diverse *montagnards* of the Central Highlands and the predominantly urban-based Chinese, are significant elements of the body politic: the former, because of their strategic geographical position and separatist sentiments; the latter, because they have considerable influence over the nation's economy. Neither of these two minorities has been effectively assimilated into national life, but outwardly at least they express allegiance to the Saigon government. Similarly, the Khmers (400,000) and the Chams (35,000) of the lowlands have remained alien enclaves in the Vietnamese society around them (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

**The Montagnards**

The 700,000 *montagnards*, ethnically distinct from the Vietnamese and divided by language and custom into 40 or more groups, are not a cohesive entity. They are, however, traditionally hostile toward the Vietnamese. Moreover, they are exposed to Viet Cong efforts to gain their favor for the purpose of exploiting the sparsely settled Central Highlands, in which they live, for use as infiltration routes and as sanctuaries. Under these circumstances, accompanied by increasing outside influences which they historically have resented, the *montagnards* are beginning to acquire a political awareness and a sense of unity heretofore unknown among them (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

The *montagnards*’ traditional hostility was further aggravated in 1954 by President Diem's action terminating the special status they had enjoyed under the French and bringing their homelands under Saigon's direct control. Thereby, Vietnamese law superseded customary law, and Vietnamese administrators were appointed to the highland districts. Other activities of President Diem's government added to *montagnard* resentment and resulted in an uprising of the Bahnar, Jarai, Rhade and Koho against the South Vietnamese Government in 1958. It was quickly suppressed, and seven leaders were jailed. Five were released in 1962 but two, Y Bham of the Rhade and Paul Nur of the Bahnar, were kept in prison until after November 1963 (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

Realizing the importance of winning the loyalty of the *montagnards*, the Diem regime in 1961 initiated a more liberal policy. At the same time, the United States Special Forces advisers began the selection and training of *montagnards* for service in counterpart South Vietnamese units. These United States advisers demonstrated an ability to work with the *montagnards* but were unable to transfer the trust placed in them by the *montagnards* to the South Vietnamese officers who were assigned by the Saigon regime to command these
small units. Hostility aggravated by this action on the part of the government was further heightened by the montagnards' knowledge that certain Rhade, Jarai, Bahnar and Hre, who had been induced to fight with the Viet Cong, were permitted to do so in units officered by fellow tribesmen (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages; ch. 27, The Armed Forces).

Tensions between the montagnards and the South Vietnamese mounted. On August 1, 1964, Y Bham, the Rhade leader, announced the formation of a Unified Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (Front Unifié pour la Libération des Races Opprimées—FULRO), claiming to represent the Khmers and Chams as well as the montagnards. The announcement accused the South Vietnamese of systematically suppressing and mistreating the minorities and declared liberation from the “Vietnamese yoke” to be the purpose of the Front. In Darlac Province, on September 20, 1964, montagnards of the local defense groups, including Special Forces in five camps, revolted, killed their South Vietnamese officers, raised their own flag (red, green and black with three yellow stars) and occupied the radio station in Ban Me Thuot, the provincial capital, whence they broadcast a demand for an autonomous tribal state. Simultaneously, Y Bham issued a declaration accusing the South Vietnamese of practicing “extermination” of the minorities.

Major General Nguyen Khanh, then prime minister, hurried to Ban Me Thuot to put down the revolt. He was prevailed on by United States advisers not to use force to retake the rebel camps and, after a week of negotiations with tribal leaders and the rebels, the camps were turned over peacefully to the South Vietnamese. Prime Minister Khanh refused to consider autonomy for the seven highland provinces where the montagnards are in the majority but agreed to “give consideration to their just aspirations” for equality.

Important concessions were promised. Villages were to be given title to an area four times as large as the land they actually occupied. Tribal customs and courts were to be restored. Highlanders were to be given preferential treatment when they sought admission to South Vietnamese high schools, the Thu Duc Infantry School and the Da Lat Military Academy. Tribal languages were to be taught at the primary school level, with Vietnamese being introduced gradually at higher levels (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

Meanwhile Y Bham had disappeared into the jungle, but in March 1965 he appeared in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as guest of Prince Sihanouk (Chief of State) at an official dinner. During a speech at this dinner, Y Bham praised the Cambodians for their help to his people and attacked the Saigon government. Later, however, he expressed satisfaction to Prime Minister Khanh for his promised concessions, but demanded the right to fly the FULRO flag at
montagnard camps and to organize a 50,000-man highlander army under its own officers. He also wanted United States aid to be channeled directly to the highlanders without passing through South Vietnamese intermediaries.

Desultory consultations were held between FULRO representatives and the Saigon government; FULRO groups continued to operate in the highlands, much to the displeasure of the II Corps commander, who branded them as rebels. On July 22, 1965, Chief of State Thieu promulgated Decree No. 6-65, which reorganized the tribal customs courts and defined their jurisdiction, and on July 27, accompanied by Prime Minister Ky, he visited Pleiku to open a montagnard center for the training of local security forces.

The promised restoration of tribal courts and other concessions to the montagnards, however, went unimplemented, and, on September 10 and 11, 1965, 400 tribesmen in Special Forces camps near Ban Me Thuot revolted but were disarmed by South Vietnamese marines. Chief of State Thieu made a hurried visit to the highlands to "convince the montagnards that they were full-fledged citizens . . . and that the South Vietnamese government was trying to eliminate the social injustices that may have existed."

After this revolt was suppressed, Prime Minister Ky visited Ban Me Thuot, where the tribesmen reaffirmed their loyalty to the South Vietnamese Government. The Prime Minister promised the highlanders that the government would reassign all military and administrative personnel of montagnard origin to services relating to the tribal population and would facilitate the admission of their youths into the National Institute of Administration, the Thu Duc Infantry School and the Nha Trang Non-Commissioned Officers' School. Action was taken immediately by the government to set up an office in Ban Me Thuot called La Direction Spéciale des Affaires Montagnards (Special Department for Montagnard Affairs). Although this office was headed by a South Vietnamese, his superior in Saigon was Paul Nur, a montagnard.

Unrest among the montagnards recurred on December 17, 1965, when FULRO sympathizers rose in the three provinces of Phu Bon, Darlac and Quang Duc. In Quang Duc they temporarily occupied the provincial capital, Gio Nghia; in Darlac they took over for a short time two Special Forces camps; in Phu Bon, they killed some 30 South Vietnamese, including a district chief. As in the previous September, the revolt was short lived. On this occasion, however, a military tribunal tried 20 leaders of the rebellion, charging them variously with treason, murder and attempted murder. Four were ordered executed by firing squad; others received sentences ranging from 5 years of hard labor to life imprisonment. Four were acquitted.
By February 1966 the FULRO-led dissident activities in the highlands were reported to be gaining momentum, but no new rebellious actions had occurred through April. Meanwhile, in March the Special Commissioner for Montagnard Affairs in Saigon, Paul Nur—the first montagnard to attain the status of a top government official—appealed to the highlanders to seek “closer unity with the lowland people and to give up any suspicion in order to help realize a new Vietnamese society, in which all racial groups will merge into a single national entity.” He stated that the present government’s policy was based on principles of racial equality and solidarity and on respect for montagnard ways and customs, and he promised them measures to improve their welfare. Labeling FULRO as a group of dissidents, he asserted that “once the aspirations of the montagnards are realized, there will be no reason for the FULRO movement to exist.” Moreover, he stressed that his office was planning to improve programs aimed at increasing security among the highlanders (see ch. 26, Public Order and Safety).

The value of winning montagnard loyalty or support has been equally recognized by the Communist-controlled, self-styled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV), which also has a program stressing autonomy for the tribal areas. Y Binh Aleo, a Rhade, is a vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Front and its Presidium, as well as chairman of the Executive Committee of the so-called Highland People’s Autonomy Movement.

The Chinese

The Chinese have long played a central role in business, almost completely dominating commercial enterprises. This role, while indispensable to the economy, has incurred Vietnamese resentment, and this in turn has reinforced the tendency of this able and energetic group to remain apart. The country not only suffers from the resultant tensions, but it is denied the contribution the Chinese could make outside the narrow economic realm. President Diem initiated a long-range program designed gradually to integrate them into Vietnamese society. He tempered the measures which required them to accept Vietnamese citizenship and which restricted their business activities. These governmental efforts were, however, generally resisted by the Chinese, who resorted to moderate economic boycotts, which, nevertheless, proved to be disquieting enough to cause the Diem regime to adopt a more conciliatory approach.

Politically, the Chinese have rarely sought an active partnership with any of the Saigon governments, nor with any of the various political forces. On the whole, they appear to be hostile to the Communist regime in their homeland and to recognize that their future is linked with that of a non-Communist and probusiness regime in Saigon. There are indications, however, that some of the younger
members of the community sympathize with Communist China rather than with the Nationalist regime of Taiwan, and this group constitutes a potential source of support for the Viet Cong.

The overriding concern of the Chinese community has been with their business and commercial interests, which in their view give them collective strength against outside pressure. In mid-1966 attempts by the South Vietnamese authorities to penetrate the protective wall built around the community's economic base of power had been less than successful. The Chinese tendency to act cohesively against outside interference was partly illustrated in March 1966 when the government of Prime Minister Ky executed a Chinese businessman after finding him guilty of "economic crimes." The Chinese reacted by staging a sort of economic disobedience campaign which disrupted the nation's commercial activities for about 3 weeks. Some of the merchants have been suspected of paying "taxes" to the Viet Cong to secure freedom of movement throughout the country.

The most influential organization among the Chinese appears to be the General Chamber of Commerce, acting as the principal intermediary between them and the Saigon government. Leading figures of this body apparently carry authoritative voices in matters affecting the community.

The Peasants

Nearly 80 percent of the South Vietnamese are peasants, traditionally uninterested in political matters outside their immediate area. The peasants, by force of circumstances beyond their control, have involuntarily played a crucial role in the nation's political life.

During the anti-French struggles spearheaded by the Viet Minh, the peasantry comprised the main component of the independence movement. Later, in Saigon's struggle against the Viet Cong insurgents, the peasants provided most of the combatants for both sides in this conflict. Moreover, the success or failure of the government's counterinsurgency operations are often directly affected by the extent of villagers' cooperation with either of the opposing forces. Thus, both Saigon and the Viet Cong have come to regard the peasantry as a decisive factor in determining the political future of the country.

The peasants have had no independent national organization or leader of any national stature to represent them in the urban-oriented Saigon government. Probably the segment of the population most neglected by the government, many peasants have been susceptible, especially during the past decade, to the Communist efforts to gain their favor and to turn them against the Saigon authorities. Since most of the Viet Cong agents were posing as nationalists and were native to the villages in which they were operating, they have in many areas encountered little or no resistance from the peasants.
Official neglect and unconcern thus inadvertently contributed, initially at least, toward increasing Communist influence in the rural areas. To arrest this trend, successive Saigon governments have instituted extensive measures intended for rural uplift, variously known as pacification, civic action, rural reconstruction or, more recently, as the Revolutionary Development Program.

The peasants' aspirations and needs are usually expressed in terms of land ownership, education and improved opportunities for their offspring, better houses to live in, adequate water for their rice paddies, availability of seeds and fertilizer, rent reduction and, in most cases, a desire for peace. They have a deep-seated conviction that these ends will have to be achieved mainly through their own efforts, partly because of their longstanding distrust of governing authorities (see ch. 17, Political Values and Attitudes). In recent years, however, they have been led to expect help in the fulfillment of these needs, at least in part, because of the competitive promises being made to them by both Viet Cong and government sources.

Peasants, like many other South Vietnamese, have shown little interest in abstract philosophical principles or political ideologies which have had little or no relevance to village life. Their mistrust, or evasion wherever possible, of governing authorities has been proverbial and has tended to insulate them from outside influences. As a result, the Viet Cong and the Saigon regime have found themselves constantly groping for means to penetrate the villagers' psychological barriers.

Depending upon circumstances, peasant reaction to the Viet Cong or to the Saigon authorities usually took the form of willing support, fatalistic acquiescence, evasion or opportunistic noninvolvement. On the whole, conscious support came from small numbers living in areas securely controlled by either the Viet Cong or the government, where the risk of reprisals from the opposing side was relatively absent. The bulk of those who acquiesced in Viet Cong rule apparently did so because of the ever-present threat to their life and property; some of them appeared reluctant to leave their ancestral land and to face an uncertain future elsewhere. Still others, if they lived a long distance from the nearest government-controlled area, apparently preferred to remain under Viet Cong control. Wherever opportunity presented itself, hundreds of thousands of villagers fled to adjoining areas not under exclusive Viet Cong control, but without overtly committing themselves to Saigon. It is estimated that over 1 million refugees have fled from Viet Cong-controlled areas since January 1965.

For the majority of the peasants, however, the standard behavior was one of opportunistic noninvolvement—ever ready to switch sides or give outward gestures of support to either side, if such action seemed...
necessary for survival. Many of them inhabit the so-called twilight zones, or contested areas.

The Viet Cong Insurgents

The Communist insurgency continued in mid-1966 to be the most pervasive political factor confronting the Saigon government. The insurgents, known under the generic label of Viet Cong, were operating within the framework of the self-styled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.

The Communist Hanoi regime announced, in January 1961, that the so-called National Front had been established on December 1960 in the South by “various forces opposing the fascist Ngo Dinh Diem regime.” The announcement, which came 4 months after the ruling Lao Dong Party in Hanoi declared its intention to “liberate” the South, also exhorted the South Vietnamese to set up a “broad national united front directed against the United States-Diem clique.”

The National Front claims that it is a South Vietnamese nationalist rather than a Hanoi-inspired Communist-front organization and that it is the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people. It avoids references to communism in all of its public pronouncements. Its avowed political and military aim is the overthrow of all pro-Western regimes in Saigon and the establishment of what it calls a neutral South Vietnam free of all alliances. In the early 1960’s, the National Front claimed that it controlled 75 percent of South Vietnamese territory and more than 70 percent of its population and that it was the sole legitimate voice of the South Vietnamese people.

In early 1966 the Viet Cong, predominantly rural based, seemed to constitute only a minor segment of the population, confined mainly to remote, sparsely settled areas not controlled by the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao sects, Catholic priests or governmental authorities. Buddhist leaders continued to warn their followers against Viet Cong efforts to exploit and undermine their religious faith. Viet Cong influence among the 3 million urban dwellers was less evident than among the peasants, partly because of the relative safety of cities from Communist terrorism and partly because of suspicion of all crusaders. The Viet Cong’s call for general strikes in cities on two different occasions in late 1965 had no tangible effect. The greatest problem faced by the Viet Cong was that of justifying the need for continuing insurgency and still more sacrifices (see ch. 27, The Armed Forces).

Superficially, the high command of the Front is its 49-member Central Committee and a more selectively constituted Presidium. In early 1966 they were both headed nominally by Nguyen Huu Tho, a former Saigon lawyer who called himself a socialist. His executive deputy was Huynh Tan Phat, carrying the title of deputy chairman.
of the Presidium and secretary general of the Central Committee. Directly subordinate to the Central Committee were a number of administrative commissions dealing with such functions as military affairs, foreign relations, information, culture, education, health, economic affairs and communications. The Commission for Foreign Relations was headed by Tran Buu Kiem, and its chief roving ambassador was Nguyen Van Hieu.

Most of these commissions had their provincial, district, and village counterparts. For military purposes the Front divided South Vietnam into five regions and one special zone for the Saigon area; nominally, the commanding authority over the military establishment emanated from the Front's Commission for Military Affairs. For external propaganda activities, the Viet Cong high command relied on the so-called Liberation News Agency and its Liberation Radio and nine permanent missions (accorded semidiplomatic status) established at Algiers, Budapest, Cairo, Djakarta, East Berlin, Havana, Moscow, Peking and Prague. Another mission was also expected to be set up in Pyongyang, North Korea. The official organ of the Front was called Giai Phong (Liberation) (see ch. 16, Public Information).

In fact, however, both in political and in military matters, the ultimate power of leadership and control within the Viet Cong movement has been vested in and exercised by the Front's so-called Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Party (Dang Nhan Dan Cach Man Viet Nam), one of the least known aspects of the Communist insurgency, probably even to some of the Viet Cong operatives themselves. Inaugurated in January 1962 by representatives of Marxist-Leninists in South Vietnam and joining the Front allegedly on a voluntary basis, this openly Communist party came to constitute the supreme political and military directorate of the Viet Cong insurgency and, hence, the authentic politicomilitary instrument of Hanoi's Workers' Party of Vietnam (Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam—contracted as the Lao Dong Party). This fact was brought to light in May 1962 in a captured Viet Cong document from the Ba Xuyen provincial committee of the Lao Dong Party in the Mekong Delta to the party's district committees concerning the formation of the People's Revolutionary Party. The instruction, dated December 7, 1961, reads in part:

The People's Revolutionary Party has only the appearance of an independent existence; actually, our party is nothing but the Lao Dong Party of Vietnam (Viet-Minh Communist Party), unified from North to South, under the direction of the central executive committee of the party, the chief of which is President Ho... During these explanations, take care to keep this strictly secret, especially in South Vietnam, so that the enemy does not perceive our purpose... Do not put these explanations in party bulletins...

Another Viet Cong document seized in Chuong Thien Province, also in the delta region, in November 1964 stated that “... we should
realize that our country is one country, that the Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Party and the Vietnam Lao Dong Party are one party. . . . There is nothing different between the two parties.”

The leader of the People's Revolutionary Party, variously known as Nguyen Van Cuc or Mei Ku (in Chinese), is thought to be a secret member of the Lao Dong's Central Committee. Supreme military authority in South Vietnam, subject to the political control of the Lao Dong Party (Hanoi) and the People's Revolutionary Party, is said to be exercised by Tran Nam Trung, the "representative" of the so-called Liberation Army and as a deputy chairman of the Presidium of the National Front for Liberation.

Tentative indications are that Tran Nam Trung may be in charge of the Military Committee of the People's Revolutionary Party, which is known to the Saigon authorities also as the Central Office for South Vietnam. Several Viet Cong prisoners reportedly have suggested that he was actually Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra, a deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese army and an alternate member of the Lao Dong's Central Committee. Another source asserted in February 1966 that Nguyen Chi Thanh, one of Hanoi's two four-star generals, possibly was the military commander in the South. He is a member of the Political Bureau and of the Secretariat of the Lao Dong Party.

PARTY POLITICS

Political parties have never played a significant role, either as a training ground for future leaders or as a process for articulating the political needs of the citizenry. Under President Diem the only legal parties were those unequivocally progovernment, and their existence was permitted mainly to lend a multiparty facade to an otherwise one-party state dominated by a single family. After November 1963 successive governments encouraged the resumption of partisan activities but barred those advocating neutralism or communism.

By April 1966 there were no less than 60 registered political parties, but none of them had as yet functioned as a party in the Western sense of the word. In fact, an influential Saigon daily newspaper commented, in December 1965 that “. . . political parties have done nothing praiseworthy since the 1963 revolution. . . .” In early 1966 parties which existed more than in name were the two nationalist and anti-Communist organizations, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and the Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam, and those organized by the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao sects.

Features common to nearly all of the parties were the lack of any appreciable mass appeal, frailty of party structure, nondescript programs, factionalism stemming from personal differences, and the urban origins of most of the party leaders. In terms of potential, parties as a whole, as then constituted, were given little chance by Saigon politi-
circles of exerting any significant influence, unless they were supported by major religious groups. Indications in early 1966 were that both Buddhist and Catholic groups preferred to remain unattached to any outside political organizations. On the other hand, there were also some indications that parties might emerge as potential rallying points for many political activists if the religious elements failed in their own efforts.

**Vietnamese Nationalist Party**

The Vietnamese Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang—VNQDD) was first established at Canton in 1925 to oppose Ho Chi Minh's Communist group (see ch. 3, Historical Setting). Although inactive during the Diem regime, this party emerged after 1963 as a major organization standing for anticommunism, antineutrality, national reconstruction and democratic socialism.

The VNQDD in early 1965 was composed of four factional groups divided along religious and regional lines. The largest of these claimed about 95,000 members, most of them Buddhists living in the Mekong Delta region. It was led by Nguyen Hoa Hiep and Tran Van Tuyen. The second component, numbering about 50,000, was based mainly in the province of Quang Ngai and, to a lesser extent, in Quang Nam and Quang Tin. Also predominantly Buddhist, this faction, led by Nguyen Dinh Bach and Bui Hoanh (chief of Quang Ngai Province), was reportedly under the political influence of Buddhist militant Thich Tri Quang. The third element, led by Le Hung, was made up of about 10,000 Roman Catholic refugees from the North who had formerly constituted the northern chapter of the VNQDD. The fourth element, numbering less than 1,000, consisted also of refugees from the North.

**Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam (Dai Viet)**

The Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam (Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang—DVQDD), usually known as the Dai Viet, was established at Hanoi in 1939 by a group of pro-Japanese, anti-Communist nationalists, initially under the name of Dai Viet Nationalist Alliance (Dai Viet Quoc Gia Lien Mien). Outlawed by the Communist Hanoi regime in 1946, the Dai Viet shifted its base of operations to the South. After November 1963 it was revived by Phan Thong Thao and Nguyen Ton Hoan; the latter served as a deputy prime minister under General Khanh. The party has been firmly committed to anticommunism and national independence. Claiming a membership of some 20,000, the Dai Viet derived most of its supporters from the Hue and Quang Tri areas of Central Vietnam.

In early 1965 the party was divided into three major factions. Prominent party figures included Ha Thuc Ky, Nguyen Ngoc Huy, Tran Van Xuan, Dang Van Sung and Phan Huy Quat. A faction
under the latter two leaders published the *Saigon Post*, an English-language daily, and the *Chinh Luan* (Right Opinion), an influential Vietnamese-language daily (see ch. 16, Public Information).

Among the younger members of the Dai Viet, Catholic influences appeared to be strong. In the antigovernmental coup attempts of September 1964 and February 1965, for example, the principal participants were Catholic and pro-Catholic officers affiliated with the Dai Viet. The September 13 attempt was made a week after Nguyen Ton Hoan, then party leader, was forced into exile by General Khanh.

**Other Parties**

Other lesser known but potentially significant parties were those identified exclusively with either the Cao Dai or the Hoa Hao sects. In 1965 the Cao Dai sect carried out its political activities mainly through the Vietnam National Restoration Association (Vietnam Phuc Quoc Hoi), established first in 1948. Under the Diem regime, the Association—then known as the National Restoration League—constituted one of the progovernment showcase parties. After November 1963 the League was reconstituted as the Association by those who had refused to support the Diem regime. Divided into at least two competing factions, the Association's leading figures included Nguyen Thanh Phuong and Nguyen Hoang Bay. Those who had supported the Diem regime formed a separate rival organization called the War Veterans Association.

The Social Democratic Party (Dan Chu Xa Hoi Dang)—abbreviated as the Dan Xa—is a political outlet for the Hoa Hao sect, established in 1945. After the sect was crushed by President Diem's forces in 1955, certain progovernment Hoa Hao elements continued to operate under the Dan Xa label. Reconstituted after 1963, the Dan Xa (with its swastika symbol) was lead, in early 1966, by Phan Ba Cam. The Dan Xa was opposed by the Vietnam Social Democratic Party (Vietnam Dan Chu Xa Hoi Dang) under Trinh Quoc Khanh. The Trinh Quoc Khanh group (with a flag bearing three stars) continued to ridicule the Dan Xa group for its former pro-Diem posture, and, in fact, Khanh's followers raided the Dan Xa's head office in September 1964.

In addition, there were scores of so-called parties or "forces." Information regarding their leadership, political orientations and membership was unavailable in mid-1966. Among those organizations often in the news were the Democratic Youth Force, headed by Nguyen Thanh Tung and claiming a membership of 110,000; the Duy Dan Party; the National Revolutionary Force; National Unification Force; Democratic Forces Alliances; National Self-Determination Front; United Struggle Force; Solidarity Movement; People's Coalition; Anti-Communist Bloc, etc.
ELECTORAL PROCESS

The electoral process became a subject of lively political debate after mid-April 1966 when Chief of State Thieu decreed that a constituent assembly would be chosen by ballot within 3 to 5 months. In mid-April it was difficult to determine what kind of an electoral procedure would be worked out and who would be involved in preparing the procedure.

Under President Diem's rule, elections, when permitted, served only to lend a stamp of legitimacy to the government. Because organized political opposition was not tolerated by his regime, elections played no positive role in political life. Moreover, the Communist insurgency and the resultant lack of security in many areas made it difficult for many rural people to vote for fear of Viet Cong reprisals.

The first general elections in South Vietnam took place in March 1956 for the 123-member National Constituent Assembly, which in October 1956 was sworn in as the National Assembly. The next elections for this Assembly were in August 1959, at the end of its 3-year term. In April 1961, President Diem, at the end of his 5-year term, was returned to office by an election. The second National Assembly was elected in 1963 instead of 1962 because of the intensification of Viet Cong insurgency. All of these elections were carried out under strictly worded codes prepared by the National Assembly and approved by President Diem. The suffrage was universal, and all South Vietnamese citizens over 18 years of age were eligible to vote. Candidates opposing those favored by the government faced formidable odds, and few were ever elected.

After November 1963 successive Saigon governments promised to hold national elections for a constituent assembly, but by mid-1966 none had been held. In May 1965, however, local elections took place to form 44 provincial councils and 5 municipal councils. Some 441 councilmen were chosen out of a total of 1,002 candidates who for the most part ran as independents, using no party label. Each candidate was identified with voting symbols, such as an elephant, plow, ox or lotus. To eliminate the danger of Viet Cong infiltration or influence, all campaign speeches were censored, and press publicity was restricted.

Of an estimated 9.5 million people under "government control" (out of some 15 million), roughly 4.5 million were regarded as eligible voters over 18 years of age. Approximately 73 percent of the voting population, or 3.4 million, cast ballots. In mid-1966 the Saigon government estimated that about 5 million people would be eligible to vote out of a total population of 10.5 million "under the government."
CHAPTER 15
FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Geneva Agreement on Vietnam, which the State of Vietnam (under Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem) had rejected as "shameful," had the consequence of indefinitely partitioning the country into two parts, although the Demarcation Line drawn along the seventeenth parallel was intended only as a provisional military measure. The settlement of a political future for the country as a whole was left by the Geneva Conference to the Vietnamese themselves to decide through "free general elections by secret ballot" as provided for under the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

This settlement, which was to take place in mid-1956, failed to materialize because of differences between two major political forces; by early 1956, two mutually exclusive political systems, Communist to the north of the seventeenth parallel and non-Communist to the south, had developed. As a result, the provisional Demarcation Line came to constitute a territorial boundary between the Communist North and the free South.

The problem of Vietnam was further complicated by the political and moral alignment of the two regimes with opposing power blocs in the cold war; therefore, internal developments in Vietnam and external factors affecting the broader aspect of East-West confrontation tended to interact. The North-South conflict in early 1966 approached the proportions of a full-fledged war without any formal declaration by either side.

The government of South Vietnam consistently refused to have any form of relations with North Vietnam or with any other Communist states. Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, like all his predecessors, saw his country as a frontline in the Free World's battle against communism. The massive aid provided by the United States, within the framework of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), was accepted as its contribution toward the maintenance of the Republic of Vietnam as a free and independent entity. The treaty establishing SEATO and its accompanying Protocol came to figure prominently in shaping the subsequent South Vietnamese-United States relations. For example, on February 19, 1966, United States Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in a statement before the Senate Foreign
Relations Committee regarding the legal basis of the United States commitment in South Vietnam, reiterated that "it is this fundamental SEATO obligation that has from the outset guided our actions in South Vietnam."

Since the late 1950's, in response to intensifying Communist insurgency activities, Saigon has asked for and received increased United States military and economic aid and a pledge to help the country. In early 1966 the government was reluctant to approve of any negotiated cease-fire unless there were effective measures to ensure the withdrawal of all Communist elements from the South and the continued stay of the United States forces in the South until such time as conditions warranted their departure. It also opposed the neutralization of Vietnam or any international attempt to form a coalition government with the Communists. Similarly, it categorically refused to recognize the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam as a legitimate group worthy of representing any part of the South Vietnamese population.

Saigon has sought to cultivate friendly relations with many non-Communist nations in Western Europe, Africa and, particularly, Asia. It has been supported by some 33 nations, providing aid in varying types and quantities, but all on a much smaller scale than that of the United States. It has actively participated in international organizations, associations and conferences.

AFTERMATH OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

Under the Geneva Agreement on Vietnam, signed on July 20, 1954, between the French High Command and Ho Chi Minh's People's Army High Command, a demarcation line was fixed roughly along the seventeenth parallel. The Agreement also provided for the withdrawal of the forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (under Ho Chi Minh) to the north of the line and the French Union Forces to the south. Furthermore, it set up an International Control Commission composed of representatives from Canada, India and Poland. Finally, under the provisions of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, the northern and southern parts were to have reunified following an election in July 1956, to be supervised by the International Control Commission.

In the spring of 1955, North Vietnam, supported by Communist China, the Soviet Union and India, stated that it was ready to begin discussions on elections with the government of South Vietnam. The Hanoi regime urged Great Britain and the Soviet Union, which were cochairs of the Geneva Conference, to uphold the Final Declaration. In July Ngo Dinh Diem, then prime minister of South Vietnam, stated that his government was not bound by the Geneva Agreement, which it had not signed. He insisted that a prerequisite to elections
had to be cessation of North Vietnamese violations of the Geneva Agreement and satisfactory evidence that the northern leaders would not subordinate Vietnamese interests to foreign Communist interests.

The United States agreed that the situation in North Vietnam precluded the possibility of free elections. Great Britain, which had at first urged the South Vietnamese to participate in election preparations, suggested to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1956 that the preservation of peace was more important than the election issue. The Soviet Union tacitly agreed. After the Soviet-British talks in London in April 1956, notes were sent to the authorities in Hanoi and Saigon urging them to keep the peace, to cooperate with the International Control Commission, and to advise when it would be possible to hold elections. The elections were never held, and, for practical purposes, the military Demarcation Line became the political or territorial boundary between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Hanoi) and the Republic of Vietnam (Saigon).

After the Geneva Conference the International Control Commission, under the chairmanship of India, began to function. The Indian and Polish members consistently showed most concern about South Vietnamese unfriendliness to the Commission; the Canadian members, on the other hand, issued a number of minority reports calling attention to North Vietnamese obstruction of refugee movement to the South and to the refusal of the North Vietnamese authorities to permit the Commission to establish contact with groups wishing to go to the South. In February 1965 the Canadian delegate refused to sign a report submitted by the Polish and Indian members protesting the United States bombings on North Vietnam and suggesting that this action violated the Geneva Agreement. The same month North Vietnam requested the Commission to withdraw to Hanoi its observers posted on its border with Communist China.

RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH VIETNAM

In 1966, Saigon maintained no diplomatic, trade or cultural relations with Hanoi. Beginning in the late 1950's, a de facto state of war existed between the two Vietnams, although the respective regimes continued to stress the goal of reunifying the country through peaceful means. With the intensification, since 1958, of subversion and armed activity in the South, the prospect for a peaceful reunification became increasingly dim. In early 1966 the South Vietnamese Government suspected the sincerity of Hanoi’s call for peace and vowed that peace would never be attained so long as Communist elements were not “exterminated.” Nevertheless, Prime Minister Ky continued to affirm his government’s desire for peace and has maintained that it would carry on military operations only to counteract, in self-defense, Hanoi’s acts of aggression.
The fundamental principles governing Saigon's relations with North Vietnam were enunciated on June 23, 1965, and on the same day they were endorsed in Washington by Secretary of State Dean Rusk. These principles are: that the Communists must stop military and subversive activities and observe the 1954 Geneva Agreement under international law; that they must disband all puppet organizations in the South, such as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, the Liberation radio station, the People's Revolutionary Party, and withdraw troops, political and military cadres illegally sent into the South; that the people of South Vietnam must be left alone to settle their own affairs according to democratic principles and without any outside interference whatsoever; that, when Communist aggression ends, the government of the Republic of Vietnam will be ready to ask friendly countries to withdraw their military forces from the South, reserving, however, the right to adopt all necessary measures to maintain peace and order throughout the territory of the South and the right to call on friendly countries to reextend their assistance in case the Communists renew their aggression or threaten to commit aggression; and that the independence and freedom of the people of South Vietnam must be guaranteed effectively. Saigon has also stipulated elsewhere that it would "reject any international solution which has not received the agreement of the government and people of Vietnam."

North Vietnam's proposals for peace were first put forward in a four-point formula on April 8, 1965, presumably in answer to President Johnson's offer of unconditional discussions on Vietnam which was announced on April 7 in his speech at Johns Hopkins University. The Hanoi proposals were made public on April 12 and were formally endorsed by Communist China on April 20 and the Soviet Union on April 29.

Specifically the proposals are: that the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people—peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity—must be recognized; that, according to the Geneva Agreement, the United States must withdraw from South Vietnam its troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds and, in addition, must dismantle its military bases there and cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam; that the United States must also stop intervention and aggression in the South and cease all acts of war and other hostile acts violating the integrity and sovereignty of North Vietnam; that, pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam and while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two parts, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreement on Vietnam must be strictly respected; that the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with a foreign country; that no foreign military bases, troops or military personnel be permitted in either zone; that the internal
affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam without any foreign interference; and that the peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be realized by the Vietnamese people of the two zones without any foreign interference.

Hanoi’s April peace conditions closely paralleled those which were proclaimed earlier on March 22, 1965, by the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, the political mouthpiece and military arm of the Hanoi regime operating in the South. The National Front’s terms are: that the United States and its allies must stop aggression in the South and North; that all troops, weapons and war equipment of the United States and its satellites must be withdrawn from South Vietnam; that Vietnamese internal affairs must be handed over to the Vietnamese for self-determination; that intervention by any imperialist country must be prohibited; and that the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam “as the sole legitimate representative of the South Vietnamese people” must have a decisive voice concerning the South Vietnamese problem.

RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

The United States

Relations with the United States have always been friendly. Formal relations with the United States began in February 1950 when Washington accorded diplomatic recognition to the government of the State of Vietnam under Chief of State Bao Dai, seated in Saigon, and raised the status of its consulate general there to that of a legation. In December 1950 the Bao Dai regime became the beneficiary of the United States military aid which was channeled through France. Later, under an agreement with Washington signed in September 1951, United States economic aid was sent directly to South Vietnam, bypassing France. Nevertheless, until mid-1954, the United States had played only a secondary role in Saigon’s foreign relations (see ch. 3, Historic Setting).

After the conclusion of the Geneva Conference in July 1954, relations with the United States entered a new phase in which France’s former dominance was gradually replaced by that of the United States. In September 1954 the United States took the lead in the establishment of a collective defense system known as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. Composed of the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines, SEATO was designed to guarantee the security not only of the member nations but also, under Article IV, Paragraph 1, of the Treaty, to extend military protection to certain states in the treaty area to
be unanimously designated by member states. In a Protocol to the Treaty, SEATO named the State of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, as “protocol states” to which provisions of Article IV and Article III (concerning assistance in the development of economic measures) were to be applicable. South Vietnam is not a member of SEATO, however, because it is prohibited by the Geneva Agreement from joining any military alliance. Moreover, in order to preserve the integrity of the territory and political independence of the designated states, the Treaty stipulates that no action on these states should be taken “except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.”

The Communist threat from the North became a source of concern to the government of South Vietnam and to the United States as well. In May 1957 a joint statement was issued in Washington by President Diem and President Eisenhower, affirming the common desires of the two nations for closer cooperation in working for South Vietnam’s freedom and independence. The two presidents also noted that the Republic of Vietnam was covered by Article IV of the SEATO Treaty and agreed that “aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Vietnam would be considered as endangering peace and stability”—a position explicitly enunciated by the United States in its unilateral declaration at Geneva in 1954 (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

By 1961 the campaign of guerrilla warfare, terror and subversion, supported by the Communist Hanoi regime, had intensified. Vice President Johnson, while on a visit to Saigon in May, reiterated the United States pledge to honor its commitments in the area and declared that additional military and economic assistance would be provided in order to help South Vietnam counter the Communist insurgency. In December of the same year President Diem’s request for still more aid from the United States was granted by President Kennedy.

Relations with the United States since August 1964 have become closer than ever before. In early August, when two United States destroyers were attacked by North Vietnamese gunboats in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, the United States Congress passed the “Southeast Asia Resolution” which reaffirmed that the United States was prepared, as the President determined, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed forces, to assist any SEATO member or protocol state requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

The governments of South Vietnam and the United States jointly carried out, through mutual agreement, retaliatory attacks on February 7, 1965, against targets in North Vietnam. On February 27 a
comprehensive report detailing "the massive evidence of North Vietnamese aggression" against the South was released by the United States. The evidence was jointly analyzed by experts from both countries.

South Vietnam has been assured repeatedly by the United States of its determination to help the country defend itself against any threat from the Communist North. Since 1954 the United States foreign policy objective in relation to South Vietnam has remained constant, and on April 7, 1965, President Johnson continued to reaffirm the United States position. On this date, in addition to offering to the Communist sides "unconditional discussions" for a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam, the President declared:

Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way. We will do everything necessary to reach that objective, and we will do only what is absolutely necessary.

South Vietnamese leaders generally welcomed the United States military and economic commitments as essential to countering the Communist challenge. They requested still greater assistance from Washington. Probably the most emphatic United States declaration of intent to help South Vietnam was enunciated at the United States-South Vietnamese summit conference held in early February 1966 at Honolulu, where President Johnson met with Vietnamese Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu and Prime Minister Ky for 3 days. They discussed and exchanged views on a wide range of South Vietnamese problems, and in a joint communique the two governments renewed their pledges: to defend against Communist aggression; to bring about social revolution; to achieve the goal of free self-government; to attack the problems of hunger, ignorance and disease; and to commit themselves to the unending quest for peace. On his return to Saigon from Honolulu, Prime Minister Ky declared that "today we bring back the full assistance of the United States in our fight against oppression and against poverty."

In March 1966 the United States military strength in South Vietnam totaled approximately 215,000, and appeared likely to increase. In contrast, the United States had maintained only about 770 military advisers in the country in January 1961. On the nonmilitary, non-governmental side, a number of voluntary agencies from the United States, including the Lutheran World Relief, Voluntary Foreign Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Cooperative for American Remittances to Everywhere, Incorporated (CARE), Church World Service and International Voluntary Service, have contributed foods, medicine and clothing (see ch. 8, Living Conditions).
France

During the period when South Vietnam remained within the French Union as the State of Vietnam, French political influence and economic controls aroused a strong anti-French feeling among many groups. After the end of the Indochina War, this sentiment was heightened by the continued presence of the French Union Forces, the continuance of nominal French command of the South Vietnamese armed forces, and by the fact that France had retained a mission in North Vietnam.

By mid-1956 the South Vietnamese Government had succeeded in negotiating the elimination of most of France's special privileges in the country, and relations improved. France, nevertheless, retained its role as a leading supplier and customer, and the government encouraged French business (see ch. 23, Foreign Economic Relations).

In August 1963, French President de Gaulle publicly called for the reunification of Vietnam, on a basis of neutrality and independence of all foreign intervention. The government of President Diem did not officially react to this proposal. In November 1963, France renewed its appeal to the military government which had supplanted the Diem regime, but this appeal was categorically rejected. Relations with Paris became extremely strained during January 1964 after the French recognition of Communist China. The Saigon leaders regarded the French action as less than friendly in light of their frequently announced position that Communist China had been actively supporting the North Vietnamese aggression against the South.

South Vietnam, moreover reacted negatively to many of France's subsequent pronouncements pertaining to the country. On a non-governmental level, in July 1964, some 200 Saigon students stormed the French Embassy smashing furniture and equipment; other anti-French student demonstrations included the burning of an effigy of President de Gaulle. On an official level, the South Vietnamese Government, on May 5, 1965, suspended a daily 2-hour broadcast on French culture by Radio Saigon and also expelled the chief of the Agence France Presse from the country. The government's action was in part to manifest its avowed dissatisfaction with the lack of French support for Saigon's cause at the SEATO Council of Ministers meetings of 1964 and 1965. South Vietnam was especially irritated in May 1965 when France sent only an "observer" to the SEATO meeting in London and refused to sign SEATO's May 5 communiqué condemning the Communist aggression on the South.

The government of Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, on June 24, 1965, formally severed diplomatic relations with France on the ground that "the de Gaulle government has persistently assisted our enemies."
Relations with France continued at the consular, cultural and economic levels without adversely affecting the 17,000 French citizens living in the country. Despite policy differences, France continued to provide South Vietnam with some 600 educators, medical and technical personnel.

Other Western Nations

In its de facto state of war with the Communist North, South Vietnam has been supported by Great Britain. Saigon has favorably regarded London’s condemnation of Hanoi’s aggressive policies against the South. In addition to its moral support of the South Vietnamese struggle against Communist aggression, Great Britain has sent some dozen technicians and advisers to the country and has provided facilities for a few of the educational institutions and the equivalent of $140,000 worth of construction equipment. Limitations in material aid have been imposed mainly by its own involvement elsewhere in Southeast Asia and by strong opposition in Parliament by members of the ruling British Labor Party itself.

In early 1966 some South Vietnamese government leaders felt uneasy about British Prime Minister Wilson’s advocacy of a negotiated settlement, envisaging a neutral South Vietnam free from foreign interference. This apprehension was accentuated by the knowledge that more than 40 percent of the shipping in and out of Haiphong in North Vietnam was in British vessels under Hong Kong registry. Some Saigon newspapers had asserted that Great Britain, the Soviet Union and France are “international appeasers” who are “putting pressure on the United States to convene an international conference to seek a solution for Vietnam” on the basis of neutrality.

Saigon has friendly relations with Australia and New Zealand—both members of SEATO—whose geographical position makes events in South Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia of special concern to them. Australia was one of the first countries with which the Republic of Vietnam established diplomatic relations, and in September 1957, President Diem made a state visit to Australia. Many South Vietnamese students are enrolled in Australian universities.

In 1965, Australian support of Saigon was described by the Canberra regime as that of an “active junior partner” of the United States in Vietnam. This aid consisted of the combat force of some 1,400 infantrymen with logistic support, including 100 jungle warfare advisers and 6 transport aircraft with crews, and 2 medical teams. Other contributions included 1 million textbooks, 3,800 tons of roofing, 6 windmills, 15,750 sets of handtools, 400 radios, 16,000 blankets and 14,000 cases of milk. In addition, in March 1966, Prime Minister Harold Holt announced that Australian combat forces in South Vietnam would be tripled in the next few months.
Relations with New Zealand are cordial. New Zealand has furnished an artillery battery and a tank unit, totaling about 150 men, in addition to combat engineers, a surgical team, and science building costing the equivalent of $200,000. Its support of Saigon is, however, limited by sharp domestic political controversy regarding the government’s decision to give combat aid to South Vietnam. In 1965 the government favored a negotiated peace and reunification through elections.

Relations with Canada, a member of the International Control Commission, are also friendly. Canada has provided $350,000 worth of flour and butter, a science building costing $170,000 and 130 scholarships. A Canadian survey team assigned to the Mekong River Project (see Glossary) within the framework of the Colombo Plan is provided local currency by the South Vietnamese Government.

Diplomatic relations with other Western countries include the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden. Most of them have given some form of nonmilitary aid to South Vietnam. Nations contributing material support were: West Germany (medical support, the equivalent of $20 million in credits for economic development, 23 technicians and instructors and promise for a 3,000-ton hospital ship being outfitted in early 1966); Italy (a 9-man surgical team and science scholarships); Spain (a medical team, 800 pounds of medicine and blankets); the Netherlands (two surgical teams, one dredge and some antibiotics); Denmark (medical supplies); Belgium (medicines); Austria (blankets and medicines); Ireland (the equivalent of $2,800 in cash); Greece (medical supplies); and Luxembourg (plasma and blood transfusion equipment). Switzerland has sent microscopes to the University of Saigon.

RELATIONS WITH ASIAN NATIONS

Cambodia

Relations between the Vietnamese and Cambodians have been antagonistic for centuries. Among the issues which have troubled mutual relations since 1954 are the Cambodian rights of navigation on the Mekong River, conflicting claims to offshore islands in the Gulf of Siam (the largest of which is Dao Phu Quoc currently in Saigon’s possession), the status of Cambodians in South Vietnam and of Vietnamese in Cambodia, and poorly defined borders between the two countries, which give rise to frequent border violations.

Reactions of both countries to these disputes are compounded by their divergent attitudes toward the issues of the cold war. Cambodia professes a neutralist policy which, in Saigon’s view, is oriented toward the Communist side. Saigon maintains that this attitude makes political neutrality impossible, and it accuses the Cambodians...
of aiding the North Vietnamese Communist infiltrators and their counterparts in the South by allowing them to use Cambodian territory as a sanctuary from which to attack South Vietnam.

The question of minority rights has been aggravated by repeated mutual accusations of mistreatment of the Cambodians and Vietnamese minorities in each country. Moreover, formal relations have been further strained by South Vietnam’s assertion that Cambodia has often given asylum to dissident South Vietnamese political elements and refuge to the Vietnamese Communist insurgents. In turn, Cambodia has charged that South Vietnam, along with Thailand, had been aiding and abetting an anti-Sihanouk, pro-Western dissident movement known as the Khmer Serei (Free Khmer).

The two countries attempted to improve relations in January 1962 by opening talks on the question of border disputes. This effort failed, however, because of a Cambodian claim that some of its border villages had been attacked by South Vietnamese troops. Another complicating factor was that, despite Saigon’s request for extradition, Cambodia had granted political asylum to a South Vietnamese air force pilot, who had bombed President Diem’s palace in February 1962.

Deteriorating relations finally culminated in the severance of diplomatic ties by Cambodia in August 1963; Prince Sihanouk justified his action on the ground that, in addition to continued border violations, Buddhists and the Cambodian minority in South Vietnam had been mistreated by President Diem’s government.

The downfall of the Diem regime in November 1963 aroused hopes in both countries for improved relations. Prince Sihanouk proposed to restore diplomatic ties if Saigon agreed to recognize Cambodian sovereignty over the disputed islands, respect Cambodian neutrality, stop supporting the Free Khmer movement, and protect the rights of Khmers in South Vietnam. He also suggested the creation of a neutral confederation of both Cambodia and South Vietnam.

South Vietnam responded by sending an exploratory mission to Phnom Penh, and eventually the two sides initiated bilateral talks on border issues. The meeting, however, was again called off by Cambodia on March 23, 1964, following a South Vietnamese incursion against the village of Chantra, 75 miles west of Saigon and 4 miles inside Cambodian territory. This action was taken despite the Saigon government’s formal apology for the incident and promise to compensate for damages.

In May 1964, Cambodian charges of aggression were brought before an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council. South Vietnam countered by suggesting that further border incidents might be averted if the two countries would agree to the initiation of effective bilateral measures designed to deny the Viet Cong the use of Cambodian territory as a sanctuary.
Relations with Prince Sihanouk’s government steadily became worse during the remainder of 1964 because of recurring border troubles. Moreover, subsequent developments in Cambodia further irritated the South Vietnamese Government. In March 1965, Phnom Penh was the scene of the so-called Indochinese People’s Conference, attended mostly by representatives from the Communist-controlled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, Communist North Vietnam and pro-Communist Laotian elements. Saigon boycotted the Conference at which Prince Sihanouk declared his “sincere and complete solidarity” with the self-styled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.

During the conference Prince Sihanouk disclosed that “the Front and other brothers” had expressed their intention to intervene on Cambodia’s behalf if his country were attacked by “the forces of the Americans and their lackeys.” In the same month he also declared that he would extend full political support to North Vietnam and the Viet Cong in their conflict against the United States, a position he has since reiterated repeatedly. Other aggravating factors were Cambodia’s severance of diplomatic relations with the United States in May and its support of North Vietnam’s four-point peace policy in June.

Laos

Diplomatic relations with Laos were established in 1956, and by 1960 several Laotian government missions had been to Saigon and trade, transit, payments, immigration and other accords had been concluded between the two nations. Beginning in mid-1959, South Vietnam became deeply disturbed about the onset of internal conflict in that country, involving a three-way struggle for power among anti-Communist, Communist and neutralist forces. Saigon supported the pro-Western government of Prince Boun Oum and strongly opposed the formation of a neutralist regime, which it felt would lead to a Communist takeover.

South Vietnam, apprehensive regarding its own security, has been alert to developments in Laos, whose frontiers are contiguous with both North and South Vietnam. Saigon government leaders have consistently maintained that the Communist North is using Laotian territory as a transit and infiltration route to South Vietnam. Thus, at the 14-nation Geneva Conference on Laos—attended from May 1961 to July 1962 by South Vietnam, Laos, North Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Communist China, India, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Poland, Canada and the United States—the Saigon delegation strongly pressed for the inclusion in any Laotian settlement of a clause prohibiting the use of that country’s territory for aggressive purposes.

268
In July 1962 the 14-nation conference formally declared the “neutrality” of Laos and created a coalition government of anti-Communist, Communist and neutralist forces. The Saigon regime remained deeply concerned because Communist troops and supplies continued to pass through Laos en route to the South on the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. Dissatisfaction with Laos intensified in November 1962, when the coalition government permitted Hanoi to establish an embassy in Vientiane; South Vietnam reacted by breaking off diplomatic relations. By mid-1965, however, relations with Vientiane had much improved and were formally restored, mainly because of Laotian governmental efforts to interdict Communist supply lines winding through two of its south-central provinces bordering both North and South Vietnam. In 1965, Laos contributed the equivalent of about $4,200 in cash for flood relief in South Vietnam.

**Thailand**

The long history of friendly relations between Vietnam and Thailand and the need for solidarity to safeguard security were stressed during President Diem’s visit to Thailand in 1957 and that of Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman to South Vietnam in 1959. Thailand, a member of SEATO, has been especially concerned about the threat to its security posed by Communist activities in both South Vietnam and Laos. Ambassadors were exchanged between the two countries soon after the Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed. South Vietnam was, in 1966, serving with Thailand, as well as with Laos and Cambodia, on the United Nations Mekong Project Committee (see ch. 20, Industry).

The problem of Vietnamese who had sought refuge in Thailand during the Indochina War strained relations between the two countries in 1959. In August of that year the Thai Red Cross Council and the North Vietnamese Red Cross Committee signed an agreement for repatriation to the North of those refugees expressing the desire to go there. South Vietnam protested, stating that the enforced regroupment of both Communist and nationalist refugees in one area had obstructed the free choice of the nationalists, who were subject to coercion by Communist agents. Thailand answered that South Vietnam had previously refused to accept the Vietnamese and that the Thai were not to blame for the consequences. The fact that the King and Queen of Thailand visited Saigon in December 1959 indicates that this dispute did not seriously disrupt friendly relations between the two countries.

The close relationship between South Vietnam and Thailand has been fostered by Cambodia’s hostility toward both and its friendship with Communist China; increased aggression on the part of the Viet Cong has also strengthened the ties uniting them. Prime Minister
Ky paid an official visit to Thailand from August 20 to August 22, 1965, reportedly to promote a new anti-Communist Southeast Asian alliance based primarily on economic cooperation. At the conclusion of his visit, Thailand agreed to train more South Vietnamese pilots and provide additional medical units. Thai aid to South Vietnam also includes aviation crews, cement and roofing materials. More substantial aid seems unlikely, however, as Thailand also has to cope with its own increasing Communist threat and other domestic problems.

**Republic of China**

There has been some friction between the Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of China (Nationalist China) arising from the treatment of the Chinese minority in South Vietnam and from conflicting claims over islands in the South China Sea, particularly the Paracel Islands some 200 miles east of Hue. These tensions have been eased, however, by common interests growing out of the similar problems they face as a result of the Communist threat to their territories.

Diplomatic relations were established between the two countries in December 1955 and received their severest test from 1956 to 1958. In August 1956 the Republic of Vietnam issued a nationality decree requiring all Chinese born in Vietnam to become Vietnamese citizens without option. A decree in September, also aimed at the Chinese, prohibited aliens from engaging in 11 lines of trade (see ch. 4, Population; ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages). The Chinese Government made representations to South Vietnam, requesting moderation of these regulations. Vietnamese rejection of the requests strained relations between the two countries. Later the decrees were somewhat modified in application, and tension eased in 1958. South Vietnam's more relaxed policy toward its Chinese minority was no doubt due in part to a recognition of the important role of the Chinese in Vietnam's economic life, but it also came about through awareness of the fact that a serious split between South Vietnam and the Republic of China could only benefit the Communists.

The visit of President Diem to Taiwan in January 1960 was preceded by an information campaign by both governments stressing the common Vietnamese-Chinese cultural heritage. A Vietnam-China Cultural Association was also formed.

Since the increased tempo of the war in South Vietnam, relations between Saigon and Taipei have been even closer. Nationalist China has expressed readiness to send troops to South Vietnam. Taipei has sent 124 technicians, engineer specialists and instructors, in addition to assistance in agriculture, education, psychological warfare and electric power. Chinese newspapers in Saigon have urged overseas Chinese to enlist in the South Vietnamese army.
Prime Minister Ky made a state visit to Nationalist China from August 15 to August 18, 1965, to promote an anti-Communist South-east Asian alliance. A joint communique was issued affirming closer Saigon-Taipei cooperation in military, economic, commercial and cultural spheres. Nationalist China also agreed to increase aid to South Vietnam for economic development.

Republic of Korea

South Vietnam regards South Korea as probably the most reliable Asian ally. In September 1957, President Diem visited Seoul, and the two countries reaffirmed their common dedication to the anti-Communist cause and stressed the importance of cultural cooperation. In a joint communique issued at Seoul in November 1965, at the end of Prime Minister Ky's visit there, the two nations pledged to strengthen their political and economic ties and expand technical cooperation and trade relations.

By mid-February 1966, South Vietnam had received more military aid from South Korea than from any other country except the United States. The Korean contribution included 17,200 men (a combat division of 15,000 and an engineer unit of 2,200), one Landing Ship, Tank (LST), two Landing Ships, Material (LSM), about 100 technicians, 10 transport pilots, 20 karate experts, a mobile surgical unit of 130 men, and two construction firms to dredge the Saigon harbor. In addition, Seoul announced a plan in February—in response to Saigon's request—to dispatch shortly 20,000 more combatants.

Japan

Diplomatic and commercial relations were established with Japan shortly after the Republic of Vietnam was formed, and by 1957, Japan had become one of its leading trade partners. On May 13, 1959, the two countries concluded a war reparations agreement as well as arrangements for Japanese loans to South Vietnam for economic development projects.

Resentment at Japan's actions in Vietnam during World War II seems to have subsided, and Japan is admired for the high level of its economic development and technical competence. South Vietnam looks to Japan for technical as well as economic assistance in its efforts to introduce new crafts and industries.

By the end of 1965, Japan had sent 90 technicians and instructors, aided South Vietnam in bridge construction and electric power projects, and furnished 20,000 radio transistors and 25 ambulances. In addition, it supplied the equivalent of $55 million in World War II reparations. Japanese aid, however, is likely to be limited, for not only does the Japanese Constitution prohibit the sending of troops,
but many press and political elements sympathize with the Communist-controlled insurgents, in spite of the governing Liberal-Democratic Party's pro-United States policies.

The Philippines and Malaysia

The Republic of Vietnam has diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with the Philippines and Malaysia (known as the Federation of Malaya until September 1963), and both have received South Vietnamese state visits. Having contended with Communist guerrillas, they share with South Vietnam a postwar experience of conflict with a Communist foe. South Vietnam takes every opportunity to foster a unified anti-Communist front in its relations with these countries. In the fall of 1965, Prime Minister Ky visited Malaysia to discuss its participation in an anti-Communist Southeast Asian alliance.

The Philippines has sent two civic action teams and a psychological warfare detachment to South Vietnam. Because of internal political disagreement, the Manila government deferred action on sending a 2,500-man detachment to South Vietnam. In August 1965 the minister of war and reconstruction, then Brigadier General Nguyen Huu Co, headed a 17-member delegation, which visited the Philippines to discuss and seek more aid from Manila.

South Vietnam shares Malaysia's concern with the Communist danger in Southeast Asia. Malaya's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's mission to South Vietnam in 1958 was his first visit to a foreign country after Malaya's independence, and the two heads of state expressed "complete identity of views." Malaya's prime minister paid a second visit to the country late in 1961 when the two chiefs of state conferred on the Communist threat to South Vietnam. Subsequently, Malaysia sent advisers to give the South Vietnamese the benefit of its successful experience against Communist insurgency. During 1965, Malaysia, despite its conflict with Indonesia, was training more than 2,000 Vietnamese counterinsurgency troops. In mid-August, Saigon recognized Singapore as an independent state and sent a congratulatory cable to the prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew.

Other Asian Nations

Relations with Indonesia have been less than cordial because of that country's formal recognition of the Communist-controlled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and avowed friendship with Communist North Vietnam and Cambodia. The self-styled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam maintains a mission in Djakarta. Saigon has been further irritated by Indonesia's opposition, along with North Vietnam, Cambodia, Communist China and
North Korea, to the anti-Communist struggles of the South Vietnamese people. Deteriorating ties culminated in Saigon's severance of diplomatic relations with President Sukarno's government in August 1964, when Indonesia announced its decision to exchange ambassadors with the Hanoi regime and South Vietnam withdrew its consulate general from Djakarta.

Saigon has been apprehensive regarding India's general stand on the Vietnamese situation. In its role as chairman of the International Control Commission since 1954, India has frequently joined with Poland in criticizing South Vietnam for alleged violations of the terms of the Geneva Agreement. In 1955, Saigon was the scene of mass demonstrations against India and Poland. In 1957, President Diem made an effort to ameliorate relations with India, and during a state visit to New Delhi, he and Prime Minister Nehru noted India's important contribution through the International Control Commission toward maintaining peace in Southeast Asia. In 1962, India voted with Canada in upholding the position that the problem of internal security in the South was a proper question for the International Control Commission to investigate. Saigon, however, had reservations about India's support of Poland in condemning the United States airstrikes on North Vietnam as "violations of the Geneva Agreement" and also about India's advocacy of a Geneva-type conference aimed at the political solution of the Vietnamese question. In 1965, India contributed some medical supplies to South Vietnam and the equivalent of $15,000 in flood relief.

South Vietnam has no formal diplomatic relations with Pakistan, which has followed a policy of noninvolvement in Vietnam. Neither Saigon nor Hanoi is formally recognized by Pakistan. Apart from contributing the equivalent of $10,000 in flood relief to South Vietnam, Pakistan has made no positive gestures on Saigon's behalf. Pakistan, although a member of SEATO, did not fully endorse the organization's declaration of May 5, 1965, which condemned the Communist aggression against the South.

RELATIONS WITH AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND LATIN AMERICA

The Republic of Vietnam has sought to develop friendly relations with the new states of Africa. It has been particularly successful in those parts of West Africa which, like itself, were formerly under French rule. One Vietnamese ambassador, in many cases, is accredited to several African capitals.

In March 1965 an embassy was established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Diplomatic relations also have been established with Niger, Senegal, Tunisia and Morocco. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced that the creation of the mission in Ethiopia was a "neces-
sary step in the defense of" Saigon's interests, as Addis Ababa was centrally located in Africa. The South Vietnamese mission reportedly hopes eventually to have contact with representatives from all African states and to follow the political events and conferences in the various countries.

In the Middle East, South Vietnam has diplomatic missions in Turkey and Lebanon. A trade agreement was signed with the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1960, and in 1961 a South Vietnamese goodwill mission in Cairo discussed economic and cultural relations with President Gamal Abdel Nasser. In general, however, the UAR fully backs Hanoi. Algeria has received a permanent mission of the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. In June 1965, however, the South Vietnamese Government sent a message of congratulations to the Algerian minister of defense, Colonel Houari Boumedienne, after he had ousted President Ahmed Ben Bella from office in a military coup. Turkey supplied some medicines; other contributing countries were: Iran (1,000 tons of petroleum products and a medical team); and Israel (medical supplies).

The Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States is also accredited to Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. Token noncombatant aid has been given by Brazil (coffee and medical supplies); Ecuador (medical supplies); Guatemala (15,000 doses of typhoid vaccine); Honduras (medical supplies); and Venezuela (500 tons of rice).

VIETNAM AND ASIAN REGIONALISM

The need for Asian unity has been a major theme in the speeches of the country's leaders. South Vietnam is a member of the Asian subgroups of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies as well as of the Organization of Asian News Agencies, the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration and other Asian groups established for special purposes. In the past the country has not, however, pressed for the establishment of an Asian regional grouping dedicated to broader purposes, and in mid-1966 no such framework existed. In August 1965, Prime Minister Ky made trips to Taiwan and Thailand to promote a new anti-Communist Southeast Asian alliance based on economic cooperation. He emphasized that a better life, more freedom and social justice among the Southeast Asian non-Communist nations are necessary to rid the area of Communist influence. The prime minister also pointed out that a military alliance was not of prime importance because of the United States commitment. Discussions of this alliance reportedly were continued in his visits to South Korea in November 1965.

The development of a regional grouping of the non-Communist Asian nations has been hindered by a number of factors: the divergent attitude toward the issues of alignment and neutralism; poor com-
munication between countries; production of competitive rather than complementary products; strength of nationalist sentiment; and ethnic, religious and cultural differences. South Vietnam has rejected Cambodia's proposal for a federation of Indochinese states.

SOUTH VIETNAM AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

South Vietnam actively participates in international organizations and conferences of all kinds. Although a Soviet veto in 1952 barred its membership in the United Nations, the Republic of Vietnam maintains an observer at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In early 1966, South Vietnam, unlike Hanoi, was generally in favor of enlisting the support of the United Nations in the settlement of the Vietnamese question.

South Vietnam is a member of a large number of United Nations organizations, including the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as a member of the executive board; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); World Health Organization (WHO); International Labor Organization (ILO), as a member of the executive board; International Telecommunications Union (ITU); Universal Postal Union (UPU); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as a member of the board of governors; World Meteorological Organization (WMO); and International Development Association (IDA).

South Vietnam is a member of the Colombo Plan for the Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia. This organization coordinates the aid of Western nations and Japan to the Asian countries. Although South Vietnam receives technical assistance, equipment and scholarships from the Colombo Plan members, the international political status conferred by association with the Colombo Plan nations is of equal importance to South Vietnam. The first international conference held in South Vietnam after its independence was the Colombo Plan Conference of 1967.

South Vietnam is a member of numerous other international organizations. Important among these are the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, the International Union of Official Travel Organizations and the International Union for Health Education.

In April 1965, Saigon cabled to the president and secretary general of the World Peace Conference in Stockholm protesting that South Vietnam was not invited to the meeting to be held in July 1965. Moreover, it questioned and criticized the presence at the Conference of
the delegation from the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. The government also expressed displeasure at being refused an invitation to the proposed Afro-Asian Conference, then scheduled to be held at the end of June 1965 in Algiers. Saigon protested against this slight, claiming that as a participant in the Bandung Conference of 1955, it had a right to be invited.

**FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION**

Under the Provisional Convention of June 19, 1965, the chairman of The Directory (National Leadership Committee) "performs all functions relating to the representation of the Republic of Vietnam at home and abroad" (see ch. 13, The Governmental System). Upon the decision of the Congress of Armed Forces, the chairman of The Directory declares war, makes peace and concludes international agreements. The chairman of The Directory, after suggestion by the prime minister and consultation with the War Cabinet, appoints ambassadors and plenipotentiary ministers. Lastly, the chairman of The Directory, on the recommendation of the prime minister, also appoints the minister of foreign affairs (see ch. 13, The Governmental System).

In early 1966 leading figures who participated in foreign policy-making were the prime minister, minister of war and reconstruction, and the minister of foreign affairs. When the policy pertained to a specific matter, such as economic relations or international health problems, other Cabinet ministers were called in.

Because of intensification of the counterinsurgency effort in the early 1960's and the government's increasing preoccupation with the more immediate problems of military strategy and internal security, the function of foreign relations tended to be relegated to secondary importance. The government of Prime Minister Ky noted, however, that this "passive" approach to foreign relations, coupled with the lack of trained and experienced personnel, had caused many foreign nations to misunderstand the aspirations of the South Vietnamese.

As a result, in June 1965, the government announced its decision to improve and energize the diplomatic establishment and the conduct of foreign relations by coping with the four most urgent tasks: reappraisal of all diplomatic personnel by the use of tests; establishment of centers of diplomatic activity in South America, the Middle East, Africa and in the vicinity of the United Nations Headquarters; dissemination, in French and English, of all documents, photographs and films needed to make the case of South Vietnam better known abroad; and inducement of Vietnamese residents abroad to support and participate in the present struggle within the country. In August 1965, Prime Minister Ky expressed the hope that, by replacing "in-
efficient" personnel with more dedicated and competent foreign service officers, the diplomatic establishment might be able to rid itself of what he described as a "resort place" image.

ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHER PEOPLE

French

France is no longer the object of the nationalist indignation that it once was, and even the bitterness engendered during the Indochina War seems to have largely subsided. The Vietnamese, on the whole, continue to blame France for the colonial regime and the manner in which it was administered, but educated persons generally express admiration for French culture.

The French in South Vietnam have been forced to relinquish their holdings in riceland, but they still control most of the rubber plantations. Despite the severance of diplomatic relations with France by Saigon in June 1965, the Vietnamese attitude toward the French community of about 17,000 appears to be good.

Chinese

The Chinese are admired for their culture, which has strongly influenced Vietnam, and for their commercial acumen. They are resented for the same reasons. Chinese resistance to assimilation tends to offend nationalist feeling, and a great many Vietnamese have had the experience of dealing with the Chinese moneylender, rice buyer or merchant on the latter's own terms. The rise of an aggressive Communist regime in China also gives special urgency in the South—and perhaps only to a lesser degree in the North—to the questions of the loyalty of the Chinese community. This question of loyalty probably explains the extremely aggressive policy toward North Vietnam and Communist China taken by the Chinese newspapers in Saigon. The editorials continuously advocate bombing raids on Hanoi and Peking, as well as urge overseas Chinese to enlist in the South Vietnamese Army.

Other Asian Peoples

The defeat of Russia by Japan in 1905 won Vietnamese admiration as an Asian victory over a Western power. Japan's industrial achievements also excited the imagination of Vietnamese nationalist, many of whom found refuge in Japan before World War II. Japan's actions in the final months of World War II, when it took over the administration of the country from the French, exacerbated some Vietnamese feelings, and the conduct of Japanese troops roused anger. In the South the attitude toward Japan has become friendly, particularly since the settlement of World War II reparations with the
Republic of Vietnam and the opening of markets in Japan for South Vietnamese products.

Laos and Cambodia are looked upon by many South Vietnamese as troublesome countries whose people are regarded by them as indolent and lacking in enterprise and culture. Thailand is somewhat more respected.

The small number of Indians and Pakistanis in South Vietnam are generally unpopular, as most are unassimilated foreign moneylenders and small shopkeepers. The government has never been happy with India's vocal neutralism and its recognition of the regime in the North.

**Americans**

The attitude of many South Vietnamese toward the American people has been on the whole friendly. In educated Vietnamese circles, however, there has been some adoption of French feelings of cultural superiority over Americans. Moreover, because of their historic suspicion of all foreigners, some Vietnamese regard Americans as partly responsible for transforming their country into a pawn in the conflict between East and West. The corollary of such an attitude has been the persistent Vietnamese desire to remain free from all foreign influences, political or ideological, especially from Communist China, the Soviet Union or France.

Communist propaganda from Hanoi and from the Communist-controlled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam relentlessly attacks United States involvement in South Vietnam as "imperialist" or "neocolonial" intervention, and those Vietnamese in the South who are dissatisfied with or disaffected by the conduct of the government tend, to one degree or another, to be susceptible to these charges. The government of South Vietnam itself has been sensitive to any suggestion, Communist or non-Communist, that Saigon is a "lackey" of the United States. Thus, in public statements, South Vietnamese government leaders have continually stressed their country's independence vis-a-vis the United States. Most recently, for example, upon his return from a summit conference with President Johnson at Honolulu in February 1966, Prime Minister Ky especially emphasized that the meeting had been conducted on the basis of "genuine equality."

In early 1966 trust in the United States and friendliness toward Americans seemed to be steadily growing, as the Vietnamese gradually came to realize that the United States entertained no colonial designs on their country. Awareness of the gravity of the Communist threat, which in their view is directed and supported by Communist China through the agency of the Hanoi regime, also played a large role in shaping their friendly attitude.
As the war intensified after 1965, many of the Saigon newspapers expressed fear, particularly in early 1966, that the United States would bring about a negotiated settlement which might eventually compromise the integrity and independence of the Republic of Vietnam. On the other hand, it also appeared that the increasing United States military and economic aid, in direct proportion to the Communist escalation of insurgency, tended to allay such apprehensions.
CHAPTER 16

PUBLIC INFORMATION

In mid-1966 modern methods of public communication were only beginning to reach outside the cities and larger towns. Newspapers, magazines and books circulated mainly among the urban minority whose members also made up the bulk of radio and motion picture audiences. An increasing number of radio receivers in the villages were bringing more country people within the orbit of the developing broadcasting system. The radio had become by far the most important among formal communications media, reaching between 60 and 75 percent of the population. The average peasant, however, continued to depend primarily on the announcements of local officials and on personal contacts for news of the world outside his community.

Wartime conditions and political unrest significantly impeded the official efforts that had been made since 1963 to expand the scope and technical facilities of communications media. Military operations prevented or slowed down the building of additional broadcasting stations in certain areas. Activities of mobile film units were curtailed in the rural communities threatened by Viet Cong insurgents, although there is an estimated monthly rural audience of 1.5 million. Some broadcasting station, including Da Lat, were damaged during the civil disturbances in the spring of 1966.

Newsprint shortages and cuts in electric power interfered with the regular publication of newspapers. Because of unsettled conditions in the countryside and the lack of transportation, newspapers could not be distributed regularly outside the major cities, and rural readers depended mainly on official government news bulletins.

Radio and press served more as instruments for the spread of the government’s political views than as channels of objective information. The governments which followed the coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem implicitly recognized freedom of expression, but official controls working through a variety of devices, including censorship, narrowly restricted the public expression of private opinions in newspapers, other publications and radio. All newspapers were subject to censorship, and those criticizing government policies or top-ranking government officials were subject to closure or suspension. The government also regulated newspaper’s content by instructing editors to give promi-
ent coverage to government press releases and by prohibiting the printing of news stories dealing with certain topics.

The broadcasting system is a semi-autonomous corporation guided by the government and is the principal means for the distribution of government-controlled news and political commentaries. The technical facilities of broadcasting stations were modernized and, wherever possible, additional ones were installed with substantial financial and technical aid from the United States. Thousands of inexpensive transistor radio sets were imported, also with United States aid.

The number of newspapers had increased notably since 1963. Although many had been sponsored by groups opposing government policies, strict censorship had prevented criticism of the government. Protests by newspaper publishers and journalists against the close surveillance of the press had grown in intensity since 1966.

Television was launched with United States assistance, in February 1966. During early 1966 its operation remained limited to telecasts from specially equipped aircraft and reached only the Saigon metropolitan area. When the Saigon ground-based facility was to become operational in late October, the aircraft was to be moved to the Can Tho area until airborne transmissions could be replaced by a ground station in Can Tho. Two other ground stations were planned in the I and II corps area.

The government expanded the scope of information services and programs which aimed to explain its policies and to enlist popular support for the struggle against the Viet Cong (see Glossary). The programs were intended mainly for the population of the South but also reached North Vietnam through radio broadcasts and leaflet-drops. Film shows, lectures, rallies, allegorical drama shows and recitals reached many villages and hamlets, including those of the montagnards in the Central Highlands.

A special program, entitled “Open Arms” (Chieu Hoi), was designed to encourage defection among members of the Viet Cong. Started in 1963, “Open Arms” provided retraining and reorientation for former Viet Cong members. Because of the importance attached to this program, a section, named after it, was added to the former Department of Psychological Warfare, which was then renamed the Ministry of Information and Open Arms.

The Communists were sending subversive propaganda into South Vietnam from North Vietnam by radio, and clandestinely within the country through the Viet Cong and its political arm, the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Newspapers and other publications, printed by the National Front, were passed from hand to hand in Viet Cong-controlled areas. The Front also operated at least one radio station, called Liberation Radio, the broadcasts of which could be heard in many parts of the country.
Viet Cong agitation and propaganda teams were active in the countryside, attempting to exploit current issues which they believed to be of popular concern. The basic propaganda theme in mid-1966 identified the Hanoi regime as the champion of Vietnamese independence and welfare, and condemned Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky and his government as “willing agents” of an “imperialist” United States.

GOVERNMENT AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Background

The first newspapers and magazines printed in South Vietnam, which appeared during the 1880’s, were intended mainly for members of the colonial administration and their families. Vietnamese periodicals and newspapers, first published in the late 1890’s, were closely supervised by the colonial authorities. The founders of most of the early newspapers were Vietnamese who chafed at this French control, and their violent criticisms soon brought on strict censorship.

By 1954, when independence was achieved, government regulation and supervision of the press had long been a feature of national life. During the reign of Emperor Bao Dai, Prime Minister Tran Van Huu reinstated a French decree providing for precensorship of the press to discourage criticism of his government.

The policy of close government control was continued under President Diem. Although freedom of the press was nominally guaranteed in the Constitution of 1956, it was never achieved. Newspapers were subject to strict screening, before and after publication, by government officials; newsprint supplies were owned and allocated by the government; and the distribution of newspapers was handled by the Thong Nhat Company, a government-subsidized enterprise.

The legal basis for the government’s control was a presidential ordinance, promulgated in February 1956, providing penalties for publishing or circulating material which “could be exploited by subversive elements” or which might threaten security and public order in some other way. The same ordinance prohibited the publication of obscene and slanderous material.

Precensorship was legally re instituted in a decree promulgated in 1957, requiring newspapers to deposit two copies of each issue before publication with the Ministry of Information. Other restrictions included reduction of newsprint allocations, threats of suspension and the buying up of daily press runs by government agents. In some instances, newspaper offices were attacked by mobs, allegedly venting their resentment over the newspaper’s criticism of the regime. In the presence of the official policies and actions, the press rarely dealt with governmental or political issues. Some editorials on minor political
issues and criticism of low-level officials were tolerated and sometimes even encouraged by government leadership.

**Government-Press Relations Since 1963**

The military regimes which followed the coup against President Ngo announced the intention to remove the restrictive practices of the preceding era. By mid-December 1964, some 23 dailies were published as compared to 15 in 1963. Many of those published before 1964 changed their names to disassociate themselves from the Diem era. The Ministry of Information was flooded with additional applications, but not all such applications were followed by the publication of a newspaper.

Strong antigovernment criticism appearing in the new dailies, and in some of the old ones, caused the governments of Prime Ministers Duong Van Minh, Nguyen-Khanh and Tran Van Huong to decree restrictive measures, including censorship and the reduction of newsprint quotas. The government of Minh adopted no new decrees dealing with the press but warned that the Ministry of Information would observe newspapers closely and that those which published anything "contrary to the spirit of the revolution" would be closed.

Decrees passed during the early months of Prime Minister Khanh's government reflected official efforts to provide standards for publishing and for the organization of the press. At the same time, however, several newspapers were closed or suspended, and draft copies of dailies and weeklies had to be submitted to the Ministry of Information 1 hour before release.

A decree announced on February 19, 1964, set forth the conditions under which newspapers and periodicals could be published. It required a 200,000-piaster deposit (for value of the piaster, see Glossary) from publishers who were not professional journalists, and one-half of this sum from professional journalist publishers. It also defined the conditions under which newspapers could be sued for endangering state security and for publishing libel and obscenity.

The organization of the press was regulated by a legal decree promulgated on April 30, 1964, which called for the establishment of a nine-member press council to be elected from a general press assembly that would include the publishers and editors of all newspapers. The council was to act as a liaison between press and government, establish criteria for the training of journalists and for the issuance of press cards, and was empowered to issue reprimands to newspapers and to recommend their suspension. The press council was established in May; it was still in existence in mid-1966, but no data were available regarding its functions.

The Provisional Charter issued on October 20, 1964, by the government of Prime Minister Tran Van Huong, recognized the freedom of
the press but warned that it "may not be abused in order to make false accusations, slander, violate public morale and order, or to make propaganda for communism and neutralism." Article 16 of the same document, however, declared a state of emergency and the suspension of guarantees. The promulgation of the Charter was followed by intensified censorship and a reduction of newsprint allocations, but both measures were relaxed following the protests of newspaper publishers.

The antagonism between Prime Minister Tran Van Huong and Buddhist leaders in December 1964 marked a new period of strain between government and press. Three newspapers, Song (Life), the pro-Buddhist Noi That (Let's Speak the Truth) and the anti-Buddhist Su That (Great Truth), started publication without licenses and were subsequently confiscated.

Since the establishment of the government of Prime Minister Ky, the friction between press and government has been a steady undercurrent of national life. Late in June 1965 the government, through Dinh Trinh Chinh, secretary of state for psychological warfare, announced the closing of all Vietnamese-language newspapers for a 1-month period. The purpose of the move was, according to Secretary Chinh, to "clean up the press" and to consider qualitative improvements in newspaper content. Because of the vigorous protests of newspaper publishers, the measure was only partially implemented: of a total of 36 dailies, 23 were allowed to resume publication after a 3-day suspension.

The government, however, has kept close watch over newspapers. Suspension or closure of dailies and weeklies which have allegedly violated laws prohibiting the printing of matters harmful to national security has occurred frequently. Because of extensive censorship, many newspapers have appeared late, with large blank spaces.

Newspaper editors, moreover, are periodically exhorted to print more government releases and news items originating with the government-owned domestic news agency, Vietnam Presse. Each day the Secretary of State for Information and Open Arms releases a list of topics about which no news stories may be published. Among such topics in 1965 were the demonstrations in the United States against the war in Vietnam, the release of South Vietnamese prisoners by the Viet Cong and some strike news. The government has also shown growing sensitivity to press coverage of the war.

This attitude has been shared by the United States Military Assistance Command for Vietnam (MACV) which, until January 1966, had briefed all newspapermen on military actions of United States as well as Vietnamese units. In July 1966 the MACV requested the news correspondents to observe rules of voluntary censorship in reporting military operations. According to these rules, newsmen would
abstain from reporting casualties, troop movements and the identification of military units engaged in combat except in general terms. After January 1966 the same rule was applied to daily briefings of newsmen held by Vietnamese government officials on the actions of Vietnamese units.

Press criticism directed against the government and against the intervention of the United States in the Vietnam war has brought forth official warnings of suspension and closure. In December 1965 several newspapers were confiscated, including Sinh Vien Hue (Student Union of Hue), a publication of the pro-Buddhist students of the University of Hue.

Censorship measures were further tightened in the early spring of 1966. Newspaper publishers requested a meeting with Dinh Trinh Chinh to discuss what they called the "rigid and illogical" nature of these measures, but their request was not granted. Protest against censorship was one of the factors in the political unrest beginning in March 1966. In a resolution addressed to Secretary Chinh the Association of Vietnamese Publishers protested against the continued censorship and the attitude of the Director of the Press in the Department of Information and Open Arms toward certain newspaper publishers. Students of the National Institute of Administration and students of the Faculties of Medicine and Pharmacology of the University of Saigon declared their support of the publishers' resolution.

INFORMATION MEDIA

The Ministry of Information and Open Arms, in April 1966, was in charge of the control and coordination of communications media and of government information programs. The Department is subordinated to the Ministry of War and Reconstruction and is headed by a secretary, who, in addition to his official title of secretary of state for information and open arms is often referred to as psychological warfare secretary or information minister.

The Press

Since 1963 the number of daily and weekly newspapers has been extremely fluid. At the end of 1965, for example, there were 10 Vietnamese newspapers, 2 English newspapers and 1 Chinese newspaper among those considered most influential (see table 2). Almost every month, however, newspapers are suspended, closed or discontinue publication for financial reasons, while new ones begin to publish. In April 1966, there were 23 Vietnamese, 2 English, 2 French and 10 Chinese dailies published in Saigon; these, however, represented only a fraction of the more than 60 dailies and weeklies published throughout the country. In contrast to the constantly changing number of
Vietnamese-language newspapers, the number of those published in French, English and Chinese tends to remain steady.

After the end of the Diem regime, progovernment newspapers no longer received official subsidies. Compelled to look for other sources of revenue, publishers turned to former politicians or politicoreligious groups, although the solvency of such persons and groups had not always been durable. Newspapers linked to political or religious sponsors tended to oppose government policies. The swift official

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Language and circulation</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinh Luan (Right Opinion)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 40,000</td>
<td>Dang Van Sung</td>
<td>Nonpartisan, anti-Communist; has the highest circulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Chu (Democracy)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 20,000</td>
<td>Vu Ngoc Cao</td>
<td>Nonpartisan, anti-Communist; appeals to intellectuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Chu Moi (New Democracy)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 25,000</td>
<td>Ha Thanh Tho</td>
<td>Nonpartisan; supports the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Chung (The Mass)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 25,000</td>
<td>Tran Nguyen Anh</td>
<td>Nonpartisan; supports the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngay Nay (Today)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 22,000</td>
<td>Hieu Chan</td>
<td>Pro-Buddhist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu Do (Freedom)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 25,000</td>
<td>Pham Viet Tuyen</td>
<td>Nonpartisan; supports the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xay Dung (Construction)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 15,000</td>
<td>Father Nguyen Quan Lam</td>
<td>Represents Buddhist political views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin Song (Morning News)</td>
<td>Vietnamese 20,000</td>
<td>Do Cuong Duy</td>
<td>Weekly; mouthpiece of the antigovernment dissident groups in Hue and Da Nang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lap Truong (Standpoint)</td>
<td>Vietnamese n.a.</td>
<td>Ton That Hanh</td>
<td>Pro-Catholic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanh Dau (Right Path)</td>
<td>Vietnamese n.a.</td>
<td>Ngo Huu Dat</td>
<td>Semiofficial organ of the Unified Buddhist Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuen Tung (Far East)</td>
<td>Chinese 16,000</td>
<td>Chu Min Yee</td>
<td>Oldest and most influential Chinese newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon Daily News</td>
<td>English 4,000</td>
<td>Nguyen Van Tuoi</td>
<td>Independent; pro-Western.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon Post</td>
<td>English 6,000</td>
<td>Tran Ly Thich</td>
<td>Independent; pro-Western.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.a.—not available.
* Estimated.
repercussions which followed antigovernment press articles explained
the brief lifespan of many daily and weekly publications.

For Vietnamese-language newspapers, the average circulation is ap­
proximately 19,000 to 20,000, about 7,000 for Chinese newspapers
and lower for English- and French-language newspapers. Circula­
tion figures are often exaggerated. Data pertaining to actual circula­
tion, financial status and names of persons or groups supporting a
newspaper are considered secret by publishers and are not divulged to
outsiders.

Sales in Saigon represent a substantial portion of the total circula­
tion. In the capital and in the larger cities, many people read more
than one newspaper. On a countrywide basis, on the other hand,
average readership per newspaper copy is as high as 50 in some areas.

Despite their instability, newspapers since 1963 have become more
varied in type and highly competitive. In an effort to maintain or
increase circulation figures, most newspapers show a propensity for
sensationalism and banner headlines, and devote considerable space to
serialized novels and cinema gossip.

The average newspaper is made up of 4 to 6 pages. Because of
economic shortages, paper, printing and pictures are of poor quality.
The staff of reporters and feature writers is small, sometimes consist­
ing of not more than 10 or 12 persons. Although formal training in
journalism is offered at the university level, many newspapermen learn
the trade on the job and never acquire a degree.

The leading professional associations for journalists are the South
Vietnamese Journalists Union and the Federation of Journalists.
Publishers are represented by the Newspaper Publishers Association.
The Press Council, formed in 1964, includes both publishers and
journalists. In March 1966 the Journalists Union offered a 3-month
course in journalism, taught by teachers from the United States and
Canada. The course received technical and financial assistance from
the International Federation of Journalists and the American News­
paper Guild.

Probably the most influential newspapers are the Chinh Luan
(Right Opinion) and Dan Ohu (Democracy). Both are nonpartisan
and anti-Communist. Chinh Luan's estimated circulation of 20,000
is the highest among Vietnamese-language newspapers. Dan Ohu,
with a circulation of about 10,000, appeals mainly to intellectuals.
Dan Chung (The Mass), with an estimated circulation of 6,000, is
nonpartisan and tends to support the government. The nationalist
Ngay Nay (Today) generally favors the Buddhist cause and has a cir­
culation of about 22,000. Tu Do (Freedom), with an estimated cir­
culation of 12,000, is noted for its support of the United States.

Catholic and Buddhist political points of view are reflected in
several newspapers. The daily Xay Dung (Construction) has an esti-
mated circulation of 12,000 and is generally regarded as the semiofficial Catholic newspaper. The daily Tin Sang (Morning News) represents the views of the Buddhist political movement. Tu Quang (Compassion), a monthly review, is the lay publication of the Buddhist Institute for the Execution of the Dharma. The weekly Duoc Tue (Torch of Intelligence) is an organ of the Refugee Buddhist Church. Its former publisher, Thích Đức Nghiep, was a Buddhist spokesman to the foreign press. Chánh Dau (Right Path), founded in November 1964, is the semiofficial newspaper of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

The Chinese-language Yuen Tung (Far East) has a circulation of 16,000. The oldest and most widely read among the Chinese newspapers it was first published in 1939. The English-language Saigon Daily News and Saigon Post, both founded in 1963, have circulations of 4,000 and 6,000, respectively, and have extensive foreign news coverage, although war stories and domestic events are generally featured on the front page. Crimes are reported in detail, frequently with pictures and names of the persons involved. The Saigon Daily News carries features by United States syndicated columnists and Western-style political cartoons and comics.

Some periodical journals are published by scientific or professional groups, but their circulations are very small. Popular periodicals include the English-language Vietnam Illustrated, published by the Saigon Post, and the Vietnam Combat et Edifices (Vietnam Fights and Builds), published in French and in English. The Vietnamese-English Lu’a Thiêng (Sacred Flame) is the illustrated periodical of the Buddhist movement.

Because the circulation of commercially published dailies and weeklies is limited to Saigon and the major provincial cities, newspaper needs of the rural population are met by provincial newspapers published by the Vietnam Information Service (VIS) or by the Province Chief. Published weekly or biweekly, provincial newspapers serve the information need of the rural areas.

**Publishing**

Saigon is the center for the publication of books and pamphlets as well as newspapers and periodicals. It is the seat of the country’s largest printing facility, the National Printing Plant, which is owned and operated by the government. Established with financial and technical assistance from the United States, the National Printing Plant is equipped with machines for various types of printing. Additional printing facilities are operated by the Vietnamese Army Psychological Warfare Directorate, the Department of Agriculture and the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO). In
addition, there are a few private publishing and printing firms, most of which lack modern printing and binding equipment.

News Agencies

The government owns the only domestic news agency, Vietnam Presse, which supplies much of the local and national news and most of the foreign news to the domestic press. Vietnam Presse subscribes to the services of Agence France Presse (AFP), Reuters, Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI) and others. It also maintains its own correspondents abroad. Morning and evening editions of Vietnam Presse daily bulletins and a weekly bulletin feature domestic and foreign news. In December 1965, Nguyen Ngoc Linh, director of Vietnam Presse, announced the government’s plan for the building of a 14-story press center in Saigon.

Radio

The government-owned National Broadcasting System of Vietnam (Vo Tuyen Viet Nam—VTVN) operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Information and Open Arms. A decree promulgated in October 1965 provided for the autonomous operation of Radio Vietnam under a director general by January 1966. Information is lacking, however, regarding the implementation of this decree.

In January 1966 the country’s broadcasting system consisted of a main station in Saigon and regional stations in the cities of Ban Me Thuot, Da Lat, Hue, Nha Trang, Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon, Can Tho and Da Nang. Provincial stations operate in Quang Nam, Phu Yen, Dinh Tuong, Long An and Kien Tuong Provinces (see table 3). The stations broadcast on shortwaves and mediumwaves, on transmitters ranging in power from 1 to 55 kilowatts. The basic shortwave program relay system has been improved since 1963 and will be further strengthened by the addition of new antennas. Twenty-five additional broadcasting sets are to be installed, mainly in the Mekong Delta, to improve broadcasting coverage of that area. Parts of the military troposcatter system (broadcasts based on the scattering of radio waves from the weather-zone, approximately 50,000 feet above the earth) have also been made available to Radio Vietnam to facilitate program relay.

By early 1966, however, the broadcasting system consisted mainly of shortwave and some low-powered mediumwave transmitters which were neither powerful nor numerous enough to function as a network. Plans had been made to build additional mediumwave transmitters and to increase the power of existing ones so that the system may be transformed into an actual mediumwave network.

Sites of the broadcasting stations operating in 1966 were selected with the view of serving the most densely populated areas, but in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Frequency (in kilocycles)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio Saigon (located at Phu Tho and Quan Tra)</td>
<td>Channel A 870 (50 kilowatts)</td>
<td>Has a total of 30 transmitters.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9775</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4810</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel B 7280</td>
<td>610 (20 kilowatts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel C 1090</td>
<td>9754</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel D n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Stations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Ban Me Thuot.</td>
<td>690 (55 kilowatts)</td>
<td>New 55 kilowatt transmitter has a radial range of 200 kilometers by day and 500 kilometers by night.²</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4810</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1090</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Can Tho</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>Formerly in Ba Xuyen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio Da Lat</td>
<td>6116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Hue</td>
<td>9670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1490</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Quang Ngai.</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>New since 1963.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Qui Nhon</td>
<td>800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Stations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Quang Nam (located at Hoi An).</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Phu Yen (located at Tuy Hoa).</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Dinh Tuong.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Long An (located at Tan An).</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Kien Tuong.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.a.—not available.

¹Technical data incomplete. Broadcasts are on mediumwave and shortwave, on transmitters ranging in power from ½ to 50 kilowatts.

²1 kilometer equals 0.62 miles.
mid-1966 only about 60 to 75 percent of the population could be reached by radio broadcasts. A more complete broadcast coverage depended upon the establishment of additional stations and further technical improvements to link the system into a network. Most of the broadcasts were on shortwaves, since the country's geographical features are not favorable to mediumwave emissions. Atmospheric conditions, on the other hand, often interfere with the reception of shortwave relay broadcasts. In spite of technical shortcomings and operational difficulties, the radio far exceeds the importance of newspapers as a medium of communication.

The Saigon station (situated at Phu Tho, in the outskirts of the capital) broadcasts on three shortwave and six mediumwave bands on transmitters ranging in power from 1 to 25 kilowatts on the shortwave and from 1 to 10 kilowatts on the mediumwave band.

Radio Hue has a combined 20-kilowatt mediumwave and shortwave transmitter; plans have been made for the installation of an alternate mediumwave transmitter. The combined transmitter operates on 9670 and 650 kilocycles.

The Quang Ngai and Qui Nhon regional stations have been added to the network since 1963, and the facilities of the Nha Trang and Da Lat stations have been modernized. The Da Nang regional station was inaugurated in January 1966. It is powered by a 10-kilowatt transmitter, which broadcasts on 1090 kilocycles, and by an additional 5-kilowatt transmitter.

The Ban Me Thuot station was being modernized in 1965 and 1966 with equipment supplied by Australia. Its new 55-kilowatt transmitter represents a more than fivefold increase of the station's previous broadcasting power.

In the course of the political disturbances in March and April 1966, following the dismissal of I Corps Commander Lieutenant General Nguyen Chanh Thi, the radio stations of Hue and Da Nang were taken over by rebel forces and broadcast antigovernment programs.

In 1964 the country's radio stations broadcast a total of over 120 hours per day, mostly in Vietnamese. Radio Saigon broadcasts also in Chinese, French, English, Cambodian and Thai. The daily hours of broadcast for regional stations vary between 4 and 12 hours a day.

Since 1965 the government has encouraged local radio stations to devote as much program time as possible to relay broadcasts from Saigon. In February 1966 more than 60 percent of the programs of some regional stations, including Can Tho and Da Nang, consisted of rebroadcasts from Saigon. Special broadcasts in montagnard dialects have been introduced by Radio Da Lat and Radio Ban Me Thuot. The programs intended for montagnards are entitled: "News," "Common Knowledge" (featuring reports and talks on reconstruction programs, hygiene, agriculture and history), "Music" and "Drama."
Radio Saigon broadcasts on four channels, of which Channel A has been on a 24-hour schedule since January 1966. News, press reviews and talks on current political topics predominate in the program which is beamed on 870, 9755, 6116 and 4810 kilocycles. In early 1966 several new features were added to the program of Radio Saigon, including an educational program, a children's hour and a drama show. Channel B (on 7260 and 610 kilocycles) features programs in Chinese dialects (Cantonese and Mandarin). The French-sponsored Channel C broadcasts music, French cultural programs and language lessons on 1090 and 9754 kilocycles. Radio Hue is on the air for 16 hours a day, mainly with “Voice of Freedom” programs intended for North Vietnam. An estimated 420,000 private radio receivers were in use in 1964. Approximately two-thirds of the privately owned sets were located in Saigon-Cholon; the rest were in the countryside, mainly in provincial district towns.

The government estimates the number of radio receivers in 1966 at 800,000. Since 1965, 125,000 transistor sets have been put on sale for prices ranging from 800 to 1,000 piasters. Government rural credit cooperatives handle the commercial distribution of sets in the rural areas. In addition, USOM has supplied more than 5,700 community receiving and listening sets, and some 10,000 hamlet receivers.

Most urban owners of radio receivers tune in every day for news, broadcasts of traditional drama, or Western music. The large majority of rural listeners prefer traditional music and classical drama (tuong cai luong) to political programs and newscasts. A growing interest in agricultural information programs has been noted in some areas. Rural radio owners tune in for about 2 hours a day, mostly in the morning. During harvesting and planting time, however, radio listening time drops off sharply. A limited survey in April 1964 among rural radio listeners indicated that they would favor a reduction of broadcasting time devoted to modern and Western music and would welcome additional broadcasts of traditional drama, poetry and music. Only students and teachers have expressed a preference for modern music and news commentaries.

Television

Television, first introduced in February 1966, has been operating on a provisional system of airborne telecasting. Signals are transmitted from specially equipped aircraft, while circling above Saigon, to receivers on the ground. Two channels are in operation: one, presented by the government, carries programs of information, education and entertainment; the other, used by the United States Armed Forces, features programs in English. During the initial phase, the Vietnamese channel operated 1 hour a day; the United States Army channel, 8 hours a day.
The first television showing, presented on February 7, 1966, on sets installed at various public places, was hampered by technical difficulties which the government hopes to correct when ground stations are installed. The United States has pledged to distribute 2,500 television receiving sets; 500 of these had been installed by February 1966.

Films

The importance of motion pictures as channels of information has been increasing. Mobile units of the United States Information Service, the Vietnam Information Service and Vietnamese Army Psychological Warfare battalions have reached a growing number of rural residents, but the scope of operations for mobile film units has been curtailed because of wartime conditions.

The USIS supplies about 70 percent of the films shown in rural areas. In 1964 more than 10,000 of the USIS prints were shown, representing about 800 titles. Most of the technical equipment required for film showings in rural areas was also supplied by USIS. More than 600 of a total of 800 16-millimeter projectors which were in use in rural areas in 1964 were made available by USIS and USOM. These agencies also furnished accessory equipment needed by mobile film units, including generators, tape recorders, loudspeakers and vehicles.

Throughout the country, there are about 156 cinemas with a total seating capacity of 65,000. Of these, some 100, with a seating capacity of 35,000, are in Saigon. Most full-length feature films are imported from Nationalist China, the United States, India, Japan and France. Since 1965 interest in French films has been slackening in favor of those produced in the United States.

There are five local firms equipped to produce full-length feature films. Because of the high price of raw film and operational difficulties incident to wartime conditions, the domestic production of feature films came to a halt in 1964.

The Motion Picture Directorate of the Ministry of Information and Open Arms produces 35- and 16-millimeter newsreels at a rate of 52 10-minute newsreels a year, in addition to various documentary films. These are supplemented by documentaries and biweekly "news magazine" films furnished by USIS. Other documentaries and short features are produced by the Vietnamese Army Psychological Warfare Directorate.

Informal Communication Channels

The traditional reliance on oral transmission of information is reinforced by suspicion of the reliability of the radio and press, and people tend to give more credence to hearsay information than to information received through more formal channels. Rumors and
reports originate in diverse settings, ranging from government offices in Saigon to the marketplace, where they are picked up and passed on by members of the armed forces, pedicab drivers, traveling food vendors and others whose activities bring them into contact with new listeners.

In the countryside, people look to village elders and officials, members of the military services and religious leaders for information. Countrywomen who sell produce in the markets of towns near their villages are also important links in the chain of person-to-person communication. News and gossip are also passed on at the village community center (đình), where people gather in the evening and carry home what they have heard to friends and neighbors.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

The government makes extensive use of formal and informal communications media to solicit public support for its policies. In 1965-66 more than two-thirds of the daily broadcasting time of the government-owned radio was devoted to news, news analysis and political commentaries. Other means of spreading information about government policies and plans range from the distribution of handbills to the dispatching of specially trained psychological warfare teams to the countryside.

Government officials stress current policy themes in speeches delivered in the course of personal visits. Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky made several such visits in 1965 and 1966, speaking in military camps, hospitals, hamlets and to members of various civic groups. The Prime Minister, moreover, encouraged persons from all walks of life to address themselves to him in personal letters regarding problems and difficulties encountered when dealing with government officials and agencies.

The basic themes the government seeks to develop are those of nationalism, elimination of "social injustice," defense against Viet Cong terrorism and the denunciation of communism and neutralism. The principal agency for the dissemination of government information is the Ministry of Information and Open Arms and its provincial organization, The Vietnam Information Service. The VIS supports the Provincial Psychological Operations Committee. The programs and activities of the Department of Information and Open Arms are complemented by the psychological warfare battalions of the South Vietnamese Army. Government information programs receive material and consultative support from the Joint United States Public Affairs Office.

The rural areas are special targets for the official information programs. In these areas the government relies heavily on the use of informal channels to reach peasants, who, by threats or inducements,