

# VIETNAM

## Magazine

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## FROM OUR READERS

Our warmest greetings and sincerest best wishes for a prosperous and happy New Year!

We firmly believe that the friendship and understanding between our country and Vietnam will grow ever stronger in times to come.

The present remarkable progress and development in the Republic of Vietnam is becoming known to more and more Swedish people, not the least through the admirable activities and work of the Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations, in Saigon and Stockholm.

We regard it as a hopeful sign that a short time ago the Swedish Government-owned TV Company showed to the Swedish people a reportage programme which was favourable to South Vietnam and included interviews with His Excellency the Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam and Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Linh, Secretary General of the Vietnam Council.

It is a well-known fact that the Vietnamese Communists have made Sweden one of their international propaganda platforms, with ample support of Moscow and Peking as well as the International Communist Front.

We have no doubt, however, that in the end, the deceitful propaganda of the totalitarians and their friends shall be defeated by those working on the side of peace with freedom, justice, and democracy—in Vietnam and in Sweden.

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Because I like your country and its valorous people, I am very interested in **Vietnam Magazine** which gives me news from Vietnam.

My children and I will be glad to subscribe to your magazine and introduce it to friends. Kindly let me know the rates of subscription.

Mme PATRICK NOLLET  
28 Allee des Sablons  
78 La Celle St. Cloud  
France

I have been informed about **Vietnam Magazine** as a means of information on behalf of the Vietnamese people for all Central American countries, and in a special way for Costa Rica.

I have read one of your issues and realize that it is a wonderful help to me since I am in the process of preparing a long report on your country. I find interesting the difference between customs and

# VIETNAM *Magazine*

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Cover: Pretty, vivacious, and young Nguyen Thi Tuy-Phuong has a flair for clothes that leaves Vietnamese teenagers agape with envy. Miss Phuong received the best-dressed prize at the Pop Festival held in Saigon last Jan. 30. The taste for clothes runs in the family. A younger sister, Nguyen Thi Tuy-Nga, whom we intend to feature in a future issue, copped second prize.

activities between Occidentals and people in your part of the world.

Please send me your publications to help me prepare a good report.

MARCO T. ZELEDON A.  
San Jose, Costa Rica

I am a law student of the University of Brazil who is very much interested in the history of your country, particularly its art, folklore, traditions, its people, government, and progress.

Please send me maps, stamps, a flag, reading matter, and pictures of your country, including those of Saigon which I consider one of the most beautiful cities of Asia.

Please extend my greetings to President Nguyen Van Thieu, a champion of democracy and peace.

ALBERTO HINDEBURGO  
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I would like to obtain information about possible employment in the Republic of Vietnam. I have been a farmer all my life and feel that there is a need for my talent in Vietnam.

Please send me any information you have on employment and farming techniques in your country.

JAMIE SWIDECKI  
2000 La France  
Bakersfield  
California 93304

Your articles on the history and culture of Vietnam are really of great interest for students in the field of anthropology.

Being an anthropologist, I should like to know if you can send me pictures of charming Vietnamese women as shown in "Women of Vietnam" for inclusion in my collection of "Women of Asia." With your kind cooperation it will be possible for me to make further preparations for a book on this subject.

V. H. NACHBAHR  
Herenetreat 32  
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Netherlands

I have read **Vietnam Magazine** in a friend's house and find it very interesting. Please send me copies. The magazine gives a lot of information about your country and your people, your brave people. We must fight Communist aggression.


MADALI SCHLICHTING  
Rua Isaac Pereira Garces, 43  
Guaratingueta  
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## FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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If you would like to learn more about our activities, we indeed would be pleased to hear from you.



President  
TRAN VAN LAM

I have learned much through your interesting **Vietnam Magazine** about your heroic and long suffering country. I have also found out through it about the upsurge in the popularity of Vietnamese stamps in the world, being as they are beautiful and interesting.

I would appreciate your putting me in contact with distributing offices of Vietnamese stamps or with organizations in charge of sales of these stamps to foreign collectors.

EDUARDO ULIBARRI BILBAO  
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3894  
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I have read several articles in your **Vietnam Magazine** and eagerly wish to know more about your country. Please let me know how I can receive Vietnamese news and magazines.

I would also like to correspond with pen-friends of different ages and nationalities in English, French, German, Spanish, and Arabian.

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# *Buddhist Belief*

## **The Middle Way of Life**

Buddhism is the "Middle Way of Life" in contrast to the extremes of indulgence or denial. It contends that the achievement of the perfect existence is obtained by a process of thought which was first taught, attained, and exemplified by Buddha.

Major Buddhist Traditions are three in number although there are many denominations or sects within the major teachings.

(1) Theravada is the teaching of the "Theras" or elder monks, and is the closest form of early Buddhism in existence, according to its adherents. Theravada uses Pali as its basic sacred scriptural language.

(2) Mahayana is the "Larger", "Greater" or "Expanded Way" of obtaining Enlightenment and uses Sanskrit as its basic textual language. This is the prevalent form of Buddhism in Vietnam if the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai are excluded.

(3) Mantrayana/Vajrayana/Tantrism. Tantrism incorporates Hindu hymns and dances in erotic rites with worship of female divinities and mysticism while declaring Buddhahood can be attained through theurgic magical practices. Sanskrit and Tibetan are used as basic languages. While related to Mahayana, it is more to be found in its purer form in Tibet, Mongolia, etc., than in Vietnam where its major influence seems to be in funerals.

The difference of the major schools seem to be based more on social, geographic and economic factors than on widely differing basic concepts. This is evident as attention is given to the different forms of popular Buddhism in the various areas of South-east Asia or even within the same country.

### **Tiratana**

The Three Jewels/Three Gems/Three Treasures are called Tiratana in Pali, the language in which Buddha spoke and the sacred language of Theravada, or Tri-ratna in Sanskrit which is the Mahayana and Mantrayana sacred language. They are considered to be the basis of all Buddhist schools and the symbolically supreme act of veneration. Reference is often made to them collectively and much as Westerners use the expression "So help me God." The Three Jewels are:



Like steep stairs the ascent to salvation is hard, long.

(1) The Buddha (Enlightened One) who conceived, taught and exemplified the Dharma/Dhamma/Karma. The Buddha, symbolized by the numerous statues, is the one who lived about 500 B.C. in Northern India, and is accepted as the originator of Buddhism.

(2) The Dhamma/Dharma/Karma is the teaching of Buddha given as doctrine. The concept of Karma contains the essence of Buddhism when combined with the Four Noble Truths. Karma declares that the sum total of a person's good and bad actions, with actions comprised of deeds, words and thoughts, determines the specific destiny of the next existence. It also affects the subsequent existences of the "rebirth" cycle. According to Karma, prior actions determine the conditions of man's present existence. Because his status is the result of his own actions, man must be his own savior from the recurring cycle of birth and death. Only by his own actions can he

free himself from the Wheel of Existence and escape into Nirvana. Karma is an impersonal, unchangeable force not subject to modification by prayer, etc.

Karma is simply the belief or teaching that the moral order of the universe requires a good deed to have a good result and a bad deed to have a bad result. When expanded in ethical concepts, Karma infers that good or bad previous existences account for the present good or evil fortune, poverty, illness, etc. It is also the controlling law of the universe of which man is a passing act. Man is subject to Karma even as nature responds to its inherent laws. There is no escape known to Buddhism from the cause/effect concept of this law.

Within popular Buddhism, regardless of theological concepts, Karma is quite similar to the Hindu belief in the transmigration of the soul. Many Buddhists use the term "I" to speak of the on-going process. A major concern of the Buddhist is that his life force, the very self, will have to endure in future existences the results of actions committed in the past or present. The scale of future existences may be either upward or downward. Some adherents of popular Buddhism have remarked that one of the highest hopes of a woman is to be born as a man in a future existence, so that she may increase merit and thereby escape into Nirvana.

### Man Reaps Own Sowing

Karma seems to say to the non-adherent Westerner that man reaps his own sowing; rewards or consequences are appropriate in quantity and quality to actions; good merit cannot balance out bad merit because both run their independent courses.

(3) The Sangha is the monastic order (organization) developed by the disciples of the Buddha as they followed his example and expanded his bonzes, or monks who are clergymen (incorrectly called as priests) and is supported basically by the Buddhist laity through gifts which gain merit for the giver, or in some countries through taxation.

(a) The bonzes in Theravada tradition may have this role for an indefinite time, from a few weeks to a life-time vocation. Normally the bonzes are vegetarians, but may eat meat on rare occasions. Their shaven heads and robes of yellow or saffron symbolize their renunciation of world pleasures as they follow the example of the Buddha. Besides the saffron and yellow robes, bonzes may wear either a brown off-shade white robe.

These monks do not usually officiate at weddings, though they may be present and recite Buddhist scripture or give sermons and offer congratulations. However, for deaths, the bonze leads the funeral rites in the home, and at the burial or cremation. He leads the religious rites after burial, including those on the first anniversary of a death. In rural areas, monks may be school teachers, or serve as bankers, advisors in economic, cultural, social, political, and religious affairs. Often the monk is the best educated figure in his community and is there-



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# Salvation dependent on good deeds

fore one of its guiding counselors. While participating in and conducting religious festivals, ceremonies or observances, they perform many functions and services for Buddhist adherents. The monks may lead the community in troubled times in solemn ceremonies to the pantheon of spiritual beings that form part of the traditions of Mahayana Buddhism.

Besides allowing the laity to earn merit placing rice in their "merit-bowls", the bonzes care for the temples, pagodas, wats, and monasteries. They also assist or direct charitable activities such as orphanages, hospitals, welfare centers, etc. More important to Buddhists, the bonzes are examples of the Buddhist Middle Way of Life in the journey to Nirvana.

(b) Nuns have been part of the Sangha since the Buddha established the role of nuns in his lifetime. Nuns observe similar, but more strict, rules than bonzes. Their work is primarily in temples, pagodas, teaching, nursing and welfare work. The saffron, yellow, brown or white robes of the monks are quite familiar, in contrast to the seldom seen white robe and shaven or closely cropped hair of the Buddhist nun. Her appearance symbolizes acceptance of Eight Buddhist Principles which include : avoid unchastity ; avoid drinking fermented liquor ; avoid falsehood ; avoid unseasonable meals ; do not dance ; do not play music or sing, do not see plays, movies, etc. Within Buddhism, her role is always subordinate to that of men, though in Theravada Buddhism her status is more acceptable than in Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhism.

The Sangha has monks, nuns, disciples, and lay devotees who may be compared to the brothers of Roman Catholicism, or to devout women who devote their total life to the church, but who do not qualify as nuns. Leadership within the Sangha is normally elected by the members. These leaders have passed certain examinations and are usually quit senior in years of service. Consideration is also given to experience and ability. Rank within the Sangha may be indicated by fans or by clothing, but they are not ordinarily distinctive enough for the non-trained observer to note.

In addition to the Sangha, Buddhism has a growing number of laymen and women who take an active part in Buddhist organizational affairs. They work in schools, hospitals, youth work, and other cultural, social, religious concerns of Buddhism.

## Merit Making

The Buddhist teachings of dana, which is giving for the sake of others without expecting compensation, has been largely replaced in popular Buddhism by the prevalent Asian folk belief in rewards and retribution. Thus the "merit-making" system in ope-

native in popular Buddhist ethics due to its Karma concepts. Due to axiomatic "By one's own good deeds, salvation must be won," the acquisition of Merit seems to be the basic motive of many religious acts. It also underlies much of daily social life. Many of the peasants assert that if the next incarnation is to be in a happier sphere, merit must be stored up. Merit may be gained by giving food to the monks, giving them robes, listening to sermons, giving money to the pagoda, becoming a monk, or even giving freedom to captive birds, turtles, etc.

Bad merit or demerits must eventually be worked off through suffering if Nirvana is to be achieved. In part, the concepts of Karma seem to result in a sense of fatalism. Man is the product of previous lives so actions in the present life cannot make too much difference.

## Merit Dependent on Factors

The merit acquired by any act is dependent upon the following factors : the spirit in which the donor grants his gifts, and the worthiness of the recipient. Gifts to animals yield some merit ; to evil men, a bit more ; to good men, even a greater merit ; to monks, a great value ; and gifts to Buddha gain the greatest merit. These recipients of gifts or good deeds may be listed under 14 categories. Merit is gained by the giver whether or not the recipient is in actual need of the gift.

Merit can be transferred from one person to another. When a boy becomes a novice, or when a man is ordained as a monk, they give merit to their parents. In giving one's merit to another, one's own merit is believed actually to be increased.

Nirvana is the highest state to which a Buddhist may aspire. It is a state of being that is outside or beyond the cycle of rebirth. An exact definition of Nirvana seems unobtainable since Buddha refrained from describing this state. When pressed for answers he gave parables and stated that it is the state which his disciples should strive to reach.

It is also the state in which Buddha's followers believe him now to be as the result of the Enlightenment which he achieved. It was the lack of clear definitions of Nirvana that created the schism that resulted in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In simple terms, Nirvana is the final release from Karma, the law that sustains the endless cycle of existence with its births and deaths.

Nirvana can be obtained only with long and laborious effort, self denial, good deeds, thoughts, purification through successive lives and much perseverance. "Salvation" into Nirvana is the result of one's own efforts, and cannot be equated with the Christian concept of Heaven.





**Le Thi Kim Phuong, popularly known as Connie Kim, is refugee from the North and the daughter of a musician. A high school graduate, she began in the singing profession when she was 16. Presented by her father, Quang Anh, in her musical debut, she has gone a long way. She is very much in demand in Saigon nightclubs and has entertained troops across the country.**

# Women of Vietnam



**Fast rising star in the South Vietnamese musical and film firmament is Miss Thanh Lan whose latest movie role is a cabaret singer in "Ganh Hang Hoa" (Flower Vendor). Critics predict a successful career for her because of versatility.**

*A legend:*

# Mountain of the Woman who waits

By VU TUYET MAI

*Day after day, month after month, year after year,  
Thinking, believing and waiting,  
So far away, one thousand miles away, my friend do you feel it,  
— In the sun, in the night, by the wind, in the rain —  
This heart in lasting gold and constant stone?*

Anonymous



A terrible prediction by an astrologer led him to hit her with an axe.

Shortly before reaching Lang Son, the traveller who goes from the delta up to the Highlands passes on the right side of the old Tonkinese road a small, isolated mountain. On top of that mountain, he will notice a rock formation which reminds him of a woman standing with a child in her arms. The resemblance becomes more striking in the evening as the sun falls over the horizon.

It is the Nui Vong Phu, the "mountain of the woman who waits for her husband." And here is the legend woven around that rock, the same that inspired poets like the anonymous Vietnamese bard who wrote the verses above.

## Prediction

Long ago, in a village of the Highlands, there lived two orphans, a young man of 20 years and his sister who was only seven. Left all alone upon the death of their parents, they were everything to each other.

One day, the young man consulted a Chinese astrologer who happened to pass by and the Chinese foretold their future, saying: "If such are the days and hours of your birth, you will inevitably

## *He knew but kept the secret*



Immovable in her eternal expectation, she waits from mountain top.

his adopted daughter. I was an orphan and I lived with my older brother who was everything to me. Fifteen years ago, he hit me with his axe and abandoned me in the forest. I was rescued by thieves. Later, the thieves went away in a hurry as they were about to be caught and left me. A trader who had just lost his daughter took pity on me and adopted me. I don't know what my brother has become and I never understood why he did it. We loved each other very much."

### No Doubt

The face of the young woman was covered with tears as she told her story. The man controlled his emotion but made her repeat the name of her father and that of her native village. No doubt remained that the woman was his sister but he kept the terrible secret to himself.

His inner agony, however, was unbearable and he felt ashamed and repulsive to himself. Unable to carry on, he invented a pretext to go away.

During the six months that his trip was supposed to last, his wife waited, patient and resigned. The six months came and went but he had not returned.

Each evening, she took her child in her arms and climbed to the mountain top to watch from afar the return of the husband. In good weather or bad, she stood there, her gaze glued to the horizon.

Day after day, she kept her fruitless vigil until—the legend does not say when—she was turned into stone in that pose, straight against the sky, immovable in her eternal expectation.

marry your sister. Nothing can reverse the course of destiny."

The terrible prediction shocked the young man and haunted him day and night. In the end, driven to madness by terror and sorrow, he took his sister to the forest where he used to cut wood and there, hit her with an axe when her back was turned.

He ran away and changed his name. He was delivered of his obsession but for a while the horror of his crime haunted him. Slowly, his peace of mind returned and he established himself in Lang Son.

Years went by and eventually, he married the daughter of a trader

who gave him a son and made him very happy.

One day, he came home and found his wife sitting in the sun, drying her long hair. She had her back to him and when she passed the comb over her smooth black hair which she lifted with the other hand, he saw a long scar above her nape.

### Adopted Daughter

He asked her how she got it and hesitating slightly, she recounted her story with tears:

"I am not the real daughter of the one I call my father but only

# BIEN HOA

## Land of peaceful frontiers

By QUANG MINH



Solitude atop Long An hill is undisturbed even by Buu Long's quarries.

Getting through Saigon's mid-morning traffic unscathed is a major achievement and when one finally squeezes through to the Bien Hoa Highway, one realizes that it is a Sunday drive compared to the furious and often deadly pace motorists take on the four-lane highway.

This is due in most part to the volume and speed of military traffic abetted by the civilian vehicle flow through this major artery coming into the national capital from almost all points.

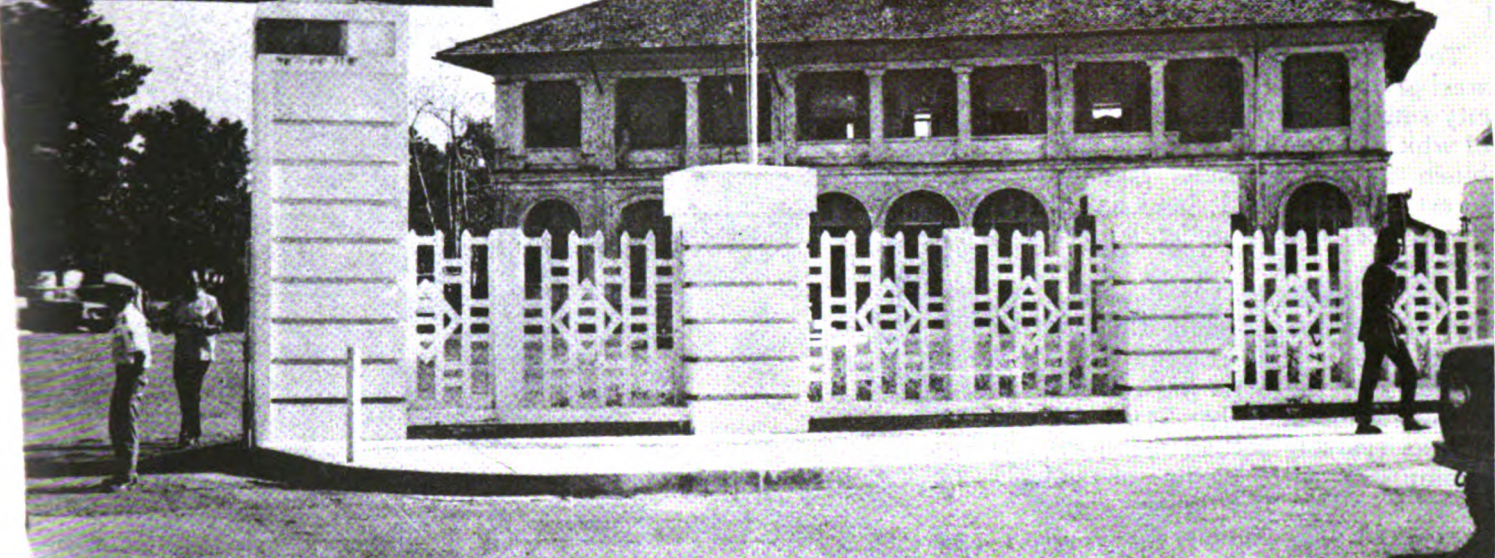
As one, however, progresses towards and into the province of Bien Hoa, the impression of fast and intense movement and activity does not slacken on both sides of the highway for this is the province that backstops the burgeoning economy and feeds the sinews of war.

### Historic Pagoda

However, as one goes into the byways and nooks of the province, one finds solitude and peace too, as on the top of Long An mountain, in the historic Buu Son Tu pagoda built centuries ago. Here, one can contemplate the meandering Dong Nai river in the west whose basin spawned Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, and Saigon. The quarry noises from the cavernous holes in Buu Long are faint and distant and even the drone of a huge cargo plane as it approaches Bien Hoa airfield in the north is barely heard.

Whoever called Bien Hoa the "land of peaceful frontiers" must

# CHÁNH



Like in most provinces in the country, the seat of government in Bien Hoa City is an old French-built building.

have been inspired by a sojourn on this quiet little mountain top.

### Peaceful frontiers

Bien Hoa is one of the oldest provinces in South Vietnam. For a thousand and a half years, it lay on the border between the Khmer empire and the Kingdom of Champa, largely undisturbed until the 17th century when the Central Vietnamese started their southward expansion.

At this time, the North was under the rule of the Trinh dynasty while the Nguyen dynasty held sway in the south. The demarcation line was the Gianh River slightly above the 17th parallel that divides the country today.

With the Trinh in firm rule in the North, the Nguyen looked southward to relieve the increasing pressure of population and they used Bien Hoa as the southern anchor for this expansion. Then, as now, refugees fleeing the tyrann

ny of the Trinh added to the population pressure, further abetted by Chinese immigration.

The Chinese were active in trading and at the time of southward expansion, commercial trading was already established and flourishing. The expansion met with no resistance from the Cambodians in the area, an attitude that quickly opened the settlement of the rich, untapped Mekong river delta.

### Dong Nai Region

In 1698, Emperor Nguyen Phuoc Chu appointed Nguyen Phuoc Kinh as governor general for the Dong Nai river basin area. One of Bien Hoa's city streets still bear his name today. Subsequently, the Dong Nai region was divided into two parts which included three districts — Bien Dinh (now Bien Hoa), Phien Tran Dinh (now Gia Dinh) and Huyen Tan Binh (now Saigon).

Bien Hoa was given the stature

of a separate province in 1832 during the reign of Emperor Minh Mang and in December, 1861 or only three decades later, Bien Hoa fell to the French under Admiral Bonard after a bloody war.

Over the long years, the size and shape of Bien Hoa changed many times and whole new provinces were formed from her territory including Phuoc Long, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy.

### Heritage

With such a long history, Bien Hoa is heir to famous artifacts like tombs and temples, some of the most beautiful in the entire country.

Thanh Long pagoda in Binh Truoc village, Duc Tu district, is one of the largest and most ornately decorated, featuring a Buddha with 18 arms. Dai Giac Tu pagoda, built in 1837, and Buu Son Tu pagoda on the top of Long An mountains, attract many tourists.

From atop the latter pagoda, one gets a beautiful view of the Dong Nai river which gave birth to the province.

In Long An village, Long Thanh district also lies the tomb of General Nguyen Duc Ung, a defender of Vietnamese independence, who died under the French occupation of Bien Hoa.

### Today's Bien Hoa

Today's Bien Hoa is 16 miles west of Saigon, the nation's capital city and consists of 193,500 hectares of which 70 per cent is arable land. Much of the remainder is dense forest or swamp and about half of the arable land is under cultivation.

It is divided into six districts—Tan Uyen, Cong Thanh, Duc Tu, Long Thanh, Di An and Nhon Trach. The southern part, which comprises most of Nhon Trach district is sparsely settled mangrove swampland with plenty of salt water intrusion and there is some rice grown but charcoal and fruit production are major occupations.

The central part of the province included Long Thanh, the largest district, and much of it is low, level land with dark, sandy loam soil. Main crops are rice and rubber. This region is famous throughout Vietnam for its rambutan and durian fruits which fetch high prices in Saigon. Its forested areas have been cut for lumber although some reforestation has been started. Game like deer, boar and wild cattle are disappearing.

The northern zone includes Duc Tu, Di An, Cong Thanh and Tan Uyen. The soil is coarse with deposits of laterite. Rice and rubber are also the chief crops but sugar cane, fruit, tobacco, corn, peanut and kenaf are also grown. Most of its lumber has also been cut.

### The People

As of 1970, Bien Hoa had a population of 463,788 with more than half of them concentrated in Duc Tu district. The capital city of Bien Hoa has 80,000. There are 65 villages and 196 hamlets in the province.

Descendants of the Vietnamese who came southward in the 17th



**Buu Son Tu pagoda atop Long An is one of Bien Hoa's many tourist spots.**

century comprise the majority of the population with the original settlers, members of the Vietnamese armies of the Nguyens. Present ethnic minority groups include Chinese who number a little over 2,000, Montagnards who total half of that, Cambodians who are just over 600 and Cham who have dwindled to about 30.

Buddhists comprise 65 per cent of the population while Catholics total some 30 per cent. Cao Dai are 2.7 per cent, Protestants one-half per cent and Hoa Hao .05 per cent.

The Buddhists in the province have 109 temples, the Catholics 57 churches, the Cao Dai 16 and Protestants, 2. In the village of Ho Nai which grew out of a North Vietnamese refugee center in 1954, there are more than 20 Catholic churches in a stretch of road about a kilometer long.

Farmers still comprise the largest occupational group, some 304,836 with merchants a poor second with 7,527. Factory workers number 2,866; transportation workers, 1,800; rubber plantation

# Province is industrial hub



Thirst for education is universal as seen in the eager faces of these children in Ho Nai Village at recess.

workers, 1,788; civil servants, 1,162; uniformed policemen, 1,141; teachers, 1,042; brick workers, 700 and quarry workers, 444.

These figures do not include employees working at the US military installations like Long Binh Post and Bien Hoa air base.

## Industrial Park

A substantial stake of the nation's industrial future lies in Bien Hoa. On both sides of the four-lane Bien Hoa Highway is a 500-hectare Industrial Park where an estimated US\$102 million are concentrated (1970 figures).

The showpiece is Vietnam's first steel rolling mill which opened in late 1968 and is already producing half of the nation's requirements. Other plants in the park produce paper, textiles, construction materials, ice, plastics, plate glass and bottles, batteries, salt, laundry de-

tergents and bleaches and bicycle tires.

Foreign investors include Canadian, Taiwanese, Filipino, French and American firms. More than half of the plants in operation rely solely or in part on local raw materials. The steel mill for instance, uses war scrap. Brick and ceramic factories use local clay. Rice straw produces paper, bicycle tires are end products of the province's rubber plantations.

The industrial park was once a colonial sugar refinery. Today it employs more than 3,000 skilled workers and more than a score more factories are nearing completion on the site. It is envisioned as one of the industrial centers of Southeast Asia.

In all, Bien Hoa has 8 textile plants, 100 brick kilns, 26 rock quarries, 37 rice mills, 32 sawmills, 30 sugar cane presses, one jute bag

plant, 21 ice plants, 13 ice cream plants, one paper and chemical products plant, three chemical factories, two battery plants, 328 charcoal furnaces, eight printing houses, one Eternit roofing plant, one Dutaco company and 51 miscellaneous factories.

Bien Hoa is an ideal location for industry. It is neither too far nor too near the capital city of Saigon and it has good roads. "Hotmixed" paved roads total 105 kilometers, limestone paved, 61 kms.; asphalt paved, 80 kms.; laterite paved, 187 kms. The Dong Nai river also provides another artery for transportation. And of course, eventually, Bien Hoa airbase could handle commercial transportation requirements.

A new bridge spanning Dong Nai river is nearing completion as part of Highway 1, the ambitious national road project that would link

the Ca Mau peninsula in the south to Quang Tri in the north.

### Security

Growth and activity are evident in the province and may be attributed in large part to greatly improved territorial security. There are few places today in the province where one is not reasonably safe on the roads during daylight hours. Much of the success in this endeavor is due to the upgrading of the province's Regional and Popular Forces.

With improved security, it was possible to lay the base for popularly-supported local government with elected officials in all villages and hamlets and the majority of the appointive officials having had at least basic training.

### Development

In agriculture, some 32,500 hectares are planted to rice and the goal set for the 1971 crop was approximately 111,500 metric tons of rough rice. Rubber is planted on 10,116 hectares that yield about 4,000 metric tons per crop year. Sugar cane, the third major crop is planted on 1,450 hectares yielding some 40,600 metric tons.

Pomelo is the major fruit product, being planted on 521 hectares followed by orange, rambutan and durian which are planted in more than 200 hectares each. Mango, tangerine, lemon and mangosteen also abound although cultivated on smaller plots.

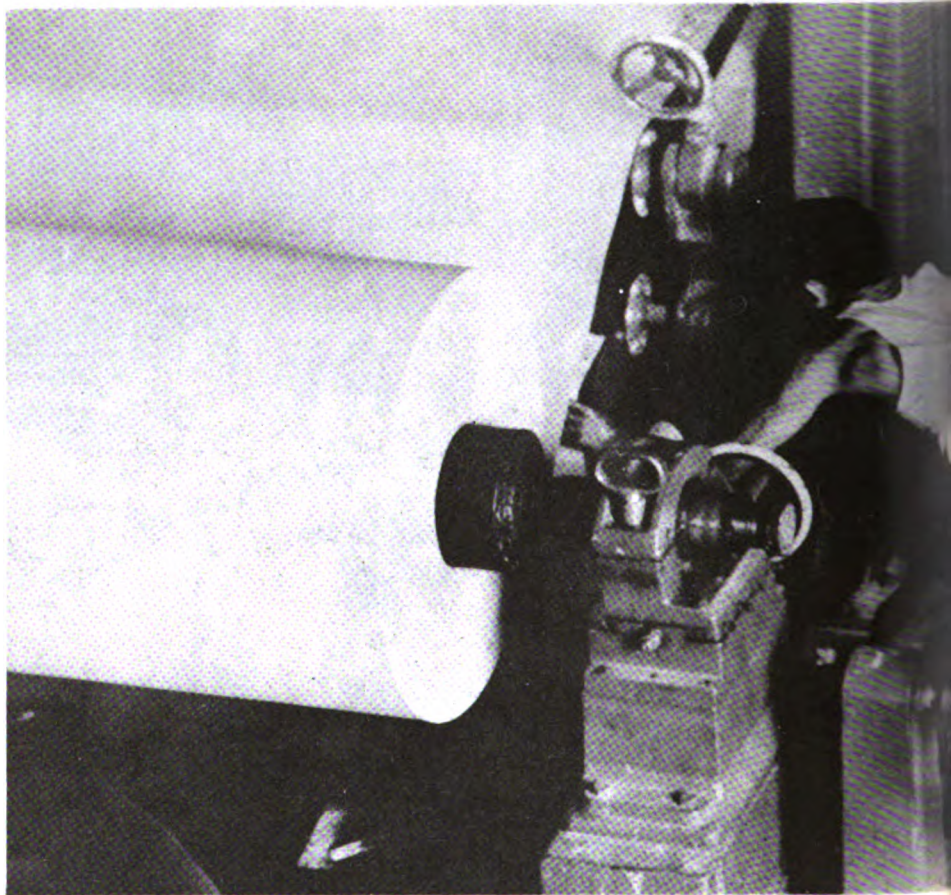
As in other provinces in the country, village self-development is an integral part of local development in Bien Hoa. Self-help projects in 1969 in the province benefitted 242,400 persons at a cost of VN\$100,843,000.

Rural development is handled by Rural Development cadres assigned in 30-man teams to work in selected villages under the direction of the village chief.

### Education, Health

Education from the rural level to the secondary level is a major activity and in the primary grades alone, there were some 55,561 en-

# Growth, activity





# ue to improved security



With the men off to war, labor is supplied mostly by women like in Buu Long's quarries.

Showpiece of the province is the industrial park which includes a paper products factory (top left)

Ceramics is another major industry. At left, girl puts finishing touches to an elephant base.



As in all of the delta, agriculture is the major occupation. At right, man irrigates a rice paddy.



Along busy Bien Hoa Highway stands the statue of an ARVN soldier at the gate of the national war cemetery.

rolled in public schools and another 10,551 in private schools as of 1970.

At the secondary level, there are seven public schools, four semi-public and 15 private schools with an enrolment of almost 18,000 during the same period.

Public health facilities are offered by the Bien Hoa provincial hospital and the privately-run Ho Nai Hospital. There are four maternity-infirmary dispensaries in the province, a total of 22 maternity dispensaries and 60 aid stations.

There is also the Bien Hoa Mental Hospital in Bien Hoa City to take care of mental cases.

### National Offices

Along the Bien Hoa Highway is also located the national military cemetery which, with its well-ordered and neatly lined rows of crosses, is often visited by tourists.

In front of the cemetery stands a statue of a soldier around which a story is woven. The story may be

apochryphal but anyway, it says that sometime ago, less than a year ago to be exact, residents near the cemetery observed that the statue went down at night, begging that it be moved to another location.

Its nightly sallies stopped only after it was taken down by the authorities and "improved," according to one version.

In Bien Hoa City also are located various prisoners' camps—political prisoners and prisoners of war.

Provincial authorities recall that in 1969, during the observance of Tet, the VC/NVA raided Bien Hoa in an attempt to free the prisoners of war. They also tried to attack the Chieu Hoi center, presumably to shoot the "hoi chanh," VC's who have rallied over to the government side. The attack was repulsed.

Another installation worthy of note within the province is the Bien Hoa air base, a major installation of the Vietnamese Air Force. Thu Duc Military School which trains officers for the RVN armed

forces is also located in the province.

In recent years, there has been little refugee activity in the province. The last legal refugees received their final benefits in June, 1969 and the Cambodian and Laos incursions last 1970 resulted in the resettling of only 62 Vietnamese and three Cambodian refugees in the province.

There are also six government-recognized orphanages and several others still unrecognized and arrangements are being made for a large charitable organization to construct a rehabilitation center in Long Thanh district for women from Saigon's streets.

The last massive refugee movement into the province took place during the 1954 partition of the country into north and south. These refugees were resettled in various places in the province and at this time, they have succeeded in starting a new life. Their settlements which were originally forests or

# A refugee tells of success



North Vietnamese farmer Pham Ba Thiet who came South in 1954 is now a successful furniture maker in Ho Nai.

jungles have progressed into full-fledged, thriving communities.

Typical of such a community is Ho Nai Village near Bien Hoa City. The people who moved into the area were all from the village of Lai On in the North Vietnam province of Thai Binh. As most of them were Catholic, the village's main road is literally studded with Catholic churches at least 20 of them in a one-kilometer stretch in the center of the village.

## Success Story

A success story of sorts was achieved by one of the refugees, Pham Ba Thiet, now 44, who was a farmer in Lai On village. Literally starting from scratch, he taught himself carpentry because he could not get land to farm and

twelve years after he and his family arrived in Bien Hoa, he had built up a modest furniture-making business.

Thiet and his wife Pham Thi Cung, now 40, came to South Vietnam with three brothers and his mother-in-law. He said he came because he did not like the Communists. Also, at the time that they moved, he was conscripted as a soldier in a private force led by a priest to fight the Communists and he did not like the trouble it caused him.

Thiet recalled that when they were new in the settlement, they were given assistance in cash and in kind by the government for three years. The village at the time was a jungle and Thiet made some money by cutting wood. With his savings accumulated over many

years, he started making furniture and as his venture grew, he subsequently hired carpenters and other help.

At present, he also buys and sells furniture, buying unfinished pieces and selling them at profit after putting the finishing touches. He estimates that his business, including the two-story house which serves as his workshop and home, is already worth more than six million piasters.

Would he like to go back to North Vietnam? "Yes," he says, "when there are no more Communists there."

But for the present, Thiet thinks Bien Hoa is still the place for him and his still growing family which consists of six girls with ages ranging from three to 15.

## *Expediency Cure*

# Stolen Panties for a Birth

By VAN NGAN

After hours in labour, the Vietnamese woman still has not given birth despite the best efforts of a rural midwife. Worry deepens in her husband until a neighbour whispers in his ear.

He runs from the maternity room, excited and bright with hope. At the home of another neighbour, a woman noted for her fecundity — ten times pregnant, ten easy deliveries, ten chubby children — he stops and surveys the yard.

### **Elastic Band**

With a leap, he jumps over the fence, pulls the lady's panties from the laundry line and quickly rips off the elastic band which is used to hold up the garment.

He races back to his wife, ties the band around her swollen belly and then leaves the room.

A few moments later the baby is born.

The father is not crazy; he is merely practicing one of the oldest methods of Vietnamese medicine: the medicine of expedient.

Curing by expedients is treating a disease, not by taking of injecting medicine prescribed by a physician, but by doing the job of another person associated with the patient.

In most instances, in order to obtain an effective cure, the patient must not know about the expedients. Where the patient himself uses expedients, no other party must know about it.

In the case of the stolen panties, two aspects were vital: (1) the husband must do it himself, and (2) the elastic band must be stolen and not given or asked for. If the theft were discovered the cure would not work.

Vietnamese folklore is filled with such cures of expediency.

### **Bone in Throat**

For example, a man with a fish bone caught in his throat walks the streets until he finds a wooden stick lying horizontally in front of him. He picks it up, reverses it and counts seven paces forward (a woman must count nine). Then he

returns home, burns the stick, mixes the ashes with water, drinks the potion and... presto, he is cured.

If a baby has grippe, a friend of the mother pulls some of the mother's locks of hair. If a crackling sound is heard, the baby will rapidly recover.

### **Southern Medicine**

Expediency cures are widely known in South Vietnam where it is called "Southern medicine." This is to differentiate it from "Northern medicine" based on Chinese medical practice requiring physicians and prescriptions.

While much of the practice appears based on superstition, other cures utilize commonly available herbs and leaves to make decoctions and potions. For example, scabies can be treated with a mixture of a fruit called oc-cho, cores or soapberry, mercury, and water from a burned cactus applied to the sores.

Other prescriptions are more exotic, such as the cure for kidney troubles. A water spider or cockroach is squashed with a sweet onion and the result tied to the patient's navel.

### **Guarded Secrets**

Southern apothecaries have compiled thousands of these expediency medicine formulas which they sell, often in brisk business, to their customers. Many secrets are carefully guarded and some even lost to posterity when an apothecary dies and takes his magic potion recipes to the grave.

So secretive is the medicine maker that often he may not pass his secrets on to his daughters for fear that they will give it to husbands outside the family line.

Many Vietnamese, particularly those in the rural areas, believe in the effectiveness of this kind of medicine and their faith is maintained by the fact that the cures often seem to work when all else has failed. And that's strong medicine in itself.

The Vietnamese understanding of time and history is different. To them—except when influenced by Western thought—time is circular. As the twelve-year repeating calendar repeats itself, so historical events repeat themselves.

There is little sense of progress. History possesses little value and few goals. Hence the Vietnamese is not impressed by a need to “rush.” He has plenty of time, usually little money. His life span is already too short; so why rush it away? There is normally an abundance of labor and many mouths to feed; make do with what you have.

### Patience

Develop sufficient patience, and perhaps in the next existence your Karma will permit improvement. After all, the only way to make any real progress is by improving one’s merits and the practice of the Eight-Fold Path to Nirvana with the removal of the 108 desires.

This concept of time combined with poor diet and disease often results in less than the fullest possible effort. When climatic conditions are added to these three elements, along with the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism, it is to their credit that the Vietnamese have achieved as much as they have.

### Family Concepts

In Vietnam, family concepts are affected by Hinduism and Buddhism, and by the older concept of ancestor veneration encouraged by Confucianism. The latter ties people to the past and to the future so that they might be adjusted to the present.

Each individual is taught his exact position in society. There is little confusion about place, and few decisions to be made.

A part of the family, the individual is neither superior nor inferior, but is an integral part of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His life is bound by the family/clan/community—by those who lived before him, by those who live with him, and by those who will live after him.

## Vietnamese Concepts

Life is short:  
why rush it?

The individual feels secure because of his accepted role. This role does not require efficiency and productivity as much as loyalty and conformity to prescribed roles. Old age is respected by virtue of being a father, grandfather, or great grandfather in the community rather than because of acquired wisdom, skill, or wealth.

Thus even grown people must consult grandmothers, parents, elder brothers, departed ancestors, etc., before making decisions. Business transactions take time because the whole community—living and dead—is involved.

Embarrassment or shame is due more to violations of the socially accepted code than to a sense of moral wrongness. All proposed actions must be preceded by consideration of what consequences they will have on the total family. This is why even deceased ancestors are consulted.

### Ancestor Respect

The belief in ancestor veneration encourages early marriage and many children. It would be wrong to deprive ancestors of worship and lessen their estate in the spirit world due to the lack of descendants. The more respect shown for the spirits of the dead, the greater opportunity for them to be “good spirits” who will help the living members of the family.

Because one’s estate in the spirit world is dependent upon worship given to the deceased, planned marriages by the family help promote and protect this veneration. Spirits not venerated may become “wandering spirits” and can do harm. These are feared by one and all.

### Concept of Spirits

Belief in good and evil spirits, both animate and inanimate, is basic throughout Vietnam regardless of other religions professed. Many Vietnamese are superstitious because of their beliefs. Some are very serious in seeking to appease evil or harm-causing spirits and the spirits of deceased ancestors. Not to appease would be to create problems.

Thus the Spirit House, the Spirit Pole in rice paddies, the mirror by the door of the home, the “ishi” lions at the temples or homes, the ancestor altars or shelves, etc. are attempts to be in harmony with the spirits, and to have the spirits to do the will of the appeaser. Moreover, pleased spirits can do much to counteract evil ones. It is widely believed by most classes throughout Vietnam that spirits have the power to do evil by causing sickness, death, and other troubles. It is because of such beliefs that:

a. Mirrors by the door frighten

spirits and prevent them from entering the house.

b. Red paper representing the "Door God" does the same thing.

c. Buddhists desire that an even number of people be in a picture lest death be caused to one of the group.

d. Since the "life-stuff" of man lives in the head, patting the head is believed by some to be an attempt to steal away the spirit and cause death. Because the head is the residence of the soul, the feet are considered of lowest value. Many Vietnamese consider it a gross insult to sit with feet crossed, pointing the sole of the foot to anyone.

e. Since spirits cause sickness and death, never joke about these lest the spirits be angered and take action.

f. Many of the rituals created by Animism, wherever found in Vietnam, are designed to ward off illness, death, etc., by requesting protection or by propitiating an errant or evil spirit. Many women have small shrines to Quang An for protection during childbirth and while children are small. The small children may also wear numerous amulets as charms against harm or ailments caused by errant or wandering spirits.

### Cleansing Service

Many Vietnamese families have a service within the first 12 years of a child's life which is supposed to cleanse the child of the evils of its birth and allow intelligence while promoting a healthy childhood.

This service may consist of a small altar dedicated to the goddess of birth—usually Quang An—on which are placed 12 bowls of sweet soybean and sugar soup. Twelve pieces of paper with pictures of the calendar cycle are then burned.

Because childhood is the time when the evil spirits are most zealous, the little ones must be carefully guarded. It is now that little boys especially must be protected and brass bracelets may be placed on the small child as the spirits do not like the feel of metal, or an earring may be worn by the male baby to fool the spirits into thinking it is a girl. Likewise, the

small children are sometimes cautioned not to play under the trees where the spirits "rest" for fear they may anger the spirits.

### Taboo for Pregnant

Pregnant women often observe many taboos in order that the strains of pregnancy may be eased and that birth may bring forth well-formed children without deformity. They must not eat "unclean" foods such as the snake, rat, mouse, dog, or beef lest the child be retarded; this does not preclude the use of tobacco or betel nut.

Because her presence might create "bad luck" for a bridal couple, a pregnant woman is not supposed to attend weddings, nor is she to take part in funerals as this may cause her child to be a "crybaby." She is to also shun places of worship including the pagoda and shrines to avoid angering the resident spirits of these places. Since the spirits often promenade at twelve and five o'clock, she must not be outside her house so the evil spirits will not see her and create harm for her or the baby. Within the house, she must always take care to avoid stepping over a sleeping place or the unborn child may be infected with lethargy so that it will take seven days after birth for its eyes to open. Moreover, stepping over a sleeping husband can afflict him with sleeping sickness even as drinking from a cup which he is using may create many problems for him.

### Individuality Concept

In contrast to the Confucian teaching that the individual is merely a link between past and future generations, Buddhism stresses individuality.

Among the Twelve Principles of Buddhism, the place and responsibility of self is emphasized when it is declared that "self-salvation is for any man the immediate task." Man is not his brother's keeper, but must find his own way to Nirvana by escaping the Wheel of Existence through the use of the Eight-Fold Path and the elimination of the 108 desires or cravings.

Because each individual has his own Karma which must be worked out for eventual salvation, it is necessary that merit be gained through good works in order to climb the ladder to Nirvana. For the Buddhist bonze, this may be done through delivery of sermon, meditation, etc. For the laity, it will include meditation before Buddha's statue, and giving gifts to the pagoda and the bonze.

In some cases there may be merit granted for helping other people, but normally, the greatest merit is gained through help to the pagoda and to the monks. The denial of the 108 desires or cravings means submission to fate and resignation to life as it is. This denial prevents involvement in the quest for a better life and the acquisition of material things, as these are thought to be illusory. The real virtues, by contrast, are patience and humility.

### Behavior Patterns

The preceding concepts create the following ideas and behavior patterns:

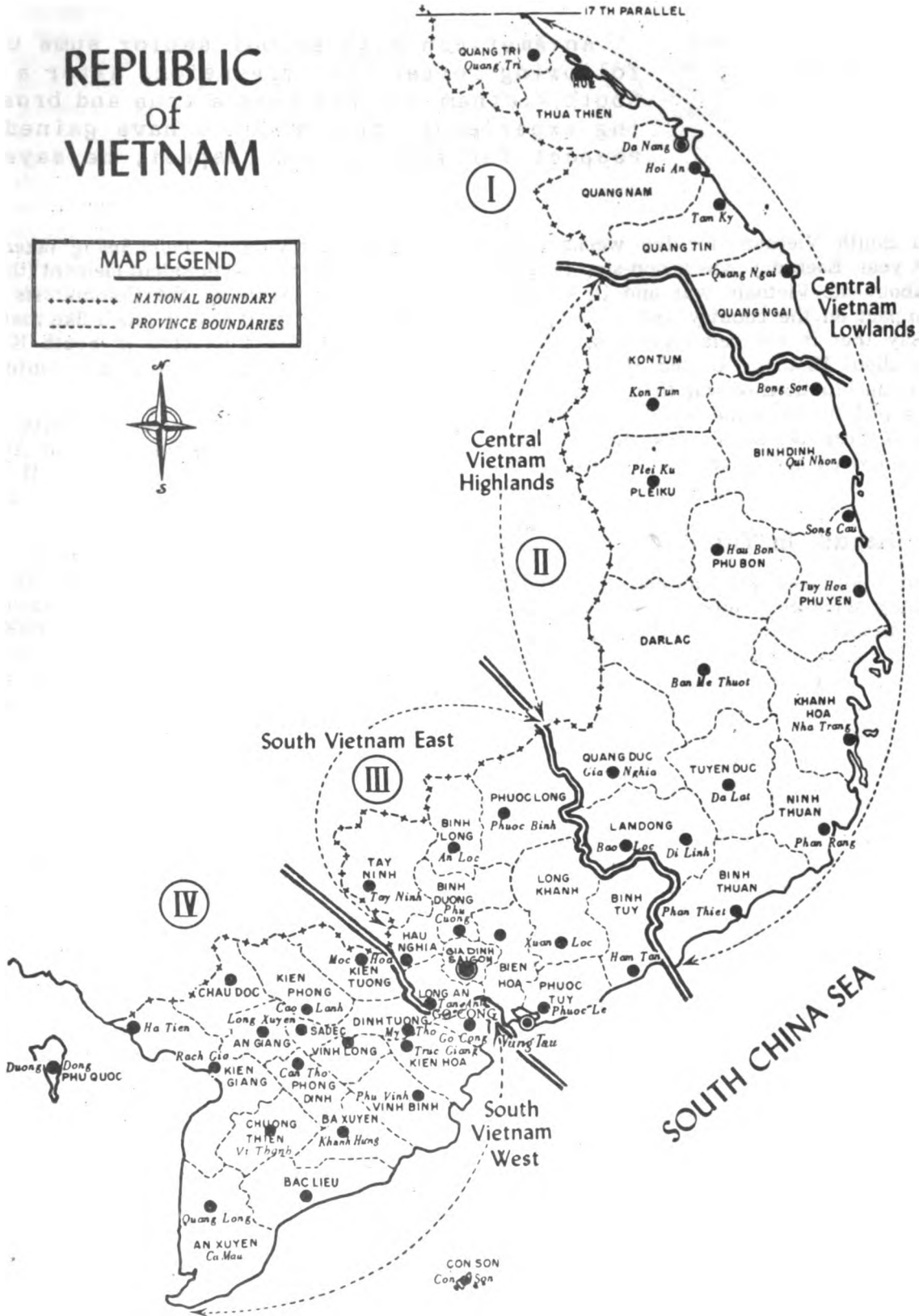
a. Avoid showing anger to anyone who offends. The more annoyed or perturbed the Vietnamese becomes, the more polite he will be. He will speak in a softer voice, and he will smile more. Therefore, loud speech, vulgarity, and anger are acts which may create concealed or repressed anger and hostility.

b. Humility is revealed in attempts to make you feel completely at ease. You will be seated higher than your hosts. Places of honor are offered to guests. Humility prevents the Vietnamese from contradicting you, even if you are wrong. And verbal agreement may be given to your plan, even when there is no intention to follow it up with action.

c. Teachings of individuality and eternal Nirvana tend to hinder industrial growth, capital investments, and general economic progress. Such material developments run contrary to the idea that man can find ultimate success only in the denial of the very drive which facilitates them.

# REPUBLIC of VIETNAM

MAP LEGEND	
	NATIONAL BOUNDARY
	PROVINCE BOUNDARIES



# RESPECT FOR FREEDOM

An American high school senior sums up in the following letter his impressions after a visit to South Vietnam. "It has been a true and broad learning experience" from which I have gained a great respect for freedom and respect, he says.

I was in South Vietnam for ten weeks from March 20 last year. Each day was a non-stop process of learning about the Vietnam war and its current and future impact on the country and its people. I am glad to say that in my relatively short stay I learned more about Vietnam, United States foreign policy and the machinations of war than I could possibly have learned in the same amount of time at Mount Hermon Prep School or elsewhere on the globe. This has indeed been a true and broad learning experience.

## Hardly in Turmoil

Having heard a lot about Vietnam before I arrived, I watched many television shows concerning Vietnam, and saw battle scenes in the news reports and in magazines, I was at first quite apprehensive about traveling around in a war-torn country, and not at all sure of what I was going to find. From a first-hand look at things over a long period, which has included travels to the northern regions and talks with all kinds of people, I can say that this country, within its own borders at least, is hardly in turmoil.

The small Viet Cong cells and so-called Veterans' and Students' Movements keep some people, especially foreigners, on edge, but when one takes an objective view it is clear that their power for war is very limited and their ability to mount terrorist attacks is also greatly circumscribed. I can confidently say therefore, that the daily reports of battles and life in South Vietnam have been portrayed by the press and others in a grossly misleading fashion.

The press and the steady stream of fly-by-night VIP visitors of course report and give out with their cooked up reports and rhetoric either to make a living or to win votes and re-election. In other cases, it is to feed the human thirst for attention or to add, or, better still, compensate for the mischief the VC are unable to create.

South Vietnam has its share of problems — corruption, vice, drugs and the great gulf between the "haves" and "have-nots," but these are not what robbed it of the support it enjoyed and deserved from freedom-loving people.

The battles which have been and are being fought in Vietnam are part of a move by a centuries-

old nation trying to avoid being taken over by a determined internal dissident element (the Viet Cong) or being overrun by the Communists from North Vietnam. Its spirit is very much like that of the Jews in Israel and the Koreans in South Korea. It is a war fought for the survival and continuation of a cherished way of life.

The American presence in South Vietnam represents generally the fulfillment of American proclamations issued after World War II guaranteeing military support to any democratic country outside the communist camp.

Perhaps more specifically when it comes to South Vietnam, the American military intervention stems from President Kennedy's inaugural statement to the effect that the United States would be "unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of the human rights we are committed to at home and around the world" and his strong declaration in the same speech, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or evil, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, to assure the survival and success of liberty."

In 1961, South Vietnam made a direct plea to the President for American military support and economic aid. The plea was quickly honored. A lot has been written about the role of the Embassy and the CIA in bringing about the quick and favorable decision, but this is academic, for the action we took fitted in perfectly with the policy President Kennedy had just enunciated.

What the Americans found in South Vietnam was a country hundreds of years behind in technology and standard of living compared with the Western World. It was obvious that it would take more than a small number of advisors and Peace Corps types to put the country in a position to defend itself and to stand on its own feet economically. Initially the American presence, although modest, was able to forestall a takeover by the Viet Cong and Hanoi, so the latter naturally turned to Communist China and the Soviets for support and military aid.

The kind of war that ensued was not that of army against army, but to effective guerrilla warfare waged by the Communists involving intimidation of the citizenry and terrorist attacks against village chiefs and government installations. The only



battle line drawn was the DMZ at the 17th parallel, but infiltration was quite easy through Cambodia and Laos. Thus, the war has not in any way been an easy war to fight.

Ideology is not the only thing that separates the North from the South. The South possesses the Mekong Delta, a huge and rich agricultural area ideal for growing rice and vegetables. The North is industrially oriented and the land is not fertile. Whereas South Vietnam can sustain itself through agricultural production and some world trade, North Vietnam cannot. Moreover, the industrialization in the North was severely disrupted and hampered by bombing raids for an extended period.

If South Vietnam were to fall into the hands of the North, therefore, it would be a great boost to the Communists agriculturally. Just as important, it would afford them excellent opportunities for expansion into neighboring countries.

The major aim of my project was to see what South Vietnam is like today and to find out how far the country and the people had progressed in terms of achieving their hopes.

As I got off the plane on March 20, 1971, I was not sure what to expect. I saw many planes and helicopters parked everywhere on the huge airfields of Bien Hoa and the outskirts of Saigon as the plane swung down from Nha Trang to Saigon. On deplaning, I wondered if I should not be carrying a gun. However, upon entering the air terminal, I found it was no different from any I had been to — Iran, Turkey or Greece.

### It Was So Normal

As we drove into Saigon, I was actually disappointed that it was so normal. Once in the city, I was dazed by the number of people everywhere and by the paved avenues swarming with Hondas, tricycles, bicycles and jeeps. I had expected a carefully controlled traffic situation with armed guards, police and special passes, but none of that was in sight. Instead, only the bridges were guarded with carefully placed pillboxes, some of the streets were lined with barbed wire, and a handful of sandbag bunkers surrounded government buildings.

There were no tanks rumbling around or trucks full of war-weary soldiers; I didn't see a single American soldier in full combat dress. Obviously, this was not at all what I was conditioned to expect.

Though some sporadic war actions take place in the countryside, and some terrorist attacks occur now and then in the city, life in general is relatively calm. The United States has helped South Vietnam militarily as well as in countless other ways and the country has benefitted a great deal from this help. The on-going withdrawal of U.S. troops and phasing down of economic assistance is not going to be disastrous.

The outlook for the future, though there could be difficult times, is very good. South Vietnam today

is not the same as South Vietnam ten or even five years ago. Barring China, the country has come up with the largest and most powerful military organization in the area and is growing stronger every day.

In contrast with South Vietnam in the early years of American involvement, South Vietnam today is a much strengthened agricultural land. Agricultural output has increased tremendously with new farming techniques having been introduced as well as new farm machinery. Formerly, where all rice threshing was done by hand, there are now new rice mills in most villages.

The farmers have been taught how to grow more vegetables in the same acreage and farm animals, such as cows, pigs and chickens, have multiplied with the introduction of American imported animals and modern techniques.

### Land Reform Program

The Land to the Tiller Program, similar in magnitude and success to the Land Reform Program launched by the Shah of Iran ten years ago, has been a terrific boon to the farmers. Plantations and huge properties have been taken over by the government and broken into two- and three-acre plots. These plots are then turned over to former tenant farmers as their property to cultivate. As a result of the pacification program and this one, rice production has skyrocketed, and in 1970 800,000 tons of excess rice were harvested.

In cooperation with Vietnamese military and highway construction units, a network of new roads has been built. Bridges have been added where formerly none existed and now trucks can move freely across the country loaded with rice and produce. This has been done not merely to meet military needs, but also with the idea of facilitating the farmers' arduous, back-breaking life. (Crops were formerly transported on the backs of the farmers or in sampans which could easily bog down in shallow marshes or capsize in strong currents.)

A communications network stretches the length and breadth of the country and electricity has been brought to many areas to power new mills and equipment. These are all remarkable steps forward in transforming a dormant society into a potentially viable one.

The country is marching forward with small industries such as asphalt, fertilizers and textiles already introduced. Fishing has been developed and appears to be the most promising industry for the future. The merchant marine has grown steadily as new tankers and freighters, as well as smaller fishing vessels, are built or given by the U.S. government and bought by Vietnamese merchants. Glass factories are also increasing and there is now a greater availability of household items at low prices.

On the political side, the Vietnamese have a sound constitution in the democratic tradition. It

provides for free elections of members of the National Assembly and the President and the orderly transfer of power. The political powers are strongly influenced by groups, families and personalities.

In the Vietnamese tradition, an older man from an honorable family, who is considered witty, intelligent and wise, is the ideal type of leader. As has been the case everywhere else, the younger generation faces a hard and long uphill battle in its effort to break into the new political system.

### Education on Upgrade

There are now universities in Hue, Dalat and Saigon and lesser schools throughout the country. The rate of literacy is increasing very fast and education is highly regarded and sharply on the upgrade. There are now some government schools which specialize in training village leaders and hamlet chiefs to do better jobs and to set up well functioning village governments. Even on this low level of national politics, families play a big part.

The group level determines the amount of influence, but if the governing personalities are not competent and honest, progress and good government are not likely. The end dream of most Vietnamese is to be able to be free, to decide for themselves who will be their leaders, and to travel about without having to go through red tape and security precautions.

Vietnamese people are of varied backgrounds but can generally be characterized as reserved and gentle by nature. People in the city all appear diffident and preoccupied. By reputation, the farmers, who outnumber all other groups, are generally noisy and busy people who enjoy a good joke on anyone, even themselves. They are shrewd and can scheme with the best on how to make a few extra piasters or get out of onerous work. Though not lazy, they do work at it.

Their life is extremely difficult and they spend their lives between sunup and sunset mostly in the fields. They greatly welcome any help and appreciate everything that is done for them by the municipality, the national government and Uncle Sam. But they are mostly on their own.

It is the farmer whom the war has affected the most. Until recently, and to some extent now, the Viet Cong would infiltrate and demand shelter and food under all kinds of threats. Young men and girls were kidnaped to work for the VC and village leaders were assassinated. No one has known when or where the dreaded VC would strike.

At first, only the regular army existed for the protection of the villages and farmers, but now there is a new force, the People's Popular Forces, to protect them from this menace. Unlike the army soldiers, who are concentrated at army bases, the Popular Forces are everywhere and consequently are extremely effective. These are village men who are either discharged ARVN soldiers or volunteer

farmers. They receive special training and are issued modern rifles. They also use radios in some cases.

In the event of an attack, they are responsible for defending their villages and homes and for alerting and aiding the ARVN. They are not offensive forces like the army, and do not go into the hills searching out the enemy. Instead, they are a home guard, a strictly village and home defense force. Because of their growing success, more and more ARVN are being freed to go out into the fields and hills to search out the VC and annihilate them.

Gaining confidence themselves, the people are now more ready and willing to fight the enemy rather than succumb to his threats. The new confidence the people have found among themselves and in themselves is infectious. More and more villagers now report suspected or known Communists to the police and the army.

This new nationalism, though still in its infancy, is a welcome phenomenon and the confidence it inspires grows every day. The people's willingness to tolerate the Communists is rapidly dwindling and in its place is a growing reaction at what they have been forced to suffer in the past. The result could be a much brighter outlook for the future.

### The Refugee Problem

Perhaps the greatest unresolved problem in South Vietnam today relates to refugees. Some are lucky and are taken to refugee camps on the outskirts of villages. These are camps with a certain amount of marginal farmland given to the refugees to till and build housing structures on. The housing consists of sticks stuck into the mud with a shabby thatched roof. The farmland is barely enough to live off of.

Other refugee camps are government-run. If a refugee has no family he can turn to, he probably ends up here, it not worse. These camps are rows and rows of stalls. Sticks are planted in the ground, a tin roof thrown on, and straw thatch or plaster walls added. They are small and stuffy, housing as many as ten people in one room. The food is provided by the government and is often meager. There is no money to be had. Their life is a hollow, destitute one with little or no diversions of any kind.

Even worse are those who move to the cities. There they erect shanties against walls and buildings. They live on the streets in plain sight and wash themselves with ditch or sewer water. There is no work for them to speak of. The government has plans to get these refugees back to their former land or new pacified areas. Some are more than willing to go, while others are still too scared.

Due to the hopelessness of life at the refugee camps, many now stand empty or have been dismantled. Those that remain and the skeletons of others are a grim reminder of the ravages of war and the hard and long task ahead.

Earlier I stated that the VC and other extremists are not capable of waging war but can carry out small but violent attacks. At the end of March of last year, you probably read about a village called Duc Duc, which was rocketed and attacked by the VC. I visited there the day after the raid and found that the VC devastated a large section of the village; several hundred people died due to their failure to follow simple precautions.

Although the houses were grouped too close together, with poor passageways between them, the bunkers built by the military in the event of an attack were conveniently located and well constructed. However, the villagers had also built their own bunkers, directly beneath their houses. These bunkers were little holes and tunnels capable of holding no more than four or five people and totally inadequate for the purpose for which they were built.

### When First Rockets Fell

When the first rockets fell, the houses caught on fire, rapidly spreading in the light wind. The people, instead of going to the proper bunkers for safety, went into their own. The tin roofs burned, dropping molten tin into the holes, and the structures fell on top, trapping their occupants. Instead of being well protected in the proper bunkers, the people suffocated in their own.

Now, why do I say that the VC and the North Vietnamese cannot take over South Vietnam in the foreseeable future? The reason lies in the South Vietnam army which numbers over one million strong. With support from the People's Popular Defense Forces, the Navy and the Vietnamese Air Force, South Vietnam has the biggest and strongest military force in the area, excluding Red China, of course.

They fly their own sorties, plan their own campaigns, and are in general taking over the major responsibility of the war. They are equipped with American-made helicopters, World War II vintage planes and tanks, and have the newest artillery and machine guns.

They have been given trucks and jeeps with radios and have been instructed on how to use modern military logistical and communications systems. Most of this equipment has been turned over to them by the American military, and we are ready to give them more.

This year they will be fighting the war themselves, with only airpower help from B-52s and Navy carriers. Had they been forced to, they probably could have assumed the ground forces responsibility earlier. But it has been only recently that they have won the confidence of the American Army commanders.

To sum things up, in the past ten years we have helped join the land and the people of South Vietnam together. We have helped build roads, airports, generators and a good communications system. As a

consequence a society five hundred years behind the times has in ten years entered the modern society of nations.

It is a terrific accomplishment and serves to show the power and willingness of the American nation to help and defend the oppressed people of the world. Is this something to be ashamed of? Without our intervention this whole part of the world would have been taken over and enslaved by the Communists.

In two weeks of fighting in World War II over Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal we lost more men and equipment than we have in ten years over here; maybe this sounds like "stretching it", but if you believe that no sacrifice is too great to preserve the dignity, freedom and peace of a people, then the effort we have made can be applauded.

I don't think very many Americans fully realize or even appreciate what we have done over here. It is something you have to see first hand to fully comprehend. Maybe the cost has been so great that we will never be able to repeat the performance. That would be a sad thought indeed, because the price of freedom would be drastically cheapened and its usurpers emboldened.

I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge since I have been in Vietnam. I have gained mixed feelings about what I have been, such as the refugees, the narcotics problem and the evils of city life. I have never seen a "war" before, but now I think I fully appreciate what the word means.

### Respect for Peace, Freedom

I have gained from this experience in South Vietnam a great respect for freedom and peace. Though I have never suffered, seeing others suffer in war is sickening and no movies or novels can adequately relate this feeling. For some people over here the war has been very far away. I went to find out what it was all about and until I can actually fight in a conflict I will only know about the destruction and pain others suffer. This has been a true learning experience, and I feel my project has been exciting in every way.

Having seen the big air base at Da Nang, traveled by jeep up to the ancient capital of Hue and by helicopter to refugee camps and near fire bases, I feel very familiar with the situation.

Back in the States the war seemed very far away and my only concern was being drafted and sent here. Though I know I would not relish the idea of crawling in rice paddies or having a grenade thrown at me, now that I've been here those thoughts don't bother me any more. Instead, I see a lot I want to do, and very many people who still need all the help they can get.

If you know my friends Chieng, Yang, Quynh and Le, you would know exactly what I mean. I pray that they will remain free and that they and their families can continue to live a better life.

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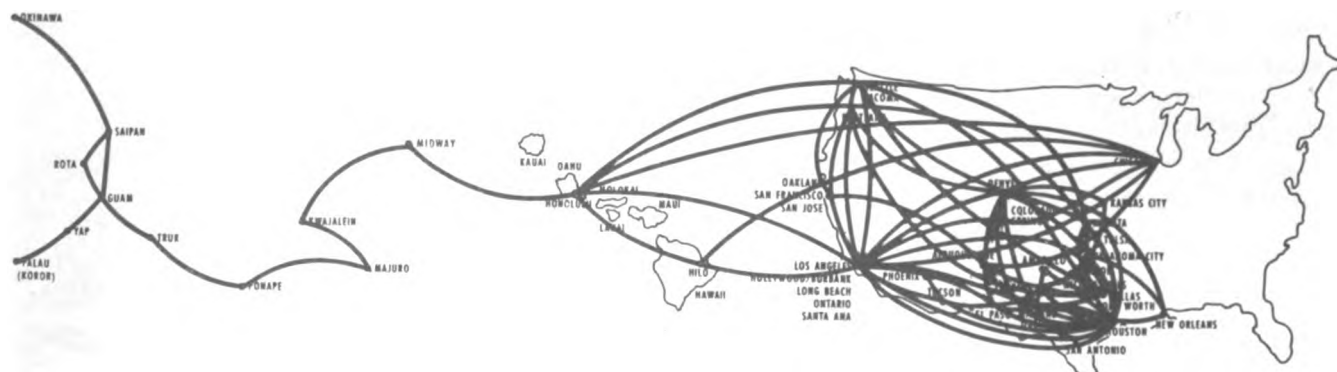
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