

NGO DINH DIEM

OF

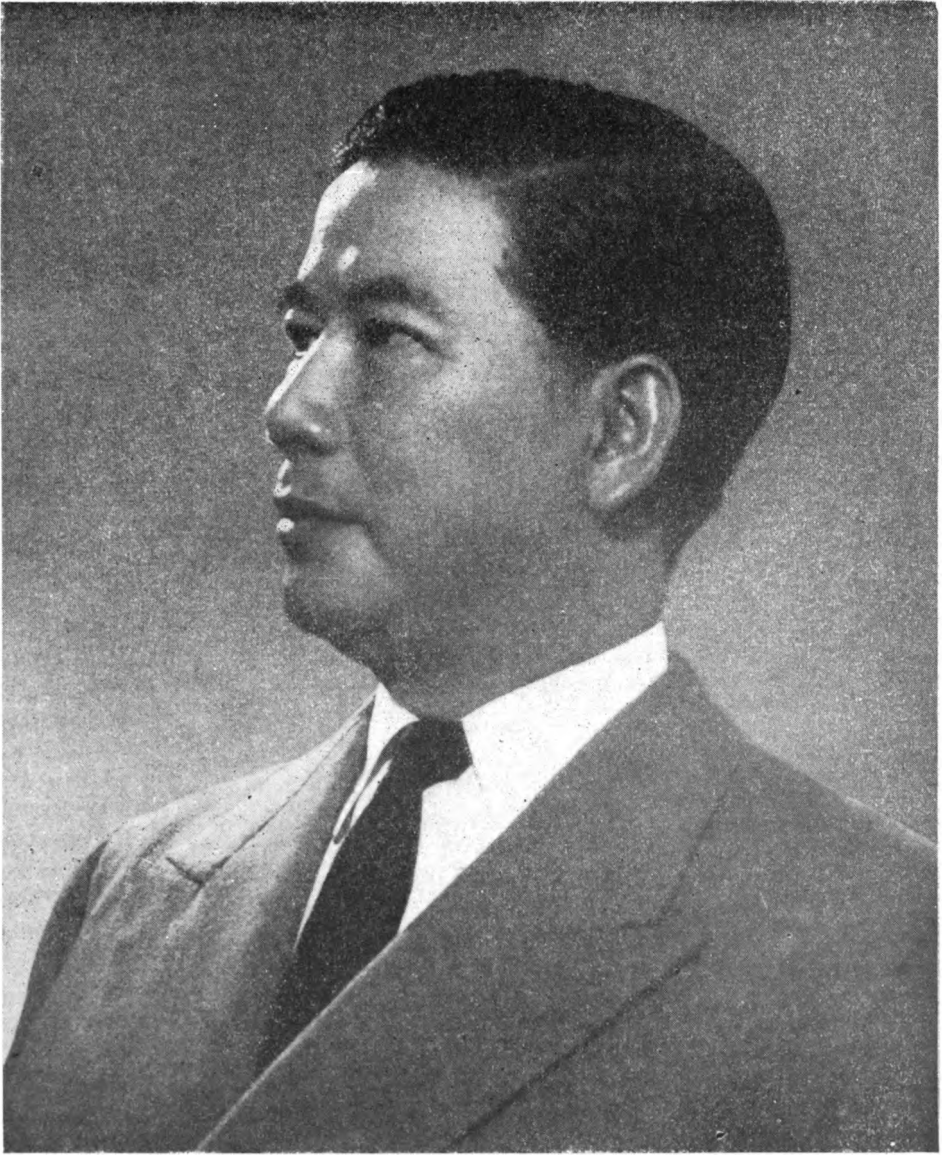
VIET - NAM



SAIGON - 1957

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President Ngo dinh Diem

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NGO DINH DIEM
//
OF
VIET - NAM

PRESS OFFICE
PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET - NAM
SAIGON - 1967

Contents

	Page
Highlights	5
Political philosophy	11
Biography	25

HIGHLIGHTS

OF

PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM'S GOVERNMENT

(17 June 1954 — 17 April 1957)

« A wholly unexpected political miracle has occurred in South Viet Nam » and « History may yet adjudge Diem as one of the great figures of twentieth Century Asia ». Thus wrote William Henderson in **Foreign Affairs** (January 1957).

President Ngo Dinh Diem will long be remembered in Viet Nam as a man who restored peace, order, stability, confidence, national pride to his country ; fought vice, corruption, colonialism ; and above all, as a man who has said « boo » to the Communists, and checked their advance in Viet Nam, and perhaps also, in South East Asia.

The principal achievements of President Ngo Dinh Diem in his two and a half years in office are summarized below.

17 June 1954 :

Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem accepted the Presidency of the Government of Viet Nam on the condition that he be given full civil and military powers.

25 June 1954 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem landed in Saigon from Paris.

7 July 1954 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem formed his first Government.

21 July 1954 :

The Geneva Armistice was concluded against Vietnam's will. President Ngo Dinh Diem instructed his Foreign Minister **not** to sign the Geneva agreements.

29 November 1954 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem dismissed French-supported General Nguyen Van Hinh for insubordination, and appointed General Le Van Ty Chief of Staff of the Viet Nam Army. Nguyen Van Hinh stayed in France.

15 January 1955 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem ordered the closure of the « Grand Monde. » biggest gambling den of the Far East, run by « General » Le Van Vien, head of the Binh Xuyen Gang.

26 April 1955 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem appointed Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Le Director General of the Police and Security Services to replace Lai Van Sang, appointee of Binh Xuyen General Le Van Vien.

Le Van Vien refused to comply, started war against Government forces, but was defeated and fled to France.

15 May 1955 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem broke openly with Bao Dai who ordered him to reinstall the Binh Xuyen to the direction of the police and security forces, and to hand over military powers to General Nguyen Van Vy, appointed by him. President Ngo Dinh Diem ignored the order.

26 October 1955 :

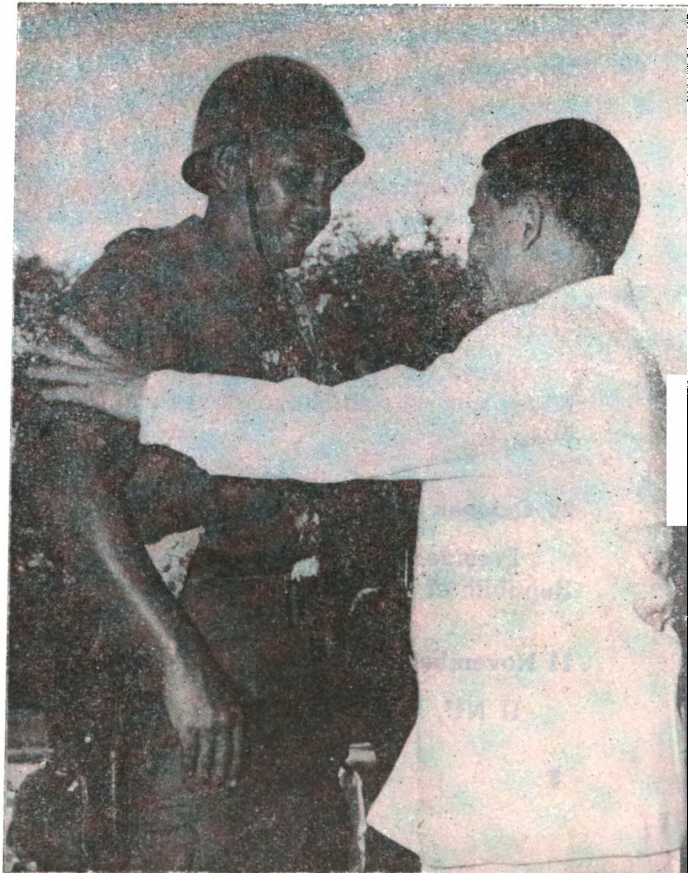
President Ngo Dinh Diem declared Bao Dai deposed and proclaimed a Republic after a nation wide referendum held on October 23.

1 December 1955 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem ordered the closing of « Binh Khang » prostitution house — also known as the « Hall of mirrors » — run by Binh Xuyen General Le van Vien and out of which Bao Dai derived a big income.



President Ngo Dinh Diem with the troops who defeated the Binh-Xuyen at Rung-Sat (May, 1955).



President Ngo Dinh Diem congratulating General Duong Van Minh who defeated the Binh-Xuyen at Rung-Sat (May, 1955).

4 March 1956 :

General elections took place throughout free Viet Nam. A Constituent Assembly was elected to draft a Constitution for Free Viet Nam which Bao Dai had ruled according to his own pleasure.

4 April 1956 :

Arrest of Ung Bao Toan and associates, a high official of the Ministry of National Economy, for selling several thousand tons of rice at black market price.

28 April 1956 :

French Expeditionary Forces withdrew from Free Viet Nam at President Ngo Dinh Diem's request.

13 July 1956 :

Execution of Ba Cut, the Hoa Hao rebel leader who had challenged Government authority for many months. Government control was complete throughout Free Viet Nam's territory. Ba Cut's execution marked the end of the Sects which had plagued the country.

20 July 1956 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem ignored date line set by Geneva Accords, thus demonstrating Free Viet Nam's strength. Viet Minh reaction was confined to violent verbal attacks on Hanoi Radio.

21 August 1956 :

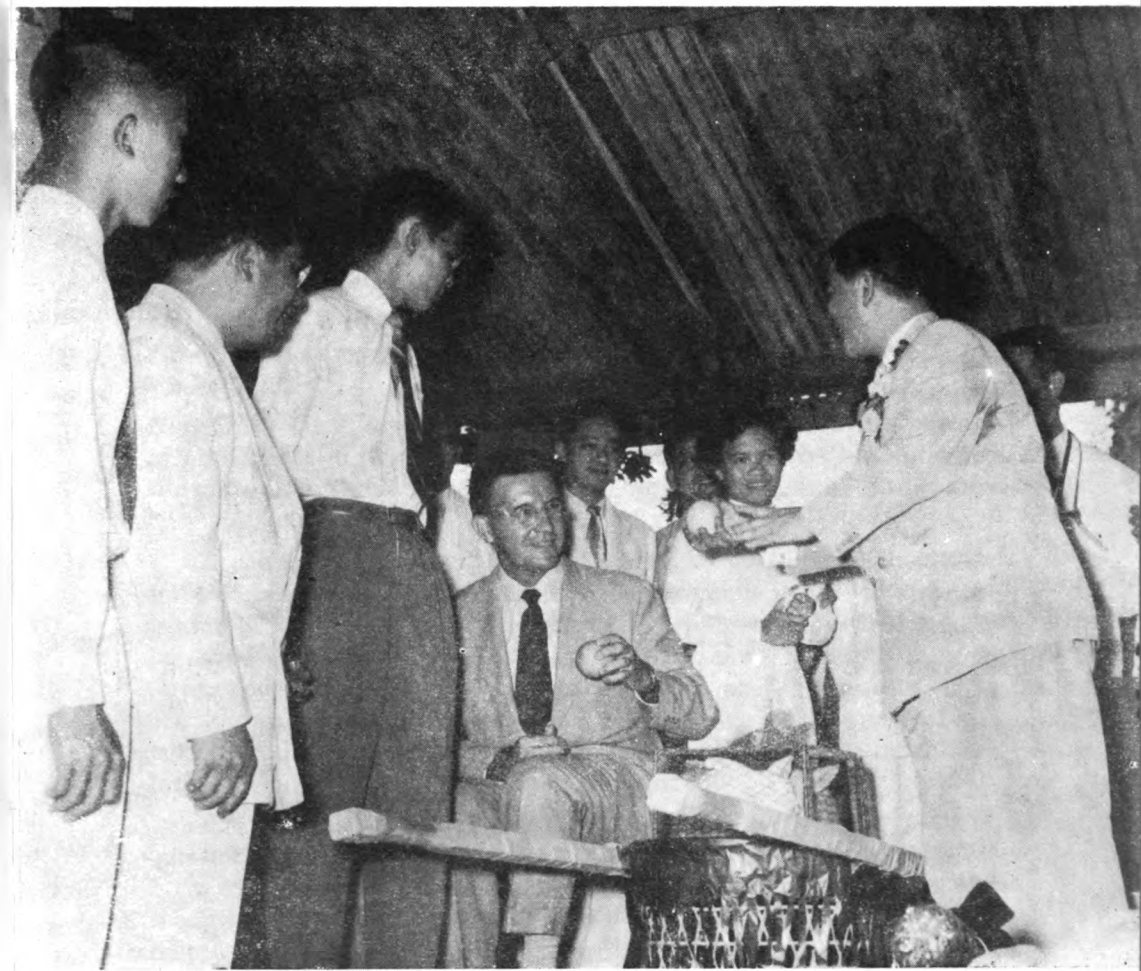
Arrest of Vu Dinh Da and associates for attempting to embezzle several millions piastres from the National Bank where they were employed.

26 October 1956 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem proclaimed the Constitution of the Republic of Viet Nam, and became its first President.

11 November 1956 :

U NU, Prime Minister of neutralist Burma, consecrated Free



*Opening of the Agricultural School at Blao,
200 km. northeast of (3 January 1956).*

Viet Nam's independence and rising prestige by accepting President Ngo Dinh Diem's invitation to visit Viet Nam. U NU stayed five days, and came away impressed.

24 March 1957 :

President Ngo Dinh Diem was scheduled to visit the Philippines on the official invitation of President Magsaysay. The visit was postponed due to President Magsaysay's sudden death.

4 April 1957 :

The White House announced that President Ngo Dinh Diem had accepted President Eisenhower's invitation to visit the United States officially in May.

PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY *

A great deal has been written recently about President Ngo Dinh Diem's success in guiding his country through its early years of freedom from colonial rule. But little has been said about his ideas and the philosophy by which he determines his course of action.

One of the reasons for this is the absence of any doctrinal exposition by the President himself. He has been too busy coping with the innumerable problems and difficulties that have sprung up or been thrown across his way since he assumed office in June 1954 to engage in any philosophical or doctrinal speculation.

And yet, on careful study, one cannot deny that President Ngo Dinh Diem's victory has been for a large part the victory of his ideas and principles, in so far as the course he has followed for more than the last two years was based on a definite philosophy and political doctrine.

It is important to understand President Ngo Dinh Diem's ideas, for two reasons. First, because of his emergence as the undisputed leader of Viet Nam and the prospect of his continued leadership for the next six years at least. Second because of his extremely strong personality, the impact of his ideas on Viet Nam will be considerable. The Viet Nam that will emerge at the end of the period of President Ngo Dinh Diem's leadership will, in a very large measure, bear his personal imprint.

President Ngo Dinh Diem's philosophy and political doctrine has not been presented to the public in a systematic fashion. We hope that this will be done in the not too distant future. In the meantime, we can obtain a general view of it in his many pronouncements in the course of the last two years which cover a wide range of subjects, and in the interviews he has granted to foreign correspondents. This attempt is undertaken in the present article.

The author makes no claim of giving an official or even authorized version of the « Diemian » doctrine. He only seeks to

* Reprinted from « The Times of Viet Nam », 6, 13, 20 October 1956.

present President Ngo Dinh Diem's ideas in a coherent way, in so far as he thinks he is familiar with them.



The great issue that splits the world to-day, as it has split it for centuries, is a philosophical one: materialism versus spiritualism. What is President Ngo Dinh Diem's stand on this issue? In his message to the constituent Assembly, on April 17, 1956, speaking of the search for a solid foundation on which to base Viet Nam's political life, President Ngo Dinh Diem said: « Such a basis can only a spiritualist one; a line that the human being follows in his innermost reality as in his community life, in his transcendent vocation as in his free pursuit of intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection ».

President Ngo Dinh Diem's **Weltanschauung** is also essentially an ethical one. He judges men and things from a moral standpoint. For him a thing is either good or evil. He does not admit of compromise on this point. In an interview granted to A.T. Steele, he said: « Our approach is an ethical one. Communism is evil, so we reject it » (1).

Because President Ngo Dinh Diem believes Communism is evil he rejects it root and branch. And because of this ethical approach he also rejects neutralism with equal force. He can accept neutrality as a policy, but he cannot accept neutralism as doctrine, because in the face of communism it is a doctrine of no-choice. In the same interview he said: « If an ideology is false, we don't put it on the same level as others. Hence we do not accept neutralism as a doctrine ».

President Ngo Dinh Diem intensely dislikes and despises the hypocritical attitude of those who seek to further the communist ideology under the cover of some apparently noble cause. Thus he rejects cooperation with the communists. **Time** magazine has given a striking account of President Ngo Dinh Diem's encounter with Ho Chi Minh in the early days of the struggle for independence (2).

In 1945 the communist struck at Ngo Dinh Diem's family, raided his house, burned his collection of 10,000 books, buried his elder brother alive together with his son, and arrested Diem

(1) *New York Herald Tribune* 6 August 1956.

(2) *Time Magazine* 4 April 1956.



*President Ngo Dinh Diem casting his vote
(4 March 1956).*

himself. Four months later, Ho Chi Minh, who was negotiating with France, needed the backing of reputed nationalists, and summoned Ngo Dinh Diem from prison. The following dialog ensued :

Ho : « Come and live with me at the palace ».

Diem : « You killed my brother, you are a criminal ».

Ho : « I know nothing about your brother... You are upset and angry. Stay with me. We must work together against the French » (1).

Diem : « I don't believe you understand the kind of man I am. Look me in the face. Am I a man who fears ? ».

Ho : « No ».

Diem : « Good. Then I will go ».

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* *

From general ideas we come to society. What kind of society does President Ngo Dinh Diem want ? A society in which human dignity and progress are combined. In his message to the Assembly referred to above President Ngo Dinh Diem said categorically : « We affirm our faith in the absolute value of the human being whose destiny is greater than time ».

President Ngo Dinh Diem rejects both absolute individualism and absolute state power. Speaking of the efforts of the various democratic countries to reconcile the demands of collective discipline and social justice with those of individual liberty, President Ngo Dinh Diem points out that these efforts reveal a personalistic tendency. « Viet Nam welcomes gladly the teaching born of the experience of these democratic States » (2). « In addition to the negative liberties of a political nature, it is recognized that the human being has positive freedoms, a number of freedoms of an economic and social nature. At the same time the State, organized on a more democratic basis, is given wider, more stable and more effective power to bring positive assistance to the citizen against the massive dangers of materialist civilization, and to guarantee to him the right to live and exercise his liberties ».

(1) It was not true. President Diem's brother's body was found recently thanks to the information from a former Viet Minh, see *Time Magazine*, 27 February 1956.

(2) Message to the Assembly, 17 April 1956.

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Leaving the realm of ideas and social concept, President Ngo Dinh Diem has this to say on the practical problems that beset the world. According to him, the three major problems confronting the world to-day are: 1) communist expansion 2, the nationalist awakening of the Afro-Asian countries, 3) the consciousness of the Afro-Asian masses of their poverty. « These three problems are but different aspects of a fundamental problem: the furtherance of human progress in freedom » (1).

Progress means the development of the individual materially, intellectually and spiritually. But such progress is impossible under communism. President Ngo Dinh Diem equally rejects extreme nationalism because it is negative and is prone to become the instrument of communism. And he is also aware that poverty is a threat to the furtherance of progress, in so far as it makes communism more attractive. « For that reason, he said, we must also win the battle against mass-poverty if we want to win the battle against communism ».

President Ngo Dinh Diem's views on democracy are perhaps the least understood of all his ideas. He has been accused of dictatorship, autocracy, authoritarianism... And yet, bringing real democracy to Viet Nam is perhaps the most important part of President Ngo Dinh Diem's program of national revolution.

The debate of the meaning of democracy is far from being concluded. With the advent of communism, a new phase has begun. The communists claim to be as good as, if not better, democrats than the westerners. A communist concept of « popular » democracy has been opposed to that of western democracy, which is essentially a parliamentary one. And it is according to either of these that President Ngo Dinh Diem has been judged.

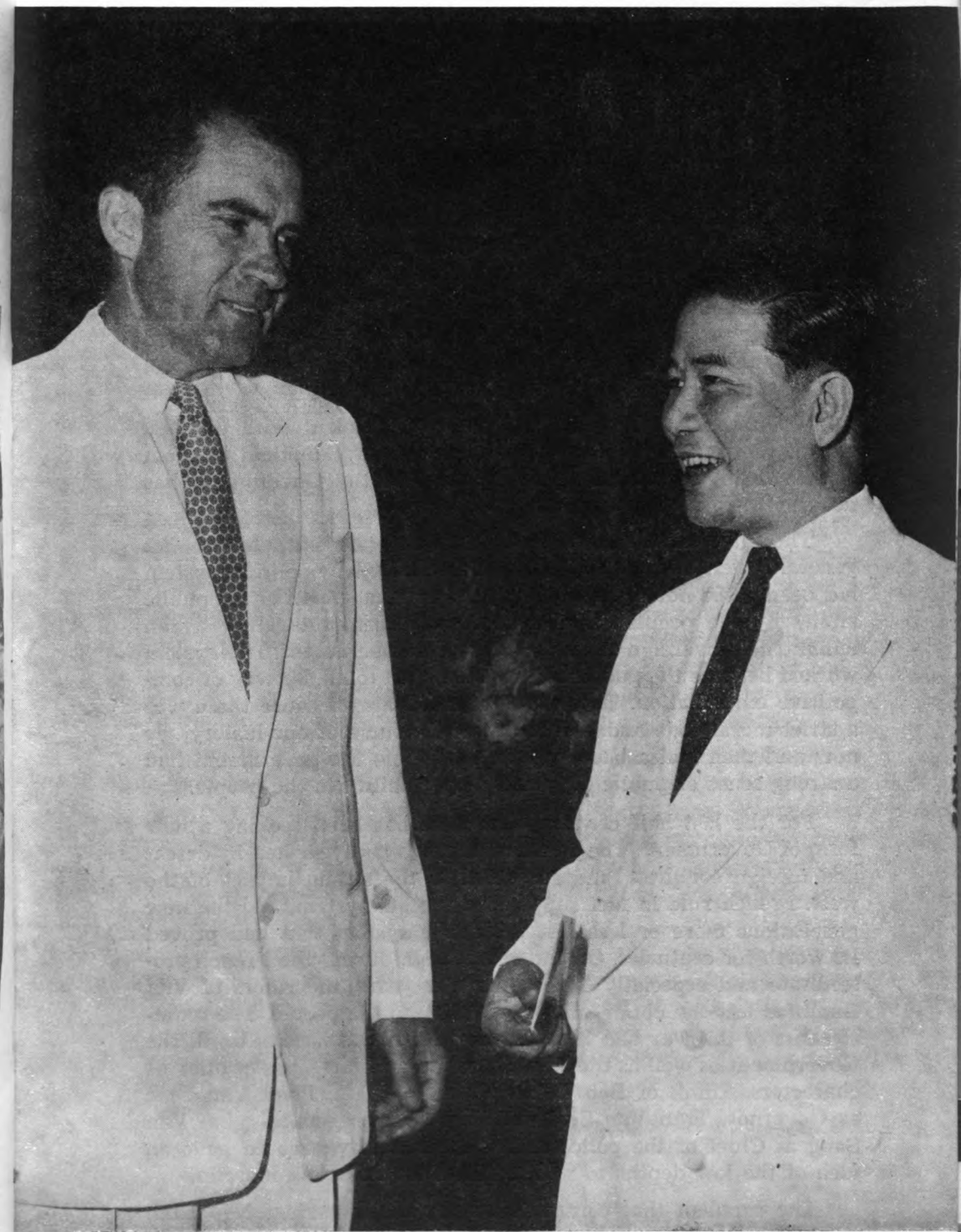
We discard here all discussions of the concept of « popular » democracy. Suffices it to say that « popular » democracy is only another name for communist dictatorship, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or as some one has put it, the proletariat under a dictatorship.

It is with reference to the western system that President Ngo Dinh Diem has usually been judged on the issue of democracy. The westerner sees democracy in terms of votes and distribution

(1) Interview with Year, 27 July 1956.



*President Ngo Dinh Diem on an inspection
tour 350 km from Saigon (December, 1956).*



*President Ngo Dinh Diem talking with
U.S. Vice-President Richard M. Nixon dur-
ing the latter's visit to Viet Nam,
(7 July 1956).*

of power much more than of right and wrong. It is essentially a political concept. And it is also a formal one. We must say that we have no quarrel with this concept, which is essentially anglo-saxon, since the peoples of anglo-saxon culture derive real benefit from it. The western parliamentary system, especially that of the anglo-saxons, has its roots in the history and temperament of these peoples, and it has suited them well, and brought them real democracy in a formal as well as a substantial sense.

But to apply the criteria of western parliamentary democracy to the Vietnamese case has resulted in the situation, a not uncommon one in historical and social analysis, of using the wrong tool or the wrong assumptions in the search for truth.

When a westerner does not see a parliament with debates, elected magistrates, elected officials, complete individual freedom and so forth, he frowns and suspects that the Government has not sought to further democracy.

The fundamental fact about Viet Nam, and one which is not generally well understood, is that historically, our political system has been based not on the concept of the management of the public affairs by the people or their representatives, but rather by an enlightened sovereign and an enlightened Government. This system worked because the public offices were open to all, by way of competitive examination. The system worked also because there was a strict moral code and, although in the course of our history, we now and then had a bad king, on the whole the government had a strong sense of public duty and responsibility to the people.

For the last half century Viet Nam has been seeking a new form of Government. The old structure was badly shaken by defeat and foreign conquest, and subjected to the strong impact of the west. French rule in fact supplanted the old system, and the new generations more or less lost faith in a system that had proved its worth for centuries. On the other hand, during the French protectorate and especially during the war years, the rulers of Viet Nam had lost the notion of responsibility to the people. The requirements of the war had brought the French authorities to fill the Government as well as the administration with all kinds of dubious characters. Think of Bao Dai as Chief of State, Phan Van Giau as Governor, Tran Van Soai and Bay Vien as generals, Lai Van Sang as Chief of the police and so forth, and we would have an idea of the low depths to which Viet Nam had sunk morally.

The problem that confronts a man like President Ngo Dinh

Diem, well grounded in traditional administrative principles but also familiar with the western political systems, is therefore one of giving Viet Nam a solid moral basis on which to rebuild a strong, healthy, democratic State. To think of the form before the substance is certainly to run into failure. The main concern of President Ngo Dinh Diem therefore is to destroy the sources of demoralisation, however powerful, before getting down to the problem of endowing Viet Nam with a democratic apparatus is the western sense of the word.

Democracy for President Ngo Dinh Diem is therefore not « a collection of texts and laws which it suffices to draft and promulgate. It is essentially a state of mind, a way of living in the active respect of the human being in ourselves as in our neighbor. It is a continuous self-education, a careful practice, a simple and patient art of fusing into a harmonious synthesis the desirable diversity of conceptions and the inevitable complexity of reality. Democracy therefore requires of us much more effort of understanding and imagination than any other regime » (1).

Further, democracy for President Ngo Dinh Diem does not mean complete freedom of the individual to do what he likes. Just as President Ngo Dinh Diem rejects communism absolutely, so he also reject absolute individualism with equal force. « It's important, » he told A.T. Steele, « that while encouraging the freedom of the individual, we preserve the freedom of the country » (2).

In fact, the problem that is foremost in the mind of President Ngo Dinh Diem is the problem of the survival of Viet Nam in the face of external and internal pressure. International communism through the Viet Minh is threatening the existence of Viet Nam directly, while the remnants of colonialism, and feudalism threaten to bring about a complete disintegration and breakdown from the inside.

In order to meet the external threat, Viet Nam must first be strong internally. Hence, the utmost energy with which President Ngo Dinh Diem has sought to destroy all elements of trouble (colonial, feudal, sectarian) after he had exhausted all efforts to convince his opponents to follow a course conforming to the unity and the superior interests of the nation.

In his message to the nation explaining his action against the

(1) Message to the Assembly, 17 April 1956.

(2) *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 August 1956.

Binh Xuyen, President Ngo Dinh Diem said : « My Government was faced with this alternative... : either to proceed from concession to concession... which would, considering the demands of the Binh Xuyen, mean abdication ; or, to defend the essential, that is, the national institutions of Viet Nam without which there would be no democracy but simply disorder, and this, until the final disintegration » (1).

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Having examined President Ngo Dinh Diem's general ideas, we can now turn to his concept of the future of Viet Nam. What kind of Viet Nam is he going to build or help build ? In an interview with Vinatrel, he gave the following answer to that question : « The kind of Viet Nam we are seeking to build is a Viet Nam that would be : 1) independent, 2) Asiatic, 3) free, 4) peace-loving, 5) progressive » (2).

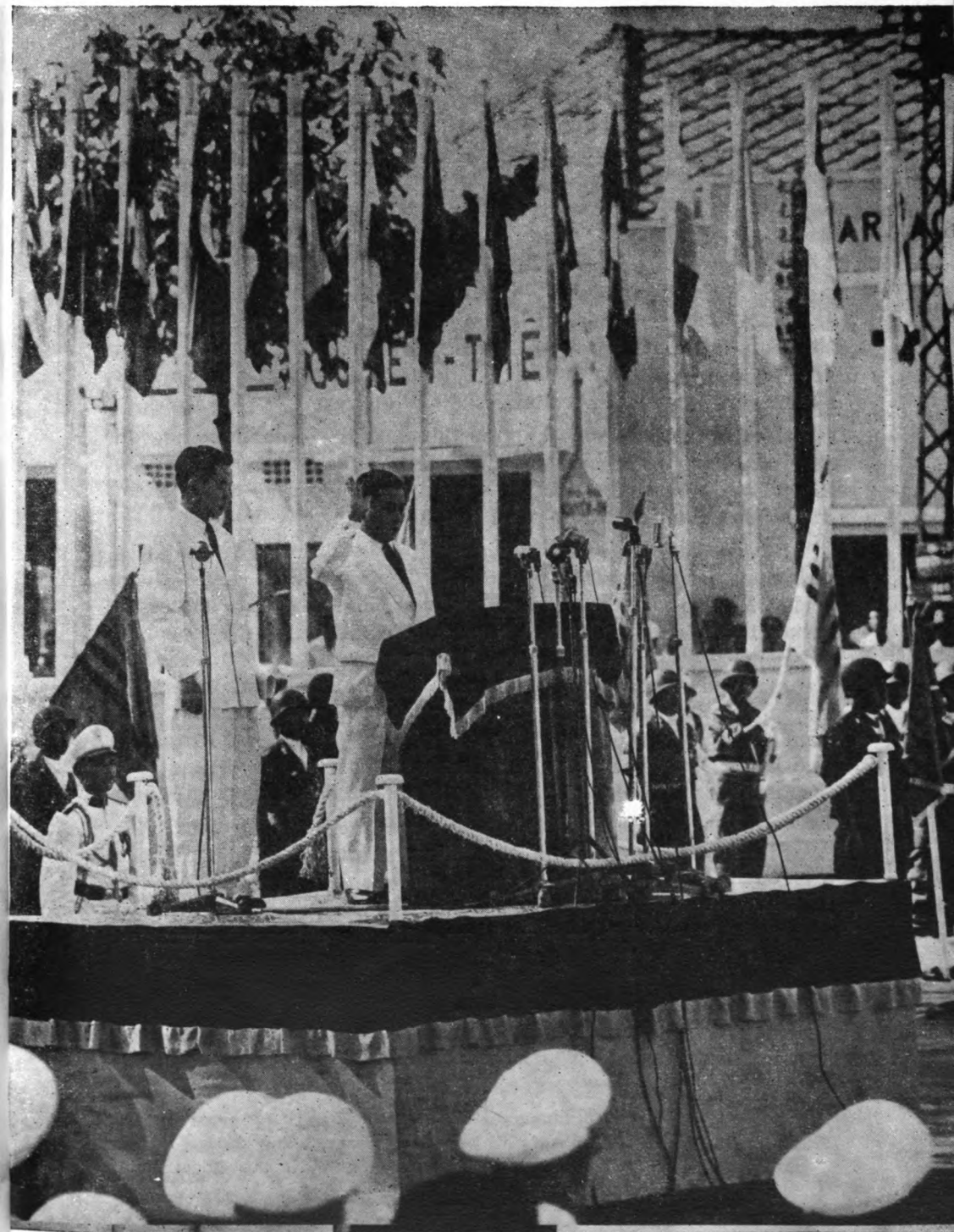
President Ngo Dinh Diem, more than any other statesman, has steadily insisted on *real* independence. Without independence, there is no prospect of progress, and without progress, there is no prospect of defeating communism. As early as 1932, four months after he was appointed Minister of the Interior (that is Prime Minister) of the French protectorate, he demanded democratic reforms leading to independence. His demand was not met and he resigned. But he warned — the year was 1932, we should not forget it — : « I saw the dangers from the communists, and I could see how they exploit such injustices. We had to have democratic reforms, or it was clear even then that the communists would win » (3). To have democratic reforms, Vietnam must first be independent. And so he demanded independence. All the humbug about the civilising role of colonialism has now been torn to shreds, and it is generally admitted that the first condition of progress in a colonial country is independence. The position adopted by President Ngo-dinh-Diem then was therefore a correct one.

The independence on which President Ngo Dinh Diem insists has nothing of the negatively explosive character which marks some of the Asian and African countries. In fact he sees the dangers of extreme nationalism. In the interview in **Year** referred to above,

(1) Message to the people 8 May 1955.

(2) 1 August 1956.

(3) *Time Magazine*, 4 April 1955.



*President Ngo dinh Diem taking the oath as First President
of the Republic of Viet Nam on Constitution Promulgation Day
(26 October 1956).*

President Ngo-dinh-Diem warned that « these (former colonial) countries are under the influence of extremely strong nationalism. This nationalism may become destructive rather than constructive. The communist powers are capitalizing on this fact ». For him « independence does not mean xenophobia » (1) but only a step towards the fulfilment of the national destiny of Vietnam which is essentially Asiatic.

Like Japan, Korea, and China, Vietnam is an Asiatic country, strongly marked by confucian philosophy. Geopolitically, it is part of Asia, and as such must turn first to Asa for inspiration. President Ngo-dinh-Diem has often referred to Vietnam's special position as « vanguard of South East Asia » (2), or the need to seek inspiration from Asian countries (3).

Viet Nam must also be free, because the human being can develop full only in freedom. We have already referred to the interview granted to Year in which President Ngo Dinh Diem stated that human progress can be furthered only in freedom.

But freedom has meaning only if it leads to progress. In a statement issued on 16 June, 1949, President Ngo Dinh Diem declared that « the present struggle is not only a struggle for national independence. It is also a social revolution for the economic independence of the Vietnamese farmer and laborer. I advocate the most advanced and bold social reforms, and yet preserving human dignity and respect, in order that all people in new Viet Nam may earn a living as truly free people ». Elsewhere President Ngo Dinh Diem said : « The nationalism that would surrender to reaction is doomed, just as nationalism which allies itself with communism is bound to end up in treason » (4).

Finally, President Ngo Dinh Diem wants Viet Nam to be a peace-loving country. This is natural enough. Progress can be attained only in a state of peace. And his country wants to move on as fast as possible and catch up with the advanced countries.

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Having examined Ngo Dinh Diem's ideas on the major pro-

(1) *Press Conference*, 6 January 1955.

(2) Laying the first stone of the National Library 3 July 1956.

(3) Speech at Tuy Hoa, on the economic program of the Government, 17 September 1955.

(4) Message to the people, 9 May 1955.

blems, both philosophical and practical, it would be of interest to trace the origin of his ideas.

The main lines of President Ngo Dinh Diem's life are generally well-known. Born in 1901 of an old catholic family of mandarins, he grew up in both the traditional and Catholic atmosphere. His father, the late Ngo Dinh Kha, was educated both at home and in Malaya. This fact is noteworthy. Few, if any men of Mr. Ngo Dinh Kha's generation had enough foresight to understand the necessity of acquiring knowledge beyond the borders of Viet Nam.

For schooling, Mr. Ngo Dinh Kha sent his son to Pellerin School in Hue, where President Ngo Dinh Diem went through a system of both French and Vietnamese education.

Later President Ngo Dinh Diem attended the National College, where both French and Vietnamese higher learning was dispensed. This college was founded through the initiative of his father, who saw the need for Vietnamese mandarins to be acquainted with western ideas.

It goes without saying that, in his home, as in all families of his time, the father was a direct teacher to his children of Chinese classics. President Ngo-dinh-Diem therefore was well grounded in both western and traditional cultures.

What was perhaps unique about the education of President Ngo-dinh-Diem is his acquaintance, at an early age, with men and ideas in an age of revolution. His father's home was the meeting place of all the political figures of the time: Emperor Thanh-Thai, Emperor Duy-Tan, Phan-Boi-Chau, Phan-Chu-Trinh, Cuong-De, and many others who came to enlist Mr. Ngo-dinh-Kha's support or seek his advice.

Mr. Ngo Dinh Kha's stand, however, was unshakable: he would not hear of bloodshed or violent revolution. Revolution must come through the education of the people. When Viet Nam had enough technicians of all kinds in all fields, then revolution would come of itself. Mr. Ngo Dinh Kha would not let himself be talked into joining revolutionary movements. But he would not hold the impatient back if he could not convince them of the vanity of their agitation. He would only shake his head sadly.

President Ngo Dinh Diem, then a young boy, was present at many of these discussions. He would sit and listen, and there is no doubt that these discussions had a tremendous impact on his mind. His father, too, never missed an opportunity to impress

upon his children the necessity of education as a means to national revolution.

Another unique feature in President Ngo Dinh Diem's education is the insistence of his father that his brothers and he should learn to know the people whom they later were to lead. And the best method for doing this is to go out to watch the people work and live and work among them.

No Vietnamese statesman or politician has had this experience. President Ngo Dinh Diem's successes are due to a very large extent to this thorough knowledge of the people.

Unlike many of the present Vietnamese politicians, President Ngo Dinh Diem was not educated abroad or in a completely western school. He always maintained contact with Vietnamese reality. Yet, as a boy, his father's stories stirred his imagination. He was a tireless reader, especially of history and geography. Later he had to give up a scholarship in France because, as the eldest of the remaining children — his brother Ngo Dinh Thuc was in a seminary at Quang Tri, and his eldest brother Ngo Dinh Khoi was to leave for France — he had to look after his younger brothers and sisters and aging father. But he was seething with the desire to visit foreign lands.

The opportunity was given to him a great deal later, in 1948, when he went to Hongkong to give advice to Bao Dai, and again in 1950, when he accompanied his brother, Mgr. Ngo Dinh Thuc, on a world tour that took him to Japan, the Philippines, the United States, and Europe. Everywhere, he worked as much as he studied.

The psychologists would tell us that the ideas of a man cannot be grafted on his mind overnight, but are the result of a long process of study and influences. It is in this light that we have to understand President Ngo Dinh Diem's ideas. He certainly had a solid education, and was better prepared than any other statesman to carry out the task of leading his country through a period of political as well as intellectual and moral crisis. More than any other Vietnamese statesman, President Ngo Dinh Diem understood the real causes of sickness of his country, and more than any other statesman he knew where to look for the new strength that would carry Vietnam Through this period of crisis.

The remedy, for him, does not lie in any imported solution, ideas or force. It is in the people themselves that we should look for it, for he firmly believes that although the country had been

living on its reserves of moral strength for many decades, there are enough of them left to carry it over this period of difficulties.

On accepting office, he issued a statement on June 16, 1954, in which he declared « I have faith in my people. I am convinced of its unsurmountable dislike for the lies and oppressions of dictatorial regimes. I have faith in its deepest love for freedom ».

It is often said that men make history. But history also makes men. President Ngo Dinh Diem is certainly as much a genius in his own right as the fruit of his time. And that is why he has been successful where others failed.

PHUC THIEN

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

OF

PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM

President Ngo Dinh Diem was born on January 3, 1901 in Hue, capital of the former Viet-Nam Kingdom, the third son of the late Ngo Dinh Kha, Minister and Counsellor of Emperor Thanh-Thai. Mr. Ngo Dinh Kha was the initiator of a modern system of education based on the combination of western and eastern cultures, and the founder and director of National School « Quoc-Hoc » in Hue, where that system was applied in Viet-Nam for the first time.

After completing his studies very brilliantly at the School of Administration in Hue, President Ngo Dinh Diem entered the mandarin (corps of high civil servants) at a very early age, and reached the top very rapidly. Everywhere, he is remembered as an honest and highly competent administrator, loved and respected by all.

At 32, he was made Minister of the Interior, a position corresponding to that of Prime Minister in other countries. At once he objected to the policy of encroachment upon Vietnamese independence practised by the French Protectorate, and demanded from the Vietnamese Court reforms aiming both at the modernisation of the country and a real participation of the people in public affairs.

His views were not accepted and for this reason he resigned in protest, and thereafter he led a secluded life, devoting his time to the study of political and social problems.

President Ngo Dinh Diem continued to remain in close touch with the leaders of various patriotic movements, and was closely watched by the French authorities. In 1944, he narrowly escaped arrest by the French who wanted to exile him to Xieng-Khouang, in Laos.

After the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, President Ngo Dinh Diem twice declined Bao Dai's invitation to form a Government, considering that the situation created by Japanese occupation did not permit his country to attain real independence.

When the Viet-Minh came into power, he was arrested at Tuy-Hoa in September 1945, declined to participate in the Viet Minh Government and was deported to the Highlands of North Viet Nam.



President Ngo Dinh Diem and family at his home in Hue (Central Viet Nam). From left to right : President Ngo Dinh Diem ; his brother, Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu ; Mrs, Ngo Dinh Nhu ; his brother, Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc ; his sister-in-law, Mrs. Ngo Dinh Luyen, and children of Mrs. Ngo Dinh Nhu and Mrs. Ngo Dinh Luyen.

In January 1946, during the negotiations with France, Hô Chi Minh, in order to placate Catholic opposition, ordered President Ngô Đình Diêm brought back to Hanoi, and invited him to participate in the Government, but the latter declined the offer.

In 1948, Bao Dai requested President Ngo Dinh Diem to come Hong Kong. The latter was opposed to the immediate formation of a Provisional Central Government and proposed the setting up of a Preliminary National Committee bringing together the most representative personalities of the country to study all the problems to be discussed with France in order to insure the independence and unity of the country. But his proposal was not accepted. For this reason, he was the first one to protest against the Agreements of March 8 1949. These Agreements negotiated without the participation of representatives of the country, and giving Viet Nam only a nominal independence were in his opinion insufficient to bring about peace and independence. Under such circumstances, he declined once more Bao Dai's invitation to form a Government.

President Ngo Dinh Diem left Viet Nam in 1950 and visited several countries of Asia, America and Europe, in particular Japan, the Philippines, the United States, Belgium. Everywhere, he pleaded with energy the cause of his country and of freedom. He stayed several months in the United States as the guest of Mary Knoll College, and in Belgium at Saint Andre Abbey, Bruges. In 1953 he went to and stayed in France. He felt that the day was coming for him to look after his country's fate.

On June 17, 1954, in Paris, following the French disaster at Dien Bien Phu, he received delegation of full military and civil powers from Emperor Bao Dai and agreed to form a Government. On June 26 his plane landed in Saigon.

President Ngo Dinh Diem formed his first cabinet on July 7, 1954, under very critical circumstances :

- General confusion occasioned by the fall of Dien Bien Phu,
- Sudden evacuation of the Catholic provinces of North Viet Nam by the French Forces on July 2,
- Geneva negotiations which were to result a few days later in the partition of the national territory.

In spite of innumerable difficulties, of which the influx of refugees from North Viet Nam was not the least one, President Ngo Dinh Diem succeeded little by little in recovering full independence and in relieving the internal situation.

On October 23, 1955, in a national referendum, the Vietnamese people called for the deposition of Bao Dai and the proclamation of a Republic with Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem as President. On 26 October,

1955, in response to the people's wishes, President Ngo Dinh Diem proclaimed Vietnam a republic and assumed the functions of President until the country was provided with a Constitution by a National Assembly elected by the people.

On 26 October 1956 the first Legislative Assembly of Viet Nam made Mr. Ngo dinh Diem first President of the Republic of Viet Nam.

President Ngo Dinh Diem has five brothers :

- Mr. Ngo Dinh Khoi, former Governor of Quang-Nam, killed by the Viet Minh in 1945 ;
- Monseigneur Ngo Dinh Thuc, Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Vinh-Long ;
- Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu, Political Advisor to the President ;
- Mr. Ngo Dinh Luyen, Viet Nam Ambassador in London ;
- Mr. Ngo Dinh Can who, in accordance with Vietnamese traditions has renounced all other activities in order to look after his mother, Madame Ngo Dinh Kha, who is now 87 years of age.

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