

THE 1963 BUDDHIST CRISIS

A Study of its Origins, its Outcome, and the Buddhist's
Role in the Future of South Viet-Nam

By

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For more than twenty years, following the Japanese surrender to the Allied Forces and the French return to Indochina, Viet Nam continued to be an area of conflict. The Franco-Vietnamese war, which lasted for a decade (from 1946 to 1954) had caused much suffering to both sides. It ended in 1954 with the fall of Dien Bien Phu; however peace did not solve the Viet Nam problem, because the subsequent Geneva Agreements created two Viet Nams.

So war was resumed, with the aim of unifying Viet Nam. The only difference was that the French colonialists were replaced by the Americans in the role of anti-Communist fighters.

That war between Vietnamese and Vietnamese, Vietnamese and Americans, Vietnamese and American Allies produced a complex situation which was further complicated when the Buddhist crisis broke out in 1963. People began to look with growing doubts at Ngo Dinh Diem, the much praised president, honoured by both the Americans and the Vietnamese. These doubts were reinforced by the self-immolation of the Venerable Thich Quang Duc. They became more perplexed when after the downfall of the Diem government, which it had provoked, the Buddhist affair continued full of strange events and contradictions...

As a Vietnamese living in Viet Nam, directly observing the situation, I find the Buddhist crisis the most interesting aspect of that situation. But to my surprise, I discover that although news from Viet Nam always topped the headlines, and that in 1963 the Buddhists' action led to the overthrowing of a government, and that since 1963 they counted as one of the strongest political forces besides the Viet Cong and the Army, not much attention was paid to them, no lengthy discussion has been devoted to the study of their movement, its origins and its outcome.

As a student of Political Science, I wished to present an objective analysis of the Buddhist crisis, in its sociological, religious, political, and cultural aspects, and explain the many questions which still remained unanswered on that subject.

My work is an effort to present a preliminary assessment of the situation, not history in the true sense of the word.

The theme running throughout the thesis is that a political crisis never occurs instantly. The Buddhist crisis was not the manoeuvre of a band of opportunistic and politically-minded monks, nor was it merely a product of the Diem fanaticism. In fact it took roots from many events in the past and developed with the changes in the structures and the processes involved in politics and policy making. From a religious demand, the Buddhist appeal became a political protest, and this protest brought down the Diem government. Thus it is impossible to come to grips with the Buddhist crisis in its entirety, if it is not:

- placed in the context of the Vietnamese political, economical, sociological, religious circumstances of the time;
- and related to the underlying propensities of the system.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS .

There are various ways of approaching the topic of the 1963 Buddhist crisis in South Viet Nam.

- One approach would be purely historical: we could follow the evolution of the Vietnamese history and trace the relationship between politics and religion in order to find the distant as well as the immediate causes of its happening. Similarly an account of the crisis, its evolution, and its resolution, will help us to deduce the changes which were to follow.

However, the political history of a nation tends to be long and complicated, especially when it covers thousands of years. Such a method would lack a framework of analysis, which would give coherence to the multiplicity of facts that we have to present.

- A second approach would be theoretical i.e. to advance theories and principles which we believe to underline the relationship between politics and religion in Viet Nam, and to demonstrate them with historical events.

This method, contrary to the first, lacks precision and cannot describe the complexity of the Viet Nam situation at best.

- A third way is a combination of the first method, making it less factual and less confusing with an analytical approach, and an enrichment of the second by considering the problem in all its aspects.

As a method of study I have therefore chosen the third way. In so doing I shall draw on the "developmental approach", as propounded by such writers as Pye, Almond, and Coleman.

According to these authors, we need a more comprehensive framework of analysis to be able to study the entire scope of political activities within a society, regardless where in the society such activities may be located. Thus in the developmental approach, politics is viewed as a system composed of

"not only governmental institutions such as legislatures, courts, and administrative agencies, but all structures in their political aspects. Among these are traditional structures such as kinship ties and caste groupings; and anomic phenomena such as assassinations, riots, and demonstrations; as well as formal organizations like parties, interest groups, and media of communication."^I

The word system implies the interdependence of parts and a boundary between it and its environment, meaning that when the properties of one component in a system change, all the other components and the system as a whole are affected.

However, "there is more to a political system than may be clearly manifested over a given period of time."² Thus when we study any political system, we need to know not only its actual performance over a given period of time, but also its underlying propensities i.e. its political culture.

The study of the political culture is emphasized to stress the continuing importance of past events that give a sense of uniqueness and meaning to the development of each individual nation.

The impact of tradition on the modern scheme of things is recognized by most students of politics. This continuous importance of tradition comes out in the study of political culture. Political culture consists of the common patterns of orientation towards politics, the basic values, cognitions, and emotional commitments which are current among the entire popu-

I. G.A. Almond and G.B. Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Little, Brown, New York, 1966), p. 1⁸.

2. Ibid., p. 23

lation. It is an important concept, since it links the elements of politics and the behaviour of individuals in reaction to those events. Thus, if we want to explain and predict the functioning of a system, we need to know these basic political beliefs on which it is based.

However political culture is only one integral part of a more general culture, of the totality of beliefs held by individuals. These general value patterns may have no direct relation with specific political objects, but they can play an important part in the structuring of political beliefs.

Therefore we shall begin our analysis with the study of some important characteristics of the Vietnamese culture, such as the Vietnamese concept of the universe, the Vietnamese concept of human nature, the Vietnamese attitude towards life, and what the Vietnamese people believe to be the proper way to orient themselves towards their fellowmen.

The determination of political attitudes is a very complicated process, so it is not always easy to describe a political culture. When speaking of political culture, we are not only interested in naming the basic political beliefs, which affect the working of the Vietnamese political system, and which are relevant to political change, such as the end of political activities, the nature of the political process, the place of the individual in that process; but we are also concerned with other aspects, which are related to that concept of political culture such as:

- The way those beliefs are held, and the norms of political action, that regulate the way in which fundamental political beliefs are applied in politics; whether those belief-systems are open or closed, explicit or implicit; whether they stress on expressive or instrumental behaviour; the degree of politeness of interaction.

- The way those beliefs were learned, inculcated and transmitted, which is referred to as political socialization; the agents of socialization and the process of socialization, whether this process is continuous or discontinuous.

- Because these basic beliefs are not unchanging factors, which condition the environment in which political action takes place, we need to know whe-

ther they were transmitted as such or whether they were new beliefs created by the elites to mobilize the population and to build up a new political system.

- The salient crises in political history, which have great effect on the political culture, referred to as political memories. We must know about the set of historical events by which the Vietnamese nation was formed; whether political crises have been divisive or not; the criteria which have been used; and the individuals whom people took into account; their responses to Law and to appeals for support; the beliefs about the way the government ought to make decision; the place of the individual in the political process; whether there was a break in development, a replacement of old functions by new ones; and other crises that explain the individual behaviour of today.

- The way in which the political culture affects the decision making process and outputs of the system.

In the study of the Vietnamese political culture, we also have to use some criteria for the selection of significant aspects of cultural orientations, because there is a great number of institutions involved in politics, many political actors and many political issues. In other words we have to focuss our attention on those aspects, which are more relevant to the study of political change and modernization. Here the careful selection of basic cultural concepts and general political beliefs will help us.

In this direction the Vietnamese political culture will be described under four aspects:

- The Vietnamese people's orientations towards national identity;
- towards their fellow citizens;
- towards the governmental output, or demands upon the political system;
- towards the decision making process.

These common patterns of orientation towards politics may not be held by all the persons which comprise the political system. There may be other sets of political orientations or political subcultures. Thus, we also need to assess the degree of cultural homogeneity to understand the situation later on.

The individual members of the society may be aware of many governmental roles, but may not know how they can influence on the decision making process, thus we also have to look at the level of cultural secularization i.e. how much diffuse or specific their orientations are.

Finally we must also mention the structural differentiation.i.e. the process by which new roles and structures are created and articulated in the old ones.

The analysis of the political culture cannot tell us precisely about the good or bad functioning of a political system, even though it affects the interaction of the structures which make up that political system. Thus we shall look at the functional aspects of the political system, which may help to understand the success or failure of that system.

Almond and Powell spoke of the interaction between the different structures of the political system as a process

"consisting of inputs from the environment or from within the political system itself, the conversion of these inputs within the system, and the production of outputs into the environment. Outputs may produce changes in the environment, which in turn may affect the political system."³

Inputs consist of demands made upon the system, and the support which are given to the system; while outputs are actions initiated by the political system, which may or may not be responsive to demands.

The functioning of the South Vietnamese political system under Diem, will be viewed on two levels which are ~~interrelated~~ but which we shall separate for analytical purposes:

- The way it transforms inputs such as demands into outputs, i.e. its policies, referred to as its conversion processes; these processes are internal to the system. We shall look at the ways in which:

- demands are formulated, or the interest articulation function of the system. Interest articulation refers to the process by which individual groups make demands upon the political decision makers. An

3. Almond and Powell, op. cit., p. 25

interest group refers to a group of individuals linked by particular bonds of concern, or advantage, and who have some awareness of these bonds. By interest articulation, it is also meant the more or less breakthroughs into the political system from the society. Even when it is controlled and organized, such an articulation structure has the potentiality of exceeding limits and norms, and disturbing or even changing the political system.

- demands are combined in the form of alternative courses of action, or the interest aggregation function of the system. Interest aggregation refers to the processing of new claims and demands from the society into a programme of government. We reserve the term for the structuring of major policy alternatives. Among the structures which usually perform the interest aggregation function are: the bureaucracy, the political parties, and the large associational interest groups.
- authoritative rules are formulated (or the rule-making function); these rules are applied and enforced (or the rule-application function); and these applications of rules are adjudicated in individual cases.
- these various activities are communicated both within the political system and between the political system and its environment (or the communication function).

Another function which does not enter directly the conversion processes of the system, but which affects its internal efficiency and propensities, and hence conditions its performance, is its maintenance and adaptation function. This refers to the maintenance and replacement of parts of the political system, to the recruitment of new personnel to perform the various roles, old or newly created, in the political system. In the study of the conversion processes of the system under Dien, this function will also be looked at, in order to understand the internal efficiency and capabilities of the system.

- The second level of functioning to be studied is the way the political system is performing in its environment and how its activities are being

shaped by the environment. There are many sources of system change: from the elites themselves, from the social groups in the domestic environment, and from the political systems in the international environment. It is in the study of the capabilities of the South Vietnamese system under Diem that we hope to understand the common reaction to that system and explain the distant factors of the Buddhist success of 1963.

We shall successively deal with the system's extractive, regulative, distributive, symbolic, responsive, international capabilities.

"The extractive capability of a political system refers to the range of system performance in drawing material and human resources from the domestic and international environments."⁴

"The regulative capability refers to the political system's exercise of control over behavior of individuals and groups."⁵

"The distributive capability refers to the allocation of goods, services, honors, statuses, and opportunities of various kinds from the political system to individuals and groups in the society."⁶

"The symbolic capability is the rate of effective symbol flow from the political system into the society and the international environment. Symbolic outputs include affirmations of values by elites; displays of flags, troops, and military ceremony; visits by royalty or high officials; and statements of policy or intent by political leaders."⁷

"the responsive capability is a relationship between inputs and outputs...

In a sense every political system is "responsive" to something... To whom is the system responsive? In what policy areas is it responsive? How does it manage to sustain a pattern of responsive behavior?"⁸

The international capability will be examined under several aspects: The international extractive capability refers to

"such things as income from international trade or foreign tourists, profit from the investment of capital abroad, tributes and reparations drawn from foreign countries, and even levies on the services of foreign peoples,...

4. Almond and Powell, op. cit., p. 195

5. Ibid., p. 196 __ 6. Ibid., p. 198 __ 7. Ibid., p. 199 __ 8. Ibid., p. 201

Similarly, we may speak of the international regulative capability of a political system, meaning the extent to which a political system penetrates another one and controls its politics and public policy...

The international distributive capability might take the form of subsidies, grants, and loans, and technical assistance such as is provided by American, British, French, Russian, and Chinese governmental agencies. The international symbolic capability is a measure of the effectiveness of the flow of symbols, images, policy statements, and the like from one country to other countries...

The relation between inputs emanating from other political systems in the international environment and outputs of a given political system into the international environment may be viewed as the international responsive capability of that political system."⁹

Having studied the functions and structures and capabilities of the political system under Diem, we shall move on to the study of the Buddhist crisis, in which the weaknesses of the system will come out. We shall see that the military take-over of 1 November 1963 could not be called a revolution (as it has been used in South Viet Nam), because it did not bring about a complete change of the South Vietnamese political system. But the Buddhist movement contained in itself many elements of change which had been brewing among the Vietnamese population since the wars. Thus from the analysis of the Buddhist crisis in all its aspects, we hope to deduce certain general criteria, which might lead to a better development of the political system in South Viet Nam and envisage a role for the Buddhists in the future of that system.

In the final analysis we shall see that the solving of the problems of South Viet Nam does not lie in the hands of the Vietnamese people. The success or failure of the Buddhists' actions is not in their control. South Viet Nam's geographical circumstances, politics in the two Viet Nams, international powers' politics do not permit us to foretell what will happen even in an immediate future.

9. Almond and Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204

OF IMPORTANT VIETNAMESE CULTURAL BELIEFS.THE FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE VIETNAMESE CULTURE.

The Vietnamese culture of today is the mixture of many cultures with which the Vietnamese people had come into contact at different stages of the country's history. These periods can be roughly divided as follows: the Chinese occupation which lasted ten centuries from 206 B.C. to 939 A.D.; the Southwards expansion; and the French colonial administration from 1884 to 1945.

Early Vietnamese history recorded that once in North Viet Nam lived a population named Au Lac, which formed a feudal society governed by hereditary chiefs (Lac Hau) paying tributes to King Hung Vuong and later to King An Duong Vuong. Their economy was essentially agrarian, but their methods were still primitive. From archaeological studies, we learn that their culture was a mixture of Indonesian and Thai.

From Legends we learn that, in that culture, great emphasis was placed on living in harmony with the universe so that good may come. A Legend tells that the Vietnamese people came from the hundred eggs born from the union of the dragon Lac Long Quan and the fairy Au Co; fifty children went high up the mountains, fifty descended to the seas. There from the attempt to identify themselves with nature, they tattooed their bodies so that they might look like fish. If good did not come, magic was the means by which they sought to appease the unseen supernatural forces, which they considered as the causes of storms and droughts, the run of fish, the death of their crops, their cattle and their kin. That attempt to befriend the evil spirits is still lingering today in the Vietnamese custom to try all means such as "prayers and offerings, to make sure of the favour of the great powers in this world and the next."^I

It was against that Indonesian-Thai background that the Chinese culture

I. G. Lebrun, "Beliefs and Religions in Viet Nam", in Asia, (March 1951),

was introduced into Viet Nam. The first elements of Chinese civilization came with the Chinese general Trieu Da (Tchao T'io) who proclaimed himself King of Viet Nam. However he modelled his regime on that of the Emperor Ts'in Che Houang Ti and still governed with Lac Hau Lords by appointing two Chinese delegates, one in Giao Chi (Kiao Tche) and the other at Cuu Chan (Kieou Tchen) and by conserving the local administrative organization.

In 206 B.C. the Hans conquered Viet Nam and undertook to remodel it on the Chinese system. That territory which is now North Viet Nam became part of the Chinese province of Giao Chi, at the head of which was the delegate of the Chinese Emperor (the Thu Su) and his assistants, the nine commandery chiefs (or Thai Thu).

It was in this period, from 206 B.C. to 221 A.D., that the process of cultural assimilation was at its highest stage, and it was also during this period that Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism were introduced into Viet Nam.

Several historical documents relate the coming of Buddhism into Viet Nam as early as 189 A.D., under Han time in China. It came from China with the monks Marajivaka, Kalyanaruci, K'ang Seng Houei and Meou Po. Their teachings found few followers. It was only later that Buddhism became more popular when the Venerable Vinitaruci introduced from India the first popular Thien sect (one of the many sects of Mahayana Buddhism) which gained more and more importance and developed into other native sects and sub-sects.

However, Buddhism as propounded by Indian monks was less influential among the population than that coming from China. Confucianism, when introduced into Viet Nam, was already considerably modified, bearing the teachings of the Yin Yang school, the Legalists, Lao Tzu, Mo Tzu and Tung Chung Shu. But it was not established as an institution until the eleventh century A.D.

As to Taoism it never established any organization in Viet Nam, and the essence of Lao Tzu's and Tchang Tzu's philosophy (or Tao Chia) "is expressed only in the thought and conduct of educated persons of both Buddhist and

Confucian faith."² The Taoist religion or Tao Chiao has had a noticeable impact on the mass prone to superstition; but it taught a different doctrine which was even contradictory to the Tao Chia, for instance it taught means and techniques to avoid death whereas the Tao Chia preached that life followed by death is the course of nature and man should follow this natural course calmly. Thus we must not judge from the number of Taoist practitioners that Taoism has found its way to Viet Nam in its orthodox form.

Therefore when speaking of the Vietnamese culture we cannot forget mentioning its similarity with the Chinese culture.

"The entire Chinese administrative, religious and cultural apparatus was imported to Viet Nam indiscriminately. This is especially true with regard to the upper classes of the population, which formed the bureaucracy. But it is also true to a certain extent with regard to the lower classes."³

The Chinese culture and techniques, the written language, the rites (li) came with the first wave of Chinese refugees between 9-23 A.D.. Tich Quang (Si Kouang), then commander of Giao Chi (1-25 A.D.) had the Chinese characters and rites taught, and Nham Dien (Jen Yen), commander of Cuu Chan (29-33 A.D.) introduced irrigation methods, the plough and the use of marriage ceremonies.

The dissemination of the Chinese culture became almost complete after the repression of the last feudal attempt by the Trung Sisters to oppose the tendency towards centralization.

It was accomplished by good administrators such as Si Whiep (She Sie) from 189 to 226, who stimulated education and the improvement of technological methods. It was also during the period of Chinese domination that a new class of leaders was created: the Si or Shih, which was to become the key of Vietnamese political and economical life.

But the most important event in the introduction of the Chinese civili-

2. Nhat Hanh, Viet-Nam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 13

3. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 38

zation was that it had given the Vietnamese people the material basis on which the Vietnamese state could be founded. This was due to the Han policy of agricultural reform and land development. Giao Chi was then a colony of China. The improvement of agriculture produced a stable economy and an increase of the population, thus providing the basis for resistance against the Chinese and allowing the national spirit to grow up.

So the period of Chinese domination was important in many aspects:

- It introduced the Chinese culture, euphemistically called Confucian culture into Viet Nam.
- It created a new class: the Si (shih)
- It helped to create a new nation.

Although the Vietnamese people chose to imitate China culturally, they wanted to be politically independent. So in 939 A.D., Ngo Quyen overthrew Chinese authority and founded the first national dynasty. From then until the French conquest in 1884, Viet Nam enjoyed full independence, except for the brief period of Chinese invasion under the Ming Emperors from 1414 to 1428; in this short period of Ming conquest, the Ming generals confiscated all the books which might foster the development of Nationalism; they also imported the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi into Viet Nam. It was that revived doctrine of Confucianism that laid the foundations of the Le dynasty and Confucianism was at its golden age since then.

The period of independence was characterized by two important events:

- The Southwards expansion as a result of population explosion.
- The contact with the Cham and the Khmer, peoples who had undergone a strong Indian influence.

The new influence was noted to be more by hearts and souls rather than by force as was the Chinese one. In the eleventh century, the Cham who were Buddhists, converted en masse to Islam, which was considered to be more dynamic than Hinduism or Buddhism. That did not deter the Vietnamese people from expanding Southwards and hopefully Westwards, had the French not trampled on their feet.

In 1884, Viet Nam lost her independence again to France. The nationa-

list movements which sprang up had caused the French to become increasingly involved into local affairs, and the move towards a policy of association and then assimilation. As a result Viet Nam was under the influence of another culture, an influence which was more profound than the Chinese one, due to the development of technology and new ways of inculcating it.

Contact with the French brought into Viet Nam new sets of beliefs, new institutions, new ways of life and new ways of thinking. In particular it introduced the capitalistic system into Viet Nam and created a differentiation in the economy, where there was dualism of modernism and traditionalism. The division which the French had created between the towns, where influence of capitalism was felt, and the rural areas, where old agrarian customs were still retained by 85% of the population, laid the groundwork for the development of Communism, Mao's style, which was to be based on the poor peasantry.

World war II and the struggle for independence achieved the breaking up of the basic foundations of the Vietnamese society.

"In the eyes of the post-war generation, the Confucian order tempered by the Buddhist philosophy of self-denial, has become outmoded...The people realized that the Confucian superior man, no longer having the material means to persuade the common mortal to follow him...any means for achieving material gain became acceptable."⁴

It was then the golden age of the merchants. Former scales of values being no longer respected, people came to crave for milk in the morning, champagne in the evening. In the towns there developed a middle class, some of whom profitted much from relations with the expeditionary forces and the French authorities.

Thus today we can discern two trends in the Vietnamese culture:

- The Eastern one represented by the Chinese, which is still very important owing to the fact that Viet Nam was under Chinese occupation for more than ten centuries and owing to her geographical situation; and

4. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 50

- The Western one represented by the French.

THE TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE CONCEPT OF THE UNIVERSE.

Like most farmers of ancient times, the Vietnamese people have their lives regulated by the rhythm of the climate. From this dependence on nature to make a living, they come to admire and love it. They admire the way the universe functions, the alternate action of am and duong (yin and yang); am evokes shadowy hillsites, cold and rainy days, the feminine, the passive; duong evokes sunny hillsites, the heat and the drought, the masculine, the active; the action of these two forms engenders the world of senses. Thus the universal harmony is a harmony of opposite tensions.

Like the Chinese Confucianists, the Vietnamese believe that Heaven and Earth (Troi Dat) is the regulator of am and duong. However the essence of the Supreme One is unknown to them. What they know is that there is a natural order in the universe and all that happens in the universe, natural and human alike, forms a continuous chain of natural sequence. So everyone and everything is part of the universe, which has nothing beyond it and is the totality of all that is. Because Heaven and Earth are the harmonious meeting of am and duong, social order requires a perfect synchronization between the natural course of events and man's actions. If man transgresses the natural order, catastrophes and troubles will occur. Thus for harmony and goodness to happen, man has to know how to live according to Heaven (Thuan Thien Hanh Dao).

In later developments of the doctrine of Confucius, one can always see the notion of a unity between the creator and the created, whether the universe is made up of Li (principles or Laws) and Ch'i (Matter) as propounded by Chu Hsi or whether it is a spiritual whole as in Wang Shou Jen's conception of the universe.

Wang Shou Jen wrote in the "Great Learning": "To manifest the illustrious virtue is to establish the nature of the unity of Heaven, Earth and all things; to love people is to exercise the function of that unity."⁵

5. Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York, 1960), p. 311

This idea of a natural order in the universe shows an obvious element of fate which lies beyond human control, since man's duty is always to follow one model: the union with Heaven and Earth.

The concept of the universe as creating, governing and transforming all that exists on the Earth, was already in existence before the introduction of the Chinese culture. It sprang from a living close to the nature and from the acceptance of human incapacity to control the universe. Such fatalism was reinforced by the loss of independence and the humiliation that the Vietnamese had to suffer during the period of domination. It is not surprising that this idea of human fortune found great affinity with Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and other waves of thought from China, which were no more than different ways to save human beings from misery and unhappiness.

THE VIETNAMESE CONCEPT OF LIFE.

Its origin: Since time immemorial up to now, the Vietnamese people believe in the principle of cause and effect. They believe that good actions and good deeds will ultimately confer happiness and virtue unto their descendants. Thus during his life, every Vietnamese tries very hard to tend to goodness in order to create happiness for his children. If the children do not equal the father in wisdom and behaviour, the latter will feel strongly humiliated, as if it were his own fault. In front of a mischievous child, every mother would say nothing but: nha toi vo phuoc (meaning her family has no such hereditary happiness and virtue).

Such a concept of life can be considered either as the cause of the assimilation of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, or as the result of this assimilation, because the two doctrines reinforced each other to an extent that we can no longer differentiate between them. The difference is perhaps a psychological one as seen in the Vietnamese greeting: may chau roi? (meaning how many children do you have?) instead of the Chinese questions when meeting a friend: an no chua? (meaning have you eaten enough?) or phat tai khong? (meaning have you made a fortune?).

In fact the belief in that principle of causality is very much different

from the Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist concepts of life. Confucian philosophy stresses on the five basic virtues which make the superior man: nhan (jen or human heartedness); nghia (yi or righteousness); le (li or proper conduct according to rituals); tri (chih or wisdom); tin (hsin or good faith).

However in the last analysis, Confucianism is nothing but the rational justification of a social order, a political philosophy which shows man the way to achieve peace in oneself and in one's country. It uses the five basic virtues as moral basis; the three elements of social ethics (tam cang), which consist of the proper relationship between the ruler and his subjects, between husband and wife, between father and son; and the doctrine of the mean (trung dung), as a mode for all activities.

The original problem of the Taoists is how to preserve life and avoid harm and danger in the human world. Its method is to transcend and to forget the distinction between things, to be at one with nature, in order to be free from desires, miseries and unhappiness. It has great similarity with the Buddhist notion of repression of one's desires to minimize one's sins; both differ from the Vietnamese view of hereditary goodness and virtue (phuoc duc).

As to the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation, it concerns each individual and not the relationship between father and son.

Thus the Vietnamese concept of transmission of one's goodness to one's children can be considered as already existing in Viet Nam before the introduction of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism.

HOW TO ACT PROPERLY TOWARDS ONE'S FELLOW MAN.

Following that tendency towards goodness, and the emphasis of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on living the superior life of the Sage, enlightened, righteous man, the Vietnamese are strongly predisposed towards living in peace, brotherhood and non violence with their own fellow men.

In the Confucian system,

"the superior man is...the generous man, who sets a sense

of dignity above his own interests; he is constant in that he must refrain from hating that which he has loved and from harming those to whom he has previously been kind. Similarly, he must fulfill all explicit and implicit promises arising from his acts and attitudes. He must never allow himself to be led by resentment or grudge."⁶

"The superior man should put forth an untiring effort to practice his duties towards others, and a continuous supervision over his conscience and his passions. When the ultimate stage of love for humanity is reached, nhan nullifies all hatred and all vice;"⁷

THE VIETNAMESE CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY.

The family group was the basic unit of the Vietnamese social system. It grew up as in China from the dependence on land, which was immovable, to make a living. The family had to live together for economic reasons.

The major traditional family relationships were those between the sovereign and the subject (conceived as between father and son), between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brother, between friend and friend (conceived as between elder and younger brother).

Ancestor worship developed for that reason.

"The ancestor worshiped was usually the first of the family who had established himself and his descendants there on the land. He thus became the symbol of the unity of the family, and such a symbol was indispensable for a large and complex organization."⁸

Ancestor worship is the tradition to which the Vietnamese are the most attached. Every house, rich or poor, possesses its altar before which the head of the family prostrates himself according to the prescribed rites.

Thus the Vietnamese family is more a social group, linked by bonds of kinship; it is like a religious organism, having the ancestors as divini-

6. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 55

7. Ibid., p. 276

8. Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York, 1960), p. 21

ties, and the home as its temple, the inhabitants of the house as its faithful. Such a strong family spirit can be noticed in old proverbs such as: *mot nguoi lam quan ca ho duoc nho* (meaning a mandarin can give his support to the entire family). Such a support can extend as far as five or even more degrees removed in paternal lineage. Hence the old imperial custom to appoint mandarins to areas other than their places of birth to avoid particularism, and to avoid nepotism by a strict rule for recruiting Civil Servants. Today this family spirit is argued to have been strongly mitigated by the development of urbanism, because people develop strong ties based on professional groups, neighborhoods etc.

With the diffuseness of the individual relationships, family ties have weakened, Nghiem Dang remarked that

"Although the family is still a firm social unit in Viet Nam, its dimensions are already reduced, and it is no longer true that the homogeneity of the family makes the average Vietnamese a collective being for whom the interest and the will of the family group take precedence over the will of the individual. However in the immediate family i.e. brothers and sisters, or fairly close cousins, some influence is still possible; but this is true even in highly industrialized societies, where, aside from political considerations, the collaborators of high administrative officials are sometimes chosen among members of the family for reasons of confidence as well as of competence."⁹

To conclude family solidarity still remains considerably influential over the individual, although much less than in the past.

THE PLACE OF MYSTICISM IN THE LIFE OF THE VIETNAMESE.

We have learnt previously that, in the old times as well as today, mysticism takes an important part in the life of the Vietnamese people. Their mystical tendency comes from the belief in the control of supernatural forces over events in this world, and the possibility to quell down

9. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 267

natural disasters by magic. Through magic, rites, prayers and offerings to the supernatural forces, they sometimes successfully prevented storms, droughts, death and diseases etc.

This psychological experience, this temporary relief of anxiety is so deeply rooted in the mind of the Vietnamese people, that they tend to multiply their divinities; seeing the mark of their actions in every event hereunder;

According to Roger Bastide, author of "Les Problèmes de la Vie Mystique"; there are different circumstances under which mysticism would appear:^{IO}

- At the time of the creation of religions, or in early tribal societies, mysticism appears with the enthusiasts and the illuminated.
- In periods of domination, struggle, or during revolutions, or during economic crises, when the society undergoes strong, unhappy changes, prophetism occurs. Oracles and prophecies are very popular with the Vietnamese, who have a strong enthusiasm for the supernatural. Vietnamese history is full of such mystical elements, such as during the period of struggle between the Lords Trinh and Nguyen from 1528 to 1802, there were the oracles of Trang Trinh; another one was that of Duc Phat Thay Tay An (of the sect Buu Son Ky Huong) which occurred when the French began their invasion around 1849; it appeared again with Huynh Phu So (founder of Hoa Hao Buddhism).
- During peace time, under strong surveillance, when free thinking has no place in society, when religion is dominant, constructive mysticism appears as seen in the spirit of Caodaism which sprang up under French domination. One of its message read as follows:

"To combat heresy, to sow the love of God and God's creatures among the peoples, to practice virtue; to learn the love of justice and resignation; to reveal to men the pos-
thumous consequences of their acts while curing their
souls, that is the ideal of Dai-Dao."^{II}

Note that these are only common cases, the origin of mysticism has to be

IO. See Le Van Sieu, Van Minh Viet Nam (Saigon, 1964), p. 96

II. G. Lebrun, "Beliefs and Religions in Viet Nam", in Asia, (March 1951), p. 81

based on many conditions among which are: the climate, historical circumstances, economic changes, social conditions etc.

Because of the importance of mysticism and superstition among the masses of the people, the mobilization of those spiritual forces for political purposes was very successful, as seen in the spread of the Hoa Hao movement which we shall examine later on.

THE PLACE OF RELIGIONS IN THE VIETNAMESE SOCIETY.

When tracing the political history of Viet Nam, we cannot omit the importance of the different religions in the political realm. Thus it is of great importance that we get some ideas about their place in the Vietnamese society to understand the importance of their activities later on. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism with their numerous ~~rites were welcomed heartily~~ by the Vietnamese people with their inherent tendency towards mysticism, thus their spiritual life did not suffer any disturbance.

Historians have been accustomed to speak of these three doctrines as the three main religions which were combined into a strong spiritual force acting on the mind of the Vietnamese people. They call it the spirit of "tam giao hoa dong" (unity of three religions). That spirit can be clearly seen in the bringing together of all divinities of the three religions into Vietnamese and Chinese pagodas. However a person who is acquainted with the doctrines of Confucius and Lao Tzu, would immediately ask: can Confucianism and Taoism really be called religions? that spirit of "tam giao hoa dong" is it essentially Vietnamese?

CONFUCIANISM A RELIGION?

There are many disputes (still unsettled) about the character of Confucianism. Some assert that it is a religion, others say it is not. Those who declared that Confucianism is a religion would stress on the metaphysical aspect of Confucianism. They would argue that in the Confucian system the highest achievement of the Sage is the identification with the universe. When performing his task in dealing with human relations, the Sage does it not only as a citizen of a society but also as a citizen of the universe.

The world as he understands it, is a synthetic whole;

"social order requires a perfect synchronization between the natural course of events and men's actions. If men...transgress this natural law, such catastrophes as floods, drought or epidemics will serve to indicate that certain attitudes or ways of living should be changed."^{I2}

This theory of social and celestial harmony served as the basis for the worship of the celestial authorities, "and in this way the various official or private social activities of the peoples dedicated to Confucianism came to be impregnated with a religious quality,"^{I3}

The famous cult to the ancestors is attributed to Confucius, who placed a fundamental importance on that cult. Thus according to this theory, Confucianism is a religion in the sense that Professor Henri de Glasenapp uses for his first category of religions which he calls: "the religions of eternal law"^{I4} In these religions, the universe is eternal and functions according to continuous unchanging laws.

Opponents to this theory would stress on the this-worldly character of Confucianism. They would say Confucianism is

"concerned chiefly with society, and not with the universe; with the daily functions of human relations, not hell and heaven; with man's present life, but not his life in a world to come. When he was once asked by a disciple about the meaning of death, Confucius replied: "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?"^{I5}

If Confucianism is a religion, why has it no God nor Spirits to worship, from whom it would spring: religion in this sense falls in the second category of religions used by Henri de Glasenapp: the religions of the historical revelation of God, in which the universe and human beings are produced, governed and controlled by a supreme power, separate from the universe

I2. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 52

I3. Ibid., p. 53

I4. See Le Ngoc Diep, Van De Tuong Quan Giua Ton Giao Va Chinh Tri (Saigon, 1967), p. 10

I5. Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York, 1960), p. 7

with immeasurable force.

Those who believe that Confucianism is a religion would say: but Confucius was worshiped like a God by the people, with all the rites and regulations, with the scholar order to perpetrate his doctrine. This was due to the fact that Confucius was the King of the spiritual world under the Han dynasty. Confucianism was like a religion, in the true sense of the word. The revival of the theory that Confucius was divinely appointed by the Heaven to follow Chou occurred in the nineteenth century with K'ang Yu Wei, but it did not expand.

Judging from the teachings of Confucius and his disciples, we can certainly not call Confucianism a religion. As to the cult to the ancestors, its ceremonies of mourning were interpreted as follows in the "Li Chi" or "Book of Rites" (most of its chapters were written by the followers of Hsun Tzu, a third century Confucianist): "When our loved ones die, we know, through our intellect, that the dead are dead and that there is no rational ground for believing in the immortality of the soul."¹⁶

Hsun Tzu in his "Treatise on Rites" said:

"The rites are careful about the treatment of man's life and death. Life is the beginning of man, death is his end. If the beginning and end of man are both well treated, the Way of Humanity is complete....If we render adequate service to our parents when they are living but not when they are dead, that means that we respect our parents when they have knowledge, but neglect them when they do not. One's death means that one is gone forever. That is the last chance for a subject to serve his sovereign, and a son his parents....

The sacrificial rites are the expression of man's affectionate longing. They represent the height of piety and faithfulness, of love and respect...The sages understand their meaning. Superior men enjoy their practice. They become the routine of the officer. They become the custom of the people. Superior men consider them to be the activity of man, while ordinary people consider them

¹⁶. Fung Yu-Lan, op. cit., p. 148

as something that has to do with spirits and ghosts."^{I7}

The cult to the ancestors, the worshipping of tutelary spirits, of herees, of Confucius, took a religious character because of many factors:

- with the introduction of Buddhism in the first century A.D., and the revival of Taoism, people became more interested in metaphysical problems, and in the nature and destiny of man. Thus Confucian rites were practised not with little superstition and mythology by common people.
- with the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation they believed that the souls of their ancestors came back to the altars to enjoy the offerings, flowers, incense and sacrifice made in their honour. Thus the cult was Confucianist but the belief was a Buddhist one.

TAOISM A RELIGION?

Despite its other-worldly character, Taoism cannot be called a religion either. We have noticed the distinction between Taoism as a philosophy and Taoism as a religion, and the diversity of the latter with the pure doctrine of Lao Tzu and Tchang Tzu. Also as mentioned before, Taoism never established its institution in Viet Nam.

The numerous rites which are said to be Taoist rites, such as the burning of imitation money and clothes for the dead to use, and which are still widely practised in Viet Nam, are merged into the cult to the ancestors, to the spirits and to Buddha. Today the practitioners of such rites do not even know of their origin.

Thus Taoism as a religion, with a temple, a priesthood, and a liturgy has never been found in Viet Nam.

THIEN-PURE LAND SECT: VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM.

As mentioned before the branch of Buddhism which was introduced into Viet Nam, in the second century A.D., was a sect of Mahayana Buddhism called Thien (in Japanese it means Zen; in Chinese, Ch'an; in Sanskrit, Dhyana).

Thien differed from other sects by its methods of arriving at Enlightenment.

^{I7}. Fung Yu-Lan, op. cit., p. 149

"A person who practices Zen meditation does not have to rely on beliefs in hell, nirvana, rebirth or causality; he has only to rely on the reality of his body, his psychology, biology, and his own past experiences or the instructions of Zen Masters who have preceded him. His aim is to attain, to penetrate, to see; once he has attained satori (insight) his action will conform by itself to reality."¹⁸

Then the whole world and he himself become Thien.

Thien meditation resembles the Taoist doctrine of non-action. The best method of spiritual cultivation of Thien is to do one's task without deliberate effort or purposeful mind i.e. to do things naturally. Thien practitioners do not have to perform special acts, such as the ceremonies and prayers of an institutionalized religion.

So as we can see, Thien is no more than a method of attaining happiness, and getting emancipated from the wheel of birth and death under the guidance of Thien Masters.

People can argue Buddha is only a human being, whose reflexions about life and death, and about the path to a better life, have brought to the rank of a God. However if we take a look at Vietnamese Buddhism, we can see that it is composed of a mixture of basic Thien elements and of the many practices of the Pure Land Sect. The Pure Land Sect requires its practitioners

"to keep five precepts: abstention from killing, abstention from acts of banditry and theft, abstention from wrong sexual practices, abstention from lying, and abstention from wrong speech and intoxicants. He has to recite the Amitabhasutra and the name of the Amitabha Buddha. He also is expected to perform right actions so as to gain merit for himself or for his relatives."¹⁹

This combination of Thien and Pure Land Sect is more suitable to the masses, for whom Thien as practised in pagodas is too hard.

As in China there is a distinction between Buddhism as a philosophy and

18. Nhat Hanh, Viet Nam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), pp. 4-5

19. Ibid., p. 6

Buddhism as a religion. Unlike Confucianism, Buddhism is a more other-worldly philosophy which is more concerned with the origin of mankind and the universe, the purpose of their existence and their destiny. Despite its lack of organization, in every village, Buddhism has a pagoda, a monk and its rites. According to Fung Yu Lan, "every great religion is a philosophy with a certain amount of superstructure, which consists of superstitions, dogmas, rituals and institutions."²⁰

According to what has been said before, perhaps Buddhism deserves the most the name of a religion more than Confucianism and Taoism do.

If only Buddhism could qualify as a religion, then why is there the concept of "tam giao hoa dong"? the unity of the three religions sprang up from the fact that they were introduced at a time when Viet Nam suffered great humiliation from being dominated. They were three different ways to create happiness for people who had lost hope, and as pointed above they were all complementary to the Vietnamese notion of hereditary happiness and virtue. As a result they were welcomed heartily by the Vietnamese and became deeply rooted into the Vietnamese mind.

We have also pointed out the similarities in their doctrines. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, all belong to the category of religions of the eternal law, each influencing the other; Confucianism was impregnated with Taoist and Buddhist thoughts, while Buddhism was thought of as a branch of the Taoist religion at first in China.

Furthermore the numerous rites, which were performed by the followers of the three doctrines, did not clash with each other. On the contrary they were all suitable to the Vietnamese tendency towards mysticism.

From this mixture of different thoughts and beliefs, the Vietnamese people have evolved a religion which is particular to themselves. In the realm of moral, ethics, they followed the teachings of Confucianism; in other spiritual activities, Buddhist and Taoist rites were performed. In fact that

20. Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York, 1960),

spirit of "tam giao hoa dong" can be most clearly seen in the famous cult to the ancestors: it is said to be of Confucian origin, but the rites performed, the offerings and the belief in the return of the ancestors to enjoy these offerings are essentially Buddhist, while the burning of imitation things for them to use is seen as of Taoist origin.

THE VIETNAMESE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

From the simplicity of their nature, from their tendency to live and let live, from their peaceful nature, the Vietnamese people do not ask for strict principles as regards to their religion's worship. They are always ready to put Saints and Spirits and Buddha into one sacred place to worship them all. Because of this, their spiritual life is centered on the pagoda. Hence although Buddhism has never been a state religion, Buddhist principles are deeply rooted into the Vietnamese mind. In every village, there is a pagoda, and in every temple Buddha is always present.

The influence of Buddhism is so obvious in Viet Nam that even when Buddhism was in decline in Chou China (from 560 to 577 A.D.) the Chinese governors did not interfere into the Vietnamese worshipping of Buddha. Buddhist monks were greatly venerated, and in their spare time, they often exchanged knowledge with Taoist priests and Confucian scholars.

The old proverb "tre vui nha gia vui chua" (meaning the young ones enjoy the home while the old people enjoy the pagoda) shows that the pagoda was some kind of a friendly place. Old people without any children of their own came to live there; desperate people; repentant bandits; retired mandarins; anybody regardless of class and sex could seek refuge and comfort in the pagoda. Thus it has always been the meeting place where news were gathered and spread out, whether the Buddhist monks wanted it or not.

Due to its affinity with the Vietnamese character, Buddhism has a big influence on the Vietnamese spiritual life. This spiritual force is latent. It only shows up in due course, as we shall see, and calms down again almost to nothing, but it is always there.

Heaven and Earth, Heaven and Buddha, are familiar Vietnamese interjections.

Any Vietnamese would confirm that every time he comes past a pagoda situated in remote areas of the countryside, he would feel some attraction for that serenity, that stillness in nature, something which he feels sorry to leave. The sound of a gong, the sound of prayers mixed with the rythmical beating of the hand-rattle coming from a distance, create a strange feeling of emotion, a feeling of respect and modesty inside oneself.

In this chapter we have learnt of many important cultural beliefs, we have seen how the Vietnamese people view the universe, what they think about life, about the future of mankind and so forth. We have also mentioned the different ways of thought which invaded Viet Nam during the different periods of Vietnamese history, and their impact on the Vietnamese way of thinking.

However, despite the Chinese influence, the Vietnamese people have evolved a distinct national characteristic; they managed to preserve their own cultural, religious and social identity, and although they have adopted many Chinese customs and ways of thinking, they modified these to suit their own ends.

The Vietnamese people can be said to be more Confucian than the Chinese Confucians themselves. This is due to the fact that they were able to distinguish between true Confucianism and its distortions. They could see the contradictions in the attitudes and the teachings of Confucian doctrines by Chinese governors. They could learn from the persecuted scholars, who sought refuge in their country, the way to differentiate between the two. Most important of all they got from these refugees the spirit of rebellion against what was considered to be untrue. Hence, during the period of Chinese domination, one can witness a series of rebellions and the rising of a national spirit. When Viet Nam recovered its independence, it was the Confucian principle of a social order which maintained the Empire until the French came.

Confucianism was adopted by the elite because it was thought to suit the maintenance of the established order. However it was Buddhism that the masses of the people had sympathy with. Confucianism was too hard for the

people to follow, while in the Buddhist doctrine they find the comfort from all miseries in life. Buddhism fit in with their tendency towards goodness, its influence was gentle and soft, while Confucianism imposed rigid laws on the people's life. Buddhism in Viet Nam was more than a religion and a philosophy, it is a way of life, which is suitable to the nature of the Vietnamese man. These two influences on the Vietnamese mind illustrate at best the ways the Chinese and the Indian cultures were introduced into Viet Nam.

Thus today, because Confucianism is outmoded and is no longer judged to be effective administratively speaking, its influence has almost disappeared, while Buddhist influence in the spiritual field is still persistent and sometimes rose up as great as ever.

VIETNAMESE POLITICAL CULTURE.

The study of general cultural beliefs does not give us specific details as to why the Diem government encountered difficulties in its task of governing. Thus in this chapter, we shall have a look at the basic political values and the ways they influence on the individual behaviour, in order to understand the functioning of the Vietnamese political system under Diem.

THE VIETNAMESE SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY.

Of what political unit does the Vietnamese consider himself a member? how deep and unambiguous is the sense of national identification? the question of national identity is the most important in the formation of a political culture. Like a man who needs a stable and mature personality to develop his own identity, a political system also needs a strong sense of national identity, if it is to get started and to work efficiently.

The nationalist movement which reemerged after the Second World War in Viet Nam took on many important aspects, which were characteristic of many other movements in Asia and Africa. It has to be examined in the context of the changing social and economical concepts. We do not deny that feelings of kinship and other factors such as the sharing of similar political beliefs, the sharing of the same laws, a common tradition in history, a common suffering in the past, the neighboring of groups in the same geographical area, a common language, a common culture, and identical ways of living, could all lead to a strong sense of nationhood. But the national spirit, which developed since World War II was a new one, with a different nature and it was based on different needs.

The contemporary Vietnamese crisis of identity can only be understood if one has a good view of the traditional concept of nationhood, and its evolution during the wars and since then.

THE TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE CONCEPT OF A NATION.

Although Viet Nam recovered her independence since 939 A.D., it was not until 968 A.D. that the Vietnamese nation was founded, for it was only then that the country became unified with the help of the Emperor Dinh Tien Hoang.

Until 1945, the political regime adopted during independence was a monarchy. It was in fact a theocracy, in which the King derived authority from Heaven.

There were some arguments that Viet Nam had been more a federation of villages rather than a centralized state, and that the monarch was there only to coordinate the activities of autonomous villages. Advocators of such an idea used the principle of autonomy of the villages, or the old proverb: "phep vua thua lo lang" (meaning imperial orders give way to village customs) as an example of federation in Viet Nam in the old days.

But in my opinion, a federation implies the union of many peoples of diverse races, customs, languages etc. who finds some common interests in uniting themselves under a federal law, while retaining some autonomy in their home affairs. Members of a federation owe allegiance to their own state and to the central federal power in so far as the latter does not interfere outside the stipulated agreements.

The Vietnamese people were not many but only one people, they have resisted Chinese domination, and manage to preserve some cultural identity of their own, despite the ten centuries of that domination and Chinese assimilation. They were one race of people, who spoke the same language, they had a glorious past behind them, a common suffering from foreign domination, a long history of struggle for independence. They had many strong dynasties, whose reigns were very long: the Ly dynasty (1009- 1225); the Tran dynasty (1225-1400); the Le dynasty (1428-1788). Their leaders were appointed by the King, how can we speak of a federation in such a case?

Furthermore, although it is said that the central authority stopped at the hedge of bamboo surrounding the village, this authority reached the members of the village in a different way, it was founded on a spiritual basis. David Apter wrote: "For the members of theocracies there is no sharp distinction between the natural universe and the state, the living and the dead, or the real state and the transcendent state."^I

Legal physical coercion could not be used by the central government to

I. D. Apter, The Politics of Modernization (Chicago and London, 1965), p. 286

enforce obedience to the law, because of the lack of means to enforce such obedience and because of the size of the country. But the village authorities as well as its inhabitants never deviated from the central way, due to the Confucian teachings, which stressed on true loyalty towards the King, Son of the Heaven.

The country was a big family, at the head of which was the Emperor who received the mandate of Heaven, in turn the mandarins were his mandataries and so on down the line.

Speaking of the personal nature of the Vietnamese administrative organization, Nghiem Dang wrote:

"At each echelon, relationships were more or less comparable to those between parents and children. Although the Vietnamese administrative system interrupted this chain, stopping at the communal level and not insisting so much on the family, the quasi-personal nature of the relationship between the administrator and the people still persisted in popular tradition, and also in legislative dispositions, as can be seen in the code of Hong Duc and particularly in that of Gia Long."²

Down the administrative echelon, the communal mandarin (or xa quan) was at first appointed by the village itself and served as coordinator between the village and the representative of the imperial authority, the district chief. The latter merely transmitted the instructions received from above and it was left to the village notables to take the necessary measures for the execution of these instructions.

"Village custom did not really block imperial orders; however the imperial order was expected to stipulate only the ends desired; it was the prerogative of the village to find the means for realizing these ends. And it was precisely in recognizing this autonomy of the village that the state was able to impose on the village a collective responsibility for the execution of orders coming from the central government."³

2. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 54

3. Ibid., p. 150

The village authorities were very careful taking part in agriculture, crafts and family activities of the inhabitants of the commune. As to the villagers, it will be wrong to judge them as to be apathetic towards public affairs beyond community level. Their participation in the various religious, literary and professional associations helped to promote national spirit. The villagers in Northern and Central Viet Nam used to group themselves into a bamboo enclosure or in hamlets, but they were by no means isolated, with the communications between the communes. They used five successive gong beats (trong ngu lien) to announce the approach of danger, a brigade of postal runners (linh tram) to run the mail by foot, and set up relay stations (tram) for mounted couriers; these were given special privileges on ferry boats to ensure quick service, and the linh tram were protected by special laws, which would inflict severe punishment on any attempting act to harm them.

As we can see, the Vietnamese nation has been existing for a long time, and there was a distinct Vietnamese character. The Vietnamese national spirit was fostered by many factors among which was the concept of the village as a microcosmos, a small part of a bigger world, the state, which was itself contained in a macrocosmos, the universe, in a chain of natural sequence of order.

It would be superficial to say that Viet Nam lacked a national church to promote unity; the Confucian doctrine was more apt than any other spiritual force to maintain order. Here we have to mention the role of the literati in shaping public opinion and transmitting it through students, by means of education and by means of advice given to the people, who always came to see the scholars on important personal and family problems. Thus the Confucian class had every opportunity to keep the individual in the line of the central way and to keep the national spirit alive. Consequently we are not surprised to see the successful mobilization of the patriotism of the people by Vietnamese Kings in the old times. Had the Vietnamese people not resisted the Chinese in one strong national force, would the nation still be existing today? one example of such unity was the famous convening

of a people's council at Dien Hong by King Tran nhan Tong, to decide whether or not to resist the Mongols.

So although the central authority did not extend its control down to the communes, the Vietnamese nation was not divided into autonomous areas under independent powers; on the contrary every inhabitant of the commune always looked up to the monarch as his sovereign, despite the fact that their daily lives were governed by the village customary or book of laws (huong uoc).

The traditional Vietnamese society showed many distinct characteristics: a strong attachment to the village and to the land of their ancestors, a strong cultural unity, a respect of education and authority, a habit of group decision and discipline, a strong national vitality, and most of all a devotion to national independence from alien domination.

A DIVIDED NATIONALIST MOVEMENT.

If the Vietnamese people were so united in front of Chinese invasion, then why was the national resistance against the French split into many movements? for what reason did the literati fail to mobilize the people when new means of communication had been introduced by the French?

The weakening of the traditional national concept came with:

- The decline of the Vietnamese monarchy.

Following the example of China, Viet Nam adopted a policy of isolationist (be quan toa cang) towards the West. The Vietnamese people, like the Chinese, considered themselves to be the most civilized and all other nations to be barbaric.

However contact with the West had given them the opportunity to see that there were other political regimes than the monarchy, and from this discovery they lost faith in the divine character of the Vietnamese Emperor. This loss of confidence was seen in the debate between Pham Quynh and Nguyen Van Vinh, but whether they advocated a reform or a revolution, both agreed on the necessity of a change.

This urge for reform also came from the example of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the reign of the Japanese Mikhado.

A third factor which contributed to the depreciation of the Vietnamese monarchy was the result of the French conquest of Viet Nam. Under French occupation, the power of the Emperor was limited both in theory and in practice. In theory, his rule-making function was limited by the fact that any law he wished to make had to be approved by the Indochinese governor; the latter, by a decree, could change the content of the law or prevent its passing. His rule-application function was hindered by the setting up of new administrative organizations which were responsible to the French. The Emperor no longer had the right to choose his mandarins, their rewarding and promoting as well as punishment were subject to French administrators. As to the rule-adjudication function, the French also took over it. French magistrates sat next to the Vietnamese magistrates and took over the real authority. Only French tribunals could try foreign residents and the citizens of Cochinchina, Ha Noi, Hai Phong and Tourane. In practice, although in the 1884 Convention, Viet Nam was only a protectorate, and although Vietnamese internal affairs were stipulated to be under the Vietnamese monarch, it was not so at all; the French even separate the Centre from the North, where the authority of the monarch was null. Following the policy of assimilation, in 1880 they set up a colonial council in Cochinchina, which was composed of six Frenchmen elected by universal suffrage by their compatriots, six Vietnamese elected by the elders of the communes, two delegates of the Chamber of Commerce, and two members appointed by the governor. In provinces, provincial councils were also created. As to Tonkin and Annam the same policy was also pursued there.

The Emperor himself did not save the situation. On the contrary the last Emperor Bac Dai only made things worse; he did not protest against the French impingement upon his rights in the Northern part of Viet Nam, nor did he ask to exercise these rights.

- The decline of Confucianism.

The early period of French domination was marked by many resistance movements led by the monks and Confucian scholars. But how did the Confucian class lose its grips on the Vietnamese society? did the ruling class actual-

ly change the ideology? were there any external factors of change?

We have seen that during the period of independence, Confucianism was at its apogee, being the foundation of the Vietnamese dynasties. It was the age of peace, prosperity and happiness; thus the Vietnamese peasant did not see any reason to protest against the established social order, he honoured the elders of his community, the men who were learned, the representatives of national authority, and he respected himself as a peasant. The world is as it is, he thought, any attempt to change it would be ridiculous, shocking, a little indecent and immoral.

We have previously remarked the rigidity of the Confucian system, which the people find it hard to comply to. The reason of Confucian predominance as a political philosophy was its utility in the maintenance of the existing social order, through the teachings of Confucian precepts and the recruiting of mandarins through Confucian examinations. These examinations took place at regular intervals from the Tran dynasty onwards, in the thirteenth century; commoners were also permitted to sit these competitive examinations, thus the choice was based on merit. Of course there were certain positions reserved to princes of the blood; sons or descendants of the King; certain exemptions for the sons of mandarins in the examinations; the *tien cu* or wise, honest, talented men, presented by mandarins or provincial chiefs; but on the whole it was a meritocracy rather than an ascriptive system. Examinations were based on the study of the three religions, but later on the Chinese classics and an administrative subject were adopted.

With the French administration, there were new methods of recruiting Civil Servants, which outdated the Confucian learnings and provoked a switch to the new education. The introduction of new methods of governing, new political theories, a new civilization, showed the Vietnamese people that the Confucian class, whom they considered to be the most able, was in fact unable to cope with the new situation.

Western education, Western ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity had a strong appeal to the Vietnamese people, who were already tired of the yoke of Confucianism and its strong moral overtone; the disillusionment

with the monarchy, coupled with the humiliation of being dominated, the awareness of their low level of development, led them to demand certain reforms within the society.

It was the literati, the mandarins who first led the movement against the French, seeing in them a threat to their position. They founded the Van Than Party, which opposed to treaties with the French. Others under the leadership of Ton That Thuyet founded the Can Vuong movement. However after the successive defeats of Dinh Cong Trang, Phan Dinh Phung, De Tham in 1894, soon the Confucian class became exhausted. As a result, Confucian predominance in cultural and political fields declined.

- The decline of Buddhism.

In the previous chapter, we have spoken of the influence of Buddhism on the life of the people; why did the people not rise up in its name to preserve their spiritual life, the foundations of which were being shaken by new concepts?

The decline of Buddhism took place since the secularization of politics by the institutionalization of Confucian examinations, as a means for securing new talents for the governing of the country. The Kings no longer had to rely on the monks for building the nation and defending the country, other talents could be recruited from the Confucian class, whose devotion to the King and to the country became an article of faith, more powerful than the abstract and highly complex doctrine of Buddhism. The Confucian scholars rose in the esteem of the monarchs with the result that the monks went into seclusion to look after the training of their young followers in the spirit of Buddha.

In 1304, a royal decree established an examination for all the monks, testing them on the Kim Cuong (Vajracchedica Prajaparamita Sutra), those who failed had to return to secular life. In 1381, Buddhist monks were drafted into the Royal Expeditionary Corps to fight in Champa.

The new impetus given to Confucianism and also to Taoism was the result of the Ming occupation between 1414 and 1428, a time during which Buddhist

books were burnt, Buddhist temples were destroyed and Buddhist practitioners persecuted. Thus talented monks withdrew into the monasteries, and Buddhism suffered a great loss from this.

Under the Hau Le dynasties (1428-1527), Buddhism gradually lost its original purity, mixing itself with Confucian and Taoist rites. Monks became loose in their way of life. Buddhism became the religion of the mass and no longer received royal protection. The taking up of monastery life was only a way to hide one's ignorance and pagodas were refuges for failures, who were disgusted with life, trying to escape this world full of deceit to get into the world of dreams and stillness through prayers. It was no longer the doctrine of self-salvation that attracted the people but the way to become a mandarin and to rise up in the social hierarchy. Unfortunately for Buddhism, with its spirit of adaptation, it came to embrace Taoist practices, and the monks became no more nor less than magicians living on the superstition of the people. Some monks failed to observe the five abstentions destined to extinguish passion and desire; they abandoned the vegetarian diet, and even got married.

From the Hau Le dynasties onwards, especially between 1528-1802, a time during which the Lords Trinh and Nguyen were struggling for power, Buddhist orders gradually desintegrated. Although Lord Nguyen was a fervent Buddhist, Buddhism was not well supported; and when the Tay Son brothers came to power, monks were drafted into the army and statues of Buddha and pagodas were destroyed.

Thus without an organization and a hierarchy, without a high education, true Buddhist faith could no longer be expanded and understood. As a consequence, the monks did not have a strong basis on which they could rely to mobilize the mass to chase the foreign invaders out of Viet Nam. Succeeding to the mandarins, the monks started their resistance to colonialism in 1898, with the cooperation of Confucian scholars. In the centre of Viet Nam, a Zen monk named Vo Tru led the "monks' war", which attracted many followers, but the movement failed and many pagodas were raided. In the North, there was the Thuong Chi Association led by monk Vuong Quoc Chinh.

In the South many secret anti-French organizations were set up, such as the Nghia Hoi, Thien Dia Hoi, Luong Huu Hoi, Nhan Hoa Duong. Buddhism was the common factor that bound those organizations together. Meetings were held in pagodas at night, many monks were arrested and tortured by French secret police, others were deported to Con Dao Island.

The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao Buddhist sects could be considered as the last attempts by religious orders to resist French rule over Viet Nam. They were religious sects with strong political overtones, and they were important to the government because they controlled quite an important number of people, and formed independent states within the Vietnamese state.

The Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars have failed in the resistance movements, and the participation of Buddhist monks in the Resistance had led the French to employ a more discriminatory religious policy in favour of the Catholics. On the one hand there was repression of political parties and political associations, on the other hand there was the resistance of an autonomous culture to Western invasion.

The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao Buddhist sects were products of the particular circumstances of the time. But why did they start as religious movements and end up by being nothing more than War Lords in the Vietnamese nation? At the start these movements gained many followers; by the end of 1926, Le Van Trung, the Great Master of the Cao Dai succeeded in rallying no less than 20,000 adherents to his faith. As to the Hoa Hao "Mad Bonze" Huynh Phu So, he succeeded in kindling the little spark that made anti-French feelings explode in the sparsely populated That Son (Seven Mountains), the ideal refuge for nationalist revolutionary elements in South Viet Nam; in 1939, the Hoa Hao Sect claimed more than one and a half million adherents in the West of Viet Nam, in the highly fertile rice bowl of the Mekong Delta.

However, when it became clear that neither the Cao Dai nor the Hoa Hao would go along Viet Minh lines in the "National United Front", the Viet Minh assassinated Huynh Phu So and attacked Cao Dai Forces. Because of this dissension with the Viet Minh Front, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao were pre-

disposed to side with the French.

Their existence could also be seen as a product of the foreign policy of divide and rule. Cao Dai Armed Forces were given arms and money to fight the Viet Minh, with the result that most Cao Dai Forces came to side with the French, except the small group of the ultra-nationalist Trinh Minh The.

The French and the Vietnamese government even went as far as giving high Cabinet posts to some of the Sects' dignitaries, such as Le Van Hoach. They coordinated military activities under the "Inspectorat Général des Forces Supplétives", which paid an allowance to the unit commanders on a per capita basis of actual fighting men available. French liaison officers and training staff were stationed with all major Cao Dai and Hoa Hao units."⁴

The French also signed a military convention with the Hoa Hao after the death of their leader Huynh Phu So. Since then the Hoa Hao raison d'être for the French was to fight the Viet Minh. Tran Van Soai (or Nam Lua) who led the oldest organized Hoa Hao group was given an "honorary" Brigadier General title in the French army; another leader, Le Quang Vinh (or Ba Cut) also attracted by money, came under the French command in June 1947. The French also profitted from the Hoa Hao internal struggle and gave Soai the bulk of equipment supplied to the Hoa Hao against Lam Thanh Nguyen, Nguyen Giac Ngo, and So's father. As a result, the Hoa Hao fiefs were frozen, and the Vietnamese government began to place its own civil administrators throughout the West of South Viet Nam.

As to the Japanese, they also used the regional local forces against the French, not because they sympathized with the Vietnamese people, but because of their ambition to dominate Asia.

When the French exiled Pham Cong Tac to Madagascar, the Cao Dai Forces responded by seeking aid from the Japanese. When Huynh Phu So was declared sane, after being confined to a psychiatric board by the French, he asked to return to Bac Lieu; a year later the Japanese sent a car to bring him to Saigon. The French government knowing the Japanese political manoeuvre provoked an accident in which So was slightly hurt; arrested by the

4. B.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), pp. 145-146

French he was released following Japanese intervention, and when the French went away, the Japanese gave the sects every facility to coax them into fighting the French.

The political religious sects could never have been so active, had psychological conditions of the time not pushed the people to response to their appeal and had foreign powers not helped them to rise and prosper.

- Different leadership, different purposes.

The Vietnamese independence movement began to change both in leadership and in purpose, after the Second World War, when it incorporated goals of economic and social change. The Viet Minh Front consisted of two main elements: the nationalists or rebels and the nationalist-communists or revolutionaries. The former wanted independence, but they were by no means well-organized; they constituted a host of popular uprisings, the aim of which was to liberate the country from alien rule; they were patriots but not revolutionaries, and independence to them opened the door to paradise on earth, a return to the golden age when Viet Nam was self-governing.

So far we have seen four factors which explained why the nationalist movement against the French was a divided one: the monarchy was weak and so was the old traditional Confucian class, the Buddhist church was not strongly organized, Viet Nam lacked a strong national leadership.

The Vietnamese people were not strongly divided and although there were certain differences in customs, behaviour, conditions of living, between the Northern, Central and Southern people; these were minor differences, had there been a strong common cause for them to defend.

There were some arguments that the French policy of "divide and rule" had succeeded somehow in making Viet Nam turn into three separate entities which reinforced the already existing North-South split. In fact it did not produce the desired effect, for a divided leadership could not mean that the people were divided. The difficulty in rallying the people into one big mass movement was perhaps due to the strictness of French control; all rebellions were quickly and violently repressed, which had a deep effect on the state of mind of the population.

Moreover, in a country which used to be dominated and controlled by foreigners, it is easy to understand why the people tended to trust only small groups, because any sign of discontent or revolt would be fiercely repressed.

So on the one hand, there was no strong traditional national leadership to organize the people; on the other hand, French control excluded any possibility of a national political organization.

Furthermore to speak of Southerners as to be more apathetic politically than Northerners and Central people is not totally right, because while the North had a strong system of villages, in the South the people were scattered into wider areas and did not live inside a bamboo enclosure; hence communication between villages and mobilization were much more difficult.

THE MODERN VIETNAMESE CONCEPT OF A NATION.

After the war, Viet Nam emerged as a politically divided country and although the problem of independence had been solved out to some extent, as the two Viet Nams became independent states, the issue of reunification continued to plague Viet Nam. International politics had created two states, which are now economically and ideologically different, but despite these differences and other already existing differences, such as the North-South difference, the Vietnamese people still preferred a united Viet Nam. Had there not been that strong Vietnamese attachment to the question of a united territory, the present war would not be existing.

In their transition from the colonial and traditional past to the modern world of technology, the Vietnamese people were presented with two revolutionary roads: the Communist and the Non-Communist or Nationalist. Compared with the Communist revolution, the Non-Communist was in a disadvantageous position. If we look at the present Vietnamese social structure, we would understand the strength of the Communist revolution.

From her colonial past, Viet Nam inherited a gap between the urban and rural people, a gap which was intellectual, sociological, political and economical. The French had destroyed the traditional village structure in their effort to destroy the nucleus of Nationalism. Today traditional

institutions and beliefs no longer proved valuable.

Tanham wrote:

"The family is not as important as it once was. The father does not hold exactly the same role as he did, nor are the elders as respected as in earlier days...Increased social mobility has hurt village cohesion and organization just as it has the family...Modern communication and transportation have opened new worlds to the rural youth, and they are either going out to seek new opportunities or are restless at home. Finally, religion no longer answers all of the people's needs."⁵

More than ever the young Vietnamese peasants felt a need to belong to a larger meaningful group than the family, the clan, the village and because Confucianism has lost its hold on Viet Nam, something had to replace it, something like allegiance to the nation state to fill the emotional vacuum.

Sharing that unrest was the urban intelligentsia; the young Vietnamese in the cities, though wealthier and more privileged in educational and material benefits, have been largely neglected if not ignored by the government. They constituted the reservoir of national leadership in South Viet Nam, because they could understand political ideas better, through education. They were wondering how they could carve out a future for themselves and for their country.

In short, the young people today looked towards the nation state as an agent of fulfillment of all material, social, emotional and psychological needs; as an agent of welfare and a source of pride. Sharing the national discontent was the revived Vietnamese Buddhism, which was not taken into account.

In response to that need, the Communists presented the nation state as a source of pride, which they had to defend to the last minute; as a future source of material welfare, that the people had to work for right now. Communist ideology served as a national religion, and they had the advantage of a ready-made doctrine and a master strategy and tactics in psychological

5. G.K. Tanham, "Nationalism and Revolution", in Asia, n° IV (Winter, 1966),

warfare and political indoctrination.

The Communists took advantage of the revolutionary spirit of the Vietnamese people, which had developed after the wars and contact with the West. To the Vietnamese Communists, a revolution can only be real when it is achieved right from the roots, when it wipes away all injustices to build a completely new society, liberating all classes, agrarian and industrial. That is why the war they fight is termed revolutionary, popular and a war of liberation. It is revolutionary because it replaces the rotten by the better new, popular because the whole population wake up to find a new way, and a war of liberation because it finds a new place for equal men in a new society.

Thus the Communists presented an excellent variation of Mao Tse Tung's revolutionary guerrilla warfare. The accent is not only on a better new society with better living and economic conditions, but also on equality and freedom. Their war is not only a revolutionary war based on the peasantry to liberate the whole country, but it is also a people's war. Through this we can see that the Communists played on Vietnamese national feelings and patriotism.

They were very much acclaimed when they overplayed the "national" theme and kept very discreet about Communist doctrine until 1951, when mass indoctrination of the population on Communist themes began. By that time, they had full control of the Nationalists, and the Communists got full control in China, and French military strength had already declined.

Still after the partition, almost a million Vietnamese chose to go down South, when they were forced to solve the identity problem. Meanwhile the Vietnamese in the South looked for a national concept which would serve them best as Vietnamese, something which would not be in conflict with the Vietnamese way of life, and at the same time would fulfill the rising expectation for a better life. But in their search they were met with frustration and their goals were still unclear.

South Viet Nam suffered from the feeling that she has lost the Indochina war with the French and that the Vietnamese peasants know very well that it

was not the Saigon government, who chased the colonialists out of the country.

On the one hand the South had no clear conception of nationhood, on the other hand national loyalty was undermined by the development of a sub-national loyalty during the war by political religious sects, which ruled many areas of South Viet Nam. Thus although both sides claimed to represent Viet Nam from the China state to the Ca Mau peninsula, South Viet Nam lacked true psychological appeal, which the North possessed.

To the peasants, the Communist appeal was irresistible; to the workers, Communism represented a means to suppress the outrages of colonialism and personal dictatorship; and to the intellectuals it offered a ready-made doctrine to add social content to the concept of independence and an efficient system to answer the rising expectations of the people. However the Nationalists got a second opportunity with the Geneva Agreements, although they had no clear concept of revolution. It is left to see how President Diem seized that opportunity to build the nation of South Viet Nam.

THE ETHNIC MINORITIES AND NATIONAL LOYALTY.

When dealing with the Vietnamese nation we must not forget the numerous ethnic Minorities which occupied the Highlands of Viet Nam (hence the name of montagnards given by the French and dong bao thuong given by the Vietnamese); the Cham who survived the Vietnamese conquest; and the Chinese who came to Viet Nam to make a living; and the Cambodians of the South.

The montagnards who occupied the Highlands of Viet Nam number up to 2,6 millions in the North, and almost a million in the South⁶; where they are divided into some dozen tribal nations of different racial, linguistic, and cultural groups. These people mainly of Polynesian and Mon-Khmer stock, were the original occupants of Viet Nam; but they were gradually pushed back into the hill areas, when the Thai (that is Laotian Siamese) and the Burmese and Sino-Mongoloid (Vietnamese) ethnic groups and seafaring Indians penetrated the area, some thousand years ago.

6. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 6

The Vietnamese vitality, which was shown in the resistance against the Chinese, manifested itself again strongly in their push Southwards; in the conquest of the South, the Vietnamese were as fierce as their Chinese conquerors. As a result, the montagnards either fled to the hills or resisted strongly. In the Northern Highlands, "the fierce Thai, Muong and Tho tribes tolerated Vietnamese overlordship with as much good grace as the latter tolerated their own submission to the Chinese."⁷ Some tribal Thai were left to their own devices, being regarded as a buffer zone against the still dangerous Khmer Empire. Even in French days, the High Plateau was under the titular authority of the Emperor, then Head of State; "In effect, wrote Dennis Warner, this meant 'Vietnamese keep out!'"⁸

Other ethnic Minorities include the 35,000 Cham, who live around Phan Rang and Phan Ri, in Central Viet Nam. Their territory, the Kingdom of Champa once spread from the eighteenth parallel to the actual province of Binh Dinh. Gradually through migrations with Cham consent, through the marriage of a Vietnamese princess with the King of Champa, through conquests, the Vietnamese came to destroy that Kingdom; the defeated Cham also sought refuge with the montagnards. The Cham were most unfortunate; on the one hand they had to resist Vietnamese expansion, on the other hand they had to defend themselves against the Cambodians from the South. It should be noted that the present Mekong Delta was once inhabited by half a million Cambodians. According to Bernard Fall, their presence in the West of the Mekong Delta is a living reminder of how recently Viet Nam colonized the area. Although there is a possibility that these peoples will disappear as separate ethnic entities in the future, their loyalty to the Vietnamese nation remains unclear.

Another important ethnic group, which we cannot ignore is of course the Chinese. They took various professions, merchants, butchers, bankers, rice millers; but they formed a compact bloc in Viet Nam, and their industrial and commercial genius, coupled with French help, consolidated their power

7. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 16

8. D. Warner, *The Last Confucian* (Penguin books, 1964), p. 179

in the Vietnamese economy. It was a colonial policy to make them indispensable intermediaries between French and Vietnamese producers and consumers; thus certain economic fields such as transportation, banks, trade, and the distribution of rice were controlled by them. Some 500,000 Chinese live in the Saigon twin city of Cho Lon; during the Second World War they provided an important fifth column for the Viet Minh. Owing no loyalty to the Vietnamese nation, they would do anything for money, even the sale of arms to the enemy; Chinese capital often flowed to Hong Kong and Singapore. Thus any responsible top Vietnamese leader must realize that all ideology aside, biological "chinization" of South East Asia would be only a question of years, if he did not decide to go against the inexorable rising Chinese tide.

The survival of a nation lies on the sense of identity of its people; we have seen that the Vietnamese people, although divided in some aspects, were culturally, linguistically, racially homogeneous; and they showed a strong vitality, a strong attachment to the ancestral land and to the defense of its independence. Moreover, although lacking a national church to promote further the national spirit, this was compensated, in the old days, by Vietnamese Confucianism and today by Communism and Nationalism.

In Viet Nam there are also many ethnic groups whose identification with the nation was not so strong. This lack of identification, coupled with the geographical factor, turned them into separate entities within the Vietnamese state. We must notice that Vietnamese geography does not favour unity, the Vietnamese crowded themselves into the lowland tiny pockets around the Red River Delta, the Central Coast and the Mekong Delta, while the vast mountainous regions were left to the montagnards. The fact that these mountain areas formed the frontier with Laos and the Cambodian state was next door, made them an ideal place for crossing the border with the help of these minority groups.

UNITY OR DIVISION IN VIET NAM.

For a country to be strong, each individual citizen needs to feel some common loyalties with his fellow citizens, a willingness to defend his

country when threatened by a common enemy. If the members of a country are divided and suspicious towards each other, it will be a very difficult task to rally them together to defend any cause. Thus it is of importance to us to investigate further the division between Northern and Southern Vietnamese, between the rural and urban peoples, between the highlanders and the lowlanders, between the Buddhists and the Catholics, to see how much it lessens the degree of national cohesion.

THE VIETNAMESE NORTH SOUTH DIVISION.

If we look at Vietnamese politics today, we would say that many of its events could be explained in terms of the North-South split; and if we look at Vietnamese history we would also find many factors which prove that this separation had always been existing. This separation was further deepened by the French policy of "divide and rule". Such was the argument of K.T. Young in his introduction to a series of essays on Viet Nam. He pointed out that the division between Northern and Southern Vietnamese did not date from recent past. The Northern area of Viet Nam was previously inhabited by the Vietnamese, and the Southern area by the Cham and Khmer; they were two different parts separated by the "Gate of Annam" near the seventeenth parallel. These two parts became united when the Vietnamese succeeded in subduing the Cham. This Southwards push was as strong as the resistance Northwards against the Chinese. Then there was the struggle between the Lords Trinh and Nguyen, who ruled the Northern and Southern areas, a struggle in which different European countries abetted both sides. In the eighteenth century the two parts were reunited under a nominal Emperor at the Centre. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, although there was a strong dynasty at the Centre, the two areas were placed under Vietnamese governor generals; the French made it a policy to turn Viet Nam into three separate entities under different administrations over which they have control, thus it was not surprising that from the governor general down the administrative hierarchy, all were appointed by them.

This political separation was further accentuated by differences in characters, behaviour, customs, conditions of living and relations of the two

areas; while the Northerners felt a certain superiority towards their fellow countrymen, since they live in the original home of the Vietnamese race, the people around Hue felt they were the most cultured, living in the Imperial capital, the Central Vietnamese also prided themselves on holding deep religious beliefs and on their superior political sense; thus the inhabitants of Cochinchina were looked down by both Northerners and Central people for being dominated by the French (which they also were, but refused to admit it) and for lacking in tradition.

In addition to all this, the French colonization came to accentuate the division further. Economically the North and the South were made different. The French stressed mining and industry in the North for local consumption, while setting big plantations of rice, rubber, coffee in the South for exports. The resulting social patterns from these systems did not favour union. Politically Ha Noi and Saigon were transformed into rival centers, while universities and modern schools were concentrated in the North.

Thus Young concluded, because of that regional split, the Vietnamese people were divided and disunited, they became fractious and polarized. However if we examined more closely the Vietnamese society, we may find a counter-argument to that of Young. Starting from the Trinh Nguyen struggle, it would be more precise to call it a struggle for power between the Trinh and Nguyen families, rather than an enmity between the inhabitants of the two regions. The Trinh and Nguyen were related by the marriage of Trinh Kiem and a daughter of Nguyen Kim. The latter was a mandarin of the Hau Le dynasty, who helped the Emperor to reconquer the throne from the Mac dynasty. After Nguyen Kim was poisoned to death by a Mac general, the command of his army passed to Trinh Kiem. However Nguyen Kim had also two sons; Nguyen Uong and Nguyen Hoang, who had led many victories to the Le dynasty. Fearing an eventual struggle for power, Trinh Kiem killed Nguyen Uong; Nguyen Hoang cautiously asked his sister, Trinh Kiem's wife, to have him transferred to the South. From then on, he consolidated the power of the Nguyen in the South against an eventual Trinh attack. Although their descendants were related, the degree of relationship was declining with time,

until 1627 when they started the first quarrel.

If Southerners were looked down by Northerners why was Nguyen Hue (one of the Tay Son brothers and a Southerner) accepted by the people of the North when he married a Le princess? how could the disdain be justified when Nguyen Anh, another Southerner, established a dynasty and reigned all over Viet Nam? how could the rivalry between Southerners and Northerners be justified, when the people from the South started an appeal for helping the people in the North, when they were stricken by famine in the Second World War? moreover had there been antagonism between the two areas, why did almost a million Northerners dare abandon all their belongings to come to the South?

It is a big mistake to think of the Vietnamese people as being composed of different races, speaking many dialects, living entirely different lives. Of course there was an obvious influence on the characters of the people and the living conditions by the environment, but the literature written by Northerners always found great popularity and understanding among Southern readers.

As to the French policy of "divide and rule", we have said, it did not produce the desired effect; even though the French gave money to Southerners to fight Northerners, they could not succeed in separating them. Nationalist fervor was nationwide, the people felt united against a common enemy: the French. The Vietnamese people always want to see Viet Nam unified, but the problem is that each of the two Viet Nams wants the other to follow her solution to the problem of modernization.

THE URBAN-RURAL GAP.

Following the dichotomy which the French had created in the economical field, the lives of the townspeople were changed in a drastic way, while the rural inhabitants retained their traditional agrarian life and even their traditional administration. This gap became bigger and bigger as the war and the towns developed, and produced great misunderstanding and suspicion between townspeople and peasants.

The city dwellers, especially the contractors and merchants gained a men-

tality of businessmen from their contact with the Europeans; with the change in their ways of life, they changed their moral values. To many of them any means became acceptable for achieving material gains, such as black marketing, bribery, gambling, smuggling. Their life was a life of ease and certain vices even succeeded in receiving semi-official sanction, for example the gambling firm of Cho Lon and the great Vuon Lai prostitution establishment. They became extremely rich and it was that urban sector which was to provide the future political and administrative leaders of South Viet Nam.

The townspeople looked down to the peasants who were regarded as uneducated and grotesque. Few rural youths found a chance to make a fortune, because they had no access to the education, which the urban people were given. They wanted land, more tractors, more doctors, more educational facilities and more welfare benefits, in other words a better life. Because the traditional structure was upset, they had nowhere to turn to for comfort. Thus they looked towards the city as something wonderful, as a place where perhaps they could get a chance to go ahead. Although there was not much concern from the city dwellers for the well-being of their fellow countrymen in the rural areas, they did not feel much animosity towards townspeople. In fact not all rural people felt upset, disturbed, rootless and rebellious; few were conscious of their situation and were managing their life happily somehow. However, if their griefs were not taken into account, this feeling of uneasiness and this desire for a better life would find a way of expression in the future.

THE MINORITY PEOPLES vs. THE VIETNAMESE.

We have noticed the presence of almost a million highlanders in the plateaus of South Viet Nam, and of three other ethnic groups, the Cham, the Cambodians, and the Chinese in the South. While in North Viet Nam, the numerous tribal groups which inhabited the Highlands were given some degree of autonomy, in South Viet Nam, the montagnard's relationship with the Vietnamese people has always been marked by the traditional mistrust between highlanders and lowlanders. To the South Vietnamese, the highlanders were

savages or moi. Thus it was not surprising that the montagnards welcomed the French with great relief when they came to Viet Nam. The Vietnamese like the Cham, never had any desire to face the inhospitable forests and primitive tribes of the Highlands, thus they concentrated on the deltas, leaving a vast territory to the montagnards.

Until the French came, the montagnards were tributary to the Vietnamese Emperor and Vietnamese annals were full of mountaineer uprisings. Despising and oppressing them, the Vietnamese failed to understand their needs. The consequence was that the Highlands became spots of trouble. The same applied to the other ethnic minorities to whom the Vietnamese also showed some contempt.

THE BUDDHISTS vs. THE CATHOLICS.

The role of the Buddhists in the overthrowing of the regime of President Diem, who was a Catholic, made it necessary for us to see whether there was any conflict between the two religions that made the Buddhists Diem's enemies.

We have noticed in the chapter on Vietnamese culture that Buddhism formed a great part of the Vietnamese culture. When confronted with a problem, the Vietnamese always evoked *Troi Phat* (Heaven and Buddha). The Vietnamese Buddhists might not go to the pagodas regularly, they might not recite Buddhist prayers everyday, they would say they were Buddhist because their fathers were, their grandfathers were and their ancestors were Buddhist, but Buddha's teachings were always present in their thoughts, their behaviour, their nature.

Because they believed in the notion of humane love and compassion, the Vietnamese Buddhists, when starting their movement of renovation of the Buddhist doctrine did not seek to fight Roman Catholicism and think of it as a rival religion, despite the many differences between them. Surely the persecution of Catholic missionaries under the Nguyen dynasty, which led to the French intervention in Viet Nam, was not at the instigation of the bonzes. But why was there a malaise between the Buddhists and the Catholics in Viet Nam? there are three reasons that we can think of:

- the alien character of Vietnamese Catholicism.
- the biased French policy towards the Catholics.
- the attitude of the Catholic community towards people of other faiths.

While Buddhists, Confucian scholars and non-Catholics participated in the Resistance movements against the French, the Catholics stayed aloof and even supplied spies and translators to them. Not only did they abandon their traditional religion and the cult to the ancestors, they accepted a new set of ideas created by foreign missionaries and imitated the mother country. The "made abroad" character of the Vietnamese Catholic church as remarked by Father Hoang Quyinh was evident in its speech and writing style, its music, its theology, and its philosophy. In short, the Vietnamese Catholics lived apart from their fellow countrymen; this was confirmed by many of the Catholic intelligentsia, such as Professor Nguyen Van Trung of the Arts Faculty in Saigon. In this way, the Catholics fell into the trap of the French government, whose principle of "divide and rule" was well known. The Venerable Nhat Hanh remarked that

"Bishop Puginier tried to convince the French that the most efficacious way to pacify Tonkin was to persuade all Tonkinese to convert to Roman Catholicism: "With the propaganda of the Bible and the French language, in less than twenty years, and without having to force anybody, this country will become Christian and part of France."⁹

Speaking of Roman Catholicism as the religion of the West, hence estranged from the Vietnamese culture, someone might say: were Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism of Vietnamese origin? certainly not, but they had a longer time to become engrained into the Vietnamese nature, and they were so well rooted that they became almost Vietnamese; besides, they were closer ways of thought to the Vietnamese existing trends. Roman Catholicism had a lesser time to take its hold on Viet Nam and it came along with new ways of life, new ways of thinking, which were contrary to a culture which was existing for thousands of years.

9. Nhat Hanh, Viet Nam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 21

The conflict between Buddhist and Catholics was not only abstract, its practical consequences were seen in the raids and demolitions of temples and pagodas and the conversion by force of the population by the local Catholic militia units in North Viet Nam in 1952. These acts were permitted by a government which favoured the expansion of Roman Catholicism. The French colonial expansion had taken the cloak of defense of religion as a pretext, and since Viet Nam was colonized, the subject of religious expansion as well as freedom of movement of the missionaries were always of prime importance in any discussion with the Imperial government.

Under French domination, the power of Catholic priests was such that when people persecuted by the French, especially political refugees, they could ask for the priests' protection with success, particularly after 1945. Thus many people were converted through gratitude, others to find security, a few by force. The days of terror perpetrated by the French army and secret service, from deportations to arrests and tortures, made the help of the Fathers really vital.

French religious favoritism was also written into laws, for example the decree n°10 passed by Bao Dai, in 6 August 1950, fixing the status of all associations, imposed stringent restrictions on associations other than foreign missions. Article I of Decree n°10 said all religious associations except Christian ones (as set in the decree of 16 January 1939) would be regarded as associations and the government could stop their activities for security reasons. Articles 24-28 said all associations, except Christian ones could only receive membership subscriptions and acquire a limited amount of properties and estates necessary to their functioning.

Furthermore the Ministry of the Interior could remove any member of their administrative council without having to give any reason; all associations that failed to follow the lines set in the decree could be dispersed, and their members taken into custody. Meanwhile, Catholic properties and estates were regarded as public properties and thus were not taxed. Even other foreign missionaries found themselves limited in their work.

Thus although there was no direct struggle between the Buddhists and

the Catholics in Viet Nam, the seed of religious discrimination was sown.

After the partition of Viet Nam, almost a million Northern refugees, most of whom Catholics came to live in the South. This influx of enterprising, dynamic Catholics from the North and the Diem's sympathy towards them, intensified the already existing malaise. While the Buddhists were stressing more and more for Buddhist modernization and the bringing of Buddhism into the field of everyday life and activities, their needs were not satisfied, while the Catholics prospered. But what happened next was clearly the consequence of the Diem regime, which we shall see later on; just as the division between Northerners and Southerners was encouraged by the French, the division between Buddhists and Catholics was a product of the Diem administration. The misunderstanding between townspeople and the peasantry should not be overemphasized because it was not so strong as to antagonize the two. Similarly the traditional mistrust between the montagnards and the lowlanders did not bring the oppressed montagnards to violent uprisings. This is not to say that there was no disunity between these different groups of people. Discontent was there for any interest group to make use of it and the winner would be the one who could understand those grievances.

DEMANDS ON THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

A third aspect that we have to look at in the development of the Vietnamese political culture is the demands of the people on the political system. It is important to know what the people expect from the government and to know about the development of these expectations, because these expectations set the goals of the political system.

In traditional societies, the value orientation towards governmental output had two aspects: on the one hand, people expected the government activities to cover only a limited range, on the other hand they did not know that they could have any claim from the government. The government's business consisted of the selection of the right mandarins to carry out a limited number of functions such as: police, justice, taxation and corvees. The Imperial government was not expected to solve many problems which modernization has created nowadays, such as problems of crowded and unsanitary

slums, problems of road repairs and public lighting, traffic problems, problems of building schools and hospitals etc.

Viet Nam, like China was a "hydraulic state", since she had large scale works of irrigation and flood control. Thus besides the problem of flood control and irrigation, in the eyes of the people, the essential duty of the government was the maintenance of general order and the taking of positive action in political events such as the defense of the territory against foreign invaders, the expansion towards the South to solve the population explosion. Economic intervention was limited to

"agrarian reforms linked to the traditional conception of the emperor's eminent domain, under which an individual was authorized to exploit certain land against the payment of a fee, which later came to be regarded as a property tax."¹⁰

Social intervention consisted of the public granaries against an eventual famine, or the decision to intensify the teaching of the classics among the various layers of the population.

Thus the people did not expect the government to build hospitals, or markets, or schools, or any other welfare constructions. They did not know the government had to render services to the people for the many things it took from them. Positive services rendered to the people were regarded as special gifts from the Son of Heaven to his subjects.

The governmental output usually consists of producing goods and services that benefit the members of the society, the regulation of individual behaviour, the extraction of goods and services from the members of the society. But, as we can see, in traditional Viet Nam benefitting goods and services were limited and were not created after any planning. As far as the regulation of the individual behaviour was concerned, we can say that Confucianism did more to help maintain the proper conduct and behaviour among the people than the governmental authority. As to the extraction of goods and services from the members of the society, it was also limited to the raising

10. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 50

of troops, the assignment of corvees, which were minimal duties.

However the government was expected to carry the few assignments it had to do, and the people sometimes made it hard for the Son of Heaven to govern, when they attributed the cause of widespread calamities and disorder or any other disturbing events to his failure in carrying the general policy. These upsetting changes were seen as a sign of anger from the Heaven, whose mandate was forfeited by the Imperial government. Thus the government was a legitimate authoritative decision making body only when prosperity, peace and order reigned over the country.

Thus it was rather Confucius than the Emperor who reigned over Viet Nam, it was the Confucian stress on the maintenance of social order that made the people obey the Law of the Imperial government. Administration was then mainly by virtue.

The development of the Vietnamese political culture was to take a big turn with the domination of the French, who introduced new concepts of governing into Viet Nam. But the influence of the environment was not enough for the people to change from the traditional belief to the belief that governmental activities would produce changes in the society or in their life. This change was mainly due to the political elites who attempted to crack the traditional patterns in order to mobilize the people for social change. During the war, Nationalism and Communism prompted the people to ask for social, economical and political changes from the colonial government. Thus the Vietnamese political culture became increasingly secularized. There emerged a pragmatic, empirical orientation towards politics and there was a movement from diffuseness to specificity of orientations. The people developed new demands, new attitudes from the government.

The French colonial administration brought in many new concepts of the government such as the idea of government enterprise,

"the ideas of the fonction publique (civil service system), in which the duties and prerogatives of the public servants were clearly specified by Law, and even more finely determined by a jurisprudence set down by administrative courts...the entire legal concept of public works, the

eminent domain of the government, its position as a contractor and a builder, and its responsibility for these works."^{II}

However these ideas were not understood by the people all of a sudden; we have noticed the dualism in the administrative and economic systems in Viet Nam under French occupation. Only a few well-to-do Vietnamese were exposed to new ideas and most important of all, of the 100,000 Vietnamese sent to France for wartime service during World War I, many came into contact with and under the influence of various socialist movements. A few including Ho Chi Minh converted to Marxism.

During the war, there developed many nationalist movements which came to be dominated by the Communists in the end. The Nationalists who led the resistance against the French were only moderate at the beginning, they asked for reforms within the French sphere and were not revolutionary. It was under Communist leadership that the people began to ask for a radical change from the government. Thus revolutionary spirit was rumbling among the population when President Diem came to power. The Communists at that time were victorious, they led the war against France and won independence, their concept was that the national revolution was to be followed by the Communist revolution; independence, revolution and material welfare constituted the main lines of their platform.

From the central government, the Vietnamese people expected the rendering of certain services and the satisfaction of their needs in a way that no other organization could. They felt they were left behind in many fields, they wanted their needs to be satisfied and not all of them were material but some were psychological and emotional. They also wanted better security and most of all to be free from any sort of domination, particularly foreign domination. But they would not want to do away with their family, their desire to own land and their religion as under a Communist regime.

Thus the partition of Viet Nam gave Diem an opportunity to gain control of the internal revolutionary impetus. The people did not know much about

II. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 61

Communism then, and they attached a strong importance to the expulsion of the French colonialists. They wanted some change from the colonial regime, a government which would satisfy their needs for a better life under better protection. In short they developed a subject participant orientation towards the political input structure, subject because they became aware of a variety of governmental roles but knew no way in which they could influence on the political system, participant because a few of them developed specific attitudes towards the political input structures. But as in other developing areas, the pattern was that bargaining played a limited role in politics.

THE VIETNAMESE BELIEFS ABOUT THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

Since governmental decisions always affect the whole society, it is important to know the limitations that the people placed on the administrator's decision. In its decision making process, if the government violates some popular beliefs, there will be reaction to it. Perhaps consensus about the decision making process is even more important than consensus on governmental output, and of particular importance is the belief concerning the role of each individual in the political process.

In this passage we are only concerned with the social and environmental factors which influenced the making of decisions in Viet Nam; other factors of equal importance are the legal factors and the psychological ones will be considered later on.

ADMINISTRATION BY VIRTUE.

When we examine the fundamental social values of the time, we can still see the persistent influence of the Confucian philosophy. In the Confucian tradition, the main emphasis was on virtue. Thus in the making of decisions which affected public order, the administrator was required to observe the five fundamental basic virtues of the Superior man (or Quan tu), which are human heartedness, righteousness, proper conduct according to rituals, wisdom and good faith. Only by observing the proper rules of conduct could the administrator achieve harmony with Nature, henceby fostering social or-

der. Conformity to the natural order to achieve harmony with Heaven and Earth should be the main preoccupation of the decision maker, so that his actions would bring peace and prosperity.

The public authorities and the people attached much importance to the morals of public officials. This is not surprising in a society which used to place strong emphasis on moral and intellectual achievement such as traditional Viet Nam.

Under the Confucian system, the administrator was not bound by too many laws and regulations in making decisions, nor was he required to render specific services to the people. He merely had to set a good example. The emphasis was therefore on the quality that the administrator should have in both his individual character and his social action rather than the action itself. It must be noted that the making of decisions was very much reduced, since governmental activities did not carry over a wide sphere of the people's life.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS.

Since the supreme powers were concentrated in the hands of the Emperor, he did not have to consult the people beforehand when deciding on any matter. Likewise his mandarins, being his mandarines, did not have to consult the representatives elected by the people; the Imperial government was not a representative government. The mandarins usually consulted the principal persons in the locality who formed an official council to conform with the natural order of things in the localities. They were the retired mandarins, the scholar gentry, the wealthy landowners, whom the people respected and took into account.

Under the Ly, Tran dynasties, Buddhist monks were noted for their spiritual and intellectual superiority. Since they were the most learned in the cultural field, most teachings were done by them and the curriculum was based on Confucian and Buddhist principles. Under the influence of Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars, the people came to think always of the state as the first priority. The people believed that those who achieved the

highest moral and intellectual attainment should be honoured. The maintenance of social order was also strengthened by the peaceful nature of the Vietnamese people; most of their wars were defensive, even the Southward expansion was seen as a solution to the population explosion.

On the one hand, Vietnamese legends praised the non-utilitarian attitude and the nobility of the man who fought for his nation without asking for power and glory such as Tran Hung Dao, monk Van Hanh who helped Ly Thai To to ascend to the throne, Phan Thanh Gian who committed suicide when failing to defeat the enemy, Nguyen Trai who retired to the countryside after helping Le Thai To; on the other hand, history relates them as models of behaviour, parents and teachers contributed to make their children obedient and disciplined citizens, who placed the nation, i.e. the Emperor before all other things including their own rights and even their life.

As a result, in traditional Viet Nam the people did not ask to participate in politics, the state was one big family in which each person had his own duty and role to perform. They always were for the maintenance of the existing order; however if error succeeded to error, if natural disasters multiplied, the people had the right to rebel. Thus the decision makers had to see what the people saw, and had to love what the people loved.

One important characteristic of traditional administration was the personal nature of the administration of the commune, which was the basic unit. It was there that participation of the citizens in social life was the most active. The inhabitants of the village participated in communal life under the leadership of village notables. They were encouraged to meet in the communal house (or dinh) to compose the village customary (huong uoc), which laid the moral and spiritual foundation of the community; since the fifteenth century they used to appoint the commune chief who served as coordinator with the imperial representative and the district chief and also had report to the council of elders (men who were the most important in the village) the instructions of the district chief.

The French colonial administration changed this situation. Certain sections of the Vietnamese society had come into contact with the French culture

and acquired many new important political concepts such as democracy, socialism and marxism. On the other hand the French introduced the capitalistic system into Viet Nam and created new classes of people whose spiritual and material life differed from one class to another. As a result, the Vietnamese society became more and more differentiated and the people had conflicting notions about what should be the functions and practices of the government.

Exposed to the modern world, the modern elites saw themselves and the government in a new light. Although Confucius and Mencius thoughts were still persistent, new hopes arose and new opportunities were perceived. A return to the old political ideology and the old political system was impossible.

However the majority of the population was left outside the acculturation process. According to Nghiem Dang,

"it may be presumed that the traditional philosophy of public administration in Viet Nam, which is deep-rooted in the Vietnamese mind after ten centuries of Chinese domination and which had not been entirely replaced by the veneer of nearly a century of French domination, must continue to govern Vietnamese society, in spite of the vicissitudes this society has experienced since world war II."¹²

Independence was the main preoccupation of the Vietnamese people after World War II. They knew vaguely about democracy and the rights of the people and all they wanted was to be left in peace as before. But there was a sensed need for action among the Vietnamese elites who became acculturated to the modern world faster than the society could be reconstructed. Those aspiring leaders then sought to put their ideas into effect and to command the rewards of power. Among them were the various political organizations and associations, the politico-religious sects which declared themselves autonomous and refused to obey the central government. Thus in South Viet Nam disorder, instability, violence were endemic and the problem was

¹². Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 52

further complicated by the great conflict of the era between Communism and liberal democracy. The result was an increasing problem of insurgency, which became materialized under the government of Ngo Dinh Diem, who failed to facilitate political development.

MODERN BUDDHISM.

- Actualizing Buddhism.

The Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in his book entitled "Engaged Buddhism" (Dao Phat Di Vao Cuoc Doi) has remarked the necessity of Buddhism to be a part of the social structure, if Buddhism is to survive. He spoke of the true Saint who has reached Buddhahood; such a man, while doing nothing does everything, for he is the Way, the Truth, the personification of morality and sanctity, his appearance in the world in the world announces a bright tomorrow. Just like the presence of the good father brings calm to a familial dispute, just like the appeasement brought by a calm person among an agitated group, an hour with Lao Tzu, or the sound of the laughter of a Zen Master would show us the Way. The true Saint becomes the absolute inspiration for all true moral and religious activities.

Now such a man cannot be produced, we can only create the conditions in which the individuals can attain self-salvation. That was why monasteries were built for individuals to try and reach Buddhahood through Zen meditation. Because the faculty of self-salvation is present in every person, monasteries became filled with men who flocked to them to follow the way to nirvâna. From this sprang up many problems. On the one hand these monks needed to be given food, money, medical care from the laymen, thus becoming subject to their generosity and attitude, and on the other hand society demanded that they participated in activities such as funerals, weddings, prayers and so on. Today in modern society, their social activities are even greater, so great that they forget the essence of Buddhism. That is why the monks have to be divided into two branches:

- The Tiep Hien (or Hoa Dao, Hanh Dao) branch.
- The The Nhap who goes deep into spiritual life to guide the former in their activities, and will have to remain above the world to be venerated.

The Tiep Hien monks will serve as a liaison between society and the Sangha, when they are sure that the time they serve society has been long enough, they will go back to their monasteries to realize their primary aim of self-salvation.

According to What Hanh, the language of redemption must be particular to each time; one cannot sit down and follow blindly the sayings of the Sages of the old time, for man's nature has become much more complex and the language of Buddhism has to develop accordingly to make itself understood. In short the demonstration of the Buddhist doctrine must be based on cultural, political, economical, sociological principles for Buddhism to be present in all aspects of modern life.

After having grasped the Buddhist principles, the Buddhist's duty is to practise them to realize the vitality inherent in his learnings, in order to succeed the modernization of Buddhism must be accomplished on many aspects such as on the theoretical level, the regulations concerning the organization of the monks, the rites etc. Buddhist universities must be set up to acquire specific technical knowledge to show the realization of the Buddhist doctrine in all fields to the young.

The number of monks and nuns is still very small to lead the people to combat superstition, their educational program is not yet complete; the organization of the Buddhist institute is not still competent, the activities of the lay people and the monks showed the incapacity to bring Buddhism into life. Buddhist music and rites need to be studied at university level and brought up to a higher standard.

The Buddhist organization needs religious advisers, specializing in the psychology of the individual and the family to bring peace and happiness to each individual wanting to find it through Buddhism. On the one hand educationalists and doctors are needed to provide free education and free care to the poor and the sick; on the other hand economists are also needed to expand the spirit of co-operation and mutual help to make the community prosper.

Such a view is not different from traditional Buddhism; it is not a new

form of Buddhist theology, it merely emphasizes the social ethics of Buddhism. The denial of oneself for the welfare of others had been the principle of the Bodhisattvas, who did not practise meditation only but actually helped the others to achieve salvation, which was one of their duties.

A Ceylonese writer,

"Vijayavardhana cites Sir Hari Singh Gour, whose book The spirit of Buddhism contains such statements as this: "the Buddha was not only the earliest exponent of the new social system, but he was equally the first in the field to elaborate it...It was He who first...taught man the value of social service."¹³

This idea of the monks standing as models of the society forms the basis of the renovation of Buddhism as witnessed in Burma, India, Ceylon and other Asian countries which had been under the yoke of colonialism and got free from it. In those countries Buddhist privileges as a state religion had been abolished with the consequence that Buddhism declined until it realized its inherent forces and its importance in reshaping the political and social conditions of the country.

Modern Vietnamese Buddhism as propounded by What Hanh illustrates the move together of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, to bring together those who professed to observe strictly the precepts of Buddha and those who emphasized on altruism and the application of the Buddhist teachings into everyday's life, to practise Buddhism and yet retain the essence of Buddhism.

- Buddhism and politics.

While Buddhism does not propound any social or political precept, it contains in itself many revolutionary ethical and political ideals. The teachings of Buddha were revolutionary for his time, for he taught the revolt against dogmatism, cult and the privileges of the priests, the abolition of the castes, the idea of a Buddhist democracy and most of all the realization of the Buddhist idea of charity, compassion, loving, kindness towards others in the many "socialistic" welfare activities of the Bodhisattvas.

13. E. Benz, Buddhism or Communism, Which Holds the Future of Asia? (New York, 1965), p. 73

The social revolution that he taught made him a heretic in his own day. Thus we are not surprised that modern Buddhism tries to emphasize those Buddhist social and political ethics. The "New Buddhists" will have to create conditions in which individuals can be happy and can easily reach self-salvation. They have to be examples of Buddhist virtue in their social activities. Then the question of Buddhist participation into politics becomes a necessity. The two cannot be separated, because they represent two aspects of man's life, the only difference is that politics uses legal means while religion uses moral sanctions to enforce the law and bring back order.

As long as the Buddhist church's attitude towards the government is one of a religion towards the government and not of politics towards the government, as The Venerable Tri Quang says, then it does not pose any problem. Religion is not excluded from society, he continues, the Buddhists do not oppose the government but any of its bad policy, by bad he means the going against the survival of Buddhism and the people; on the other hand Buddhism cannot hold any political power directly or indirectly.

The "New Buddhist" involvement in politics is not particular to any country, it happened in Burma, in Ceylon, in Tibet, and in Japan; in Viet Nam the Buddhists protested and the Diem government fell. As K.W. Morgan remarked, Vietnamese Buddhism

"is in many ways unique, faced with all the problems of a country at war, a country torn by internal dissension, a country emerging from colonialism, a country threatened with communism and with invasion- and the Buddhism there is awakening with a new vitality, a new courage, ... Engaged Buddhism."¹⁴

The renovation of Buddhism found the impetus in the new ideas of organization that were introduced with the West; the strengthening of the leadership due to the amelioration of the education of the bonzes under the leadership of men such as the Venerable Thich Mat The, the Venerable To Lien; the rising intellectual attainment of the faithful; the decline of Confucianism;

14. K.W. Morgan, "The Buddhists: the Problem and the Promise", in Asia, n°IV (Winter 1966), p. 84

and the expansion of Catholicism. There have been many disputes about the number of Buddhists in Viet Nam, some pro-Diem writers argued that Viet Nam was not a predominantly Buddhist country, that even the 15%, 35% Buddhists which can be attributed to Buddhism were not registered and organized into hierarchies. Other estimates varied from 70% to 90%. The 80% number might be disproved by excluding the "Ancestors Worshipers", the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Confucianists, Taoists and others, from the Buddhist rank. However Buddhist potential strength in mass mobilization must not be underestimated. Thus according to Fall,

"While there may only be a relatively few organized Buddhists in Viet-Nam, all but the Catholics, the animists, and the 30,000 Muslim Chams will react as Buddhists if they feel that their religion is challenged. And in Viet-Nam south of the 17th parallel that represents 12.4 out of approximately 14.8 million people."¹⁵

In this chapter we have seen the different components of the Vietnamese political culture; we have discussed how the Vietnamese people viewed the nation and what they thought about their role in the society; we have also seen the Vietnamese attachment to tradition and the continuing importance of Confucian teachings, despite the evolution of the Vietnamese beliefs caused by the introduction of Western concepts; we have seen what the people think of the government and its role, what criteria they used and the people they took into account.

Here we need to mention that the various dimensions of political cultural belief are related one to another and that they constitute the latent political tendencies, the propensities for political behaviour of the Vietnamese political system.

The immediate question we would ask then is: in Viet Nam were these problems solved in the past or did they persist as continuing problems. The answer was very clear.

The French colonial administration had left to the Diem government many

15. B.E. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 287

unsolved problems; problems of modernization, of political change, which all came to a head at the same time. In South Viet Nam the question of national identity was not solved yet. The country was divided but the people preferred to see it unified still. The new state of South Viet Nam was formed in a rather dubious manner. If we recall the conditions set in the Geneva Agreements of 1954, we cannot see any mention of such an entity.

The Geneva Agreements provided for a cease-fire between the French and the Viet Minh, a temporary military demarcation line between the Northern and the Southern zones fixed at the seventeenth parallel and Chapter III specified the forbidding of the establishment of any military base under the control of a foreign state in the regrouping zone of either party.¹⁶ Articles 6 and 7 of the Final Geneva Conference Declaration also specified that the military demarcation line was provisional and should not in any way be considered as constituting a political or territorial boundary.¹⁷ That General Elections were to be held in July 1956.¹⁸

The Geneva Agreements were not signed by the leader of South Viet Nam Ngo Dinh Diem, nor was he in the Resistance movement which led the Viet Minh to final victory. Moreover the Final Declaration was an unsigned document. Both the Communists and Nationalists expected to win the coming elections. However Ngo Dinh Diem refused to organize such elections on the ground that South Viet Nam did not sign the Geneva Agreements, which to him was a contract between the Communists and the Colonialists.

However the Vietnamese people felt that partition was only temporary. Both sides hoped to win the other; but while the North progressed in its praise of independence, of national revolution, then Communist revolution, the South lacked a counter-ideology to enhance loyalty to the nation of South Viet Nam. The new state of South Viet Nam could not mobilize popular enthusiasm for its regime, thus it was not surprising that autonomous groups began to develop sub-national loyalty such as the politico-religious sects.

16. See M.E. Gettleman (ed.), Viet Nam (Penguin books, 1965), p. 152

17. Ibid., p. 161

18. Ibid., p. 161

On the other hand, historical events proved to be divisive to the Vietnamese society. The coming of Northern Catholic refugees to the South benefitted the North while adding further problems to the South. The result was a growing malaise between Northerners and Southerners, between Buddhists and Catholics, a malaise which began to grow since French days. Furthermore South Viet Nam's Ethnic Minorities bore little loyalty to the nation; while the montagnards were pro-French, which gave them a certain degree of autonomy, they themselves fell into the trap of "divide and rule" set up by the French.

It was also the French who gave the Chinese the economic means to paralyze certain fields of the Vietnamese economy when they wanted so. The Cham and the Cambodian population did not especially like the Vietnamese as the memories of their conquest had not faded. These latent roots of division made it hard for the South Vietnamese nation to feel united and strong.

Moreover the people expected more security and a better life, rural people needed help to progress, they wanted many welfare benefits, which helped the townspeople to take the lead in the nation, this they thought was their due, since they composed the majority of the population; and since the country was independent, some wanted a sharing of the power; the intelligentsia, the Nationalists, the political parties etc., all wanted to exert their democratic rights; others (such as the revived Buddhist church) wanted to participate in social welfare activities.

These claims and demands were obviously beyond the scope of the Diem government. However despite the many latent divisions which undermined the regime, the Vietnamese people in South Viet Nam gave Diem a chance to carry a national revolution. They were happy since the French were out, they wanted a better future and hoped Diem could realize it, thus they recognized his government wholeheartedly. Bearing all these problems in mind, in our next chapters we will analyze the activities of the Diem government, which will show that the origins of the Buddhist crisis lie partly in the legacy of the past and partly in Diem's failure to understand the rumbling national revolution.

THE FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE DIEM POLITICAL SYSTEM.THE DIEM GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES.THE INTEREST ARTICULATION FUNCTION.

In characterizing the interest articulation function of the political system, we have to look at the forms which interest articulation takes, the degree to which interest articulation structures are specialized and autonomous, and the style of interest articulation.

- Interest articulation structures.

The Vietnamese interest groups: Some sociologists observed that in underdeveloped countries, most of the people live and die without even achieving membership in a community larger than the family or the tribe. This was not the case of Viet Nam, where associations occupied an important place in the decision making process of villages. Their spheres of action widened with increasing communication under the colonial era.

Under the First Republic, South Viet Nam had an important number of associations; there are social associations such as the Veterans' association, the labour unions, cultural associations such as the Association For Confucian Studies (Hoi Khong Hoc), the General Students' Association (Tong Hoi Sinh Vien), religious associations such as the General Association For Buddhism (Tong Hoi Phat Giao). These associations had limited activities and only took political action in support of the government.

Because discontent was viewed with bad eyes by the Diem administration, those who were not satisfied joined in secret societies and acted underground to spoil the regime. The increase in strength of the National Liberation Front clearly showed this.

Individual self-representation was not a rare thing under Diem, whose followers were allowed to step up and articulate their own interests in the guise of articulation of more general or societal or group interests. Such an articulation of interests is a common feature of dictatorships, where interest articulation took place from person to person or within a small group. Government agents and supporters will infiltrate groups and try

to influence and appease them if necessary. In some cases it is more profitable to the government to give financial and professional gains to a few elites if they are not harmful to the government.

Thus owing to a strong network of police and sbires, anomic interest articulation was not seen under the First Republic, Diem's rule was noted for its absence until the final breakdown.

Non-associational interest groups such as kinship and lineage groups, ethnic, regional, status, class groups, which articulate their interests intermittently through individuals, cliques, family and religious heads, had their demands satisfied in only as they coincided with the government policy. Similarly institutional groups, which were formed in political parties, legislatures, armies and bureaucracy, churches; and associational interest groups such as trade unions, organizations of businessmen or industrialists, ethnic associations, were allowed to function only when the government found advantages in their activities.

Channels and means of access.

Physical demonstrations and violence were ruled out under Diem's regime. Discontented elements found in the Viet Cong movement the only means to express their anger. Mass violence was not in the order of the day; however demonstrations as a means of support of the government were not unusual.

Personal connection thus constituted an important means of access to political elites to get things done and gain profits, however few people have had this chance. Elite representation became difficult because government personnel was chosen on basis of loyalty and obedience to the Ngo Dinh family. Formal institutional channels of access such as the mass media, political parties, legislatures, bureaucracies and cabinets, were also supervised by the government. One example was that Civil Servants were enrolled into the "Lien Doan Cong Chuc Cach Mang Quoc Gia" (National Revolutionary Civil Servants League), whose objective was to ensure a better implementation of government policy. The League served as an effective arm of the Diem group, and was often mobilized for massive demonstrations in favour of the government.

- The degree of autonomy of Vietnamese interest groups.

The degree of differentiation and autonomy among the groups is of great importance to us, because it reveals the extent to which associational interest groups articulate autonomous goals of their leaders, or that members are subordinate to other groups and institutions. Interest groups may not articulate the needs felt or perceived by their members, but may serve only as instruments to mobilize support for the government, as in the case of the Diem's regime.

The lack of autonomy of associations dated from colonial times, under which the French forced the associations to pursue only goals permitted by the colonial authorities. Provisions were very restricted in their nature. Speaking of the first two authorizations concerning association formation, Nghiem Dang wrote:

"Both authorizations were discretionary, i.e., it was not necessary for the authority to give his motives for granting or refusing it. The operations of the associations were also subject to rather strict regulations: any changes in the administration, statutes, or publication of the organization had to be declared. An authorized association could be dissolved by a legal authority if it violated the regulations, or the authorization could be withdrawn if the association failed seriously in the obligations imposed on it by the decree of 1933 and subsequent decrees."¹

Thus associations of a political nature were prohibited so that those who wished to organize themselves into a political movement had no other choice than to form secret societies. "The value of these associations as a means of communication between the environment and the administrative system was therefore itself limited to openly accepted goals,"²

Under the First Republic, certain restrictions on the freedom of forming associations still existed as seen in ordinance n° 10 of 6 August 1950 and article 15 of the Constitution of 26 October 1956. Among the restrictions

1. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 253

2. Ibid., p. 253

were that:

"the association had to obtain the prior authorization of the secretary of state for the interior before it could begin to function; it could be dissolved by a legal decision, or the administrative authorization could be withdrawn if the association violated the public order or the provisions of the statutes."³

This lack of autonomy could have serious consequences for the political process, by the fact that they might lead to anomic outbreaks. The Diem regime was characterized by a penetration in all levels of the society, and a close control over interest groups, as they were allowed to exist only by the government. Overt articulation of interests was reserved to the elite, and government sponsored groups were noted for their display of force such as the Women's Solidarity Movement or the Cong Hoa Youth group etc., many of them were organized artificially. To say that the government absorbed all political, educational, business, labour leaders into its propaganda network, is a biased declaration, since it did not have the capacity to do so. However the Diem government did make use of associations in its favour and of different means to render them harmless.

Government rallies were couched in ideological terms, and the people took no interest in them. Interest articulation among the groups was diffuse, particular, affective and took the form of behavioural or mood cues which might be read or transmitted into the political system. A better study of this aspect will be seen in our examination of the Buddhist interest articulation later on.

Some of the consequences of the way the interest articulation function was performed under Diem were: It determined what group in the society did not influence the decision making process. Clearly Diem and his supporters decided for everybody. The fact that there was some interest articulation structures and that there were certain means of access to political elites, was not a guarantee of a successful articulation.

3. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., pp. 253-254

Because discontent was driven underground and was diffuse, the political decision makers could not easily recognize the bases of spontaneous group violence, as we shall see. Diem and his supporters could not expect the rallying of all forces to the Buddhist group, which led to their downfall.

Because there existed only one legitimate access channel available in the system dominated by Diem's group, it was difficult for other groups to achieve adequate articulation; furthermore demands which did receive articulation through legitimate channels were often distorted and shaped by the interests of dominant groups and the Nhus, fearing some reaction from Diem. Because Diem was isolated from his people, he could not clearly perceive group demands and this discredited him in the eyes of the people. Conflicts between groups were not solved and constituted a permanent threat to continued responsiveness and stability.

THE INTEREST AGGREGATION FUNCTION OF THE DIEM REGIME.

- Interest aggregation structures.

The Vietnamese bureaucracy: The government bureaucracy is the group of formally organized offices and duties, linked in elaborate hierarchy, subordinate to the formal rule makers. Under the First Republic the inefficiency of interest aggregation by government agencies was due to many factors:

Problems of organization: The Diem administration found delay in making decisions, because of its reluctance to delegate authority and of the tradition of centralization, the personality of the leader who took the father figure, the need for co-operation with foreign counterparts. Because everything was referred to the centre, the central authority became overburdened with work in different fields and could not aggregate at best. For the bureaucracy to aggregate effectively, the country needed a strong and effective decision making centre outside the bureaucracy itself; however, because Diem's supporters were the strongest, they "colonized" particular agencies and prevented them from aggregating effectively.

The situation was further aggravated by an uncertain American aid, a permanent threat of Communist invasion. The bureaucracy found no means to

develop, to become more specialized, to have formal responsibilities for set duties, and formal and standardized rules of procedures.

Other causes were regional rivalries, family considerations and corruption, religious discriminations.

To solve these organizational problems, certain agencies were set up by the administration to make the decision easier, such as the interdepartmental committee formed in 1956 at the instigation of the National Institute of Administration to study "the means of setting up a depository of documentation (legislative acts and regulations, statistics concerning major activities etc.) for each bureau, service, directorate, or department."⁴

Another one was created in 1960 to study administrative reforms.

"It often (occurred) also that because major national issues (were) involved the problem (was) beyond the reach of the technical or institutional jurisdiction of the agencies participating in the commission; in this case, representatives of the interests concerned (were) sometimes asked to present their views directly to the commission."⁵

Political parties: Where the number of interests being articulated is too great to receive satisfaction through informal interaction, the political parties can serve as specialized structures of aggregation.

As far as the government is concerned, the development of such structures tends to increase the system's efficiency in many ways:

- It becomes easier for the decision makers to know all elements in the society and to respond to them.
- A wide range of voices can be heard without overwhelming the decision making structures.
- It increases the government capacity to respond effectively to a large number of demands.
- Where there exist specialized structures of interest aggregation, it is

4. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 257

5. Ibid., p. 257

easier to make demands for various kinds of change without threatening the central decision making structures, the philosophy and the support of the entire political system.

As far as the society is concerned, the political party offers many advantages: in a developing society where traditional norms are broken down by the disruptive consequences of the transition, the people need a substitute such as the political party, the promise of some sort of action in the interest of the people to rally support from the elite. Sometimes even in totalitarian regimes the government claims to act on behalf of the citizens. In open and responsive political systems, the elites must positively incorporate the interests of major groups within the political party system.

The political party is also the means through which the individual participates in the recruitment of political elites. It further performs two kinds of political socialization; the first is a reinforcement of the existing political culture, to provide continuity in performance; the second is the initiation of significant change in existing political culture patterns.

In the first place, the reinforcement may be either functional or dysfunctional, especially when the parties are engaged in the initiation or maintenance of new patterns of political culture, such as the political Left, Socialists, Communists. Because when socio-economic conditions are in a period of flux and disruption, parties which can offer political solutions with long standing cultural patterns are in a favorable condition to attract supporters.

There are several dimensions in which party activities may influence political socialization: the affective and cognitive dimension, party activity can be important sources of information about national issues, political leaders, channels of grievances and redress. Participation creates a sense of loyalty and coherence and order upon the frightening newness of transition. It can also satisfy underlying emotional needs for security and identification engendered by the breaking up of traditional society.

The evaluative orientation: parties can supply goals and criteria against

which the individual can measure existing political and economic realities and introduce or reinforce the idea that life may be changed for the better through human effort. They can upset a specific ideology and define the proper behaviour of mass and political elite, set forth particular criteria for political legitimacy prescribing political tactics. A party which fulfills such needs can be successful in mobilizing support for the regime or for the political system. It gives an aura of legitimacy, provides charisma to political leadership. Although the party is not an independent variable in the process of development and change, it is greatly dependent on leadership, organization, and the culture in which they operate, it is a good factor of stabilization and order in time of confusion and changes in the society.

Vietnamese political parties.

Diem's hinderance of political parties' activities proved to be a great error in misunderstanding the need for change in South Viet Nam. Diem failed to rely upon the political party to control and order the process of change and orderly patterns of mobilized political participation.

Professor R. Scigliano noted:

"It is understandable, indeed prudent, that the present regime should wish to leave a margin of safety for itself and public order. However, it would seem that the Ngo-Dinh-Diem government has been unnecessarily cautious and has at times acted for narrow advantage in dealing with the problem of political freedom. It would seem that less control of the press, a more significant role for the National Assembly, and greater tolerance of the public expression of opposition viewpoints and those who express them would not undermine the foundations of the Vietnamese republic. On the contrary, they might serve to reinforce them."⁶

Nhu's political party, the Revolutionary Labor Personalist Party (Can Lao Nhan Vi Dang) was the most powerful and almost the official party, but its membership was restricted to persons in the government and to a lesser ex-

6. R. Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam under the Republic", in Pacific Affairs, Volume XLIII n° IV (December 1960), p. 246

tent, persons in private employment who share an inclination to serious thinking and a strong and unwavering antipathy to Communism. The Labor Personalist Party sought neither to advertise itself nor to enlist a mass membership, it held no public meetings, issued no positions on issues of the day, it did not seek any publicity in the press, but personalism was in fact the official doctrine of all pro-government political groups, and it was the bedrock of the Constitution itself, and was studied by Civil Servants.

No one has been able to assume the position of the leader of various opposition groups and cliques against government parties. If there was any potential figure such as Phan Quang Dan, the government would act to deprive him of his seat in the National Assembly. South Viet Nam under the First Republic was like a one party state with a wide range of government legal parties controlled from a common centre. The government had a party press, subsidized all newspapers and a government's news agency publicized government policies, not to mention the instructions which other papers received from the Department of information. In the National Assembly, a large majority belonged to government parties, the rest followed government lines more or less. The Opposition was floating between legality or illegality, and constantly faced the risk of suppression, it had no newspaper and was critical only in private, it could not run elections nor hold meetings. Thus between the government and its nationalist opposition there was mutual distrust and antagonism.

In short under the First Republic there was no alternative programs aggregated.

THE DIEM GOVERNMENT AUTHORITATIVE FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES.

The analysis of governmental functions and structures of non-Western areas is usually rendered difficult by the indetermination of the formal government structures and by the gross deviance of the government functions from the constitutional and legal norms. What the government proclaims officially to do is different from what it does. The analysis of the Diem government functions and structures will show that the formal Western structures

of the Diem government did not perform the activities usually associated with such structures.

The Constitution of the First Republic reflected the classic theory of separation of powers. The legislative power was given to the National Assembly, members of which were elected by universal suffrage for four years. The executive power was vested in the President of the Republic, assisted by a Vice-President, each elected by universal suffrage for a term limited to four years. The judicial power was entrusted to a corps of independent magistrates, appointed by the President of the Republic, but responsible to a superior council of magistrates.

The First Republic philosophy was a combination of the French principle of priority of law and personalism. This principle of legality was seen to be well in accordance with the Sino Vietnamese legalistic tendency. Under such a regime the citizen must be free within the limits of legality.

"After the referendum that deposed Bao Dai and established the Republic (October 25, 1955), a temporary Constitutional Act (October 26, 1955) specified that all existing laws and regulations were to remain insofar as they were not contrary to the new Republican regime."⁷

But there was also the need to respect the human person, both as an individual and as a member of the society. Thus

"According to the preamble of the Constitution of the First Republic, personalism constituted the official doctrine of the state: "Confident in the transcendent values of the human person, whose free, harmonious and complete development on the individual as well as on the communal plane must be the object of all state activity...."⁸

"What constitutes the value of man, what places him at the summit of the hierarchy of living beings, is precisely, his soul. The cultivation of the soul implies freedom of action, freedom of thought, religious freedom, and freedom of association."⁹

7. Nghiêm Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration, (Honolulu, 1966), p. 64

8. Ibid., p. 64

9. Ibid., p. 65

This was all very well, but the personalist philosophy of Diem went a bit further: only with the development of society can the human person realize his supreme goal;

"Thus it was to be expected that the president of the First Republic would demand discipline, moral strictness, and the sacrifice of certain leisure and comforts so that society could develop," as a result,

"Personalism risks degenerating into a doctrinal justification of political coercion and oppression."¹⁰

The principle of legality was therefore seen to be somewhat reinforced by the doctrine of personalism.

The Constitution of the First Republic further gave Diem the title of National Leader, which further strengthened his hand. The First Republic had none of the checks and balances usually found in a separation of powers system; the power of the executive was far greater than the other two powers, for instance Diem could curtail the exercise of the legislative and judicial powers through the proclamation of a state of emergency; another example was the short period given to the National Assembly to vote on appropriations, at the end of which time the President could promulgate a personal budget.

The First Republic presented many aspects of a modernizing oligarchy such as: the concentration of functions in a ruling clique and in the bureaucracy, the absence of a competitive party system, the limitation of associational interest groups activities, the control of media of communication. Diem and his group were the principal law makers, vetoers, the source of rules and the aggregators of interests, and the legitimators of rules.

THE RULE MAKER: FUNCTION.

In South Viet Nam, as in other countries of South East Asia, where one group dominated the political process, there was a strong tendency for the legislatures to act as "rubber stamps" for government proposed bills. Without a responsible and powerful opposition, even the factional struggles common to these countries were not reflected in open legislative manoeuvring;

10. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 65

Agreements were known to be reached before legislation was formally introduced.

The rule making function was thus left to the office of the President, who was in control of the civil administration, the Chief of State, the National Leader, the Supreme Commander of the Army.

Diem had the right to make décrets-lois. In article 41 of the Constitution these décrets-lois had the force of law and might modify the provisions of certain existing laws in case of national emergency. The President could also veto the laws passed by the National Assembly and it could only be overruled by a 3/4 majority. He could also make executive orders. The formally constituted law-making body was not the focus for rule making function.

THE RULE APPLICATION FUNCTION.

Rule enforcement became difficult where social change and the demand for a new society have produced novel conditions. This was the case of South Viet Nam after independence.

As can be expected, under the first Vietnamese constitutional system, the bureaucracy was subject to political control; and the mechanic application of rules which dated since the colonial era has not been altered since independence. Professor Nghiem Dang:

"Much more serious is the practice of fence-sitting: in the early days of the Republic a certain number of civil servants— torn between concern for personal security, which advised against committing themselves to loyalty to a given political system, and the desire to execute faithfully instructions coming from the government — preferred to wait and see "which way the wind blows."...

Comparable to this egotistical practice of fence-sitting is the fear of responsibility. After many interviews with civil servants of the highest level, one author felt obliged to draw the conclusion that "most Vietnamese civil servants remain passive and uninvolved, avoiding decisions by referring them to highest levels. Following mandarin and French tradition, where the admi-

nistrative system is autocratic and highly disciplined, unquestioned obedience at every level is expected."^{II}

The continued belief in the principle of legality has had the paradoxical effect of encouraging more authoritarian practices at one level and of limiting initiative and fostering a narrow view of one's authority at another level. The assumption of new duties was always hesitant; as a result new ministries and departments had to be created to handle new problems. Perhaps out of the lack of experience and self-confidence and the fear of political reprisals for making decisions which displeased their superiors, low ranking officials have tended to avoid all but routine decisions and to refer matters, about which there was any question, to higher authorities. As a consequence important officials became involved in insignificant matters while major problems were left unhandled.

The 8 May incident in Hue could have been avoided and thus a big crisis in Vietnamese history would not have happened.

Rule enforcement was thus complicated by an inefficient bureaucracy, which lacked in initiative and looked towards the past. Because of strong loyalty requirements the innovative spirit was very low. Young and old Civil Servants had conflicting ideas on what to be done. The old administrators trained by the colonial regime were considered old fashioned, good only for the archives. They still consulted soothsayers, astrologers to decide upon the wisest measure to take at each important step in the history of the Diem regime, the mass exodus of 1954, the struggle against the politico-religious sects, the abortive coup of the paratroopers in 1960, the Buddhist crisis, the 1 November 1963 Revolution. Older Civil Servants, similarly tended to follow systematically traditional practices which had been proven successful not knowing that these had to be adapted to a changing world.

Furthermore recruitment and promotions made on family considerations, regional differences, religious affiliations, or on dishonest practices such as bribery, did not help the Civil Service to improve itself after independence.

III. Political System, op. cit., p. 264

Diem's personality cult was not popular among the Civil Servants and could not develop the willingness to assume responsibility. The result was that the Diem administration had little competence in enforcing the rules upon the population and often had to take recourse to extra legal and arbitrary practices.

Diem's wishes to shape the bureaucracy were never realized,

"as is shown by the fact that the November 1 Revolution met no resistance whatever on the part of the civil servants, many of whom were hostile to the regime, particularly during the Buddhist Affair."¹²

During the Buddhist crisis despite government efforts to stop the Buddhist movement, many provincial governors and district chiefs secretly encouraged strikes, paralyzing many branches of the nation's activities.

THE RULE ADJUDICATION FUNCTION.

As can be expected, the government control over the courts and adjudicative structures has made it difficult, if not impossible to maintain a sham of impartiality of style. Since the differentiated judicial structure was controlled by other structures, it was unable to force secret police, army, or bureaucracy to bring all cases to the courts and to subject them to an authoritative review of the propriety of their rule application. Political prisoners were tried in circumstances which are very unlike those under an autonomous judiciary either formally or through a process of ad hoc judgement.

The Diem group made the law, executed it without any check from any other source of power. The illegal arrests and tortures of participants in the Buddhist movement, the trial of political prisoners were all decisions of the Diem family and its supporters, as had always been during the nine years of his administration.

Diem's infringement upon the power of the judicial system has made the people lose confidence in justice; the setting up of special tribunals to

¹². Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 202

try political opponents was regarded as a hinderance of the performance of rule adjudication of the South Vietnamese system.

The Vietnamese judiciary was relatively unable to stop Diem's erroneous activities in rule making and application; neither could it serve as articulator and aggregator of interests, as they interpreted things according to the government's will. The idea that the citizens could turn to the courts for protection from the government was by no means widespread in South Viet Nam under the First Republic.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION FUNCTION UNDER DIEM.

All of the functions performed in the political system are performed by means of communication. The presence or absence of communication structures, the volume of information passing through them, and the freedom from control, may have important implications for the political system. Thus it is of interest to us to examine the political communication function of the Diem system.

- Communication structures.

Two important communication structures which were used by the Buddhists in South Viet Nam were: the informal face-to-face contacts and the traditional social structures, we shall examine these later on.

A third communication structure was the official one. In addition to regular administrative means of communication, the Diem government organized services, the role of which was essentially to communicate to the people the major decisions made concerning the general policy, and to prepare the people psychologically to assist in the effective execution of these decisions. These communication services were by the Secretariat of State of Civic Action. The organization was given authority over the Commissariat of Civic Action, the Directorate General of Information, and the Directorate General for Youth. Their goal was the effective mobilization of the spirit and will of the people, beginning with the infrastructure, with respect to the struggle against Communism and to national reconstruction.

These agencies used various means from traditional ones to modern tech-

niques of mass media, such as the radio, moving electric news signs, motion pictures. However they were not as effective as the government wished them to be. Nghiem Dang noted the example of inadequacy of downward communication such as the inadequate organization of information services at the district and village levels; the poor propaganda that gave the farmers the impression of being pushed by the government agents into a repugnant program; the failure of many family heads to understand the benefit of American aid while benefitting from it.

Government structures of communication did not consist only in communicating its decisions to the people, it had also to organize an internal communication system to transform elements of informations gathered from the inside into decisions capable of influencing the behaviour of the people.

Communication within the administrative system was complicated by many factors. The multiplication and specialization of services due to the increasing size of new problems unknown under the colonial period. Inter-departmental services and committees were created to solve this problem, but it sometimes happened that proposals or demands by the representatives to those committees were later denied by their ministries. This multiplication of services also required an elaborate hierarchical organization, which constituted itself a communication barrier, since at each échelon information was filtered and polished in the direction of the desire and wishes of the informant. Diem was said to know only what Nhu and his agents let him know. Besides the fact that different individuals interpreted facts differently, and tended to colour them in transmission,

"As the information (worked) down the hierarchical ladder, there (seemed) to develop a general law that this transmission from superior authorities to lower level (was) performed with a vigor that (decreased) as the position of the informant (decreased) in importance."¹³

On the other hand, because of the centralizing tendency, the central

13. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 299

authorities had too much to do and tended to simplify the giving of instructions. In open political systems with many autonomous political structures and channels of communication, the elites can utilize other information sources to help balance action by subordinates, but it was not the case with Diem, who feared independent sources of power.

New institutions also had problems regarding procedures of communication, since there were no provisions for them under colonial regulations and this posed many technical problems to the administration.

A fourth communication structure consisted of interest groups and parties. By their nature they were engaged in transmitting popular and special interest demands to the political leadership. They also constituted an important channel for disseminating informations about the activities of the elites. They also had their own organizations to press their ideology upon the people. Their activities were, however, limited in scope, because they did not find many supporters. On the one hand people did not have faith in them, on the other hand they were afraid to join in political groups, which might antagonize the government. The driving of political parties' activities underground, reinforced the informal face-to-face contacts, discontent exploded in private and propagated rapidly.

The last class of communication structures was the mass media, the radio, magazines, books. These were closely supervised. In 1962, South Viet Nam had more than 100 newspapers and magazines in circulation; besides news of the day, they also contained editorials reflecting a part of public opinion. Under the First Republic they had to have permission from administrative authorities before the publication of their periodicals; and the government had certain means of sanction for the newspapers that violated the regulations, such as the suspension of authorization to publish, or control of distribution through the distributing agency (Nha Phat Hanh Thong Nhat).

The radio was a government monopoly and was considered as an instrument of information and propaganda for the government, or at least a means of civic education of the mass. Other means of mass communication such as books, circulars, tracts, movies, theaters and other literary and artistic mani-

festations had more effect in urban than in rural areas.

On the whole, the formal communication structures were subject to a high degree of control and still inadequate, as far as the formation of a really enlightened and impartial nationwide opinion was concerned. Although there was a big improvement from colonial times, the government found itself unable to supplant traditional means of communication. The word-of-mouth method of spreading opinions especially in rural areas proved to be most successful during the Buddhist movement.

The failure of the government to reach the rural areas, which inhabited the majority of the people was a great help for the guerrilla Viet Cong, who were there day and night to make their propaganda heard. They could be neighbours, friends and co-workers, who communicated informations and opinions and indirectly shaped the knowledge and beliefs of the people against the government. This intermittent communication structure is still persistent in modern societies and exemplifies the cultural dualism typical of developing societies.

The slowness of newspapers circulation; the lack of electricity which made radio diffusion difficult, despite the existence of transistors, regional accents still persisted and the use of people from Northern and Central Viet Nam in communicating government policy, all contributed to discredit the government in the eyes of the people.

- Implications of communication patterns.

The analysis of communication patterns is important because of the dependence of other functions in communication processes. For instance hierarchical patterns of communication tended to inhibit or distort the information passed downward or upward through the hierarchy. Diem's orders were executed too rigidly, or badly interpreted by his followers, and on the other hand discontent, demands for redress of grievances were not communicated to him. Certain types of information were not accurate and could be influenced by prejudices and attitudes of the people conveying them, the presence of such weaknesses affected the possibility for effective interaction. Since Diem's supporters constituted the only access channel through

which he learned things and since Diem did not want to know anything which went against his will, rural voice was little heard of; as a result this affected the impact of national leadership appeal through the mass media.

- Political communication and maintenance and adaptation functions.

A fragmented political culture could result from different socialization experiences of various sub-groups. The families and churches introduced different ideas to the children, whereas at school they learned different views which contradicted their previous knowledge. We have noted the differences between the Vietnamese ideas and beliefs and the personalist doctrine, which Diem wanted to force on to the people.

The government could develop other structures to counteract the disruptive consequences of other means of disseminating information such as the development of a national media. A heterogeneous communication flow could bridge the gap between different groups and interests in the society; however, government propaganda was unable to cope with other sources of information which were well received following government unpopular measures.

The government made a mistake in limiting the activities of political parties, interest groups and opinion leaders, who could contact the individual citizen in a more immediate sense. Government parties were limited in membership and sought no publicity. As a result the government impact became minimal.

- Communication expansion and system capabilities.

South Viet Nam could have promoted the consolidation of its regions since the people already shared the same language, the same culture, and the major social institutions. But because the Diem government was inefficient in communicating informations, its capabilities were consequently undermined. Unable to promote a strong sense of national identity, its symbolic capability found itself weakened. The government could not mobilize the people to extract resources, thus its distributive capability and welfare activities were hindered. Regulation was also lessened by the fact that the people were not convinced of the government stability. Why were the people indifferent to government appeal? because the government failed to develop a strong

anti-illiteracy campaign, and the average citizen had no accurate knowledge of the activities of the office holders and the relationship between these actions and popular goals. With an insufficient standard of literacy and being scarcely equipped with the minimum essentials of a civil education, the average citizen could not develop attitudes and outlooks necessary to the new situation, the knowledge and understanding of government policies, co-operative and creative thinking; the increasing technological complexity of the government activities needed some specialized knowledge to be understood, so did national vital issues.

Consequently the Diem regime found itself unable to mobilize the nation in its many activities.

- Political communication and rule-making.

Making effective decisions requires accurate and relevant information. As we have seen, information became distorted through the administrative hierarchy before reaching Diem. Being the decision maker he was not aware of the conditions of the country, the attitude of the people and the materials available for action. One of the main difficulties was the centralizing tradition, which required lower échelons to refer all activities to the centre, and the increasing technical complexity of the administration necessitated a great number of experts in all fields: military, technology, cost-accounting, political manoeuvres, urban transportation, medical care etc.. Diem's distrust of others limited this number. On the other hand, members of his group thought of themselves to be the most brilliant and cleverest in the field: for example Nhu considered himself to be the most brilliant strategist and decided all military operations. Furthermore decision making became unsuited to South Viet Nam conditions by the fact that top officials had to rely on informations given by their experts except where they possessed special competence, and because recruitment into leadership was based on family links, loyalty etc. These had very limited talents.

Those problems affected the regime's ability to make laws and to be responsive to social demands. In open political systems it is through autonomous channels of communication and political structures that the elites

receive information to help balance the distortion of subordinates. Diem's non-tolerance of the opposition put him into a disadvantageous position.

Moreover people became suspicious under the Diem regime and were not ready to give their views. The more control there was the more distortion of information there was, which decreased government effectiveness and efficiency.

- Political communication and conversion functions.

In theory the presence of an autonomous mass media, interest group and informal personal contacts in a society would make possible popular awareness of the consequences of elite activity.

As we have seen, several factors complicated this process, the people could not establish the cause and effect relationships in the world of politics, the increasing technological complexity of government activities necessitated specialized knowledge to be understood, some vital issues might not touch them. However, even if they were aware of elite activities, the Vietnamese people could not exercise any check upon the Diem government. Mass media, interest groups were not autonomous, and on the other hand informal personal contacts distorted information.

Consequently the claim of the Diem government to have the support of the entire nation could not dupe the people and it could not substitute symbols for action.

The analysis of the Diem government's functions and structures showed a lack of responsiveness from the Diem administration; the government needed to develop a better bureaucracy to exercise control, channels through which grievances could be heard, if it wanted to maintain itself in power. Because their demands fell on deaf ears, the Vietnamese people increasingly withdrew support from the government which explained the increasing popularity of the National Liberation Front. Had the government succeeded in building a good image of itself for the people to tighten their belts, troubles would not have occurred; as we shall see, the weaknesses of the Diem government functions and structures contribute to explain why the Buddhists succeed in 1963.

The government output was not the only determinant of the direction of change of the system; we also have to take other factors into consideration, among these are the Vietnamese political culture, the domestic and international environments in which the Diem government operated. Thus our next study will be the capability of the Diem regime.

THE CAPABILITIES OF THE DIEM GOVERNMENT.

THE EXTRACTIVE CAPABILITY.

A political system cannot perform adequately if it does not possess the means to mobilize material and human resources from the domestic and international environments. Thus to be able to make an assessment of South Viet Nam's chances of political survival, it is necessary to know how and where the South Vietnamese system drew its resources from. First we can consider the amount of resources that flow into the government funds. Apart from the vast amount of American aid and the revenue from taxation, the government of South Viet Nam under Diem had no other resources to finance its activities. The American aid programme will be examined later on.

As regards to the taxation system, South Viet Nam still maintained the old colonial distinction between direct and indirect taxation. Direct taxes consisted of taxes such as property tax, business license tax, income tax, and indirect taxes were taxes such as production tax, sales tax, custom duties etc. Nghiem Dang noted that during the fiscal year 1962 and 1963 indirect taxes formed the major part of the total amount of tax receipts, this was shown by the following figures (in millions of piastres)¹⁴

Fiscal year:	Actual Revenue from all Taxes:	Actual Revenue from Indirect Taxes
1962	9,987.5	9,025.5
1963	9,412.3	8,638.5

The above table also shows that the people in South Viet Nam were not yet used to pay a large amount of direct taxes. Whether it was unwillingness or inability from the part of the Saigon authorities to tax the high living

¹⁴ . of. Nghiem Dang, op. cit., p. 235

urban people within their reach, the result was that in South Viet Nam tax deviation and tax avoidance were very well known. Tax avoidance meant the shift of the burden of financing governmental activities on to the population. Income tax which was considered to be socially just in most industrialized countries, because it was progressive and brought in a lot of revenues from the rich people, formed only a minimal part of tax collection. This income tax deviation was due to the fact that most Vietnamese did not keep their accounts and did not correctly declare their incomes, incomes such as those of professional workers and farmers were very hard to ascertain. American suggestions that the burden of the war be spread more equitably was met with polite silence. In 1960 only 15,000 individuals out of 13.8 millions paid any income tax at all, and of those 12,500 were Civil Servants or Army officers who enjoyed special low rates.¹⁵

The meagre collection of taxes was also due to the fact that Revenue which should come to the government in fact went directly into the pockets of certain government officials. It was known as tax deviation or protection money paid to officials by contractors who wanted to avoid some obligation or by an individual for the enjoyment of rights unlawfully denied him.

Moreover in the countryside property taxes were hard to collect, because of the insecurity caused by Viet Cong guerrillas; the people who lived in Viet Cong areas were forced to pay taxes to them, while the fields were left unexploited. The lack of qualified personnel for tax assessment and collection aggravated the situation further. Thus the collection of revenues from taxations needed many reforms, which the government seemed hesitant to take. Injustice and corruption could not be avoided without radical measures of financial reforms and South Viet Nam had never known a financial revolution. As a result the government was deprived of an important means to finance its activities.

According to Professor Nghiem Dang, the ratio of extraction is probably the lowest of all South East Asian countries; it is noted that South Viet

15. See B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 308

is unable

"to raise its production level at a rate equal to that of its development. Thus the proportion of national government revenue to the gross national product is 9 percent for Viet-Nam as compared with an average of 12.5 percent for twelve other countries of South East Asia."¹⁶

Had the resources been more plentiful, the people in South Viet Nam would not have felt the impact of taxation, however minimal it was. If one makes the balance-sheet of the South Vietnamese economy during the years which followed partition, one would be doubtful of its chances for survival. South Viet Nam itself was not without valuable assets. It was the traditional granary of the whole Indochinese Peninsula; it had ample space for secondary food crops and high valued industrial crops, fairly plentiful fishing, excellent port facilities and a nucleus of light industries around Saigon. However confronted with a growing insurgency and not having recovered from war damages, the South Vietnamese economy was deteriorating rapidly. A main exporter of rice, rubber and other agricultural products, since the partition South Viet Nam found that its value of food imports consistently exceeded the value of food exports. Pre-war levels could not be reached with the influx of refugees from the North and the population explosion. South Viet Nam was heavily dependent upon food imports on American aid, although it had tried to develop supplementary crops; the average rise in food production was only 7 percent while the population has augmented by 50 percent since 1933.¹⁷

Besides the production of rice, rubber was another main crop, but its production was threatened by insecurity in the plantations and the new tree-planting programme did not have any effect till the 1970's. By then it would be faced with the competition of synthetic rubber. The importance of rice and rubber in South Viet Nam's exports can be seen in the following table:

16. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 240

17. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 294

(Percentages of Total Exports)¹⁸

	1938	1939	1956	1957	1958	1960	1961	1962	1964
Rubber	21.4	27.4	87.1	60.9	64.0	58.6	62.5	87.6	67.9
Rice	<u>34.8</u>	<u>36.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>24.8</u>	<u>25.5</u>	<u>31.4</u>	<u>20.3</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>11.5</u>
Total	56.2	63.4	87.1	85.7	89.5	90.0	82.8	91.2	79.4

In the field of industrial development one could see no way of compensating for the insufficient agricultural development. South Viet Nam lacked the basic materials for industrialization, it did not possess capital (American investments were minute) and its basic philosophy was hostile to foreign investments. As a result of foreign domination during the colonial era the South Vietnamese economy found no way to develop.

South Viet Nam's extractive capability could thus be termed as to be of a low level of functioning, its basic resources were insufficient for the country, the government revenue was consequently small and its economic perspective was very grim. Increasing insecurity cut production to a very low level and the burden of the war was shifted on to the population, since there was no means to take more from the rich. Indirect taxation's predominance again struck the consumers; the government had no means to extend its control down to the countryside, nor to protect the peasants, to raise the levels of production. It is left for us to see how the American presence could relieve the South Vietnamese people from the burden which they could not bear, even for a short period of time.

THE REGULATIVE CAPABILITY.

Every system, in order to have a highly regulative capability, has to possess many resources, which in turn were obtained through the regulation of the behaviour of individuals and groups, through coercion, or threat or control. In the case of the Diem government, despite its inability to raise production and draw resources from it, it achieved a certain degree of control over

¹⁸. B.B. Fall, op. cit., p. 296

the population for the first few years; this was due to its reliance on foreign aid to govern.

The early years of the Diem regime were characterized by a series of hopeful measures. Diem undertook to wipe out the remnants of colonialism; he created an awareness of the distinction between national resistance and Communism; pacified the politico-religious sects of Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen; and resettled the Northern refugees.

However to the problem of political instability inherited from the past, Diem responded by building up a dictatorship, through which he hoped to bring back order and stability to the country. The Diem government endeavoured to control every aspect of the lives of the citizens. Of the Ngo Dinh, Dennis Warner wrote:

"Like medieval inquisitors, their witch-hunting for sources of demoralization was indiscriminate, haphazard, ineffective, and brutal. In its closing months the regime had deteriorated to the point where it was less of a dictatorship than a tyranny."¹⁹

The 1956 constitution was proclaimed solemnly to have as its aim:

1. The consolidation of national independence and the struggle against any form of domination and imperialism.
2. The safeguarding of freedom for each individual and for the nation.
3. The edification, in the respect of the human being, for all levels of the population, of a regime of democratic politics, economics, society and culture."²⁰

However limitations of civil liberties were well known and often cited against pro-Diem literature, which praised his activities in nation building. The presidential ordinance n° 6 of 11 January 1956 stipulated:

"by decision of the President of the Republic upon proposal by the Minister of the Interior, may be sent to concentration camps...all persons considered as dangerous to national defense or collective security." Article 2 of the same ordinance limits assignments to concentration

¹⁹ D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p. 107

²⁰ Nguyen Qui Trung, Neuf Ans de Dictature au Sud Viet Nam (Saigon, 1964), p.65

camps to a duration of two years."²¹

Interpersonal contacts were very much restrained. Supposedly to defend the women of Viet Nam, who could quite well defend themselves without her, Madame Nhu, the President's sister-in-law introduced two famous morality bills into the National Assembly and had them enacted: the Family Bill, which

"outlawed polygamy and concubinage and made the granting of a divorce the exclusive prerogative of Diem. Later she drafted a second bill prohibiting dancing, both public and private, along with prostitution, contraceptives, beauty contests, cockfighting, and wrestling."²²

She even banned sentimental songs.

What kinds of freedom did Diem guarantee? freedom of speech? certainly not; nobody would risk criticizing the police and military police, there were the Secret Police directed by Doctor Tran Kim Tuyen, Director of the Political Studies Service and the Special Action Group of the Centre of Viet Nam, who were everywhere to listen to the people's comments upon the regime. In May 1962, the Diem-sponsored National Assembly prohibited unauthorized public meetings; even weddings and funerals required official sanction.

Freedom of movement? those who went abroad had the occasion to know of the multiple formalities they had to go through to get their passports.

Freedom of association? there was no such thing. The decree n° 10 which was passed by Bao Dai in 6 August 1950, fixing the status of all associations imposing stringent restrictions on associations other than foreign missions, was not repealed by Diem. Articles 24-28 said: all associations, except Christian ones could only receive members' subscriptions and acquire a limited number of properties, which were necessary for their functioning. The Ministry of the Interior could remove any member of their administrative council without giving any reason, all associations that failed to follow the regulations set could be dispersed and their members taken into custody.

21. B.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 171

22. D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p. 119

Freedom of press? although there was no official censorship over Vietnamese-owned newspapers, and censorship was placed upon foreign-owned publications such as the French-owned Journal d' Extrême Orient and France-Asie, the partly American-owned Times of Viet Nam, opposition newspapers could not be published without any danger. Fearing a wreckage of their offices by mobs, or a closing down of their newspapers, press directors were careful not to publish anything that would offend the regime. According to Fall

"two of them were later sued for "libel" by government agencies. The major opposition newspaper, Thoi-Luan (Chronicle of the Times), was finally driven out of existence after a trial of its publisher under a press law which may punish "sabotage of public order" with sentences up to and including death."²³

As to the Western press, Diem and many officials felt that they should also serve as vehicles for his propaganda. Two foreign correspondents particularly enraged Diem, they were Homer Bigart of New York Times and François Sully of Newsweek.

Nguyen Qui Hung related:

"The radio was no more interesting. Throughout the day in between musical items, one could only hear hyperbolic praises of the regime. The anonymous spokesman of Radio Saigon (another poor victim of the regime!) became very unpopular and as soon as his voice was heard, people switched their radio off."²⁴

Freedom of religion? the Buddhists' complaints told us many things on that matter. The Buddhist church was regarded as an association, thus was subject to the regulations set in ordinance n° 10; again this ordinance was only a minor cause for irritation and the Diem government proved to be intolerant as far as freedom of religion went. Governmental repression was illustrated by the Buddhist complaints of government's killings of Buddhists in the provinces of Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and by many cases of con-

23. B.D. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 103

24. Nguyen Qui Hung, Neuf Ans de Dictature au Sud Viet Nam (Saigon, 1964),

version by force to Catholicism.

Most important of all, the Diem government gave the people no right to political action for security reasons, while claiming to have laid the ground-stone for the building of democracy. "Every now and then the dragnet went out, and a few more political opponents went off to jail."²⁵ Elections were one of the means by which Diem evinced his political opponents. To him, they were more a demonstration of collective loyalty than an example of democracy at work. Candidates who were not affiliated to the Nhu's political parties such as the Movement for National Revolution (Phong Trao Cach Mang Quoc Gia), the Labor Personalist Party (Can Lao Nhan Vi Dang), and the Movement of Solidarity of all Vietnamese Women (Phong Trao Lien Doi Phu Nu Viet Nam), found little chance of even presenting themselves. Thus independent and opposition candidates were subject to all kinds of intimidation and persecution for all sorts of fictitious offences. Precautions were taken so that they could not win if they managed to present their candidacy. Dennis Warner wrote that one was fined

"because several of his electoral poster pictures were found to have been outlined in red. Others were disqualified because they had posters that were too big or too small. In all, eight 'unacceptable' candidates in the Saigon-Cholon area had their papers declared out of order."²⁶

Opposition electoral posters were limited and so were their electoral propaganda, while the government favorites had all their facilities. All sorts of fraudulent devices were used to ensure a complete total victory to the government. These manoeuvres were less obvious in Saigon, where there were many inquisitive foreign eyes, and there, of the few political opponents of Diem who managed to get elected were: Phan Quang Dan and Phan Khac Suu; in the case of Doctor Dan, his functions were suspended after his involvement in the abortive coup of November 1960.

As a result, the National Assembly was considered to be the voice of Diem

25. D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p. 123

26. Ibid., p. III

and not a forum for divisive and contrary opinions, and its submissiveness was illustrated at best by the person of the President of the National Assembly: Truong Vinh Le himself.

The Diem government lacked the essential prerequisites of a stable and democratic government. First, it lacked a social mechanism whereby it became possible to determine and clarify continuously the patterns of values and interests within the society and relate those patterns to the pattern of power through an aggregating and bargaining process. Diem has created an awareness of the distinction between Nationalism and Communism but failed to rally those who were aware of that distinction to his cause. On the contrary he antagonized the intellectuals and created numerous opponents to the regime. Second, the administrative structure which he inherited from the colonial past was one which was used to be a domineering power group rather than an efficient bureaucracy to carry out a public policy, once the society has expressed its relative values and interests.

"The more he was pressed to liberalize and to broaden the base of government, the more Diem resisted. He felt that the Communists wanted to subvert democratic liberties to their own ends. He did not believe the villages were ready to run their own affairs,"²⁷

A former member of the Palace staff said: "one of our troubles is that we got self-government before we got government."²⁸ Diem filled the local governments with provincial chiefs, whose links fell back on brutality to cover up their own deficiencies. The discovery of any arms dumps in villages were often the cause for widespread arrests, tortures and reprisals against the peasants, whose only crimes were fear and ignorance. The year of 1959 was marked by many arrests and sentences to death and life imprisonment by the special military tribunals set up by Diem.

Village autonomy was only a myth;

"the long-awaited establishment of local self-government, widely considered to be essential to the success of the

27. D. Warner, op. cit., p. 110

28. Ibid., p. 108

"strategic hamlet" program, also became a meaningless distortion."²⁹

The building of strategic hamlets had as its main aim the regrouping of the population into areas well controlled by the government. The iron hand of the government was felt in the composition of village administrative councils and provincial councils, who were first appointive in character, and after a reform, were dominated politically and unlikely to go opposing Diem. The Diem government could be termed of having a high regulative capability. The individual was truly at the mercy of the system. South Viet Nam took many aspects of a police state and there were numerous repressions of civil liberties. The years 1955 and 1956 were the period during which the regime was at its height of popularity and security all over the country. But after that, insurgency spread out and guerrilla activities took on a new pattern. They were no longer desperate actions by Viet Minh remnants or dislocated Communist bands, they were organized to conduct a war of liberation of South Viet Nam.

Despite the fact that no other previous government could have managed any better than that of President Diem; despite the fact that insurgency took roots from the social, political and economical confusion of South Viet Nam after the war; despite the fact that one must take into account a competitive regime up North, one can say that it was Diem who was the cause of the deterioration of South Viet Nam. It was his lack of tolerance and compromise with his opponents (mostly non-Communists) which had made his regime turn sour and driven the population into the arms of the Viet Cong.

Diem's dictatorship would have been tolerated, had his regime been effective in solving the many problems of South Viet Nam. The National Liberation Front could never have grown, had the Diem regime not weakened. A passage from Eric Hoffer's book The true Believer is of significance here. He wrote:

"The general rule seems to be that as one pattern of corporate cohesion weakens, conditions become ripe for the rise of

29. E.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 274

a mass movement...When people revolt in a totalitarian society, they rise not against the wickedness of the regime but its weakness."³⁰

Hoffer gave the example that the Reformation people objected to the Church's power only when it released its hold and became weak. The French Revolution came as a reaction not against the tyranny of the Catholic Church and the ancient regime but against their weakness and ineffectuality. With a high regulative capability the Diem regime was still unable to stop an increasing insurgency.

THE DISTRIBUTIVE CAPABILITY.

Control over the people was more deeply felt when it was not justified, and when injustices were being accomplished. The Diem government's securities measures contradicted all its assertions that all was well and his failure to make the people understand such strong regulations had created many dissatisfactions with the regime. Just as it lacked a sound system for extracting resources, the South Vietnamese government under the First Republic was incapable of developing an effective programme for distributing resources among the population. The Vietnamese people who had just come out from the quiescence of the Imperial age had changed their views drastically, under the French occupation, through their contact with the West, during the wars, and following the social, political, economical and psychological changes, thus creating pressures and difficulties of various kinds for the government to cope with. The people wanted security and protection, a decent life, a decent education and other welfare benefits; but the Diem regime deceived the people in many ways.

One of the ways to assess the distributive capability of a regime is to look at its expenditures. Because of the urgency of military expenditures, the government had to pull all its resources into the military and security budget. According to Nghiem Dang in 1962 the military expenditures

"amounted to VN (piastres) 12,105 million, 46 percent of the VN (piastres) 26,250 million total estimated expen-

30. E. Hoffer, The True Believer (New York, 1963), p. 44

ditures, and in 1963 to 50 percent of the VN (piastres) 29,600 million total estimated expenditures."³¹

Meanwhile only a meagre amount was spent on economic and social development which amounted to only 1,400 million piastres in 1962. What the peasants longed for was

"social justice and reform — at a minimum, the old way of life with the cruelties removed.

This (included) reform of land-tenure arrangements, reasonable rent, credit, and market facilities; and simple modern tools....Finally they (craved) peace and physical security."³²

Being an agrarian people the Vietnamese attached strong importance on their land, but land reform proved to be mismanaged under the First Republic and agricultural improvements were not satisfactory. Warner wrote: "the much-vaunted rural help programme did not exist. Land reform was a flop."³³ Only a third of the eligible peasants took advantage of the Agricultural Credit, and "Six years after the land reform ordinance was promulgated on 22 October 1956 the government still had 150,000 hectares of distributable land on its hands."³⁴

In theory each village has public lands to be rented out at reasonable rates to the poorest peasants, to provide revenue and relief for the village; in practice it was another means for squeeze and graft from the appointed village chief. There was no security of tenure beyond the crop year and often the land went to the richest and most prominent landlord. The government was reluctant to grant land titles, and there was no incentive to private ownership. The maximum rental fixed were taken as a legal minimum and land reform was only an added tax to the peasants who were not visited since the lack of security prevailed in certain areas. Thus the Vietnamese farmers were left unskilled, lacking in fertilizer and their products faced an uncertain market. The result was a growing discontent.

Other aspects of distribution can be examined in other areas of life.

31. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 209 — 32. *Ibid.*, p. 218

32. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 308

33. D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p.137 — 34. *Ibid.*, p.139

We have seen, when dealing with the taxation structure, that the burden of the war was shifted from the rich to the poor, from the powerful to the simple citizen, and shifted on to the consumers.

Meanwhile there were reports that half of the government revenue went to defence, which included the payment of the Civil Guard and Self-Defence corps. The 1956 Constitution did not permit Diem a third mandate, thus honours and statuses were given to all those who joined the Nhus to build up their force. Nhu tried various means to bring to his side all groups which might constitute a force against him: the Labour group, the Civil Servants, the Students and the youth, in order to take power after Diem. Government jobs were filled by supporters of the Ngo Dinh family, while public money was spent on the formation of groups patroned by them, such as the Cong Hoc Youth and the paramilitary girls, to further strengthen governmental ranks. In the provinces, the Ngo Dinh's followers enjoyed great prestige, status and honours. Diem drew heavily from Central Viet Nam to fill the leading posts in provinces, this meant that to the Southern peasants, these were quasi-foreigners. In the Central area, Ngo Dinh Can, Ngo Dinh Thuc and their men acted as it suited them to do so. The middle ranks of the army were discontented; generals were under constant surveillance, some were without troops, others were sneered at by Cabinet Ministers as French corporals and sergeants.

Most important of all there were the many complaints from the Buddhists that there was preferential treatment in favour of the Catholics, who received economic aid, protection, jobs, honours, statuses, despite the fact that they formed only a minority in South Viet Nam.

Of the almost a million Northern refugees, the majority were Catholics and their escape from home was thought to be a demonstration of loyalty to the Catholic President Diem. They provided the cheering crowds along the roads, political shock troops for the regime and "safe constituencies" for the regime-approved-candidates. That strongly anti-Communist mass of Bui Chu and Phat Diem was said never to be fully integrated into the South Vietnamese society.

Soon they occupied the choicest positions throughout the government and the economy, and formed the staff members of the governmental agencies; menial positions such as cleaning women and porters were held by South Vietnamese. The Buddhists complained that Buddhist refugees were mistreated and not given aid, while other Buddhists were resettled in remote and harsh areas, just because they were Buddhists. There they had to witness "favouritism towards Catholics in such matter as promotion, land tenure etc. Guns and economic aid were frequently channelled through Catholic bodies."³⁵

Speaking of the village of Dong Tre, Dennis Warner wrote:

"The driving force behind the training guard scheme was the local priest, a Vietnamese, and a man with great energy and enthusiasm. The village chief was a man of straw. The result was that all the guns went to the Catholics and none to the Buddhists."³⁶

The village pagodas were not restored because they were said to be refuges for the Viet Cong; the builder of the strategic hamlets intentionally left the pagodas out of their hedges, their inhabitants were not allowed to leave when there was any celebration outside.

Furthermore, in 1957 the government wanted to write the Wesak off the list of official holidays, had strong pressure from the Buddhists not forced it to restore official recognition and later in 1961 the Buddhist journal Lien Hoa "published a letter from Buddhist soldiers complaining that permission to celebrate Wesak was being withheld or granted too late."³⁷

The Diem government did not hesitate to insult the Buddhists publicly, such as by granting the traditional Buddhist holy place at Thien But, in Quang Ngai province, to Catholic priests as a building site. The Catholic pilgrimage to La Vang was celebrated in great pomp, and to the Buddhists such a festivity and the offering of South Viet Nam to the heart of Virgin Mary were insulting as many other acts of Monsignor Thuc. The government

35. A. Roberts, "Buddhism and politics in South Vietnam", in The World Today, (June 1965), p. 241

36. D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p. 209

37. A. Roberts, "Buddhism and politics in South Vietnam", p. 241

also allowed the propagation of the film "Sakya", a Japanese production, which was forbidden by the World Buddhist Association because of its damaging effect to Buddhism; while newsman Tu Chung was allowed to attack the Buddhists in the paper Ngon Luan.

But the most impressive criticism of the Diem regime's pro-Catholic policies, said Roberts, appeared in a prominent Catholic journal, the issue of 15 March 1963 of Informations Catholiques Internationales, in Paris, cited examples of preferential treatment to Catholics in obtaining visas, in promotion and in organizing processions. As far as the government personnel was concerned, he continued:

"Commenting on the much-paraded fact that there were only two Catholics among Diem's fourteen Ministers, it stated: 'The opinion of the people is not formed solely by an album of photographs of Ministers; it is more sensitive to the place of honour occupied by a bishop at a military parade, to the comings and goings of priests in the Ministries, to their power to intercede for the release of a suspect or for aid for a refugee.' Public opinion, it said, is critical of 'processions which hold up traffic over several kilometres in Saigon or Hue, after having been prepared for weeks with the technical assistance, the personnel, and the equipment of the army or the information service. Nor can opinion be insensible to the fact that it is the personalism of (the French Catholic) Emmanuel Mounier which the regime has chosen to spread and set against Marxist ideology...'"³⁸

While his family formed the top of the ruling body and controlled every government agency including the Secret Police, Buddhists were given positions without any power. This discrimination extended to the army which had no Buddhist chaplains, if there was any then they had to be under Catholic control; in order to be promoted officers of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces had to be Catholics.

In his memoirs published in Hai Trieu Am, The Venerable Thich Tri Quang quoted Donald Harrington in Newsweek, the issue of 27 May 1963 as follows:

38. A. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 241-242

"The Catholic battalions of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces were equipped with heavier and better weapons than non-Catholics. In many areas, Catholic missionaries possessed their own army..., with the mission to protect the Church and its priests, responsible to the Archbishop, elder brother of President Diem. This army was equipped with American weapons, you and I had to pay for these expenses, and they were trained by American advisers." He continued: "To my knowledge in a certain department of the Military Police, out of 50 agents 50 were Catholics."³⁹

Whether willingly or unwillingly, President Diem committed the error of ignoring early Buddhist tensions. There have been many disputes about the number of Buddhists in South Viet Nam, as we have said before, and because the Buddhist group lacked organization, it was easy for the Communists to infiltrate its ranks. Consequently the distribution of resources was slanted towards minority groups at the expenses of the majority. Under the First Republic, while the Buddhists did not benefit from any material gains, they received no psychological compensation either for prestige, honours and statuses were the privileges of the Ngo Dinh supporters. When tensions, misery, and dissatisfaction, and frustration were accompanied by a religious fervour, no strong government could resist the popular upheaval which ensued.

THE SYMBOLIC CAPABILITY.

At first glance, the Diem government seemed to have a high symbolic capability, because it survived with the bad effects of the wars. Strong symbolic capability is needed for the people to tighten their belts and forget their miseries, if the country is in a state of tension and pressure.

First there was the Hymn to the President, which followed the salute to the flags, called "Suy Ton Ngo Tong Thong" (meaning Let us respect and adore our President Ngo). It was supposed to express the gratitude of the people for the man who saves the nation; it was sung in every reunion and even in movies theatres.

39. Thich Tri Quang, "Cuoc Van Dong Cua Phat Giao Viet Nam: Mot Hoi Ky", in Hai Trieu Am, n° XII(9 July 1964), p. 2, (in Vietnamese in the text.)

The President's portrait was in all public buildings, all offices and stores where people hoped to get some favour from the regime. When President Diem moved around, there were a squad of motor-cyclists wearing white gloves in front, and a long line of official cars on a road forbidden to all traffic half an hour ago. Cheering crowds along the roads waved their hands to President Ngo.

When he visited strategic hamlets, altars were set up on his way, guarded by village notables in traditional ceremonial costumes. Every New Year, or on his anniversary day, on the occasion of Têt (The Vietnamese New Year) dignitaries of the regime came to prostrate in front of his father's altar, his mother and himself.

Diem's motto of Nhan Vi (Personalism), Cong Dong (Co-operation), Dong Tien (Self-Advancement) etc. were learned by heart at school. One must not also forget the Cong Hoa Youth parade and the para-military girls' parade in front of Madame Nhu, on the anniversary of the Trung Sisters.

As regards to the Buddhists, the Diem government was said to have built many pagodas and given public land and estates, material and money for these constructions. As a symbol of religious tolerance Diem sponsored the building of Ka Loi pagoda in Saigon, which later turned out to be the sanctuary of Buddhist revolt.

In the economic sphere, the State Department asserted in a report in December 1961 that "the years 1956 to 1960 produced something close to an economic miracle in South Viet Nam."⁴⁰ It further declared that "food production rose an average of 7 percent a year and prewar levels were achieved and passed."⁴¹

Official statements asserted that enormous impetus were given to existing crops, special attention given to food and industrial plants and that soon Viet Nam South would be ready to export ^{rice} and by-products by 1966.

All this seemed to be a bright and gay picture of South Viet Nam.

⁴⁰ B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 290

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 294

However, despite the South Vietnamese government repeated declarations that all was well, that there was peace and normal activity in the countryside of South Viet Nam, despite the naming of Diem as the tough miracle man of South Viet Nam, despite the majority won at elections, the effectiveness of the symbolic output was very much in doubt.

We have noticed the government failure in political communication and propaganda. Symbolic messages might be transmitted but not received, the activities of the Diem government in making displays, building statues, making speeches to the nation were not in themselves indicative of the capability level. At first glance these activities might magnify the impact of certain governmental distributions or regulations but the people did not take them into account.

We have mentioned the turning off of the radio when government propaganda was on the air. The praising and cheering were believed to be forced, organized by the government rather than voluntary popular enthusiasm for Diem. The Saigon press reported many non political news which were very grim such as items on the economic situation, on security conditions.

The joining of such groups as the para-military girls, the Cong Hoa Youth, the All Vietnamese Women Solidarity Movement, was far from being voluntary. The powerlessness of the National Assembly, the limitations of civil liberties, the tortures and illegal arrests were too obvious for the people to believe in the clemency and protection of the Diem government.

Personalism, the regime's philosophy used as an antidote to Communism, was ill-understood and badly applied.

Preferential treatment towards Catholics was even remarked by Catholic missions. Reviewing the situation in South Viet Nam under Diem, we can say that the government level of symbolic capability was low.

THE RESPONSIVE CAPABILITY.

So far we have described the pattern of outputs into the internal environment, we now turn to the examination of the relationship between outputs and inputs, or demands and supports from the people. It is necessary for

us to know in what policy areas the Diem regime was responsive and to what groups of people it was responsive.

In a country where the political, economical and social fabrics were disintegrating, the Diem government showed little degree of responsiveness. The early years of the regime showed a series of measures which were intended to pacify the country; the government wiped out the politico-religious sects who were acting as War Lords in their own areas; Diem resettled the Northern refugees and undertook to purge the Vietnamese society of its sinful elements such as gambling, prostitution, alcoholism and drugs. The people were hopeful for a bright future.

However as time went by, the Diem regime was very much criticized less because of its lack of efficiency in governing, than its growing insulation from the people. The government had a strong sense of public duty and responsibility to the people; however Diem misunderstood his people, from seeing the world through his own eyes.

First, he was an austere man who had taken vows of chastity in his youth; he virtually led a monastic life, preferably a secluded one, and his abandonment of priesthood did not mean a loss of his religious fervour. A shy man, but a prodigious worker, "he had a strong sense of his own moral righteousness, and therefore of his inherent right to rule."⁴²

Second, Diem was well grounded in traditional administrative principles, according to which the governing of the people was by an enlightened sovereign and an enlightened government, and the system worked because there was a strict moral code. At the same time, he was familiar with Western political systems, so he was concerned to build a strong moral basis for a healthy democratic state. It is not surprising that Diem aimed at destroying the sources of demoralization; but his witch-hunting for evil elements would not have been so much resented if he had not joined to it a Catholic puritanical attitude towards life.

We have already spoken of the preferential treatment of the Catholics

42. D. Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York, 1964-65), p. 43

when dealing with the distribution of resources. The trouble was that non-Catholics did not see things in the same way as Diem. The Catholic prudery of the Ngo Dinh exacerbated the animosity which had been rumbling since French times. The Buddhists looked askance at the Diem government-sponsored Catholic ceremonies such as the "country-wide series of elaborate Marian Year celebrations culminating in a solemn ceremony in front of the Saigon Cathedral at which South Viet Nam was formally consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."⁴³

Responsiveness towards Catholics was further seen in the controlling Catholic Can Lao Party, the Diem regime's quasi-covert political organization; in the regime's official philosophy of personalism, which owed obvious debts to French Catholic thinkers, and which was expounded to government officials at an institute presided over by Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc; it was also seen in the Family Bill and Law for the Protection of Morality of Madame Nhu.

Furthermore, Diem was a man who could not stand any advice or criticism, firmly believing that he was always right. Repressive laws and ordinances were for evil doers. Any opposition would be termed Viet Cong (i.e. Vietnamese Communist), and to Diem Communism was very bad indeed.

The Diem regime was concerned to suppress the growing insurgency and the discontent of the peasants, who formed the majority of the population. Only the way it went about doing this was not appreciated by the South Vietnamese people. The regime got increasingly dictatorial, almost tyrannical and the people had no means through which they could express their grievances to the government. As we have seen, in the examination of the government's interest articulation and aggregation functions, Diem did not provide the people with any channel of access to communicate their demands to the regime, and there was no political elite to transmit the people's will.

If Diem was responsive towards giving the country a strong moral basis in the Catholic manner, he was very irresponsible towards the solving of the nation's problems.

43. G.A. Carver, Jr., "The Real Revolution In South Viet Nam", in Foreign Affairs, Vol. XLIII n° III (April 1965), p. 394

First of all the national identity question was not satisfactorily solved. On one hand, Diem declared his non-recognition of the Geneva Agreements, which he had not in any case signed, thus depriving those who felt that a divided Viet Nam was like an amputated limb of a hope of reunification. On the other hand he could not promote loyalty towards the nation of South Viet Nam, despite his contribution to its formation by refusing the nationwide elections for reunification of the country. He increasingly antagonized the people, many of whom turned Communist, which to them meant opposition to Diem.

Second, his policies did not bring rural and urban people any closer, by sending his own men to provinces to direct local affairs. They did not reconcile Buddhists and Catholics; nor did they promote lowlanders-highlanders brotherhood, with the negative effects of the colonizing plans of Southern plateaus. Ethnic minorities were forced to adopt Vietnamese nationality, thus increasing their resentment against the government, while the problems created by their presence were not solved. In particular this did not change the Chinese strong grip over the Vietnamese economy.

The Diem government could not gratify the people's needs for welfare and better life, nor could it serve as example of benevolence, and enlightenment as in the old imperial times. The Land Reform Programme's failure was to the regime's disadvantage, considering the importance the Vietnamese people attached to their land.

Local government was being badly viewed and representative government was somekind of a folly to talk about with Diem. Lowland self-government was not even envisaged, not talking of such thing for mountainous areas. Fall noted:

"The mountain tribesmen of the vast plateau area which covers almost 65 percent of South Viet Nam were the object of political and economic oppression which American experts as early as 1957 considered tantamount to genocide. They formed an organization known as FULRO (Front Unifié de la Lutte des Races Opprimées)...which

resulted in two major rebellions..."⁴⁴

American suggestions were badly received. Under American pressure, an eleven points reform programme was promulgated in 1962. Of this programme Bernard Fall said:

"The best that could be said for this program was that some of its points amounted to locking the barn door after the horses had been stolen, while others offered the routine kind of basic aid to economic development that could be applied anywhere from Bolivia to Timbuktu, but hardly with any telling effect upon a country whose very political-administrative fabric was desintegrating under the hammer blows of revolutionary war.

Of the eleven points, only two showed any special responsiveness to Viet-Nam's own problems: the items concerned with the training of village officials and with improving the lot of the mountaineers. But as early as 1957, the cream of village officialdom had been murdered by the Communists, who had correctly identified this group as a key element in the struggle. In any event, the major problem at that level is not so much the effectiveness of the village officials in their relations with the population as the effectiveness of the central and provincial administrations in their relations with the village officials."⁴⁵

Too absorbed in his own divine mission, Diem grew apart from his people, shielded from the outside world by his surroundings. A passage quoted by Halberstam from Graham Greene's article in the New Republic describes at best the trouble with Diem in handling the nation's affairs:

"Diem is separated from the people by cardinals and police cars with wailing sirens and foreign advisers droning of global strategy, when he should be walking in the rice fields unprotected, learning the hard way how to be loved and obeyed _ The two cannot be separated. One pictured him sitting there in the Norodom Palace, sitting with his blank brown gaze, incorruptible, obstinate, ill-advised, going to his weekly confession, bolstered up by his belief that God is always on the Catholic side, waiting for

⁴⁴. B.B. Fall, "Viet Nam In The Balance", in Foreign Affairs, Vol. XLV n° I (October 1966), p. 6

⁴⁵. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 281

a miracle."⁴⁶

Diem withdrew even closer to his family after the 1960 coup d'état of the paratroopers, and by 1961, it was said that the Nhus' power was immense.

Halberstam wrote:

"Imagine Diem as the President of the United States; in such a situation Nhu would have controlled all the country's newspapers, headed the CIA, the FBI and the Congress, served as Attorney General and Secretary of State and written all the reports that the President saw. What Diem knew of the outside world was what Nhu wanted him to know; what he saw he saw through Nhu's eyes, the people he met he met only after Nhu had approved them."⁴⁷

In short he became a political cadaver as Dennis Warner put it. The political system under Diem can be characterized as having a low responsiveness. The Ngo Dinh and their supporters formed almost the sole source of political inputs. The system had no set of interest groups and political parties to which it was responsive and sensitive in policy making, and the government was one voice, not many voices.

THE INTERNATIONAL CAPABILITY.

In order to judge a country's capabilities, it is also necessary to examine its foreign relations. A government which gets some support from abroad, gets some assets on which it could rely to work, and this in turn might influence its capability to rule at home.

- The international extractive capability.

Despite the fact that the government's main revenue came from custom duties, which could be classified as income from international trade, its international extractive capability was a low one.

Because of the insecurity in South Viet Nam, tourists stopped coming to visit it; it did not have capital investments abroad, nor did it attract foreign investments. According to Fall, "Foreign investment - except for the reinvestment of French capital "stuck" in Viet-Nam, which does not even benefit from rights of repatriation of legal profits - is extremely low."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ D. Halberstam, The Making Of A Quagmire (New York, 1964), p. 41 - 47. Ibid.

although the South Vietnamese government tried to ensure American investments against everything but the most normal business risks and to guarantee the repatriation of profits, foreign investments were disappointingly low. The point was that the South Vietnamese government could not discourage French investments without scaring off other foreign capital.

Reparations drawn from foreign countries such as Japan were useful but still were not enough; and levies on the services of foreign people could not be drawn significantly, since technicians came to Viet Nam under the American aid programme, thus had to be subject to the Vietnamese-American agreements. Furthermore, the presence of technicians, educators etc., although benefitting the Vietnamese system with new methods and new techniques of working, was not fully appreciated by the South Vietnamese people. The Americans led their own way of life in South Viet Nam. They had their own newspaper, namely the Times of Viet Nam, they never bought anything from Viet Nam, not even a packet of cigarettes or a piece of soap. As a result the South Vietnamese economy suffered from a decline of the purchasing power, particularly the countryside where the people benefitted from the French expeditionary forces spread throughout the area and consuming local goods and services.

Thus despite American aid, South Viet Nam suffered from a trade deficit which was officially recognized since 1962, as seen in the following table:⁴⁹ all figures are in millions of piastres.

Year	Total Estimated Expenditures	Total Estimated Revenues	Deficit
1962	26,254	22,066	4,188
1963	27,000	22,500	4,500
1964	28,500	19,000	9,500

⁴⁹ Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 222

In the field of international trade, South Viet Nam still depended on the good will of her ex-colonial power, France, as seen in the following table:⁵⁰

Share of South Vietnamese Trade with the Franc Area,
The United States, And Japan
(Percentages of Total)

	1939	1956	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
<u>Exports to:</u>								
Franc area	32.2	67.5	42.3	38.7	42.2	24.7	32.7	41.3
United States	12.0	18.1	4.4	5.1	3.5	1.1	4.0	5.5
Japan	4.4	0.6	2.8	2.1	5.8	5.5	8.5	13.4
<u>Imports from:</u>								
Franc area	55.7	24.5	21.0	17.0	13.4	11.0	6.1	3.3
United States	4.2	28.0	23.5	27.0	37.4	37.1	42.4	43.9
Japan	1.7	25.6	22.0	22.8	16.6	10.8	10.4	10.0

It must be noted that only France has increased her imports from Viet Nam, since no other nation saw much point in purchasing the country's overpriced products. American purchases of Vietnamese goods have declined since pre-war days, while imports from America and Japan rose up heavily, this was clearly due to the American payment for almost all American goods imported. French purchase of Vietnamese rubber was sound business, and

"French and franc zone purchases of Vietnamese rice...are nothing but charity, since France herself produces 135,000 tons on the Camargue rice fields in southern France (for a national consumption of 85,000 tons) and uses Vietnamese rice only for economic aid to several African states."⁵¹

While France, Japan and Taiwan were serious contenders for the Vietnamese market, there was a great lack of encouragement from the government, as a result exports to France were declining as seen in the above figures.

- The international regulative capability.

The South Vietnamese political system under Diem had a very high level of

50. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 305

51. Ibid., p. 304

international regulation, despite the many attempts from the Ngo Dinh family to do things their way. Diem was not a puppet, nor his regime a satellite of America. America did not control Vietnamese politics and public policy directly, but there were many constraints to Diem's activities which made the American presence felt in Viet Nam.

First, it should be recalled that Diem was the chosen man to conduct the American policy of a nationalist reform programme, to deter Communist progression in South East Asia. Among the many reasons for which Diem got American support was that he was the enemy of the Viet Minh and his refusal to co-operate with Ho Chi Minh at Tuyen Quang. Diem, furthermore, received strong support from Monsignor Spellman, who was convinced that Catholicism was the only spiritual weapon against Communist fanaticism, that was no small thing in the Mac Carthy era. Together with the elder Kennedy, Spellman pressed Eisenhower to accept Diem as the democratic alternative to Ho.

Second, it was the United States aid that

"kept Diem in power and manned the barricades against his adversaries. It reconstructed roads and railways, put goods in the shop windows, caused modest improvements in agriculture, and some even more modest industrial development."⁵²

Although American aid was necessary for maintaining the running of the economy, the South Vietnamese government was unhappy that it could not use it where it saw fit and the release of funds had to be jointly approved. This caused no little friction between the Diem government and the American government. The South Vietnamese Ambassador to Washington declared that:

"his country could not "go very far and very long with ounces of uncertain (American) aid wrapped up in pounds of red tape,"...The Ambassador's son-in-law, Ngo Dinh Nhu, stated a short while later...that American aid was "rigid and insufficiently adapted to the specific character of each people."⁵³

The Americans criticized the South Vietnamese government for the misuse

52. D. Warner, The Last Confucian (Penguin Books, 1964), p. 125

53. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 303

of their aid in the hoarding of foreign aid funds to build up its gold and currency reserves despite a huge trade gap. They found that this was hard to justify on economic grounds and to explain to the United States tax-payers. Both misread the role which they expected each other to play in the rebuilding of the country's economy. The Americans wanted to help the South Vietnamese economy to take off and to keep the South Vietnamese Armed Forces strong enough to stop Communist aggression, while the South Vietnamese wanted them to revise the procedures of United States aid to do things their way. As a result, Diem got more infuriated by suggestions for reforms or criticisms from the United States than from other countries.

Only the United States could press Diem for reforms through economic means. Despite Diem's successful resistance to some American suggestions for economic and political reforms, forcing the United States to go along his line, without American approval and support he could do nothing. As Fall remarked, slogans such as "Economic independence" and "Monetary independence" were in fact a myth that South Viet Nam could never afford. They were "used to wreck what was left of French and Chinese economic footholds in the country,"⁵⁴ but Viet Nam South could not survive for ten minutes without American aid. Thus when speaking of reforms and change it is not totally wrong if we say that "The change (could) not be undertaken in Saigon, but (should) be carried out in Washington."⁵⁵

- The international distributive capability.

If the United States exerted some pressure on the South Vietnamese political system, in return it provided the country with many resources on which it had to depend to survive. On the whole the system could be said to have a high level of international distributive capability which took mainly the form of assistance provided by American government agencies. In 1958 Fall wrote:

"During the past fiscal year, American aid to Viet-Nam supported the whole cost of the Vietnamese armed forces, nearly 80 per cent of all other government expenditures,

54. B.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 166

55. *Ibid.*, p. 167

and almost 90 per cent of all imports."⁵⁶

The importance of foreign aid was illustrated in the following table:

"All figures are in millions of piasters, except the fifth column, which gives figures in thousands of U.S. dollars."⁵⁷

Year	Total Estimated Budget	American aid for military expenditures	American aid for economy	Additional American aid for economy
1962	26,250	7,275	1,857	11,946
1963	29,600	7,558	1,692	15,205

80 percent of this aid came in the form of merchandise exported to Viet Nam, and sold through normal commercial channels, which generated local currency; this currency minus normal commercial profits would be deposited in a counterpart fund, out of which the South Vietnamese government covered the expenses for the various projects approved jointly by the U.S.O.M. (United States Operation Mission) and the South Vietnamese government. The rest came in "hard currency" (i.e. dollars) granted for outright purchases in the United States and in other countries, or it might consist in part of currencies of third countries which owed money to the United States from which South Viet Nam desired to make certain purchases. Besides this aid, the United States also supplied technicians, educationalists, medical personnel, clothing, drugs, food etc. to South Viet Nam.

- The international symbolic capability.

It is difficult for us to evaluate the effectiveness of the flow of symbols, images, policies statements and the like from South Viet Nam into the international environment. This is due to the fact that the United States support was already given to President Diem when he assumed power. Thus we must make the distinction between the capability of the Diem government to make propaganda abroad and the willingness of the United States to support

56. B.B. Fall, op. cit., p. 161

57. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 210

a regime on which it had relied to deter Communist aggression in South East Asia. In other words it is always easier to plead our cause to people who are willing to listen to us. For this reason, we wonder whether the Americans knew about the facts but still wanted to believe that they were right supporting Diem. Here it is of interest to note

"...that curious trait of the American political personality which causes it to appear reprehensible to voice anything less than unlimited optimism about the fortunes of another government one has adopted as a friend and protégé."⁵⁸

According to Fall, this has been the attitude of the American officials, the press and some American scholars, towards Viet Nam from 1954 onwards. A good measure of the effectiveness of the symbolic output can be made from the reading of statements and declarations by journalists, scholars and American official reports.

Although pro-Diem sources stressed on its capacity to rule and to purge the South Vietnamese system from many vices, other sources stressed on the government dictatorial measures, the deterioration of the country's economy and the spread of insurgency.

The early years of the regime were marked by a series of diplomatic successes:

"Burmese Premier U Nu, during a visit to Saigon, found President Ngo Dinh Diem "charming," and the country "efficiently run." The reception accorded Diem in New Delhi in November, 1957, was almost as cordial as that which he had received a few months earlier in Washington."⁵⁹

When Christian Pineau, France's Foreign Minister, visited Saigon, he extended an invitation to Ngo Dinh Diem for an official visit to Paris coupled with a visit to Lourdes, the Catholic shrine.

On the whole the Americans sincerely believed that South Viet Nam could work with American institutions. Thus,

58. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 268

59. B.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 170

"On November 13, 1960, The New York Times, while musing that "much obviously now depends upon what reforms he now decides to make," nevertheless expressed its editorial happiness "that President Ngo Dinh Diem has survived this major test of his power."⁶⁰

The result of the 1961 presidential elections had the American press on Diem side.

"Time concluded that the "much-abused Diem had run a reasonably honest election—and won"; while The New York Times, despite the objective reporting of its field staff, lent its editorial prestige to such nonsense as explaining that the heavy pro-Diem vote was due to the country's "considerable prosperity, as exemplified by the fact the many conical hats worn by women voters today were covered with cellophane over the traditional raw straw." It commented that the election had been a "double victory," over both Diem's opponents and the Vietnamese Communists, due in the main to the "reform programs," and asserted that the over-all results had been a "crushing repudiation of Communism as well as a public tribute to the strong-willed leader."⁶¹

All this did not mean that the Diem regime was safe from criticisms, neither was the effect of American aid on South Viet Nam.

"Dean Vu Quoc Thuc of the Saigon Law School, bluntly stated in The Times of Viet-Nam Magazine of April 1, 1962, that "1961 may be regarded, in all aspects, as having been a critical year," and "that the present economic crisis has its origin in the state of insecurity in the rural areas"; while a former American taxation adviser to the South Vietnamese government, Professor Milton C. Taylor, in the Fall, 1961, issue of Pacific Affairs amply documented his assertion that "after six years of large-scale American aid, Viet-Nam is becoming a permanent mendicant."⁶²

Also according to Fall, an Indian political scientist stated: "what has to be discarded is not presidential leadership but the arbitrary and undemocratic exercise of executive authority."⁶³

60. B.B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (London, 1966), p. 273

61. *Ibid.*, p. 277

62. *IBID.*, p. 290 63. *Ibid.*, p. 269

The Vietnamese were also unhappy, their discontent was seen in the paratroopers' rebellion of 11 November 1960; in the presidential palace bombardment of February 1962 by two Air Force pilots; in the increasing insurgency and the widespread insecurity. But these events were seen as signs of frustrated ambition or of subservience to colonialism. French views were also discarded, and the above declarations by professionals were given little attention to.

On the whole, the political system under Diem can be said to have a high level of international symbolic capability; criticisms, if any, were oriented towards the idea of reforms, nobody spoke of the withdrawing of Diem's mandate.

- The international responsive capability.

An accommodative international capability would be one in which demands made on other political systems are in some proportion to compliance with demands which other political systems make upon it. The Diem system was neither responsive nor accommodative.

Renewed assurance of American support of Diem, on condition that his regime should be reformed, despite the mounting guerrilla war and the deterioration of the country's economy, showed American willingness to stop Communist expansion in South East Asia. But South Viet Nam saw things in another way, as noted earlier. Suggestions of reforms were met with massive resistance from a regime which was mobilized against any reforms which might weaken its monopoly of effective absolute power.

The Staley and Maxwell reports in 1961 were badly received by the Saigon regime which erupted in a wave of anti-Americanism. The United States was charged of capitalist imperialism, and there was threat to revise Vietnamese-American collaboration. The State Department for the first time expressed its disappointment with Diem. However, Washington backed down with the Kennedy promise that "the United States would promptly increase its aid" and statement of "full confidence in the determination of the people of South Viet-Nam." ⁶⁴

⁶⁴ H. P. S. Roll, op. cit., p. 270

The Saigon reforms were disappointing. Diem's fiscal reforms led to the abandon of merchandise to rot at the dockside rather than pay taxes; the creation of the Economic Council in 1962 represented no broadening at all of the base of popular representation; and as we have said the eleven points reform programme did not produce any effect.

Despite the mounting insurgency, the United States still persisted in supporting Diem, because it could find no other trustworthy strongly anti-Communist leader to replace him. It went on supporting a dictatorship and led the country to bitter wars and damages. The effect was disastrous, for massive economic aid could not solve the problem of insurgency, if one does not understand the nature of such a war; it demanded a revolution to change the country and South Viet Nam did not experiment any revolution under Diem.

The affluence of American aid, although necessary for the running of the South Vietnamese economy, paved the way for an eventual economic crisis. American aid produced an impression of progress which was not real. Besides the restraining conditions of the United States government regarding the use of its aid, the profusion of the aid strongly affected national revenue, by making the South Vietnamese economy dependent on foreign aid. The nature of such aid channelled Vietnamese capital into useless consumer goods, which were harmful for a weak economy, such as hi-fi sets, cameras, American cigarettes; during 1956-1957 it was noted that Viet Nam spent 7 million piastres on private cars and 5.5 million piastres on tires and tubes for them while it spent a meagre 800,000 piastres on tractors and industrial vehicles (the rate of exchange was then 35 piastres per U.S. dollar); the use of big shiny cars also created a long term dependence upon dollar paid spare parts, batteries, tires, gasoline, which the local economy could not afford. The South Vietnamese people made little effort to increase internal resources, which led to criticisms that American aid "produces a psychologically unhealthy multiplier effect on local powers who otherwise might be self-sufficient."⁶⁵

⁶⁵. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 211

On the other hand what would happen if the people exhausted their needs on some consumer goods or found American goods too expensive? the buy-American programme of 1960 was sharply criticized, for American goods were higher in cost, compared with French and Japanese goods, which the Vietnamese wanted to buy.

- Factors affecting the capabilities of the system in South Viet Nam

Among the factors affecting the capabilities of the system are the goals and actions of the political elites. We have previously noted the centralizing tendency of the Diem regime. Diem and his family were the government and their subjects had only to obey superior orders. We have also discussed what kind of a man Diem was, his Catholic fervour, his traditional beliefs, his stubbornness and his concern for raising the morality of his people to his level, his gradual isolation from his people. Because of his lack of contact with the outside world, Diem could not undertake any change which would conform to the people's will. His will would be the people's will, because he was right, and always thought right about his people. The people could not hate Diem very much, until his death Diem retained considerable grudging respect. He received a fragmented and shattered country which nobody wanted, and magnificently resettled the refugees, wiped out gangsters sects and crushed the criminal elements which had ruled Saigon, through their control of gambling and prostitution and alliance with the French police. But Diem was not alone deciding on what should be done. There was the Ngo Dinh family, whose solidarity was very strong. We have noted the importance that the Vietnamese attached to their family, in the case of the Ngo Dinh, they were even prouder to come from a long line of mandarins. They were full of their importance and became corrupted by power, living side by side with a people whose revolutionary spirit they failed to observe.

There was Nhu who boasted once to Time reporters that he was the only true serious strategist of guerrilla warfare, he considered himself to be a brilliant military tactician, as we have said previously, and took over the position which should be left to army commanders. It was also he who promoted the agrovilles (Khu dinh dien), the dense prosperous areas (Khu tru mat), and

the strategic hamlets (Ap chien luoc). Nhu controlled the eminent men in the government through his Political and Social Research Service of the Presidency (So nghien cuu chinh tri), a sort of spy and counter-spy network which possessed all documents, holding the life, the freedom and honour of every citizen in South Viet Nam. Nhu's aim, we have said, was to take power after Diem.

Collaborating with him was his wife, a Buddhist who turned Catholic after her marriage, more Ngo Dinh than the Ngo Dinh; because of her achievements in the consolidation of the family position and indirectly of hers, she was a strong voice in family councils.

Perhaps because she bore Nhu many boys, the only male descendants of the Ngo Dinh (brother Luyen only had a son later), or for some other reason, Diem let her act as she wished, convinced that it would always be for the good of the Ngo Dinh family. Consequently, not satisfied with her role as hostess of the house, Madame Nhu acted as the First Lady of South Viet Nam. She became drunk with power and was reported to say: "Power is wonderful. Total power is totally wonderful."⁶⁶

She did not only rule the men who ruled the country, she represented the government herself, and according to Jean Lacouture,

"the deputies of the Saigon Parliament, who listened without visible response to the homilies of the chief of the family and the state, frankly admitted that when minuscule Madame Nhu mounted the rostrum, they felt all the weight of governmental power pressing down on them."⁶⁷

In central Viet Nam there was Ngo Dinh Can, who reigned as a despot over an area, where troubles accumulated with the Buddhists' dissatisfaction with the Ngo Dinh regime. Of a lower level of education, Can only felt at ease with uneducated people. Hue was also Monsignor Ngo Dinh Thuc's centre of activity. Although playing no part in politics, Thuc was to be the spark of the Buddhist fire. Talking of an Archbishop, his speciality was the

66. D. Warner, "Agony in Saigon: The Lady & the Cadaver", in The Reporter, (10 October 1963), p. 39

67. J. Lacouture, Viet Nam between two Truces (London, 1966), p. 79

accumulation of wealth and his dream was to become cardinal; it was said that had the Ngo Dinh been in power a little longer, Monsignor could have bought the whole Viet Nam. Thuc was strong and he was the eldest. He became too much involved in temporal affairs, asking for more and more troops and materials for church projects. The trouble was that he worked in an area where Buddhism flourished and was well-led, well-organized, militant and renovated, plus its strong longing for the past when Buddhism reached its golden age. Thuc was called back to Rome just as the members of his diocese were on the verge to burn him at stake.

Not only the Ngo Dinh's tried all means to consolidate their positions, their followers in an excess of zeal caused many grievances among the population. Too absorbed in their own interests, they forgot that they had to have people to rule over and to which they had to answer. They became irresponsible of societal and international inputs of demands, and guerrilla ranks swelled up. On one hand they repressed internal opposition, ignored internal and external criticisms, stayed indifferent to people's needs and substituted true reforms by promises and superficial symbols; on the other hand they tried to appease the Americans by accommodating with their policy of reforms and then failed to achieve it.

Another factor which affects the extraction of goods and services of the people depends on the size of the population, its skills and its motivations. Despite the holding of many able-bodied men by the Viet Minh, labour could be found in the refugees to provide manpower for the development of fertile land. The Vietnamese people did not lack skill; figures showed that education was getting more and more important and the number of schools had arisen and in relation to the size of its population as well as in academic performance, the South Vietnamese regime was a match for its Northern rival. But there were a few problems:

First, jobs had to be created for Vietnamese graduates without creating even more unproductive government jobs. Second the South Vietnamese were more prone to contact with "heretical" ideas from the West. Because the Diem regime lacked strong psychological appeal and there was no motivation for

production, one could witness the rapid deterioration of production of the country's economy, despite the semblance of wealth created by the American commodity imports programme.

A third factor which would affect the capabilities of a system is its organizational apparatus. Because Civil Servants were chosen on basis of loyalty towards the Ngo Dinh family, administration could not be an effective one. The feeling of protection from the superior coupled with the traditional administrative principle that the government was expected to rule rather than to respond to political forces made Nhu and his men very much resented among the villagers.

Thus there was an assault of politics on administration which would not tolerate the building of any autonomous power, thus could not be turned into popular and representative politics and administration was violated, the capacity for effective administration declined. Thus in South Viet Nam, as in many of the new countries,

"authoritative organs of the government, weak as they are, tend to overshadow the non-bureaucratic components of the political system. Until these components have been strengthened, the new countries will have neither effective administration nor the bases for stable political processes."⁶⁸

Because the Diem regime was irresponsive and failed to mobilize the people, the system could not draw in popular support for its activities to bring them to government levels of effectiveness and efficiency.

For a transitional political system to be able to cope with the many pressures of urbanization, industrialization, exposure to modernity, it has to develop many capabilities.

"If it has great resources and a well-developed distributive program geared to meet increasing demands, if it has pilot community — organization programs and trained personnel, if it has educational facilities geared to expansion, if it has strong police and military forces, if it has a pervasive and sensitive political infrastructure

68. L.W. Pye, Aspects of political development (Boston, 1966), p. 23

(such as a well-organized political party), if it has a strong and acceptable set of national symbols (usually including a magnetic leader), then we might predict that the present system may be able to cope with the environmental pressures without discontinuous or revolutionary change."⁶⁹

Unfortunately for South Viet Nam, the political system under Diem did not possess all these capabilities.

South Viet Nam possessed many resources, but the government could not develop them and because the system did not have adequate capabilities of extraction and regulation, it had to cling to its supporters to strengthen its ranks, thus could not emphasize distribution and responsiveness.

Increasing demands were left unsatisfied. The central government could not mobilize enough forces to maintain order in the rural areas where it was faced with hostility from depriving the local authorities of their previous autonomy. Without an efficient bureaucracy, the government was unable to develop any sound project or any sound programme of reforms that would correspond with public demands and expectations. Because of its intolerance of opposition, the Diem government deprived the people of a way of expressing their needs and wants through political parties and interest groups; these of course, in such a case only expressed their support for the government, and the government's will was their will.

Considering the history of the Vietnamese people one would expect that they would tighten their belts and work for their nation. Despite the many disruptions brought by contact with modernity, they were still Vietnamese and very conscious of their national identity, and they still retained their characteristics.

But the Diem government failed to mobilize that national feeling. The government could not present any strong and acceptable set of national symbols, because it failed to understand its people. Instead they forced on to them a combination of old ideas and Catholicism which the people found

69. Almond and Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (New York, 1966), p. 211

hard to assimilate.

Pye noted the solution to the problems of new countries, which Diem did not accept:

"The analyses of the problems of developing effective administration, of accepting positively the need for wider political participation, of encouraging the prospects of democratic evolution are all in a very fundamental way important for meeting the problem of civil violence. Indeed, we must recognize that there are conditions under which the revolutionary spirit of a transitional people reflects an inevitable, and even most desirable, ingredient in the process of effective nation-building. Time and again progress calls for the mobilizing of precisely such a revolutionary spirit, and democracies cannot be built out of a spirit of trying to counter all revolutionary changes."⁷⁰

Diem's prestige diminished with time and with the many wrongs done by his protégés in an excess of zeal. The level of performance of the Diem government was inadequate, it was in a situation in which it could not cut back distribution in favour of its supporters and step up its symbolic flow of activities.

On top of all troubles was the uncertainty of American aid and the Diem government was unable to seek any other source of international aid. Diem wanted American money, not American control or advice. Thus there was only one way left for the government, which was to maintain its power and to shift from responsiveness to regulation and symbolic satisfaction. This shift to an authoritarian pattern was said to be the common developmental pattern of the new and modernizing nations.

70. L.W. Pye, Aspects of political development (Boston, 1966), p. I28

THE 1963 BUDDHIST CRISIS.

The study of the functions and structures and capabilities of the Diem political system has pointed out where lay the many weaknesses of his regime. We have spoken of the Vietnamese people's affinity with Buddhist teachings, and of the force the Buddhist church could mobilize among the population if they needed so. In the end we shall see that their cause came to represent the common cause, their aspirations became the people's aspirations and their demands, the people's demands. The Buddhist crisis of 1963 was the most outstanding example of the bad functioning of the Diem system, which failed to go along with the people's will, while claiming to be the champion of democracy.

The Diem government suffered from an increasing unpopularity but did nothing to alleviate discontent. Its bad performance level was accompanied with an ignorance of internal and external criticisms. The shift to an authoritarian pattern was not eased by a good symbol manipulation. Taking all this into consideration, we shall examine the Buddhist movement of 1963.

THE INTEREST ARTICULATION BY BUDDHIST GROUPS.

The last months of the Diem administration were marked by the Buddhist crisis, a movement which erupted as a movement for religious equality and ended up by the overthrow of a regime. How did it start? what was its aim and how did it evolve? how did it end?

As we have seen in the last chapter, under the First Republic the people lacked open channels through which they could express their interests, needs, grievances, which remained unsatisfied. In such a situation two things could happen, either the people's dissatisfaction broke out in violence, or the government had to use force to suppress discontent. The Buddhist crisis showed us the conflicts inherent in the Vietnamese political culture, and the strong determination of the Buddhists to defend their cause intensified the conflicts to a point where neither side could be reconciled.

Diem's non tolerance of the opposition and dissent has led to the eruption of the Buddhist crisis. In characterizing the Buddhist interest articulation

we have to discover first what kinds of structure it was and the style of its performance.

- The incident of May 8 and the beginning of the Buddhist crisis.

During the first week in May 1963, the city of Hue was decorated with large pictures of Archbishop Thuc, crosses and bunting to celebrate the Silver Anniversary of his ordination as a bishop. It was a great occasion; both the government and the Vatican flags were flown from rooftops and church steeples. Diem apparently attended the festivities and drew attention to the government law proclaiming that only the Vietnamese flag could fly in public.

Unfortunately four days after, on the night of 6 May, while city streets were full of Thuc's pictures, crosses and flags, province chiefs were ordered by the government to enforce that regulation, while Hue was busy setting up lanterns and altars and flags to celebrate Buddha's 2507th birthday.

Most Buddhists did not obey the order; on 7 May their leader protested to the province chief, a sympathetic Buddhist, who decided that the presidency's order had been interpreted incorrectly and that the Buddhist flag could be flown after all. On 8 May, the traditional Buddhist procession on the bridge linking the old and new cities across the Perfume River was replaced by another one on sampans, since Thuc's bunting was still there and nobody could remove it.

The Buddhists carried banners in defiance of the government, asking for religious equality; they gathered at the Tu Dam Pagoda, home of the Superior Bonze Thich Tri Quang, who addressed the crowd on the injustice of religious discrimination. The meeting broke up without trouble. In the evening, larger crowds gathered at the pagoda and at the radio station to listen to a rebroadcast of the day's ceremonies. The crowd reached 10,000 at the radio station by 8 o'clock.

At first, the province chief explained that the rebroadcasting equipment had failed; later he admitted that the government had forbidden the rebroadcast. Fire hoses could not break up the mass, neither did blank shells; police troops then used tear gas and grenades, eight people were killed, some

were wounded and an armoured car rolled over some of the victims.

Viet Cong activities, said the government, artillery shells said a group of West German doctors who produced eyewitness and photographic evidence. The government quickly buried the victims without performing autopsies and stuck to the Viet Cong grenades story; the American Consulate in Hue reported to Saigon that the Buddhist version was correct.

As C.A. Joiner remarked:

"Reports that Diem was outraged by the display of Catholic flags without simultaneous display of the national flag, and that he took steps to remedy the unconstitutional ceremony cannot be proved or disproved at this juncture."^I

What the Buddhists saw was that the government wanted to find a pretext to destroy their religion, and that eight of them had died for Buddhism. Thus the Buddhist crisis began.

- The nature of the Buddhist interest group.

The Buddhist demands were well-organized and well-controlled, despite the many aspects of violence which accompanied the crisis till the end. In its claim for a better treatment, the Buddhist church showed many characteristics of an associational interest group. It followed the orderly procedures for the formulation of interests and demands and for the transmission of those demands to other political structures. Thus in characterizing the structure of the Buddhist movement in 1963, we need to make the distinction between the Buddhist church and those who sympathized with its cause.

The Buddhist demand was first voiced by a Buddhist meeting at the Tu Dam Pagoda, it broke out without any upheaval or violence. Then the matter was taken up by the General Buddhist Association. Following the incident of 8 May, on 9 May The Venerable Thich Tam Chau, Vice-Chairman of the General Buddhist Association wrote a Letter-from-the-heart calling on monks, nuns, and Buddhists to unite themselves in the struggle for the defense of Buddhism.

The Letter-from-the-heart further specified that the Buddhists were ready

I. C.A. Joiner, "South VietNam's Buddhist Crisis: Organization For Charity, Dissidence, And Unity, in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 915

and determined to sacrifice for their religion in a peaceful, orderly manner under the guidance of the General Buddhist Association and to follow the examples of the Buddhists in Hue who had lost their lives for the Buddhist flag.

At the same time an Intersect Committee For The Defense Of Buddhism (Uy Ban Lien Phai Bao Ve Phat Giao) has been set up with Thich Tam Chau as Chairman.

On 10 May, the Buddhist leaders met at the Tu Dam Pagoda and put forward five demands accompanied by a declaration:

- 1 That the government cancels the order forbidding the flying of Buddhist flags.
- 2 That the Vietnamese Buddhists be allowed to enjoy the privileged status granted to Catholic missions by ordinance n° 10.
- 3 That the government stop arresting and persecuting the Buddhists.
- 4 That the Buddhist priests and laymen be allowed to worship and propagate their own faith freely.
- 5 That the government pay adequate compensation to the victims of the 8 May cruel repression and punish those who were responsible for it.

The aim of the Buddhist church and the values which it defended seemed just and fair. The Buddhist manifesto was accompanied by a declaration of the Buddhist church, which professed not to cuss the government but only to ask it to undertake reforms, not to regard anyone or any group to be its enemy, in particular the Catholics, only to fight for religious equality, and not to be "used by anybody, especially the Communists and political usurpers."² It was sent to the government through its delegate in the Centre of Viet Nam.

On 15 May 1963, Thich Tam Chau and fourteen of South Viet Nam's sixteen sects took part in the delegation which went to see Diem to bring him to reason. They wanted to discuss the Hue incident and other long-standing grievances but they were told that "they were "damn fools" to be concerned about religious freedom; the Constitution of the country guaranteed it, and

2. For a full statement see Tue Giac, Viet Nam Phat Giao Tranh Dau Su (Saigon, 1964), p. 126

he was the Constitution."³; that the Hue incident was the result of Viet Cong activities.

In a press conference on 16 May, Thich Tam Chau declared that the Buddhist church was not satisfied with the government tortuous arguments; and to most observers and reporters, and to the American Mission, that seemed to be the end of the story.

On 28 May, government issuance led to the issuance of a "pastoral letter" from The Venerable Thich Tinh Khiat, Monk Superior of the General Buddhist Association, calling for a hunger strike to begin on 30 May.

On 30 May, several hundreds monks and nuns began a 48 hour hunger strike with a four hour non violent demonstration in front of the National Assembly, while Hue would continue fasting for an entire week as part of the struggle for the satisfaction of the five requests.

On 11 June, after a series of governmental repressive measures, The Venerable Thich Quang Duc received the honour of being the first martyr. At 8 a.m., leaving from the Phat Bui Pagoda, more than 800 bonzes and nuns, who attended the prayer service for the Hue victims, went quietly to the front of the Cambodian Legation, corner Le Van Duyet and Phan Dinh Phung, to watch the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, a 73 years old monk from Khanh Hoa Province, while thousands of curious and interested people witnessed the scene. The monks and nuns formed a circle around him; with the help of a co-religionist, Quang Duc saturated himself with gasoline and then burned himself into a strong torch. In the ocean of fire he sat there quietly and calmly, while the others prayed and prostrated and the people shed many tears of emotion.

Over a month, every negotiation being violated by the government, the struggle continued, on 16 July 1963, The Venerable Thich Tam Chau led a demonstration before the United States Ambassador's residence to ask the United States to take a clear stand, not to allow Diem to make use of American weapons which were intended for the anti-Communist war, to repress Buddhism.

3. D. Halberstam, The Making Of A Quagmire (New York, 1964-65), p. 202

In the morning of 17 July 1963 more than 11,000 Buddhist monks and nuns and laymen gathered at Giac Minh Pagoda to go and visit those fasting for the implementation of the Joint Communiqué.

On 22 July, the Intesect Committee organized a press conference to accuse the regime violation of the Joint Communiqué and to denounce it to the world.

As the situation deteriorated, the Buddhist leaders then demanded that the government assumed responsibility for the Hue incident before any negotiation could begin. They

"further displayed their lack of faith in government assurances by barricading themselves in the Xa Loi Pagoda on July 25, addressing a crowd of seven thousand at Xa Loi two days later on the non-implementation of the communique's guarantees and calling for July 30 demonstrations to commemorate the last day of the formal memorial period for Duc in Da Lat, Nhatrang, Quin Nhon, and Hue as well as in Saigon."⁴

On 30 July, The Venerables Tinh Khiet and Tam Chau issued a manifesto restating the Buddhist loss of confidence in Diem, but that the Buddhists would not abandon their doctrine of non violence to bring the movement to a success.

On 1 August, The Venerable Tinh Khiet also sent a telegramme to Kennedy to oppose the American Ambassador's declaration that there was no religious discrimination.

From 14 August to 5 October six more suicides by fire occurred; on 18 August, ten of thousands of Buddhists of all social classes gathered at Xa Loi to pray for the martyrs. The ceremony was conducted by Thich Thien Hoa, Chairman of the South Vietnamese Sangha, in presence of The Venerables Tam Chau and Tri Quang and other members of the Intersect Committee. The mass intended a 24 hour hunger strike but in the advice of the monks, the crowd dispersed itself.

The Buddhist crisis was effectively checked after the Xa Loi Pagoda raid

4. G.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam's Buddhist Crisis", in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 922

of 20 August, the Buddhist leadership was cut off, but by that time the whole country was already engaged in the struggle against the government, which to the people had become totally undemocratic and the military moved into action.

- Organization and nature of the movement.

At the beginning of this chapter, we have said that the Buddhist movement took some anomie aspects. This was due to the actions of the population who gave its sympathy to the Buddhist cause. This nationwide reaction against the government was a clear proof of the Buddhist church's ability to mobilize support, energy and resources.

First, there was the huge mass meeting at the radio station on 8 May, which was to start the crisis. Then, there was the dramatic suicide of Nguyen Tuong Tam (better known under his pen name Nhat Linh), idol of the youth. He was the author of many masterpieces and his name figures in the history of the Vietnamese literature. As a politician he took part in the resistance against colonialism since the age of 23; a former leader of the Dai Viet Dan Chinh Party, he led the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang with which the former was merged. He belonged to the anti-Communist group and was once Secretary of State in the alliance with the Viet Minh Front. He did not take part in the Bao Dai government.

On the verge of being tried for his involvement in the 1960 abortive coup d'état against Diem, Nhat Linh committed suicide by poison at 8.00 p.m. on 7 July leaving those words:

"Đời tôi dễ lịch-sử xu, tôi không chịu dễ ai xu cả. Su
bat bo va xu tôi tất cả các phân tử đời lập quốc gia là
một tôi nâng se lam cho nước mất về tay Công-San. Tôi
chông đời su do va tu huy minh cung như HOA THƯƠNG THÍCH
QUANG DUC tu thiêu dễ canh cao nhưng người cha đáp mọi
thứ tu do."⁵

meaning:

"My life will be judged by history, nobody else will be

5. V.O.A. information, 9 July 1963, (Vietnamese document in possession of the writer)

allowed to judge me. The arrest and trial of nationalist opponents of the regime is a serious crime which would force the nation into the hands of the Communists. I oppose this crime, and like THE VENERABLE THICH QUANG DUC, I kill myself as a warning to those who are trampling on our freedoms."

His death intensified the crisis by bringing the students, among whom he remained a popular figure into an active alignment with the Buddhists; and the apathetic Buddhists and politicians also joined in. Just like Thich Quang Duc's self-burning his suicide brought the crisis to another phase.

Students, lecturers, found it necessary to strike, for their conscience was hurt. To the Vietnamese intelligentsia, the Buddhists posed the problem of religious freedom and singled out the inhuman acts of the Diem administration. On 30 May, in a letter to all students of Viet Nam, the Buddhist students' organization in Hue said:

"The Venerables are suffering from hunger and thirst for our spiritual well-being, for more than 80% of the Vietnamese people who are Buddhists to be able to live for their faith...We are young, full of vitality, we cannot stay aloof, watching our parents sweating and crying for the sake of our spiritual life and that of the people, today and tomorrow..."

Hence the all Vietnamese Buddhists' struggle in general and that of the Buddhist students in particular, is extremely close to the ideal of the students — that is the ideal of democratic equality."⁶

In a letter to The Venerable Thich Tinh Khiet on 15 August, a group of intellectuals also noted that man's sacred right of religious freedom, the basis of the Vietnamese Constitution was only respected on papers not in fact; and they certified that they wholly supported the just and legal struggle of the Buddhists by every legal means.

Again the Intersect Committee For the Defense of Buddhism, in a communiqué to all monks and nuns and laymen, asked the educated group to endorse the responsibility to preserve and develop the national culture and morality,

6. Tue Giac, Viet Nam Phat Giao Tranh Dau Su (Saigon, 1964), p. 140

in which the Buddhist impact was of ultimate importance; and it urged them to join forces into its non violent struggle.

The movement spread to most Southern big cities, where people were amazed by students' demonstrations; fastings, strikes. A group of Buddhists who volunteered to organize the Youth League for the Protection of Buddhism, was very welcomed.

To the students joined the Catholic group which had contributed much to the Buddhist struggle, among them one could notice Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh, Father Nguyen Ngoc Lan, Father Cao Van Luan, Professor Ly Chanh Trung, Professor Nguyen Van Trung and other Catholic priests and youth, who sent a letter to Vatican to ask for the Pope intervention to stop Diem from committing more crimes and to protect the right cause and personalism itself.

After the government raid of Xa Loi Pagoda on 20 August, the strikes spread through colleges and high schools. The National League of university and high school students (Lien doan Sinh vien hoc sinh Thanh nien toan quoc) appealed to the Armed Forces not to join with the Diem government in its brutal treatment of innocent students. Students of Chu Van An high school wrecked their class-rooms; with difficulty they hoisted the Buddhist flag in the school yard, and demanded the release of all monks and nuns and Buddhists who were arrested when Martial Law was proclaimed. Banners reading: "Down with the Ngo family" were courageously displayed by Vo Truong Toan high school, while Trung Vuong high school girls demonstrated to appeal to the Armed Forces to topple Diem. The shooting of a girl student, miss Quach Thi Trang, in front of Saigon Market on 25 August, 1963 by Diem's combat police during a demonstration by university and high school students, did not stop their fighting spirit. Again, Gia Long and Trung Vuong high school girls and other private school students sent a letter to the Army asking them to side with the people against the Diem family.⁷

Schools had to close, thousands of students were arrested and beaten. This was affirmed by the Students' Committee For The Defense Of Freedom

7. Handwritten document in possession of the writer.

(Uy Ban Chi Dao Tranh Dau Cho Tu Do), in a letter to Civil Servants and private employees of all classes, asking them to resign from their posts. In the same letter they pleaded: "Khong bao gio lich su nuoc Viet duoc tiep noi nua, neu khong co su dong gop cua qui vi." (meaning: The history of our Viet nation could never continue, if you do not contribute to it.)⁸

Such incidents of violent breakthroughs into the political system by anomic groups indicated poor boundary maintenance between politics and the society. They also showed that the Buddhists successfully defended their cause.

Most important of all, the generals moved into action, worried by the news that Nhu was reportedly dealing with Ha Noi. The death of Nhat Linh, the joining in of the students and the generals had turned the movement away from its original claim.

However the Buddhist group was a well-organized one. There was no violence from the Buddhists. Not only they were tightly organized, they also campaigned successfully for their cause. They got much support and sympathy from the fact that their cause looked just. They fought for religious equality, something which seemed obvious in the democratic world. They had been persecuted, maltreated, killed. But to these they answered in a spirit of forgiveness. They did not seek to overthrow the government, despite the strong popular force they could mobilize, but merely asked for its tolerance and the repair of its mistakes. They did not ask for privileges, which they thought their due, since they represented a fair share of the population; nor did they want to make enemies among people of other faith; all they wanted was justice to be done.

Religious struggles, the Buddhist manifesto said, endangered the nation in its fight against Communism, and

"because of that, not only the reason of our struggle, but also its limit were clearly set, under the Buddhist name, we are fighting for the ideal of "religious equality within the framework of the ideal of a social justice." "⁹

8. Photocopy of the letter in possession of the writer.

9. Tue Giac, Viet-Tam Phat-Giao Tranh Dau Su (Saigon, 1954), p. 128

Then there was also the moving plea of The Venerable Quang Duc to Diem:

"I pray to Buddha to give light to President Ngo Dinh Diem, so that he will accept the five minimum requests of the Vietnamese Buddhists. Before closing my eyes to go to Buddha, I have the honor to present my words to President Diem, asking him to be kind and tolerant towards his people and enforce a policy of religious equality."¹⁰

As to the question of flags, one would think at first that it was wrong for the Buddhists to attach too much importance on the displaying of their flags rather than the national one and that they looked for a cause to start opposing the government. The Buddhist justification was that their opposition to the decree 9195 forbidding such displays, was that it was not the regulation laid down when the Catholics have just been enjoying full privileges. Obviously, the Buddhists argued, religious flags can only be displayed on occasions of religious ceremonies, on religious vehicles and in private homes, bureaus; and the Buddhist opposition to ordinance n° 10 was justifiable in the fact that it was a product of the colonial period, which obviously favoured the Catholics. We have said before that articles 10 and 12 of the ordinance authorized any administrative or legal agent to exert control on religion; article 14 and article 28 restricted the number of Buddhist properties by making them subject to presidential authorization while articles 18, 19 and especially 25, 26, 27 made membership or participation to any association under ordinance n° 10, the decision of a committee which decided on every matter, not according to the evolution of internal life or self-improvement.

The other requests concerning the ending of Buddhist persecution, the freedom to preach and to practise religion as well as the compensation for the Hue victims did not seem to be exaggerations.

From justifying their cause, the Buddhists passed into action, to show that they were not a handful of militant unreasonable political adventurers

10. C.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam's Buddhist Crisis", in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 918

looking for troubles. Thus they set up the Intersect Committee For The Protection Of Buddhism, which rallied most Buddhist sects of the three regions of Viet Nam: North, Centre, South, to show their unity and the approval of all the leaders for a just cause. Joiner commented:

"The Intersect Committee was not only a manifestation of a new Buddhist identity, but also dramatized the unity and the identity of that religion and simultaneously singled out the regime as the enemy of Buddhism."¹¹

The Buddhist leaders knew well that:

"the capacity to resist coercion (stemmed) partly from the individual's identification with a group. The people who stood up best in the Nazi concentration camps were those who felt themselves members of a compact party (the Communists), of a Church (priests and ministers), or of a close-knit national group."¹²

On one hand any action against the Buddhist group would be an action against all the Buddhists in South Viet Nam, including the inactive ones. On the other hand this manifest of a new Buddhist identity reinforced the morale of those who were already fighting for Buddhist interests.

- Channels of access.

In the analysis of an interest articulation structure we must also consider the degree to which groups have access to political elites engaged in making relevant decisions. The impact of their demands varied with many factors: The information it carried.

As we have seen, the Buddhist claim was clear and precise and publicly stated by the General Buddhist Association. Another factor which contributed to the success of the Buddhist group was its control over information, something which was always a powerful tool for an interest group.

The bonzes were very much aware of the different steps of the evolution of the crisis and their actions were very well-timed: let us cite a few examples:

- the death of The Venerable Thich Quang Duc on 11 June, brought the govern-

11. C.A. Joiner, op. cit., p. 917

12. E. Hoffer, The True Believer (New York, 1963), p. 66

ment to a policy of conciliation.

- Bonzess Dieu Quang burned herself the day the American Ambassador left South Viet Nam.
- The Venerables knew of the Xa Loi Pagoda attack of 22 August 1963, but decided to stay as martyrs. They found the right place, the right time and acted swiftly, as in the case of
- The Venerable Thich Thien My who burned himself to death at Hoa Binh Square when the United Nations Fact Finding Mission visited An Quang Pagoda.

The impact of the message.

It also depended on the feelings of the decision makers towards the group, on their beliefs in the legitimacy of the claim. We have previously seen the importance that Diem attached to Catholicism and the deferential attitude he kept towards his elder brother Thuc: Thuc was said to covet the title of cardinal and to have declared to Vatican that the Vietnamese population had become Catholic through him. When Diem thought he was right, nobody could persuade him that he was wrong. The granting of the Buddhist requests would equal to a failure from his part. As a result government reaction was one of repression.

Diem, we have said, did not believe in the legality of group participation in the decision making process. His mistake was that he failed to compromise. Giving in to the Buddhist demands would equal to a revision of his policies, of all the ideals that he had been living with and worked for, believing they were the right ones. Giving in would also lead other factions to claim other things, and he could not tolerate such thing; he believed he was in power by divine right and the people were his children, who could not disobey his orders. He could not treat this little band of trouble makers on an equal basis, he should be loved and obeyed, he thought. The result was a series of mistakes during the Buddhist crisis. First, the government police tactics rendered any compromise impossible. Second, its conciliation-suppression policy only exacerbated the crisis further.

After the incident of 8 May, the Diem government tried every means possible to hinder the prayer service in memory of those who died on the birthday of

Lord Buddha in Hue. One could see soldiers and tanks on every corner and the policy of solving the crisis by force was clear and obvious. All pagodas were surrounded by secret agents, policemen formed a net terrorizing and threatening the Buddhists.

The government continued to display its lack of diplomatic finesse from 30 May to 4 June, during which pagodas were encircled by police troops, barbed wires, police dogs, students were beaten and hospitalized; monks and nuns were arrested and kidnapped.

After the death of Thich Quang Duc conciliation and uncertainty seized the government. On one hand the Buddhists were permitted to display their flags and mourners were allowed to visit the scene of the martyr; the government said, on the other hand, that it would provide busses, but these were late, the resulting demonstration added fuel to the fire.

The government violation of the Joint Communiqué led to other demonstrations; then it attempted to save its face by claiming that militant action was necessary to preclude Communist manoeuvres within the Buddhist ranks. The government took to defend its stand with a series of unconvincing accusations. The Planning Service received the order to set up documents accusing the Buddhist church of Communist affiliation. The Secretary of Civic Action, Ngo Trong Hieu and his subordinate, Pham Van Tao, held many press conferences in this aim, while, according to Wilfred Burchett,

"Available evidence (did) not substantiate the regime's claim of communist leadership in the Buddhist crisis. The National Liberation Front has created its own Buddhist organization,"¹³

On 23 July, while bonzess Dieu Hue told of her resolution to follow Quang Duc's example, over 200 disabled veterans demonstrated in front of Xa Loi Pagoda carrying pro-government banners demanding more severe actions against religious dissidents, who were used by the Communists. A week later, they came back to beg for forgiveness.

13. C.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam's Buddhist Crisis", in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 920

The month of August saw nationwide raids, of which the Ka Loi Pagoda's raid, the Buddhist sanctuary; it was accomplished by Colonel Le Quang Tung's squad of soldiers, Nhu's forces. Soldiers in Hue broke into pagodas, smashed the giant statues of Buddha, killed priests and students, the whole Intersect Committee was arrested, Monk Tinh Khiet was hospitalized. At the same time Diem decreed Martial Law.

However the handling of the crisis was not Diem's sole responsibility, there were also the other members of the Ngo Dinh family who directed governmental actions. Nhu's hand was clearly seen in two cases of violation of the Joint Communiqué, cited by Monk Tinh Khiet on 26 June, and which were seen as bad for government propaganda:

- The government setting up of the Luc Hoa Tang Sect, which could not bluff anyone, with the aim of discrediting the Intersect Committee by accusing it of being composed of political adventurers.
- The preparation of a mass Cong Hoa Youth's anti-Buddhist demonstration under Youth Director, Cao Xuan Vy, to ask Diem to review the Joint Communiqué, which he found too tolerant; while Ngo Trong Hieu and Tao held press conferences to crush public opinion.

Nhu's overconfidence in himself made him oppose the Americans in Viet Nam. In an attempt to embarrass the United States, which he considered too favourable to Buddhism, he set up a special tribunal to try both in person and in absentia 19 officers and 34 civilians accused of involvement in the 1960 paratroopers' coup.

As two former American Embassy officials were formally accused by Nhu of involvement, as well as the CIA and the United States, the trial was said to be intended to convince the Vietnamese military that the United States could not be counted upon for any attempted coup.

Nhu was said to have planned the pagodas' raids of 20 August, and afterwards Diem and Nhu bribed Thich Nhat Minh into setting up the so-called Union Committee For Pure Buddhism (Uy Ban Lien Hiep Phat Giao Thuan Tuy) and ordered him to hold a press conference, while they forced the Republican Youth to stage a demonstration.

There was also Madame Nhu, who shocked the world, when she declared, after the burning of The Venerable Thich Nguyen Huong on 4 August, that she hoped there would be more burnings and that she would clap her hands if there were. She called them "barbecued monks" and added: "the government should ignore the bonzes, so if they burn 30 women we shall go ahead and clap our hands. We cannot be responsible for madness." ¹⁴

After the raid of Xa Loi Pagoda, Halberstam reported that

"Madame Nhu...was in a state of euphoria, chattering like a school girl after a prom. She told the reporter that the government had crushed the Communist-Buddhists, and referred to this as "the happiest day in my life since we crushed the Binh Xuyen in 1955." ¹⁵

Because of her irreverential remarks concerning anybody who dared oppose the Ngo family, she was badly received on her desintoxicating tour, to tell the truth about the Buddhists in Viet Nam. Nguyen Qui Hung related:

"In Rome, the Pope refused to see her, so did the General De Gaulle in Paris, and President Kennedy in Washington. And Democrat Senator Young went as far as suggesting that she be sent back to South Viet Nam on her arrival to the United States." ¹⁶

There was also Ngo Dinh Can, who conducted the different operations in Hue, in particular there was the dispersion of 1,200 students' demonstration near the Ben Ngu Bridge in Hue, which was in his jurisdiction. The hospitalization of more than 60 students and the maltreatment of those incarcerated worsen the crisis to a point of no return.

It was clear, to the Vietnamese and to the world, that the Ngo Dinh family could not be relied upon for any compromise or negotiation. Pleading one's cause to Diem would be difficult and opposing the Ngo Dinh would be a foolish thing to do if one did not have the strength to do so.

In the case of the Buddhists, different access channels were used to advance the interests of the Buddhist church. Other means were physical de-

¹⁴. C.A. Joiner, op. cit., p. 922

¹⁵. D. Halberstam, The Making Of A Quagmire (New York, 1964-65), p. 235

¹⁶. Nguyen Qui Hung, Neuf Ans de Dictature au Sud Viet Nam (Saigon, 1964), p.234

monstrations, strikes, fastings, prayer ceremonies. On one hand there were the Buddhist non violent demonstrations, sit-ins, as means of access, on the occasion of Thich Quang Duc's funerals, after the pagodas' raids etc.

If there was any sign of violence, it was exerted by governmental troops and combat police. The Buddhist group, as we have said before, was committed to a policy of non violence. As a result, the Buddhists preferred to become martyrs rather than to oppose the soldiers, an act which would be contrary to their notion of humane love and compassion.

It was precisely because the Buddhists were defenseless against a harsh and determined government that the people sympathized with them. The setting up of a good cause was not enough for the Buddhists to succeed in their requests to the government. They also had to get a strong backing among the people to join forces with them. Hence the organization of religious conferences to convey their aspirations to the people and to persuade them to support the Buddhist cause. To religious preachings were added prayer ceremonies for the martyrs, which were attended by masses of faithful, which continued to grow as people realized that the only way to appease their conscience was not to let injustice be done.

Clearly action was used as a unifying agent in the Buddhist movement. Talking was not convincing enough, the monks had to act and set examples to the lay people, and to show the strength of their conviction. Faith organizes and equips man's soul for action. The Buddhist group tried to show that it held the only truth and never doubted its righteousness; it felt it was backed by everybody, it was convinced Diem was the incarnation of evil, and must be opposed. But in their action, the Buddhist leaders did much to discourage violence from the beginning till the end; undoubtedly their commitment to non violence did much to ensure that their campaign aroused both internal and international support. In the first address to all monks, nuns and laymen, The Venerable Thich Tam Chau emphasized it and repeatedly called off demonstrations on several occasions, and when violence did break out, it was not planned by the Buddhist leadership, as for example the one in Hue on 3 June, and in Saigon on 16 June.

The monks organized sit-downs, protest demonstrations on a mass scale. There were also hunger strikes to show that they were ready to suffer and to sacrifice for a just cause. They did strike a deep chord among the Vietnamese people. Thus one could see demonstrations' banners reading "Fasting for the Buddhist Flag and Religious Equality" in front of the National Assembly and other mass scale fasts such as the one for demanding the granting of the five requests led by Thich Quang Lien and 400 monks at Xa Loi Pagoda; by 200 nuns at An Quang Pagoda; and others at Nha Trang, Da Lat, Hue, Binh Dinh, and the subsequent fasting of 1000 Buddhists at Giac Minh Pagoda on 17 July 1963 to ask for the correct implementation of the Joint Communiqué.

But the most spectacular tactic was of course the fire-suicide. Seven monks died in the campaign of the Buddhists to defend their ideal; this tactic was used with extreme discretion and provoked a strong reaction among the primarily apathetic mass. Such a method of struggle might appear horrifying to us and seemed to be far apart from the doctrine of non violence, however the difference here was that violence was inflicted to oneself, not to one's opponents.

The self-burning of the monks, explained Nhat Hanh, could not be conceived as an act of suicide, because an act of self-destruction showed a lack of courage to live and to cope with the difficulties in life, a defeat by life and a loss of all hopes, as well as a desire for non-existence. The monks, by burning themselves, wanted to show their enlightenment and to show their enemies that they were capable of practising the doctrine of highest compassion, in order to call for attention. Their real enemies, Nhat Hanh emphasized, were not men but intolerance and fanaticism, dictatorship, cupidity, hatred, discrimination. Therefore, the act of self-immolation should be interpreted as that of a brave, humanistic enlightened mind, who could not be silent when an indescribable suffering was occurring, not as that of a mad man in a state of euphoria, nor as a masochistic reflex.

Personal connection constituted another important means of access to political elites. The Buddhists found many allies from all classes of the society, especially from top ranking officials. Among these were the Viet-

namese Ambassador to Washington and his wife, the parents of Madame Nhu, Secretary of State Vu Van Mau etc.

Finally institutional channels were also used: the mass media. Skillfully the Buddhists made sure that the people and the world knew what kind of a woman Madame Nhu was. In South Viet Nam where Confucianism was still lingering, people looked at her with doubtful eyes, for she was the first woman in Vietnamese history to publicly criticize her own father. Consequently her cause was more and more lost in the people's minds. We have already spoken of the world reaction to her rowdy speeches and irreverential remarks about the Buddhists.

Here we have to mention the role of the foreign press, through which the events were reported to the world. We have said how sensitive the Ngo Dinh family was to foreign public opinion. Foreign reporters played an exceptional role in the relating of the story. International public opinion was as shocked as the Vietnamese people themselves. Their disapproval of the Diem policy was seen in many countries. The Buddhist leaders used superb tactics to communicate to the world outside, all the events which would be favourable to them. Thus foreign reporters sent back disturbing news and photographs of the Diem's Buddhist persecution.

The Royal government of Cambodia cut off diplomatic relations with Diem on 11 June. A prayer ceremony to Thich Quang Duc was performed by the Thai sovereign in person; other countries such as Australia, France, Belgium, the United States, Switzerland, the Republic of China, Korea, Japan, Ceylon, Burma, India etc. and even Catholic sources of informations showed their disapproval with the Diem policy of religious discrimination. In those countries various manifestations took place against Diem.¹⁷

Besides the choosing of the right place to demonstrate or to protest, a place where there would be many people but little surveillance from the secret police, they kept their action secret until the last minute and called foreign reporters just in time by telephone to attend the scene. The Buddhists skillfully arranged so that nobody would be accused of murder or of complicity to a murder. At home they also organized press conferences to explain

17. c.f. Tue Giac, Viet Nam Phat Giao Tranh Dau Su (Saigon 1964), p. 92

their cause to the people and also had recourse to a great deal of illegal publications since censorship was strong. Roneotyped Buddhist tracts managed to circulate from person to person, most of them bearing these words: "The People Must Be Cautious of any Conspiring Slander from the Diem Government Document Circulated by Hand -- Information Is Spread It is a Contribution To Defend Buddhism."¹⁸

Because the First Republic was not responsive to public grievances at home, the Buddhists had to look where the government would be prone to respond the most: foreign governments especially the American Mission, the Vatican and the United Nations.

The World Buddhist Association joined hands with the Buddhists to condemn Diem when it received a telegramme from the Intersect Committee protesting against the government setting up of the Co Son Mon Sect to divide the Buddhist ranks. On 16 June, at 19. 30 p.m. more than 300 bonzes and nuns demonstrated in front of the American Ambassador's residence to ask for support of the Buddhist non violent fight for religious freedom. They carried banners asking the Free World to intervene to ask Diem to enforce rightly the Joint Communiqué signed on 13 March 1963. On 1 August, Monk Superior Thich Tinh Khiet sent a telegramme to President Kennedy to protest against the Ambassador's declaration that no religious discrimination existed under Diem. On 5 October, after the suicide by fire of The Venerable Quang Huong, Monk Tinh Khiet sent another telegramme to the United Nations asking it to intervene to end the violations of human rights in South Viet Nam.

- Style of articulation.

The Buddhist performance of their interest articulation was manifest since it took the form of an expression of disappointment, of a loss of confidence in the Diem government. The Buddhist campaign was a consistent one, it was led all over the country and never stopped, thus helping the people to have time and confidence to back them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AS A WHOLE.

¹⁸. Photocopy in possession of the writer, (In Vietnamese in the text)

First, anomic elements indicated poor boundary maintenance between politics and the society. The Buddhist demand was clear, but the people who joined in latently asked for another kind of rule and the Diem government knew it; discontent was rumbling underneath during the nine years of his hard rule; this latent articulation of the people's interests by the students, by Buddhist sympathizers, made it hard for Diem to decide. The reluctance of the Diem government to satisfy the Buddhist demands had provoked its downfall.

Second, it told us that it was possible for the Vietnamese people, with their diverse tendencies, to unite and work out strategies of influence and access successfully. Of course, much of the success depended on the structures of political communication available in the society. The Vietnamese people were pacifists by nature and did not like violence; furthermore, the Buddhist ideal did not permit them to be violent. When I asked him about the reason of the success of the Buddhist movement, The Venerable Thich Tam Chau told me in a personal interview that it was "due to non violence, which was in accordance with the people's aspirations and the ensuing support the Buddhists got from their attitude of non violence."¹⁹

The setting up of a good cause and the attitude of the Buddhist church had created much sympathy. Internal support was manifested in the huge attendance of prayer ceremonies, demonstrations and riots all over the country. International reaction was seen in the Washington cut of American aid to Nhu's Special Forces under Colonel Le Quang Tung, who conducted the Xa Loi Pagoda's raid.

Because of the centralizing nature of the Diem regime, the Buddhist interest articulation was made directly to the government and not through other institutional channels. The Buddhists knew very well that these did not have any influence on Diem's decisions. Nghiem Dang noted that:

"consensus of authors writing about public administration in Viet-Nam seems to be that the chief executive of the First Republic was "reluctant to delegate authority" to

19. Personal interview with The Venerable Thich Tam Chau, ex-Chairman of the Intersect Committee For The Defense Of Buddhism.

his immediate collaborators, as they, in turn, were reluctant to delegate authority to their subordinates, and so on down the hierarchical ladder. This fact can be explained, first, by the tradition of centralization that has existed in Viet Nam for thousands of years, which was reinforced by the French colonization; and second by the personality of the charismatic leader, who feels he is obliged, like a good father, to guide his people and to look out for everything, with the result that he does not have time to resolve conflicts. A third factor could be added: the stress upon political loyalty of subordinates and the manipulative efforts of the President's advisers."²⁰

These factors inhibited the Buddhist articulation of interests through legal channels and forced them to a direct debate with the government. In general the poor and defenseless people would risk less, since they were weaker. However the Buddhists were driven to a position in which they could do nothing but rebel.

We have previously dealt with the Buddhist articulation of interests as if it was independent from all other characteristics of the system. All the components of the political system were in fact intertwined in a complex pattern and the Buddhist demands were not the only factor of political change. The weaknesses of the government's functions and structures, the changes in the political culture, the communication structures, the resources of the society, the American influence etc., all came into action to press for change.

The absence of specialized structures of interest aggregation did not help the government in its handling of the crisis. As a result of the 8 May incident in Hue, an Interministerial Committee (Uy Ban Lien Bo) was set up, it was chaired by the highest Buddhist in the government: Vice-President Nguyen Ngoc Tho and included the President Secretary Nguyen Dinh Thuan, Interior Secretary Bui Van Luong, Superior Monk Thich Thien Minh, Deputy Chairman of the Buddhist Association of the Central area and Commissioner For

20. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), pp. 255-256

Youth and Students of the General Buddhist Association of Viet Nam, Superior Monk Thich Thien Hoa, Chairman of the South Vietnamese Sangha, The Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, The Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep. Its aim was to negotiate the issue with the Intersect Committee, since the government was worried by the wave of faithful overflowing towards Xa Loi Pagoda to pay the last visit to Thich Quang Duc.

This Interministerial Committee was to make decision in an effort to reconcile public order and religious interests; together with the Intersect Committee, it issued a Joint Communiqué on 16 June at 2.30 p.m., which was also signed by Superior Monk Thich Minh Khiet. It also contained

"detailed procedures for displaying both the national flag and other flags, including displays on national holidays and Buddhist holidays and displays in pagodas, on ceremonial platforms and vehicles of Buddhist dignitaries, and in processions and private homes. The agreement also provided for the exemption of religious associations from certain statutory controls," (as laid out by ordinance n° 10 while waiting for a new legislation on that matter) "the creation of an investigating committee and promise of special clemency for religious dissidents arrested and detained; government guarantees concerning religious activities, properties, publications, and construction; severe punishment for cadres violating the agreement; and payments...to families of the May 8 incident in Hue."²¹

Commenting on the Joint Communiqué, Georges Naidenoff wrote in the Catholic magazine Missi:

"It is almost comic to read the Joint Communiqué (after the first agreement of 16 June) published by the government and the high Buddhist authorities. Two whole pages are devoted to the determination of the place and the dimensions of the Vietnamese and Buddhist flags in processions, pagodas etc...It is comic. In fact it is tragic."²²

It was tragic because the Joint Communiqué was only part of the Diem ga-

21. G.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam's Buddhist crisis", in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 919

22. G. Naidenoff, "Le dossier bouddhiste au Viet Nam", in Missi, n° CCLXXIV (November 1963), p. 15

me of concession and repression. The members of the committee were not true representatives of the government, to discuss with the Buddhist group, but its powerless agents. When seeing that the Interministerial Committee and Vice-President Tho could do nothing to stop the Buddhists, Diem set up the "joint Commission to investigate instances of previously alleged bad faith in the implementation of the communique and to assume responsibility for future implementation."²³

Another one was to follow in August: the so-called Union Committee for Pure Buddhism (Uy Ban Lien Hiep Phat Giao Thuan Tuy) chaired by Thich Thien Hoa, who called upon the Buddhists to implement the Joint Communiqué.

"Hoa noted that it was the government which proposed the "brotherly agreement" but that impediments to the communiqué had been masterminded by "unidentified provocateurs determined to sow confusion, hatred, division and trouble between the government and the Buddhists, thus creating the false impression abroad that Buddhists in Viet Nam were being brutally opposed by the government." "²⁴

Hoa led a Buddhist delegation to pay homage to Diem on 28 August with the blessing of Monk Tinh Khiet, who three days earlier recognized his errors and gave Hoa full power to repair the faults. Hoa performed very well in his new capacity of Head of the Union Committee for Pure Buddhism; he

"wired the Secretary General of the United Nations condemning the fact that "a number of politically minded people" had hidden under the "roofs of the pagodas and monks' robes to engage in extremist activities to satisfy their cupidity, passions and aggressiveness." "²⁵

Thus as we can see, while setting up committees in view of reconciliation of their interests, the government made the gap deeper by discrediting the Buddhist group. This showed the government's inability to handle new situations with instant aggregating committees. As a result the people lost faith in the government good will to consider their interests.

23. C.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam's Buddhist Crisis", in Asian Survey, Vol. IV n° VII (July 1964), p. 922

24. Ibid., p. 923

25. Ibid., p. 924

The mishandling of the Buddhist crisis also told us of the government insufficiency in rule enforcement. On the one hand province chiefs and administrative officials secretly supported the Buddhists; on the other hand,

"representatives of the General Association for Buddhism found that administrative officials, particularly in the provinces, frequently refused to execute some of (the Interdepartmental Committee's) decisions, and executed others ineffectively."²⁶

Among the factors of change, there were also the changes in the socio-economic environment, which greatly increased the flow of information and the contact between different parts of the society. It also brought the development of the level of education, wealth and status to the individual members of the society; thus facilitating political awareness, participation and the feeling of competence. The Buddhist church has evolved with the changes which occurred in the society. The emergence of the mass media also provided another incentive for articulation as the flow of political information became greater.

The emergence of the problems of participation and distribution may be viewed as an extremely likely consequence of the process of socio-economical and technological changes from the traditional time. However the Diem government attempted to control this process through subsuming interest groups within a dominant party organization and through the control over the flow of information and by suppressing demands and dissent.

The success of the Buddhist movement also lay in the Buddhists' ability to attract support internally and externally, and showed the regime's poor propaganda and low level of internal and international symbolic capability. The Buddhist crisis was the impetus that pushed Washington to withdraw support from the Diem regime.

As we have said, the American influence in South Viet Nam was extremely important, due to the part that American aid played in the South Vietnamese economy. The Buddhist movement would not have come to a successful end, had

26. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 255

the Diem regime not worried the Americans, as far as the fighting of their anti-Communist war was concerned, and had Diem and his family not opposed the United States policy in South Viet Nam.

We recall that in early September, there was still no real change in the internal situation in Saigon. It was only after the sending of the Mendenhall-Krulak, then the Mac Namara-Maxwell Taylor missions that the United States decided to reverse its total commitment in South Viet Nam. Mac Namara's report supported the declaration of Rufus Phillips, a young civilian in charge of the strategic hamlets' programme, which said that Nhu had fooled the Army and the Viet Cong were making headway in many areas.

In the meantime, the Nhus added fuel to the fire. "On a trip in Europe," Madame Nhu "criticized American junior officers for acting like "little soldiers of fortune",²⁷ which shocked Lodge and infuriated Kennedy.

Nhu held a press conference in October, in which he made a prolonged attack on the Americans, accusing them

"of having caused the process of disintegration in Viet Nam...after Nhu carefully leaked reports that he planned to raid and bomb the USIS, Marine guards were put on duty there around the clock and vital papers were removed."²⁸

Nhu also let it be openly known that he had entered into exploratory negotiations with Ha Noi. His flirtation with Ha Noi was through a French diplomat in North Viet Nam, who was visiting Saigon with a Polish member of the International Control Commission. He summoned a group of reporters to tell that the Vietnamese had lost faith in the United States, and charged the CIA of urging the monks to stage a revolt repeatedly. Nhu made a mistake by carrying on the Ha Noi talks. It became clear to the United States and to the Army that the former had to rely upon the force of her purse and the latter on the force of their arms and troops, to talk with Diem and his supporters. The military could not act, had the United States not specified its stand in the crisis and in the case a new government was set up. Since

27. D. Halberstam, The Making Of A Quagmire (New York, 1964-65), p. 259

28. Ibid., pp. 277-278

the Buddhist top leadership was cut off after the pagodas' raids, the movement might not have succeeded.

Like many other transitional societies, South Viet Nam was confronted by new problems, which it did not encounter before. The Buddhist crisis could have been solved in a way which was favourable to the government. Its success was an indicator of the incapacity of the Diem administration to deal with new situations.

However, the Buddhist success should not be interpreted as the triumph of a just cause. It was but one of the many factors which led to the overthrow of the Diem regime. It happened at the right time when hopes were gone about the building of a stable democracy with Diem, when the United States, ally of South Viet Nam was asking for reforms. Internal and external demands were met with stubbornness and intolerance from the Diem administration. The government dragged the situation on, despite internal and external reaction, to the point that it could not go back to its starting point. The downfall of President Diem explained at best the interaction of many components of the South Vietnamese political system. The interdependence of roles, structures and parts of the system does not permit us to say that one action led to a change in the whole system. It was more complex than that, it was the whole work of the system, just as the eruption of the Buddhist crisis took roots from many causes.

The Buddhist movement was a good example of a successful articulation of interests, but it was not a revolution led by the Buddhists. The real revolution was only in ferment. The Buddhist victory did not mean the end to South Viet Nam's problems, for the different weaknesses of South Viet Nam, which appeared during the crisis still persisted after Diem's demise. What was then the outcome of the Buddhist crisis? we shall see it in the next chapter.

ENGAGED BUDDHISM IN THE FUTURE OF SOUTH VIET NAM.

The overthrow of the Diem regime, we have said, did not bring political development into the South Vietnamese system. The coming into power of the military could not change overnight a situation which had deteriorated since the wars. Similarly, one would expect the Buddhist church to play an important role in South Viet Nam's politics from then on, considering their success in the toppling of the Diem government and the display of their force during the crisis; however the legacy of the Diem regime was too heavy to be eradicated in a short time. In this chapter we shall examine the South Vietnamese political system after Diem's downfall and bring out the problems which hinder the development of the system. We shall see that much of South Viet Nam's future depends on the influence of an external factor: the willingness or unwillingness of the United States to support South Viet Nam in its fight against Communism. But despite the increasing threat to the survival of the South Vietnamese nation, Buddhist supporters still hope for a better future with a better government, it is left for us to see what part they could play in the future of South Viet Nam.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE DIEM REGIME.

On the structural side, what President Diem inherited from the colonial government was left unimproved. On one hand, there was a tendency towards centralization and an assumption of too many tasks by a suspicious elite; on the other hand, there was a lack of a differentiated and large administrative staff with a standing army to create an autonomous political system.

Diem's government became increasingly unable to extract resources and regulate behaviour in its own society. Neither was it able to defend its territory in its own society. Neither was it able to defend its territory in front of a spreading insurgency, to increase the country's resources and to pursue autonomously other political goals, having to depend largely on American aid.

President Diem and his family took over many roles which should have been left to other substructures and groups, and the consequence was an inability

to increase the capabilities' level of the government.

On the cultural side, while Diem evolved his particular kind of democracy, which was a combination of a mandarin outlook and Western democracy, his people developed different ideas about how the country should be governed. Diem was all for tradition, but only the tradition which was to keep the people in order and to maintain himself in power.

As we have said, contact with the West has developed among the population of South Viet nam a political subject attitude, while some of their elite developed a political participant attitude, but were frustrated in their attempt to bargain with the government. This pattern of political culture is called the ideological political culture, in which the individual developed a specific set of political orientations but failed to develop the open, bargaining attitudes associated with full secularization. The South Vietnamese people wanted some reforms in governmental administrative policy but found no way to express their demands. In such times of trouble and fear, the Buddhist monks offered a spectacular means to oppose the government.

However since the Diem government made little effort towards differentiation and cultural secularization was not achieved, this affected the performance of the government and prevented the development of the capabilities of the political system, which in turn could not cope with the strains of secularization.

Various efforts at changing the political system by the Diem government did not have a great effect on the people. Despite the compulsory learning of government mottos and slogans in schools, and the compulsory joining of government-sponsored movements, the people could not assimilate Diem's ideas totally. Various strong agents of socialization such as the family unit, peer groups, formal and informal groups, the mass media and direct contact with the political system, did not favour the government. Discontent was latent not only because of fear of government police forces, but also because the Vietnamese people were in a way pacifists, if not apathetic.

As a result there was a degree of alienation between Diem and his people until the complete separation in 1963.

WAS THERE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AFTER DIEM?

Events after the downfall of President Diem do not justify a claim to political development in the sense we have been using the concept previously, that is to say increased differentiation and specialization to meet increased demands on the political system. Problems of development were left unsolved.

- The national identity question.

In an article in Foreign Affairs, G.A. Carver, Jr said:

"Since November 1963, South Viet Nam has witnessed a succession of coups, demi-coups, demonstrations and governmental changes bewildering to the casual observer and suggestive of an inherent incapacity for self-government."^I

Diem's contribution to South Viet Nam was that he gave South Viet Nam a chance to stabilize itself and to become a real physical entity, and created an awareness of the necessity to fight Communism. However Diem's rule has failed to create a tradition of loyalty to the central government in the sense that there was some traditional loyalty to the Emperor in Hue. This has resulted in a myriad of emotions, ambitions and loyalties within the Vietnamese people.

As we have seen, Diem's failure rested on many factors:

- He failed to bridge regional, religious, racial, urban and rural conflicts; he even further aggravated the situation by a discriminatory policy.
- He could not develop a unifying symbol to counter Communist ideology, nor could he develop institutions, which were capable of channelling disagreement and containing tests of relative strength.
- His constitutional edifice was patterned on the French and American models and had no roots in Vietnamese soil.
- Neither were there political parties and groups to perform the socialization function.
- And most important of all he failed to explain the presence of the United States and the benefits which she gave South Viet Nam in order to fight Communism.

After nine years of Diem's rule the people in South Viet Nam were still

I. G.A. Carver, Jr, "The Real Revolution In South Viet Nam", in Foreign Affairs Vol. XLIII n°III (April 1965), p. 403

unsure whether they considered themselves as South Vietnamese citizens or as citizens of the whole Viet Nam. They knew and deeply felt that they were Vietnamese, they longed for "a set of political arrangements tempered to Vietnamese needs, adapted to Vietnamese realities and consonant with Vietnamese traditions."² However, they remained uncommitted to any side, cautiously apathetic, for self-preservation.

A review of the National Liberation Front's activities showed that the Communists had won the first step in creating sympathy for their cause, while Diem and his government failed to do so. The Viet Cong tried to bridge the gap between different classes of the population by promoting a new place for equal men in a new society. Their unifying symbol was a better Viet Nam, a truly democratic one where everybody would be equal men in a new society. They had the advantage of promising a lot without having to realize their promises immediately. Their agents performed the socialization function which was reserved to political parties. And most important of all they turned their war into a war of independence against the Americans.

The Viet Cong promised to the Vietnamese people a united Viet Nam, in which South Viet Nam would be an entity by itself but would not be absorbed by the North, thus they satisfied those who longed to see their country united, while appeasing those who had Communist leanings but feared the Northern dominance. To the Vietnamese peasants they answered by promising what they wanted. In the simple hearts and minds of the peasants they were the first to introduce the notion of a better society constructed in their way. To those who still resisted, terror would force them to be reasonable. The National Liberation Front succeeded in creating a shadow government and gained strength as time went by.

As to the Saigon government, Diem's downfall had created no further improvement of the situation; there are still those who mourn the departure of the French, those who regret Diem and what he has given them, Communist sympathizers, neutralists, frustration, fatigue, war weariness, all those elements bring South Viet Nam to a state in which no one believes she can stand any

2. G.A. Carver, Jr, op. cit., p. 403

longer.

Professor R. Scigliano noted a remarkable lack of change in personnel at the higher levels of the new administration which was set up after the 1 November 1963 revolution. He wrote:

"Several ministers and other high officials from the Diem regime also serve the new government and, indeed, ... The military take-over was directed against certain military and political practices of the Diem regime, not against its economic programs, its anti-Communist policies, or its international alliances, and the practices could be attached to the Ngo Dinh family and a small number of its intimate supporters."³

The welcome of the urban people given to the change of regime reflected a dislike of the old rather than a liking of the new. Some dissatisfaction was even developing over the new government's retention of unpopular officials. In the countryside attitudes towards the new government was harder to ascertain. Although the military junta, with some success, has won over the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao religious sects, which had been cool towards Diem.

However it was clear that the Saigon government was losing ground, as the war went on.

"By mid-1964, the situation in South Viet-Nam had clearly taken a turn for the worse... South Vietnamese morale was low and the regime of General Nguyen Khanh was obviously unable to rally the Vietnamese people.

On the other hand, it became obvious that the United States was in the process of committing itself to a large-scale operation in Viet-Nam, as aircraft and troops began to stream into the little country."⁴

Then came the naval incident of 2 August 1964, in which two United States Navy destroyers "Maddox" and "C. Turner Joy" repelled two attacks from North Vietnamese patrol torpedo boats, and which led to a series of severe reprisal raids against North Vietnamese shore installations.

During the years 1965, 1966, the shifting of the war up North and the

3. R. Scigliano, "Vietnam: Politics And Religion", in Asian Survey, (January 1964), p. 671

4. B.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), pp. 313-314

mass increase of American combat troops and fire power in South Viet Nam had changed the aspect of the war. On the National Liberation Front side guerrillas' interrogation showed little concept of Vietnamese nationhood and the war of liberation seemed to be fought for very personal objectives: land, to chase the Americans out of Viet Nam, righteousness, justice etc. Marxism, Leninism were little mentioned of.

On the anti-Communist side, anti-Americanism was developing as a result of the social, economical, psychological and moral disruption brought by the presence of hundreds of thousands of GI's in South Viet Nam. The heavy American commitment has made the war come to be regarded as an American war. It was no more a counterinsurgency war that they were fighting but a war of containment of Communist China.

Despite the fact that moderates have now to take a stronger stand and despite the awareness of what life under Communist control would be, of what their version of "neutralism" or "negotiation" really means, there is no improvement as far as the national concept is concerned. Warner wrote:

"With the great influx of American men and matériel, the government of Viet Nam is no longer in danger of losing the war by outright military defeat, but..." "With every regime since Diem there has been a decline of at least five per cent in administrative efficiency." an American official in Saigon estimated. Another official in Da-nang was even more pessimistic: "Militarily, the hard-core Vietcong battle formations will eventually be eliminated," he said, "but politically and economically the situation is in a terrible mess. There seems to be no political motivation. Politically, the country is dying."

It was a gloomy view. But as 1965 drew to a close there was little evidence of the national unity and identity of interest and purpose required to win a permanent political victory over the NLF....

Thus what was gained militarily was offset by political losses. In province after province I heard the same story: the rural aid program had bogged down because of prior needs for military construction. Almost everywhere there were shortages of raw materials, of skilled labor and contractors, and sometimes (because of inflation) of money.

The situation was even more striking in the cities, which had hitherto managed to remain relatively insulated from the economic side effects of the war."⁴

When they are asked:

"Whom would you follow: the government of South Vietnam or the National Liberation Front?" The peasants reply: "We do not follow either. We follow the one who can end the war and guarantee that we can live."⁵

They are not concerned about ideology. However there are large segments, which are concerned in preserving a non-Communist South Viet Nam; they are the Hoa Hao Buddhists, the Cao Dai, the Buddhists, the Catholics and the nearly one million "Vietnamized" Chinese. Taking all these into consideration, they would provide a comfortable margin in any kind of fair electoral test for a non-Communist Saigon coalition.

Fall argued:

"Secretary Dean Rusk is perfectly right in saying that countries do not vote themselves into Communism voluntarily."⁶

He continued:

"the real permanent problem in South Viet-Nam _ and one that cannot and will not be solved by the presence of even a million American troops _ is the reconstruction of the non-Communist body politic... Thus, one Saigon regime after another has been allowed for more than a decade to demonstrate in full view of all its people its inability to govern even with popular consent; even when not challenged by guerrillas; its unwillingness to implement reforms or make concessions of any kind except under the threat of military catastrophe; and the apparent failure of its foreign advisers to push their protégés firmly in the right direction, though proclaiming all the while that this has been done and has yielded impressive results. Communist North Viet-Nam, for all its obvious faults _ ... _ at

4. D. Warner, "Behind the Battlefield: a search for Stability", in The Reporter, (24 February 1966), pp. 25-26

5. That Hanh, Viet Nam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 65

6. D.B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (New York, 1966), p. 344

least can point to its nationalist record of having defeated the colonial power. It is difficult to argue with Dien Bien Phu."⁷

Reviewing the situation we can point out a few things: If the National Liberation Front was created as a reaction to the Diem administration, why has the situation not improved after his removal? because all Diem's mistakes have not been remedied and the Front has strengthened accordingly. The Front is still growing because of the presence of American and Allied troops and its disruptive consequences.

Diem did not try to look for the common elements in the Vietnamese culture and develop his own view of the South Vietnamese nation. In short, national identity cannot develop because South Viet Nam did not possess a leadership class, a true national government with a capacity to lead and a freedom to lead.

- The state building problem.

The state building problem may arise out of a threat to the survival of a political system, or from the society in the form of revolutionary pressure challenging the stability or the survival of that system. The state building problem is essentially a structural one. It involves the differentiation of new roles, structures and subsystems which penetrate the countryside.

One may say that when a government has successfully solved the nation building problem, state building will be easily accomplished with the resulting increases in the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system, and the development of a centralized and penetrative bureaucracy, as well as the development of attitudes of obedience and compliance among the people. However there are also many cases in which centralized and penetrative bureaucracies have never been created, while a homogeneous pattern of loyalty and commitment to the central political institutions has never emerged. There are examples in which the elite never sought to create a common national culture of loyalty and commitment.

7. B.B. Fall, op. cit., pp. 345-346

As we have seen, the early years of the Diem administration saw a series of successful state building measures, which brought some kind of order to South Viet Nam. However as the years went by, the situation grew worse, and the government found itself unable to cope with the cumulative problems of revolution which came all at the same time. With the growing corruption and an inefficient bureaucracy on one hand, and without a strong and acceptable leadership which could enforce legitimate authority and regulate conflicts on the other, South Viet Nam witnessed an increasing insurgency, which demanded a true revolutionary government.

- The distribution or welfare problem.

It occurs when there is pressure from the domestic society to employ the coercive power of the political system to redistribute income, wealth, honours and opportunity. Not only was the Diem government unable to perform its task of ruling, it was irresponsible to the resulting discontent of the population. Diem's policy of reliance on personal loyalty and preferential treatment had exacerbated the latent conflicts within the Vietnamese society and widened the gap between various groups of the society.

- The problem of participation.

It occurs when the central government cannot create loyalty, nor control of the population, nor satisfy their demands. Various groups in the domestic society increasingly demanded a share in the decision making process of the political system to remedy the situation. Demands for participation, as we have seen, were quelled down. Popular discontent reached its climax in 1963 and resulted in the November revolution.

In the light of the Diem's experiences, his successors tried to take a reverse course of action, but the challenge of state, nation building and distribution were too hard for them to confront, owing to many factors: The governments which succeeded Diem had no popular mandate, thus could not command national loyalty and commitment. The change from the Diem was neither peaceful nor constitutional and was recognized only because of the exigencies of the war. In an attempt to win back national allegiance, elections into the Constituent National Assembly were organized in 11 September

1966 to draw a constitution for South Viet Nam, which was to come into effect from 1 April 1967. A second step of the Saigon government towards nation building was the organization of election_s of village councils, a measure designed to restore the old tradition of village autonomy, which Diem failed to respect. And finally, in September 1967, a constitutional government was nationwide elected with General Nguyen Van Thieu as President.

Yet even though the fact that a great number of the South Vietnamese people chose to go to the polls despite Viet Cong threats of reprisals, there was no big step towards building the nation and the state of South Viet Nam.

Despite massive American economic and military aid, the National Liberation Front proved indestructible and was still making headway in many areas of South Viet Nam. Increasing Viet Cong terrorism threatened village authorities with the result that they fled to secure areas and left village affairs to run themselves.

Speaking of the National Revolutionary Development Programme of 1965, Warner wrote:

"Pathetically little of the economic aid intended to succor refugees, and to provide the good life that Revolutionary Development promises seems to get through to the hamlets. I heard of one instance in which five hundred cases of cooking oil left the provincial capital but, according to the district chief, only a hundred arrived at his headquarters. In another district, all the village chiefs lived in the capital and some had never visited their villages."⁸

In an article in Time magazine, Senator Edward Kennedy painted a grim picture of the government of South Viet Nam:

"The government of South Viet Nam is infested with corruption...government jobs are bought and paid for by people seeking a return on their investments. Police accept bribes. Officials and their wives run operations in the black market. Army vehicles are used for private purposes... Nepotism remains particularly virulent"...Kennedy also deplored the treatment of South Viet Nam's 2,000,000 refugees,

8. D. Warner, "Vietnam: the Ordeal of Pacification", in The Reporter, (1 December 1966), p. 28

who, he said are becoming increasing anti American. "only a handful" he said, "claimed that they were driven from their homes by the Viet Cong"...the objectives are set forth to justify our initial involvement while still defensible, are no less clear and less attainable than they seemed in the past. The pattern of destruction we are creating can only make a workable political future more difficult, and the government we are supporting has given us no indication that it can win the lasting confidence of its own people."⁹

Senator Kennedy seemed to put the blame on the Saigon government, but he presented the fact forgetting the cause of the deterioration of the present regime. After all, who bears the responsibility for the present situation in South Viet Nam? while we cannot deny that the Saigon government needs radical reforms, as long as the United States develop no constructive policy in South Viet Nam, progress cannot be made in nation and state building.

The South Vietnamese government's effort at developing a true land reform programme, and at eradicating social injustices to improve village welfare cannot compensate for the devastating effects of the war. Dedicated men at work on programmes for rural development cannot repair damages done by the United States bombing and destruction of villages. The increasing number of refugees clearly demonstrates that the South Vietnamese economy can only grow worse. On the one hand people are driven out of their land into more secure areas where they find no work, on the other hand cultivated land is left unexploited. It is always easy to destroy, but it is always hard to rebuild something. The failure of the strategic hamlets programme is not taken into account. Corruption is part of the pattern of living, a means to squeeze some money to make ends meet to cope with the rocketing prices caused by the presence of troops in South Viet Nam.

Thus there is only one avenue in which the South Vietnamese government can appease discontent; that is the broadening of the basis of participation into the decision making process. The fall of President brought to the fore the many latent conflicts within the Vietnamese society, which were kept

9. Time , 2 February 1968

silent under Diem's strong rule. One can notice the emergence of different factions with different political views. Among these groups, most important were the ones which overthrew the Diem regime and which had shown their forces, namely the military, the students, the Buddhists.

The military predominance in politics can be explained in many terms. Under the Diem regime there was no way in which the voice of the opposition could be heard, in which the opposition could accede to power; the seizure of power by force was thus the primal alternative. After the revolution, the confusion created by group rivalry led the military to intervene, considering themselves as the champions of new causes. Though they do not constitute an important effective power group, the military formed a thoroughly organized body, the best equipped to take in hand the fate of the country in a situation of crisis.

Furthermore the army is a reservoir for numerous talents recruited from different fields. In the face of the deteriorating situation of the country, local administrative functions have been assumed by the military. Towards the end of the Diem regime they also came to fill higher posts in the government, and this experience in responsible administrative positions helped the military to take in charge the most important political posts in South Viet Nam after the 1 November 1963 coup d'etat.

The students' political strength grew up on two occasions: it was Diem himself who had the students and various secondary school groups organized into a tightly disciplined body according to the government instructions. That experience in mass-rally practices had allowed the students to gather in huge meetings to listen to political speeches, this time made by themselves.

Their campaign against Diem was so successful that his successors had to take them into account. After the coup, they reappeared many times on the political scene, demonstrating against France's proposals to neutralize South Viet Nam; protesting against the Nguyen Khanh's Charter of 17 August 1964; demonstrating against the composition of the first civilian Cabinet in November 1964. Three of them even got elected in the elections for provincial

and municipal councillors on 30 May 1966.

The Buddhists' importance was such that up to 1965 "in three out of four cabinets Buddhist interests have been well represented."¹⁰ As a result of the overthrow of President Diem, Buddhist leaders became fully aware of their potential strength in arousing mass reaction. Apathetic Buddhist sympathizers soon turned devout churchgoers. Nghiem Dang related:

"it was in an atmosphere of euphoria that the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Church came into being. In contrast with the previous unorganized state of Vietnamese Buddhism, now, for the first time, a real, rational, and hierarchical organization took form inside the Buddhist Church, with the creation of the Institution for the Study of Dharma (Vien Tang Thong) and the Institute for the Propagation of the Buddhist Faith (Vien Hoa Dao)."¹¹

The Buddhist leaders set up the Buddhist University of Van Hanh and expanded educational, social and medical welfare facilities.

Besides these groups there are other groups which command less followers but are nonetheless important: among them are the Catholics, other religious groups, the political parties and regional groupings.

Basically the Buddhist movement was driven by a feeling of resentment against the way the Diem government gave preferential treatment to the Catholic group and the numerous economic as well as other benefits that this group enjoyed because of the government policy. All those who joined under the Buddhist banner to fight against Diem now split into different groups with different interests to defend. If we look back at the political activities of the Diem's successors, we can see that they only maintained their position by adopting a policy:

"(1) of acquiescence to demands for creation of a procedure for expanding representation and (2) of increasingly providing varied interests with formal access to the administrative system."¹²

10. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 357 - II. Ibid., p. 357

12. J.C. Donnell and J.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam: "Struggle" Politics And The Digger War, in Asian Survey, Vol. VII n° I (January 1967), p. 53

Many authors noted that the most important change was the lessening of political apathy. As the avenue for increased political participation by legitimized political interests was open, the perennial latent regional animosities within the Vietnamese society reappeared. Dennis Warner spoke of this emergence of regionalism as an increasing political maturity:

"Street demonstrations and the highly inflammable and dangerous use of religious emotionalism as a basis for political action are nightmares of the past.... Potential political leaders and would-be Presidents have suddenly become aware that the narrow horizons within which they once operated are not broad enough to meet the requirement of a national election...emergent groups and blocs are fully conscious of the need to reach an accommodation not only with the religions and the sects but also with regional factions."¹³

The elections to the Constituent Assembly on 11 September 1966 illustrated that change at best: of the 117 members who were elected, 34 were Buddhists, 30 Catholics, 10 Hoa Hao, 5 Cao Dai, 9 tribesmen and Cham, 4 Khmer. Although party affiliation was not highly organized, ten admitted being Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese People Republican Party), 8 Dai Viet (Great Viet Nam Party), 2 Fulro (Front For The Liberation Of Oppressed Peoples).

However, despite the broadening of mass participation into politics, it is too optimistic to call it political development. The fact that these groups were unable to create a new viable institutional structure was more important. Despite the successful common experience of a united action in the movement against Diem, despite common symbols such as nationalism, anti-Communism, internal division and group rivalries, shifting alignments have weakened all groups to a point that none could work effectively.

THE BUDDHISTS IN SOUTH VIET NAM SINCE 1963.

As we have seen the post-Diem period was the golden age for the interest groups which have contributed to the overthrow of the Diem government to strengthen their positions and expand themselves. The Buddhists were no

13. D. Warner, "South Vietnam's Political Awakening", in The Reporter, (17 November 1966), pp. 41-42

exception to these and this would have many important effects on the future of Buddhism in South Viet Nam later on.

Before considering the part that the Buddhists can play in the future of South Viet Nam, we need to study the Buddhist movement since 1963 to find the causes of its weaknesses.

After Diem's downfall many factors led us to think of the Buddhists as a strong political force. We have spoken of the Vietnamese affinity with Buddhist teachings; the November coup d'état would not have occurred and succeeded without the tension created by the Buddhist movement; and during the struggle against the Diem regime, the Buddhist leadership has learnt many tactics in political manoeuvring and in political power.

Following the Buddhist victory in the campaign against Diem, the attendance at the pagodas has increased, and the Buddhist leadership played a much more important role in the lives of the Vietnamese people than they did before. It has become a persistent myth that the Buddhist movement has become a strong and unified force against which no other force could be measured including the Viet Cong.

Early November saw the release of masses of Buddhist students and many demonstrations were organized to express congratulations to the Buddhist leaders. During the first months, despite variations in opinion concerning specific policies and leadership, the Buddhists saw the necessity to unite themselves to consolidate and enhance their political posture. Thus the Buddhist leaders used their power to prevent demonstrations against General Minh's appointment and Vice-President Nguyen Ngoc Tho as Premier. In return they received the assurance of the new government to observe assiduously the United Nations declaration of human rights and to defend religious freedom for all religions and sects. The military Revolutionary Council explicitly supported the Vietnamese Buddhist Reunification Congress of II sects from 31 December 1963 to 3 January, 1964, which led to the creation of the Unified Buddhist Church and the establishment of permanent organizations to administer programmes agreed upon by the United Buddhist Movement.

The Unified Buddhist Church had a secularly oriented arm: the Vien Hoa

Dao (or Institute for the Propagation of the Faith), at the head of which was The Venerable Thich Tam Chau as chairman, The Venerable Phap Tri and Thich Thien Hoa as Vice-chairmen. It consisted of 6 commissions in charge of: religious personnel, faith expansion, rites, financial and restoration affairs, laymen affairs and youth.

In addition, an organization to attend to purely sacral matters was set up: the High Council of the Buddhists, with The Venerable Thich Tinh Khiet as Supreme Bonze and The Venerable Thich Tri Quang as Secretary General.

Until 1964, the General Buddhist Association was the largest and most important of all Buddhist groups in Viet Nam with three communities of monks and three lay associations for Northern, Central and Southern Viet Nam. During the crisis, various Buddhist associations formed the Intersect Committee For The Defense of Buddhism under Thich Tam Chau and Thich Tri Quang to lead the struggle against the Diem regime. But, after the coup, the Venerables felt that they should advance further and founded the Unified Buddhist Church at the protests of leading Buddhist laymen. In vain these appealed to Supreme Bonze Tinh Khiet and the laymen's association in Central Viet Nam was dissolved in retaliation. Since the time of its creation, the Unified Buddhist Church has sown the seeds of division within Buddhist ranks. Opposed to it were the General Buddhist Association, which claimed a million adherents and the Association of Studies of Buddhism, which was composed of intellectuals, Senior Buddhist laymen and monks. These groups believed that Buddhism should play no part in the political affairs of the state and disapproved of the political activities of the Institute for the Propagation of the Faith.

We have noticed the disagreement between Buddhist leaders towards the end of the crisis, and this division was to be further enhanced by the elimination of the common enemy. In the post-Diem period the Buddhist leaders found themselves holding different views as to the most advantageous role of the Buddhist church in the new political situation. Despite many protests, the Vien Hoa Dao has become an important pressure point where important persons from Cabinet Ministers to diplomats, generals, businessmen came to seek

advice or make deals. Its influence rose up to the point that it became almost a shadow government. Talks of agitation, demonstrations were badly received by those who favoured a return to pure Buddhism and the atmosphere of serenity after the upheaval of the Buddhist crisis.

The young Buddhists' involvement in politics could also be said to be part of the general feeling that a national revolution was needed in South Viet Nam. Due to their vitality the young Buddhist leaders found themselves in a position of prominence rivaling with their elders, the traditional Sangha leaders, who bitterly disapproved of what was happening and who were worried that the young monks became too involved in temporal activities.

However the division between Buddhist laymen and the Venerables, between younger and elder Buddhists was not as important as the division within the Unified Buddhist Church itself, between the two most striking figures of the Buddhist movement, namely Thich Tri Quang and Thich Tam Chau. Since the lines of authority were not clearly set between the two branches of the Unified Buddhist Church, they served as potential vehicles for magnifying differences between these two. The struggling for power between Thich Tri Quang and Thich Tam Chau exacerbated all the conflicts and divisions within the Buddhist ranks and could be said to be the main cause for the weakness of the Buddhist group in the present time.

Despite his holding of a non important post in the Institute for the Clergy, The Venerable Tri Quang was considered to be the most influential monk within the Buddhist church. People who feared him were relieved when he was outmanoeuvred by The Venerable Tam Chau in the election to the chairmanship of the Vien Hoa Dao. Yet Tri Quang's followers occupied important posts in the Vien Hoa Dao, enough to annoy Tam Chau when necessary. Tri Quang's lieutenant, Thich Thien Minh held the most important post in the Vien Hoa Dao namely the Commission of Youth; another one, The Venerable Thich Minh Chau held the Education portfolio. In the central area The Venerable Thich Tri Quang could afford to send out 50,000 demonstrators in the street whenever he wanted. Warner reported: "All together, in central Vietnam he can count on one to two million followers." Tri Quang can just as easily keep

demonstrators off the streets."¹⁴

Despite Tri Quang's strength in central area and the presence of his men in the Vien Hoa Dao, Thich Tam Chau was not as weak and pliable as Tri Quang expected him to be. Tam Chau's force lay in his control of perhaps a million Northern refugees and migrants, his alliance with the Catholics, and his support among the Buddhist lay authorities. Tam Chau further got the backing of uncommitted elements in the Vien Hoa Dao such as Quang Lien's Peace Movement group, the Theravada Buddhists, the Army chaplains etc. Thus Tri Quang found himself unable to extend his Hue based political organization to Saigon.

Since 1963, the two monks have been competing each other for the control of the Buddhist movement. In many instances the two leaders proved to be antagonistic to each other: for example, in return for Tri Quang's promise to support the 1965 elections, Thich Tam Chau agreed to back Tri Quang's plans for the Force of Vietnamese Socialist Buddhists, which was to be an official Vien Hoa Dao Party. However Tam Chau's laymen found themselves barred from the first meeting; infuriated by such a measure, Thich Tam Chau formed a separate party which was also to be called The Force of Vietnamese Buddhism. As a result neither of the two succeeded and the parties were quietly dropped.

Tri Quang organized his own Struggle Movement which began in Hue, spread to Da Lat and Saigon; Tam Chau was not less active, he forced Tri Quang to participate against his will in the campaign against Tran Van Huong, but found that Tri Quang profitted from this by gaining control of the Finance, Economy, Education and Social affairs sections in the succeeding government of Phan Huy Quat. Without any influence in the government, Tam Chau was further challenged by Thich Thien Minh, enriched by government donations. An expedient alliance with the Catholics from Tam Chau brought the government down.

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¹⁴ D. Warner, "The Divided Buddhists Of South Vietnam", in The Reporter, (16 June 1966), p. 24

Their rivalry spread over the Ky administration, which Tam Chau supported and Tri Quang opposed. Tam Chau was sent to Japan, Korea, Formosa and Hong Kong in return for his co-operation with the government. Then without any previous consultation with Tam Chau, Tri Quang sent his Struggle Forces to Da Nang in May 1966; he then presented a petition to Tam Chau to sign against Ky, which Tam Chau bluntly refused, and the gap between the two Venerables was never to be fully bridged.

Basically Thich Tri Quang could not win over Thich Tam Chau for the command of the Buddhist church for many reasons, which were also the basis for all the internal conflicts within the Buddhist church itself:

- The less significant factor for division was regionalism. We recall that Tri Quang's followers were mainly from central and Southern Viet Nam, while Tam Chau's supporters were among the Buddhists from the North where he came from.
- The breadth of the Vien Hoa Dao's political mandate was dubious, and there were many Buddhists, especially Buddhist laymen and the highest Buddhist circles, believed that religion should be kept out of politics. The Venerable Tam Chau has always been a moderate man, ready to coalesce when necessary. One example was his issuance of a communique in October 1964, from the Buddhist Institute asking all Buddhists to prevent the faith from being used for political movements.

In a personal interview, The Venerable Tam Chau reasserted to me what he thinks of the role of Buddhism in South Viet Nam:

"Buddhism in Viet Nam is always closely associated with the people, that is why Buddhism must be clear-sighted, persevering and skilfully contributing to the building of the nation's just cause. Buddhism and Buddhist monks cannot participate in politics, but Buddhist laymen have the common duty in the political career of the nation, once the nation is strong, Buddhism is strong."¹⁵

Another example of Tam Chau's moderation was noted by Adam Roberts:

"And when last February (1965) Thich Quang Lien, Commissioner for Educational, Cultural, and Social Affairs of

15. Personal interview with The Venerable Thich Tam Chau.

the Buddhist Institute, addressed himself to the urgent problem of the war and produced a cease-fire manifesto, the annual meeting of the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Church conspicuously failed to commit itself to his proposals."¹⁶

Thich Tri Quang was more ready for street actions, riots and hard measures to press on the government, thus worrying those who were moderate fearing their damaging effects.

- But most important of all Tri Quang's group could not demonstrate that it had no links with the National Liberation Front. Suspicion was based on the fact that Tri Quang's followers in Hue crossed the lines between the government and Viet Cong controlled areas and were also ready to protest against any injustice to Buddhists suspected of Viet Cong affiliation.

Tri Quang's views concerning the war were very much nationalistic. His followers in Hue displayed strong anti-Americanism and their views sounded very much like Ha Noi propaganda. Dennis Warner related that in Hue:

"In a radio broadcast and in the columns of Tranh Thu, the student newspaper, their propaganda became virtually indistinguishable from that of Hanoi. "The Americans say they are here to defend the country against the Communists," said the April 8 issue of Tranh Thu, "but what is there to be defended when the people have lost all their basic rights?"... Typical slogans used by the students were "Down with the Americans Who Protect Ky and Thieu" and "Vietnam for the Vietnamese." In a leaflet distributed throughout Quang Tri Province on April 8, the committee charged that "The United States is prosperous, powerful, and rich through war industry, and is intent on fostering war. Therefore the United States does not really want to put an end to the war in Vietnam."¹⁷

The mere fact that Tri Quang was for a neutralist Viet Nam did not necessarily mean he was Communist, neither did his anti-Americanism. To denounce him as a Communist would be coming back to the Diem's past error of calling any opposition man Viet Cong. One might argue that in a context like

16. A. Roberts, "Buddhism and politics in South Vietnam", in The World Today, (June 1965), pp. 248-249

17. D. Warner, "How Much Power Does Tri Quang Want?", in The Reporter, (5 May 1966), p. 12

Viet Nam, one had to take sides, to be either with the government or to follow the Front.

However Tri Quang believed that there was another way of defeating the Communists and to win peace without having to take sides, a third way in which a popularly-based and revolutionary government could beat the Viet Cong. If such a government should emerge one day, the Buddhists would wholeheartedly support it against the Viet Cong.

War weariness, the effects of the American aid programme, the presence of troops in Viet Nam, the disastrous consequences of the United States bombing in both North and South Viet Nam, were sufficient for Tri Quang and his group to justify their conduct against the government and the Americans.

If we care to study their statements and to consider what has been said before about the changes which had been occurring in South Viet Nam since the wars, we must admit that they simply echoed the voice and the aspirations of the Vietnamese people. In an interview Tri Quang declared:

"It was the Americans who gave birth to the Vietcong and indirectly helped them to expand. The people's support is the only factor that can beat the Vietcong. Through their clumsy interference in Vietnamese internal affairs the Americans have lost the trust and support of the Vietnamese nation. They are losing the war because of their own policies...

We, the Vietnamese, are fully aware that we can never live at peace with the Vietcong - or with any kind of Communism. Moreover, the idea of neutralizing the South is unrealistic now because the two opposing parties are too extremist in their aims. It is impossible to visualize any reconciliation.

I strongly urge the United States and Hanoi to start peace talks through diplomatic channels. My conviction is that this is the right time to beat the Communists by means of a negotiated settlement, not by retaliatory attacks on the North."¹⁸

It was clear that he wanted peace but not capitulation. To Saigon Daily

18. A. Roberts, "The Buddhists, the war, and the Vietcong", in The World Today, (May 1966), pp. 218-219

News, he said: "The struggle against Communism has necessitated and still necessitates the aid of the allies."¹⁹ Tri Quang denied the view that he wanted to split the majority of non-Communists in the Liberation Front from the loyal body and soul to Ha Noi, of these he said to Time, published on 22 April 1966:

"If there are any, ..., 'they are completely exploited and led by the Communists, so we can have no hope for them... 'It is agreed by all that the struggle against Communism here must be made with the assistance of the Americans... ' To Newsweek of 25 April, Tri Quang stated: 'If negotiations can really achieve peace in Viet Nam, that peace should be the result of a victory over the Communists and a victory for the Vietnamese people.' ... 'I never said that the United States should leave.' "²⁰

Protest against the United States policy in Viet Nam was not the only move from the Tri Quang group. There was the "Struggle Movement for Preservation of Peace and People's Happiness" of Thich Quang Lien, a Yale educated monk; his manifesto sounded as nationalistic in tone as that of Tri Quang: the second demand was that "the U.S. Army must withdraw from the South as well as the Chinese and Russian advisers and soldiers from the North."²¹

Similarly,

"The Saigon Buddhist newspaper Dat To has repeatedly emphasized the growing moral corruption and economic damage... Tam Chau said recently: 'The war is a military thing and I don't know much about military matters. For military news I follow the papers. But as for our future, the Vietnamese people naturally wished to see their country united and free from all foreign influence. After... years of war, the people are really tiring.' "²²

The split within the Buddhist church has considerably weakened the Buddhist force, thus the Buddhist political strength should not be exaggerated, although the Buddhist movement led to the toppling of Diem's government and proved to be influential upon the government on many occasions. This division

19. A. Roberts, op. cit., p. 221

20. Ibid., p. 221

21. Ibid., p. 221

22. Ibid., p. 221

was often seen as a political machination from those who were interested in a disunited Buddhist church, or as a product of American policy of divide and rule. Thus while Thich Tri Quang was labelled Communist, Thich Tam Chau was termed Thich Dollar (meaning Dollar loving). Dennis Warner wrote:

"Another Buddhist layman urged that Tam Chau should be encouraged to form a political party of his own. "Then Tri Quang will be neutralized." "Do it with money," said a third."²³

The fact was that Tri Quang or Tam Chau alone were not powerful to press on the government. There were thousands if not millions of followers who fervently shared their ideas and beliefs.

Another main cause for the Buddhists' weaknesses was the fact that they had no political ambition, though they wanted some influence on the government policy and personnel. They did not possess the strong hierarchical organization that the Catholics had. Although The Venerable Tri Quang has in many instances proved his capacity in mass rallying and in toppling governments, he held no official post of authority in the government. The Buddhist group lacked candidates of stature to defend their interests and have their views heard of or executed. Furthermore Tri Quang's defeat by Ky's armed pressure in Da Nang deprived him of means to press on the voters and the system of proportional representation was weighted against his group.

"Thus a movement...that has a greater potential for establishing cohesiveness than perhaps any other national institution, was reduced to becoming another of Viet Nam's numerous factionalized parties."²⁴

The disunity within the Buddhists' ranks was not characteristic of the Buddhist group but of all other groupings including the military and the National Liberation Front. In the end we can say that the possibility for markedly more responsive and effective leadership still appears to be remote for the foreseeable future.

23. D. Warner, "The Divided Buddhists Of South Vietnam", in The Reporter, (16 June 1966), p. 24

24. J.C. Donnell and C.A. Joiner, "South Vietnam: "Struggle" Politics And The Bigger War", in Asian Survey, Vol. VII n° I (January 1967), p. 56

PREREQUISITES FOR A POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH VIET NAM.

So far we have described the problems of South Viet Nam during and after the Diem regime and shown why the system evolved towards the broadening of the base of participation without any further advance on the road towards political development. Similarly we have explained why the Buddhists failed to exert a strong influence on the succeeding government. It follows from our analysis that in order to develop there are a few general criteria which a political system must fulfill. In this paragraph we shall study the South Vietnamese system's potential for development according to a few generalizations.

First, the South Vietnamese system needs greater structural differentiation in order to better serve the people; its lack in administrative personnel is in fact considerable. The vacancies caused by the departure of the French, the reshuffling due to the partition of the country into two zones, the need for public security resulting from the outbreak of Communist activities created an important demand for Civil Servants.

An example of the necessity of bureaucratization was given by Nghiem Dang: the importance of economic development in national development is acknowledged by many theorists. How can there be economic development under guerrilla warfare conditions? without debating on the role of the government in the national development of a developing nation, one can point out a few advantages in an effective organization of governmental services in the economic sphere:

- The organization of good statistics is a duty of the administration since private sources furnish very partial and inadequate information. Only with good statistical data, can the government reply to questions arising from economists and from the people. A lack of scientific approach from the responsible administrators can lead to statistical errors and hinder planning.
- In view of the insufficiency of private capital advances from the government can always be made, adjusting and adapting to progress made in other fields. In case private initiative falls short the government should set

up a proper programme to stir up the population and give more impetus to key elements of economic activity. Being an essentially agricultural country, South Viet Nam needs to increase cultivated land and improve existing fields. The administrator is very much called upon to play an advisory role and a liaison agent between agricultural extension agencies and in encouraging various forms of co-operation. Also because of the lack of perfect machine tools for farm development, the administrator's duty is to mobilize the human factor in the process of capital formation.

It is clear that with a more differentiated and larger administrative staff, he is better able to extract resources from and to regulate behaviour in its own society, to increase the country's resources. Modern organizations provide the government with stronger superior techniques in coordinating activities. Developed systems are presumed to have developed a social life more than less developed systems can. The magnitude, scope and scale of political and governmental performance are different. Effectiveness, efficiency, faster execution of public policy and greater thoroughness in all activities are required from developed systems. Similarly government actions are guided by more deliberation and justifications that seek to relate ends and means in a systematic manner so that planning becomes possible. To be able to fulfill these conditions for development, a competent, larger, specialized, differentiated, rational bureaucracy must be set up.

Although there may be some objection to the overdevelopment of the administration, on the ground that a powerful bureaucracy may not submit to political control. However if the aim is the achievement and maintenance of self-government, with greater accountability of the elite to the needs of the people, no matter how all this is brought about, one cannot say that such a development can hinder the move towards national development.

Furthermore,

"In a nation in which the greater part of the population needs a certain education in order to realize the full extent of its civic rights and duties...who would be responsible for looking out for the public interest if the-

re were no competent bureaucracy."²³

Second, the people need to know the rudiments of public administration to support better the government in its activities. If the government needs some reforms, so do the people. Cultural secularization is another prerequisite to better system performance. We have noted the importance of the human factor in economic development. For some authors, it is an essential prerequisite for development. The spirit of development, innovation should be developed in every member of the community to realize common projects. It is the cultural change that conditions all development.

In a secularized political culture, the citizens should be active and develop a political participant attitude, for political development does involve mass participation and popular involvement in political activities. One broadly shared characteristic of such a culture is a general spirit towards equality. Equality means law should be of a universalistic nature, applicable to all, more or less impersonal in their operation. Most often this means the development of a codified legal system and explicit legal procedures. Equality also means that recruitment to political office should reflect achievement standards of performance and not the ascriptive considerations of a traditional social system.

Although the present standard of education of the people in South Viet Nam needs further improvement, it can be said to have evolved a great deal in the past 15 years. Recent statistics showed a percentage of 71% in rural areas can read and write, of these 16% have had primary education,²⁴ (that is they have completed the whole primary course and studied basic Arithmetics). Thus owing to literary expansion, communication expansion and through the mass media, the Vietnamese peasants of the South began to learn of a better modern world, a world in which nature can be submitted to man's fate to a certain extent, differently from what they thought before.

If education, the war and Communist activities and all disturbing events

23. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu 1966), p. 334

24. Cong Luan newspaper, (29 March 1969), p. 2

have changed the average Vietnamese into a politically sensitive person, there is a minority who persists in living outside these events and thinking that all is well the way it goes, this group does not want to understand the real needs of South Viet Nam. Unfortunately in this minority are those who hold the nation's future. Their attitude is a result of the kind of education they have received. The kind of education in political theory and political history which the intellectuals and leaders of the new nations now receive (at home and abroad in Western institutions, almost guarantees demoralization and disillusionment. They are confronted with an image of the modern and democratic state which is difficult to realize, given the present social and cultural conditions of their societies.

Third, if South Viet Nam is to build up a democratic system, group autonomy must be observed, in other words if its infrastructure does not become specialized and relatively independent of government elite and bureaucracy, there is a limited responsiveness from the government. They are the political parties, pressure groups, mass media, which process political demands and proposals, thus need to be well-informed. Moreover the awareness of a better economic and political system can easily lead to increasing demands of participation and welfare if they are rallied into groups.

We have seen why the Buddhist political strength did not increase in the post-Diem period; as to the other groups, their freedom of action has been so far very limited.

Although with a stronger organization and discipline, the Catholic group has lost the importance which they occupied before. Although they feel the need to unite in front of the growing Buddhist church, and despite their ~~co~~li-tion with other religious groups, such as the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai group, they also remain divided, mainly on the war in Viet Nam.

Political parties have suffered from the restriction of action since Diem and in the post-Diem era. Dennis Warner noted:

"Threescore registered political parties with resounding titles and neither membership nor platforms have been pushed aside...the word "party" is so discredited that

no one wants to use it."²⁵

Political parties which functioned secretly under Diem, now lose the popularity they have enjoyed when they were clandestine. Why are they discredited including those who have participated in the resistance movement against colonialism?

In fact nobody can erase them from the political scene, they themselves retire from the political life. First, their leaders have done nothing spectacular to the building of the nation. Second, many prove to be political adventurers who follow whichever way the wind blows. They lack a strong and appealing cause, they have no programme, no organized supporter. Since independence, because they are not revolutionary and progressive, they keep all the characteristics of a secret society. Furthermore their failure is due to the fact that they did not seem able to organize what was considered to be a genuine political party. Their political viewpoints seldom coincided with those of each other and they split themselves into factions.

This division within their own ranks and their passive attitude when other groups were protesting over important issues, did not give them any credit, even though they were offered important posts in different Cabinets, such as the Dai Viet Party and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang under Nguyen Khanh.

Besides political parties and interest groups, the mass media constitute a channel through which public opinion is made known to the government. Among these different means of communication, the press is a very important one. We have spoken of the great number of newspapers in South Viet Nam; however most of them being published in Saigon, rural opinion does not seem to be represented. Furthermore, although the press seems to be freer in its attack against government policies and other mismanagements of public affairs, it is still subject to certain legal restrictions regarding the freedom of the press. It is forbidden, for example, to publish certain items, documents concerning criminal affairs, national defense secrets, exhortations to revolt, foreign political propaganda. Penalties were provided for in the

5. D. Warner, "South Vietnam's Political Awakening", in The Reporter, (17 November 1966), p. 41

Décret-Loi of 9 February 1964 and a Press Council was also created by another Décret-Loi, in May 1964, "to maintain a national discipline among the members of the press, and to carry out the journalistic code to be drawn up by the Council."²⁶ Other means of communication still remain the instruments of government propaganda.

In summary, because of the situation of the country, there is bound to be a few restrictions regarding the freedom of action of different groups in the society. Pressure groups are not allowed to develop, fearing it would be of benefit to the enemy which is challenging the government. As a result, the governments which succeeded Diem did not seem to prove any more responsive to public needs and demands.

Although structural differentiation and cultural secularization are associated with the expansion of the capabilities of the system, we do not say they fit easily together. Demands for equality and the requirements for greater capacity of the political system and the process of greater differentiation cannot be realized at the same time. Pressure for equality can reduce equality by stressing the importance of quality and specialized knowledge.

Moreover bureaucratic elites, political parties, interest groups and communication elites cannot be trained overnight. Financial difficulties form the main obstacles to the development of the administration and the raising of the standard of education of the people in South Viet Nam.

Still in the final analysis, we can say that there is a strong relationship between a specialized and pragmatic orientation towards politics, secularization and the effective performance of modern differentiated political structures.

THE ROLE OF THE BUDDHISTS IN SOUTH VIET NAM'S FUTURE.

One of the main reasons of our study of the Buddhist crisis was our interest in the display of vitality and dynamics of renewed Buddhism before and

26. Nghiem Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu, 1966), p. 250

during the Buddhist crisis. The Buddhist victory in 1963 has raised many hopes among those who longed for discovering a way to build up a better South Viet Nam with the help of enlightened righteous men such as the monks. However in the analysis of the crisis we have seen that the different parts of the South Vietnamese political system are all related and interdependent and change cannot be brought about by the sole action of the Buddhists.

As we have suggested above, in order to develop a system needs to have some basic characteristics: first a general spirit towards equality. Second, a greater governmental performance, capacity, effectiveness, efficiency, rationality in administration and a secular orientation towards policy and a differentiation and specialization of structures; we have also pointed out the difficulties to realize these criteria, we know what should be done but we do not know how to lead to political development. But it is not in the realm of this study to present a development strategy for South Viet Nam given the present conditions of the system. Here we shall only speak about the contributions which we think the Buddhists can make to the national development of South Viet Nam; we know that certain traditional elements may serve temporarily national leaders in their efforts towards differentiation and in increasing system capabilities, giving it time to develop its capacity to satisfy new demands and meet the strains of secularization.

Judging from the number of Buddhist practitioners in South Viet Nam one wonders why the Buddhists cannot take up power and govern the country to realize their aims and lead the country to national development? we can point out a few reasons.

As we have seen, the Buddhist leaders never aspire to control political power or participate in political control; they interfere in politics when they think that this is necessary to preserve their religion and the national heritage; they do not deny their involvement in political life, which is a new aspect of Engaged Buddhism. It is precisely because they do not aim at political control that they do not organize themselves into a strong power group to do so. As a result the Buddhists lack political candidates of stature who would defend Buddhist interests.

Similarly, the Buddhists enter the South Vietnamese political scene with a strong weapon, which is at the same time their weakness: their commitment to non violence. This is not saying that only violence that can lead to power. Many times in world history, violence has been proved to have to surrender to non violence. But the Buddhists in South Viet Nam have to face a government which possesses an army, a police, a strong organization, without any moral obligations, and is not committed to non violence. As a result, the Buddhists may not always win, if their opponents persist in resisting Buddhist demands.

We have also noticed the division within the Buddhist ranks, owing to their diverse political viewpoints, regional differences and American interference. We have said that the Buddhist crisis might not have succeeded, had the United States not withdrawn its support from the government. In fact the United States' interference in South Viet Nam's internal affairs has become obvious to the most casual observer.

Here it pays us to divert a little from our topic to speak of the American aim in South Vietnam, which will explain at best why the Buddhists, who seemed to get American favour during the crisis ended up weakened, divided and unable to strengthen their ranks.

To the question: why can the people of South Viet Nam not build up a true democratic system? the answer would be: it is not because of traditional elements going against it, nor because they are so divided that they cannot do so. A Vietnamese author argued: they cannot solve their problems because they are not self-governing,

"the main obstacle to the building of a democracy in the South is neither the army, nor the Saigon regime, because had they not been supported by the people, they would not be able to maintain themselves in power, the real obstacle is the power behind the Saigon regime, the director of all the plays in the Vietnamese political scene: the economic and military presence of the United States right here."²⁷

27. Nguyen Tu Loc, "Van de dan toc dat cho nguoi Cong Giao", in Dat Nuoc, n° VIII (December 1963), p. 7

What Hanh also wrote:

"The Vietnamese army is fed, clothed, and armed from the American budget; its guns, bullets, and planes all come from America. In Vietnam people refer to gasoline as being typical of the American control; the army would be powerless without the use of American gasoline. Without gasoline every army activity would be cut off. The resistance movement of the dissident army units of Da Nang and Hue in May, 1966, could not continue because of a lack of gasoline, and without American gasoline the troops of General Ky could not have suppressed it. Thus everyone knows that the Vietnam policy is made by Americans and that everything that Vietnam does, the United States is responsible for."²⁸

To justify the continuing escalation of the war, the United States argued that peace was only beneficial to the Viet Cong, because the nationalist side is not prepared yet. But haven't they had enough time after so many years?

The United States was not concerned in creating a strong South Vietnamese leadership. If the lack of leadership has endangered South Viet Nam and contradicted American interests, America would have exerted pressure for a change. A strong South Viet Nam might go against the American will. The United States wanted no independent source of power, which might stand between her and the Communists. Diem's non tolerance of the opposition suited the Americans fine, until Diem showed sign of independence.

What sort of leadership does the United States favour in South Viet Nam? South Viet Nam does not lack intellectual people; there are even perhaps too many of them. Thousands of Vietnamese graduates have accomplished brilliant work abroad. The Vietnamese people are skilled, their nation was formed a thousand years ago, their historical past was full of glorious examples and they started a most heroic struggle against colonialism. But South Viet Nam lacked a competent intelligentsia, on whom the people can rely. The nationalist cause has been weakened by the attitude of the intelligentsia when the country was in danger. Many of them collaborated with the

28. What Hanh, Vietnam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 63

Japanese, the Chinese, the French, instead of promoting the just cause of the Vietnamese nation; other stayed apathetic; a lot fought against each other to serve several governments; they are divided into factions ready to exterminate each other and they do not care for the nation's survival. In short many of them have contributed nothing to nation building and failed to fulfill their mission of leadership. They regard their position of privileged as a right, a debt which the nation has to pay for the degrees that they hold. They do not possess the spirit of serving the nation so often displayed by Confucian scholars. The French supported them, the Americans continue in this way.

Because the intelligentsia form the best part of the nation, the country cannot prosper without this group. The stabilization of the country does not depend only on the regime adopted, national heads are also of prime importance, even though they may serve sometimes only as symbols of the nation. The confidence of the people in leadership cannot be created by the setting up of democratic elections, because the votes can only confirm this confidence. Egypt has had no democratic elections but its intelligentsia which was in the army was accepted by the people of Egypt without being elected.

In a revolutionary guerrilla warfare in which the social and political factors are of prime importance, the United States never sought to politicize the war, but increasingly militarized it.

If the United States is the enemy of Communism, why did she make the first step to stop the bombing of South Viet Nam and expand negotiations with Hanoi, without prior approval of South Viet Nam and her allies, without letting the government of South Viet Nam time to prepare the people of the presence of the National Liberation Front at the conference table in Paris. Clearly America never wants South Viet Nam to lead in any action, which is in fact overdue since South Viet Nam's future depends on the result of such undertakings.

The American aid has never aimed at the production of producer goods but at merely satisfying the thirst for luxurious commodities of the people, who are still unable to produce these. Considering the enormous amount of mo-

ney which had been spent in Viet Nam, it is surprising to find that instead of being increasingly industrialized, South Viet Nam has in fact become a permanent beggar and developed a due dependence on American aid. One wonders whether the United States aim is to weaken South Viet Nam to make her dependent on America or not. While defending South Viet Nam against the Communists, the United States destroys faster than it builds.

The success of the Buddhist movement has given hope to the people that their action will have a continuous effect on the government to change the situation, but they are soon deceived. The Buddhist movement started as a religious movement against Diem's fanaticism and policy of religious persecution, but the political character of this movement gradually showed up as the crisis went on. After Diem's removal, the Buddhists kept on struggling against the government asking for a Constituent Assembly and an elected government, voicing opposing ideas concerning the war and American policy in Viet Nam.

The Buddhist leadership realized that Engaged Buddhism does not only necessitate a change in Buddhist principles and dogmas to adapt to new circumstances, but it also demands a new society, a new regime, thus the Buddhist struggle continued. Their opposition to the Saigon regime equals to an opposition to the American support for that regime, American policy makers prefer them to remain quiescent and keep their hands off their war efforts. Buddhist opposition to the American policy in Viet Nam has often been voiced. Some were mildly criticizing it, others protested vehemently. Furthermore, Washington does not seem to accept the Buddhist claim that they are not violently anti-Communist because this is equally to suggesting that they are profitting from the situation to acquire American dollars. To the United States neutralism equals Communism and those who do not want to take a strong stand against the Communists are serving the enemy and must not be allowed to do so.

The Buddhist demands are too idealistic and especially nationalistic in appeal, they are not feasible in American views, because they clash with American interests. The United States has spent too many lives and devoted too

much effort in the Viet Nam war to withdraw from the scene. And since the United States finances most of the country's activities and keeps the country running, when she decides that the Buddhists cannot take up power in South Viet Nam, it is difficult for the Vietnamese people to protest.

Besides, the reasons cited above, which make the Buddhists unable to take up leadership, there is also the revival of Can Lao members and their participation in political power in the governments succeeding Diem. We have noted the fact that there was little change ⁱⁿ personnel after Diem's downfall. The overthrow of Diem can thus be seen as a proof of United States lost of confidence in Diem and Nhu themselves but not in their regime and the reintegration of former Can Lao members into the succeeding governments is also a proof of that policy. The Can Lao party, Nhu's government within the government was the principal opponent of Tri Quang's group.

As a whole, the Buddhists were generally without influence in the government, Can Lao party's resurgence could be seen as a threat to their activities. Of special importance to the Buddhists was the appointment of Major General Nguyen Bao Tri to head a super ministry (Justice, Information, Interior) and to supervise the conduct of the II September Constitutional Assembly election. General Tri, a Catholic, and a former member of the Can Lao party was appointed to this important position with three other Catholics under the Ky government.²⁹

Two articles published in Thien My, a Buddhist magazine, entitled "A Half-Way Revolution is the Way to a Counter-Revolution", and "Buddhism In front Of The Political Situation In South Viet Nam", spoke of the danger of retaining Can Lao party members. The former said:

"Revolution is the eradication of an outdated regime. Yet after the removal of Diem and Nhu, the so-called revolutionary government still wants to present all that is left from the old regime, including hard-core members of the Can Lao... Revolution needs not be achieved merely in name and in form, but also in structure."³⁰

9. See Donnell and Joiner, "South Vietnam: "Struggle" Politics And The Bigger War", In Asian Survey, Vol. VII n° I (January 1967), p. 57

10. See Thien My, n° XV (26 February 1965), pp. 4-6, in Vietnamese in the text.

The second article attributed the cause of the troubles following Diem's downfall to the absence of reforms from the succeeding governments.

Opposed to the Buddhists there are of course the Catholics, who react against every move of the government in favour of the Buddhists. Catholics and Buddhists, as we have seen before, were like two neighbours disputing now and then about insignificant matters, but if there is any outsider to prompt them into action, they will immediately rose up against each other violently. If the government favours one of the two adversaries, the other will immediately feel himself oppressed and react to ask for religious equality etc. Catholics suspect Buddhists of Communist affiliations and think that they are determined to exterminate Catholicism, on the very first occasion. Buddhists suspect Catholics of planning to regain their former political importance with the help and support (financial including), from Vatican and that some of them are dedicated to the extermination of Buddhism.

The Catholic community has always occupied a privileged position in South Viet Nam with the French domination and the Diem's protection. In front of an expanding Buddhism, it is very natural that they feel endangered; moreover they are only a small minority and are losing the few privileges which they had before.

The Buddhists claim discrimination by the government in educational institutions and in business; however, they did not want to reverse the situation against the Catholic minority, but only an improvement of that situation without further discrimination. With the feeling of a loser, the Catholic group is very sensitive to any slight move in favour of the Buddhists as these are no any special favour towards Catholics. This malaise between Catholics and Buddhists does prevent the government from favouring Buddhism, if it wants to. We have noted that Thich Tam Chau's alliance with the Catholics has supported a pro-Tri Quang government. The Catholics although small in number are a very well-organized force, which is determined to defend its rights with an excellent leadership, especially Catholic Northern refugees who have left everything to come down South, and are not ready to lose anything again; they have sure financial means and Catholic politicians to defend their

interests. As a result, co-operation between Catholics and Buddhists is only realizable when none of the two is endangered by the rise of the other.

If they cannot take up power, the Buddhists can form an important pressure group to voice their demands to the government. Had the Buddhist group been allowed to expand freely, perhaps it would have become one of the strongest political forces in South Viet Nam, not excluding the Viet Cong. Basing on the fact that most Vietnamese are Buddhists, one can say that the Buddhist leaders are in fact closer to the people than any other group of leaders in South Viet Nam.

The Buddhists in South Viet Nam display a vitality which is not equalled by Buddhists of other countries. They have started a programme of action,

"to reach every village and town of South Viet Nam, with a growing staff concerned with education, health, relief, social services and all the problems facing a religious group which is trying to influence its society."³¹

As a step towards better organization of the Buddhists, a large Buddhist centre was to be created with records and identification cards to all monks and nuns; advanced schooling was also provided for them with the founding of an Hanh university. Their students are trained to do practical training in villages, to live and work with the peasants and to gain their confidence as well as to teach them to improve their conditions of living. A secondary school and clinics were also installed in Saigon, while relief activities and other welfare activities are also organized to assist and secure the poor, to the weak and defenseless.

The involvement of Buddhist monks in the life of the people is not a new thing; we have noticed that those who felt defenseless and hopeless used to seek refuge in the pagodas. With the impact of modernization, the help of men like the monks is valuable to the people to cope with its disruptive consequences. Modernization brings with it an increasing specialization of labour, urbanization, education, a radical growth in communication and an in-

31. K.W. Morgan, "The Buddhists: The Problem and the Promise", in Asia, n° IV (Winter 1966), p. 80

terdependence of thought and economic activity. The result is also a breakdown in the traditional pattern of belief, the traditional form of family and the traditional social life under the pressures of industrial employment and urban life.

Old customs and old bonds are loosened, the people are left by themselves in their new life and there is nothing to check on their activities, nothing they can lean on in moments of distress. Furthermore the interdependence of thought and economic activity makes the individual more susceptible to fluctuations of inflation and depression. They cannot return to the land in such times of insecurity and uncertainty.

They are stuck in urban areas where they must struggle to live. The former scale of values is no longer suspected, people adopt a new scale of distinction within the society. The introduction of class distinctions based on wealth and material belongings, becomes increasingly accepted. Confucian humanism is replaced by materialism. In addition to the problems such as juvenile delinquency stemming from urbanization, there are also the cultural changes from the cities to the countryside. The traditional social life is not as complex as the new life and the people get lost in front of the hustling and struggling even in their everyday life activities. In such circumstances, Buddhist organizations for social assistance would be more than welcomed.

Although their social activities are not without problems especially financial ones, the Buddhists hope to do better still for the people. Engaged Buddhism as propounded by Vietnamese monks has turned the Buddhist group into a strong force. The Buddhists are now very much conscious of the necessity to participate in politics in order to get things done as they wish. The 1963 Buddhist movement was the occasion in which the Buddhists tested their revived concept of Buddhism. To their great surprise the result was a triumph to them; and the fact that they handled themselves so well and showed such skills in organizing protests and getting information to the press, has demonstrated that they are able to make of the Buddhist group an effective social force in South Viet Nam.

The Buddhists have surprised the West with their theory of Engaged Buddhism, because Buddhism has always been known for its retreating character. An article in a Buddhist periodical called "Phat Giao Viet Nam" (Vietnamese Buddhism) reads as follows:

"Vietnamese Buddhism is not merely a religious belief that limits itself, everywhere and at all times, to its mission as a faith. On the contrary, everywhere it spreads, Buddhism adapts itself to the customs, cultural climate, and human elements of the land, influencing the local population's way of life."³²

So Buddhist involvement in state affairs is not unusual, the new involvement must therefore be seen as a revival of the old Buddhism with a new method in engaging in public life, the method of popular struggle. The Buddhist leadership clearly realizes that religion is something essential to the life of an individual, which is itself determined by social regulations. Thus religion cannot expand in a regime which is opposed to it, and political struggle in the proper sense of the word also becomes necessary for religion to preserve itself.

"The Buddhists have succeeded, due to their involvement in politics but have failed because they do not wholly participate in it, which they could not do."³³

This statement shows the limitations of the Buddhist struggle to solve the political situation in South Viet Nam; the Buddhists still do not have the capacity to have a decisive influence on South Viet Nam's destiny.

However, from our study of the evolution of the Vietnamese political culture, the changes in ideas and beliefs in the Vietnamese society, we can say that any force which comes closest to the people's aspirations and can guide them to find their way in satisfying their aspirations will succeed in Viet Nam. Vietnamese Buddhism, we have said, played an important part in the national culture previously; in their struggle today, the Buddhists are closer to the people than any other force, we have often heard the people name the

32. Nhat Hanh, Vietnam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 44

33. Tam Dien, "Ket Luan cua cuoc Van dong Phat Giao", in Dat Nuoc, n° V (6 July 1968), p. 148

Buddhists extreme nationalists.

"In every Buddhist the idea of Buddhism and nationalism are intertwined and cannot be easily separated. Many non-Buddhist elements also took part in the Buddhist campaign, not because they wanted to support the Buddhists but because they realized that the Buddhist campaign was consistent with the people's aspirations."³⁴

The people have become weary with the war which had been going for many decades, thus they find in the Buddhist demand for peace a satisfaction of their longings. Today we cannot deny that the Buddhist force is one of the basic forces of the people which could contribute a lot to save the nation of South Viet Nam.

The Buddhists have grown influential in the Vietnamese political scene through the aspirations of the Buddhist faithful, who form the majority of the people. If we examine the political situation in South Viet Nam today, we can see that a number of Buddhist policies, which sounded extreme to the United States and to the Saigon are now being adopted.

First, there is the Buddhist concept of the war in Viet Nam. To the new Buddhists, the fratricidal war which is going shames the soul of the nation and there is no point in pursuing such atrocity as retaliatory attacks on the North. As the war expanded, not only North Viet Nam suffered many damages, South Vietnamese casualties also increased at high speed; the United States indiscriminate bombings and shellings killed innocent civilians and caused serious effects on the whole structure of the Vietnamese society.

According to The Venerable Tri Quang, the American reliance on the supremacy of their military power is in fact an unrealistic manner to face guerrilla warfare; he was reported to have said:

"most of the guerrillas joined the Vietcong army not out of any sympathy for Communism...but from an aggressive nationalism that rejected first the French colonial power, then the autocratic regime of the late Catholic President Ngo Dinh Diem, and finally his dog-eat-dog

34. Nhat Hanh, Vietnam Lotus in a Sea of Fire (New York, 1967), p. 45

military successors and their American backers,"³⁵

The presence of American troops in South Viet Nam causes many damages to South Viet Nam morally, physically, economically while it does not help South Viet Nam solve its problems. Thus the more Americans there are in South Viet Nam, the stronger anti-American feeling would grow, and the biggest obstacle to negotiations with the Front and the North would be the United States policy of escalating the war and of interfering with the South Viet Nam's internal affairs, and of retaining military bases in Viet Nam. Thus the Buddhists declare that war must be condemned, because of its atrocity, which has never been witnessed before in world history. To the Buddhists the Vietnamese cannot sit there and watch the United States destroy their country to defend American own interests.

That war cannot be accepted, because independence, democracy and freedom have never been achieved in South Viet Nam. It was the United States interference in South Viet Nam internal policies that strengthened the National Liberation Front. As long as the United States persists in controlling South Viet Nam, the war is not a war between North and South Viet Nam, but between the United States and the Vietnamese people. It also keeps South Viet Nam in an underdeveloped state and prevents it from finding the regime it needs.

According to the Buddhists the United States cannot win the war even militarily speaking, because according to experts guerrilla warfare could not be won without the support of the people and in particular of the peasants. Similarly despite their heroism the National Liberation Front could not win the war militarily speaking. The war would eventually end because neither side could win the other, the only solution left is a negotiated settlement.

At first the Americans did not want to negotiate because they were convinced of their supremacy, but they would come to negotiations if there was no other way. Therefore when the United States is ready to negotiate, violent anti-Communists and belligerents would not be used any more and would

35. A. Roberts, "The Buddhists, the war, and the Vietcong", in The World Today, (May 1966), p. 219

be conveniently evinced out of the political scene.³⁶

To the Buddhists, there is not a North Vietnamese state, but a unified territory from Nam Quan to the Ca Mau Peninsula; and Viet Nam must be independent from American, Chinese and Russian influence to be able to develop itself freely. South Viet Nam must be free to determine its future and the rights of its people must be observed.

In his book *The Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh* has clearly expressed the Buddhist aspirations for an independent South Viet Nam, which are also those of the majority of the people:

"The Vietnamese believe that the United States must change its policy and let them find their own solutions to their own problems. The non-Communist Vietnamese have to have a chance to bring into existence a force that will combine patriotism with peace, so they must be allowed to have an independent and pacifist government. America should respect such a government and help it to achieve the aspirations of the non-Communist Vietnamese. Those aspirations are to solve the problems of self-determination and of stopping the war."³⁷

The people are increasingly deceived by the deterioration of the country and lose the confidence in the United States support and good will; the longer the war continues, the more sufferings it would cause to the Vietnamese people. But how to stop the war and advance towards peace? the only path towards peace, according to the Buddhists, is negotiation, but with whom and under what conditions?

Here again, Buddhist prediction turned out to be true. To be able to negotiate, the two enemies must create favourable conditions and find a place to meet, and among the basic conditions is the unconditional cessation of the bombings of North Viet Nam, and the acceptance of the National Liberation Front as a valuable interlocutor at the conference table.

The Buddhists argue that the present government is not representative and

36. c.f. Article, "con duong cua chung toi", in *Gio Noi*, n° IX - X (November-December 1966), pp. 9-10

37. Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (New York, 1967), pp. 82-83

could not be trusted by the people. Thus to enter negotiations with Ha Noi they believe that there must be an elected government, one which is truly representative of the non-Communist people, of supporters of the Front and even of those within the Front.

This government would rally most religious and political groupings in South Viet Nam and would work towards democratic free elections with the help of a strengthened International Commission. It would ask the United States to refrain from any offensive action until it is functioning, to be able to guarantee free elections. It would appeal to the Front for a cease-fire arrangement.

This government would be the agency to negotiate with the United States for the withdrawal of its forces. After consolidating its hold on the people of South Viet Nam, it would begin negotiations with the Front for the creation of a coalition government and the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops.

This coalition government would establish normal relations of trade and diplomacy with North Viet Nam in view of an eventual reunification.³⁸

The Buddhists believe that these views illustrate the kind of moves that are logical and could lead to peace.

There are many people who are afraid that such a course would lead inevitably to a Communist take-over, but to the Buddhists, the Front is composed of a majority of patriots who resent the presence of foreign troops in South Viet Nam, such a course would serve to liberate them from Communist domination. If negotiations should take place before the setting up of a representative government, these negotiations would undoubtedly be only between the United States and the Communist leadership in the National Liberation Front, therefore the interests of the majority of non-Communists would be poorly served. So the Buddhists offer to the Vietnamese people a third way between the nationalist side and the Communist way, a solution to the Vietnamese impasse which no other group can find.

Why does the Buddhist solution seem the most practical way to solve the

38. For further details see What Hanh, op. cit., pp. 83-84

Vietnamese problem? the Buddhists argue: the United States cannot accept the Communist kind of peace, nor do the Communists accept peace in the American style. Neither side wants to lose face. Thus peace in Viet Nam must be of a different kind, one in which both sides would not be hurt and would not continue their aggressive acts. The number of people who do not believe in both ways is a growing force; any solution to the Viet Nam problem without due attention being paid to them would be a fatal error.

The struggle between the United States and Communist Red China for influence in Asia is getting towards a big impasse, the result of which will be damaging to Viet Nam. Both North and South Viet Nam are getting further and further apart from each other; the rising of a third force is seen as a necessary link for all non-Communists to set up a government, which can make negotiations deals with the North, the Front and the United States, then to prepare the programme for a coalition government with the Front and work towards reunification after the cease-fire. This third force, the Buddhists believe, would prevent any polarization which would make any solution unacceptable.

Besides the contributions towards the finding of a solution to the Viet Nam problem, the Buddhists are offering to the government of South Viet Nam something which is important, which the government cannot find or realize: a national ideology. They offer a way to rebuild the nation of South Viet Nam, one of the basic prerequisites for South Viet Nam to stabilize itself to be able to cope with the North. We have noted the absence of a nationalist ideology to cope with the Communist doctrine.

According to the Buddhists, we cannot combat Communism by propagandizing its horrors or lower its prestige, we must accept the fact that it is an ideology spreading all over the world. The proof of their popularity was that even Nhu and Diem, who had campaigned so much against the Communists, had to think of negotiating with them in the end. They had also thought of a rival ideology, Personalism, which unfortunately was not familiar to Viet Nam, over which Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism had had a long term influence. No one can say categorically that he or she has understood Personalism tho-

roughly. Without an ideology to serve as basis for all activities of the nation, anti-Communist demonstrations or propaganda, arms and weapons, prisons would become subject of irritation if not of horror to the Vietnamese people.

Speaking of the Buddhists as offering an ideology to combat Communism is not quite true, because it would be contrary to the Buddhist spirit of tolerance. What they do is to call upon the nationalists to find a way to be able to hold a conversation with the Communists, with some authority. The Communist invasion is an ideological invasion; using literary means to combat an ideology would be a foolish thing to do. To Communism, South Viet Nam can oppose another spiritual force which results from the links with the people for thousands of years: Vietnamese Buddhism.

To achieve this end, the Buddhists propose a rebuilding of popular culture to compete with the Communist culture. Why is it necessary to rebuild the national culture? because Communism would lead Viet Nam towards an assimilation with China, and this they do not want. Sooner or later, the war will take another turn, the struggle would be on the cultural level and the one who is the closest to the people's aspirations would win politically. So the decisive struggle would be on the cultural level, in which both sides would try to achieve the primary aim of a revolutionary people's war: that of winning the people's hearts and minds. It will be the people who decide which side will win the war, because the weapon and the gun is only secondary to the soldier who holds it. What he tries to defend in holding the gun is something important. A thousand years of Chinese domination is not easily forgotten, the Vietnamese people would never want to come under Chinese authority again. A strong people needs a strong culture to develop; thus the Buddhists call attention to the preservation of the national heritage in order to win the war against Communism, for once the cultural revolution is achieved, political revolution would not be long to follow.

Conclusion.

After having analyzed the Buddhist crisis, its origins and its outcome, we can draw out a few points: first, the Buddhists succeeded in 1963 owing to a series of circumstances: the government of President Diem did not answer the people's aspirations and added to this a touch of religious fanaticism.

Independence from the French has not created a better South Viet Nam. On the structural side, no reform was undertaken; on the cultural side the people did not participate in governmental activities; group autonomy was lacking; rule-making was to preserve the interests of the privileged; rule-application was lacking in initiative and responsibility; while justice does not always shine in any case; extraction became more and more difficult, so did regulation, distribution could not be made impartially, government responsiveness was limited and its symbolic capability consequently diminished.

The Diem government was unprepared to face an expanding Buddhism, and was moreover too confident in itself, thus it resisted the Buddhist demands strongly, which gave the Buddhists an opportunity to rise up against him. Armed with a good cause, the Buddhists were further endowed with an excellent leadership, who mastered the techniques of mass rally and propaganda. As a result their movement received much internal and external support, and most important of all the United States withdrew its support from the Diem government.

Second, the Buddhist group could only be a pressure group, because of its internal weaknesses, of Can Lao party resurgence, of Catholic opposition and of American interference. But it would be an important pressure group, because it has an important following and because its doctrine is conform with the people's aspirations; it fully realizes the difference between religion and politics and the role religion should play in the new society.

So the Buddhists could influence on the government through the aspirations of the Buddhist faithful, thereby they could make important contributions to the finding of a solution to the country's problems such war and peace, Com-

munism, how to have the ideal government, to find a national concept, the importance of a national culture.

Third, considering what has been said before, if the Buddhist leaders want to take the leading part in South Viet Nam, there are a few conditions which they should fulfill.

Vietnamese Buddhism has for a long time been a latent force, which erupted at the right moment. This force was based on the links which Buddhism had with the Vietnamese culture thousands of years ago. However, Buddhism could not have a decisive influence on South Viet Nam's politics with its present organization. After Diem's downfall, with the latent conflicts which emerged within their ranks, the Buddhists could not present a unified programme of action. One can say that the Buddhist group has a solid superstructure but without a base. Brilliant leaders emerged from the crisis such as The Venerables Tri Quang and Tam Chau, while others made themselves highly respected with their knowledge. Buddhist leaders held very high university degrees such as The Venerables Nhat Hanh, Quang Lien, Thich Minh Chau etc. Although there are numerous Buddhist youth associations, and despite the many activities of Buddhists in setting up orphanages, nursery schools, hospitals etc. They are not strong enough to carry out a revolution among the Vietnamese people. They need a more specialized infrastructure in order to get things done efficiently, for the Buddhist church is characterized by a big shortage of chaplains and preachers, whose training has been progressing rather slowly and could not satisfy the increasing demand for them in various associations of students, scouts, guides and the Armed Forces.

Furthermore, when we speak of the Buddhist concept of war and peace, of negotiation and politics, we refer only to a group of progressive Buddhists who realize the necessity of participation in politics. Although this group has the potentiality to mobilize quite a strong following, they do not represent all the Buddhists in South Viet Nam. Thus the active Buddhist leaders need to present a clear programme of action, which is acceptable to most Buddhist factions, to be able to rally the necessary support to take a more active part in the life of the society. They have to convince the conservative

elements of the Buddhist church of their sincerity and integrity, and especially of the need for actualizing Buddhism.

As we have said before, the Buddhists have grasped the people's aspirations, their hunger for peace and security, thus their role in the South Vietnamese society would be extremely important if they know how to clearly determine their position in the struggle for peace. They succeeded in the movement against Diem because they knew what the people wanted. So in the present situation they have to know what the people aspire for and what they should do to save the nation. If the progressive leaders within the Buddhist church could present an interesting programme of action and explain the necessity of such an action, conservative elements would not try to hinder their activities such as in 1963, when they were united for a common cause.

The longer the war continues, the more sufferings and bitter tragedy there would be, and the more the Vietnamese people long for peace. The Buddhist demand for peace did not sound loud enough for the South Vietnamese government and the United States to take it into account, the Buddhists should have organized and united themselves and pressed stronger; and because they did not press strongly enough, their efforts to bring peace are easily forgotten, when the time comes that the United States decides that continuing the war would be against the interests of both the United States and South Viet Nam. This has been the case of many of the Buddhist proposals for peace, to stop the war, to condemn the bombings of the North, for negotiations, for the recognition of the National Liberation Front as a valuable interlocutor, for the acceptance of the Front into the South Vietnamese government.

But peace alone is not enough to solve the situation in Viet Nam; the Vietnamese people and the Buddhists have been struggling so many years not simply for peace. Peace has to be accompanied by independence and a revolution in the South Vietnamese society, thus once the war stops, there will be an immense task of reconstruction lying in front of both North and South Viet Nam. This drive for a social revolution and national development, although it is not as imperative as the longing for peace, it is nevertheless a vital problem for South Viet Nam.

Should a neutral South Viet Nam come out of the Paris negotiations, it would have to devote all its efforts to develop to be able to compete with an enterprising North Viet Nam, with which it would eventually entertain trade and diplomacy relationships.

If we take a look at the present society in South Viet Nam, we can say that it has not progressed since the French went away. The French left behind a strong influence, which is still unreplaced; mourners of the French departure still persist, French structures and methods of working, all the corruptions and injustices still remain. The national culture, the country's politics, administration, religion, way of living, all still bear the vestige of the old French colonial regime. The people's life has become more complex, more difficult, but old methods are still used in different fields of the country's activities; agriculture has not been mechanized, industry hardly advances and the many claims of the government of progress are in fact only achieved in form. South Viet Nam still lacks a national culture, government functions and structures need radical reforms, its capabilities need further improvements. In short South Viet Nam needs a social revolution not simple reforms to be able to develop.

We have previously noted the necessary conditions to progress towards national development, the first of which is a spirit of equality and universality of law. In the new society every Vietnamese must be equal before the law to get protection, privileges, and have his rights properly defended as well as to accomplish his duties as a citizen of his country. Bureaucratization, specialization, structural differentiation, secularization, greater governmental performance and capabilities, effectiveness, efficiency, rationality in administration are among other conditions of development.

But to reform the government is not enough, a national strategy has to be worked out to solve development problems, to present investment strategies, and a compensatory investment programme should be set up to cope with the disruptive consequences of development, together with investment strategies in other fields than the political one such as education, industrialization, family structure and organization, urban and community planning. In the

final analysis the problem is still the finding of a truly responsible government, the inducing of the leaders to take the necessary measures for reforms, that would be disadvantageous to them in a way, but profitable to the nation.

The Buddhists of South Viet Nam has for many years stressed the necessity for equality but could not advance any concrete general programme of reforms; they fail to describe clearly the kind of peace they wish South Viet Nam to achieve, a revolutionary peace from the roots of the society.

The Communists, we have said, present to the Vietnamese people their kind of revolution with a different spirit taking stability, democracy and welfare to be the goals of the nation.

The Buddhists clearly realize that wealth and abundance are not vital issues in both Viet Nams. Peace, freedom in a better society, a proud and strong nation are more important. Buddhist leaders have to understand the importance of their role in the country's history, not to let their good will be abused. In the present situation, all they could do is to hope that a truly representative government would emerge, which they could assist in rebuilding South Viet Nam.

What would be the Buddhists' next move, we cannot say, at the moment the Vietnamese people seem to have lost the fervour and enthusiasm for struggle, especially religious struggles after the series of crises of the mid 1960's. All the country's religious groups including Buddhists and Catholics stay surprisingly quiescent. South Viet Nam is waiting anxiously for the results of the Paris conference, a conference in which it does not occupy a prime importance, although its future is at stake.

Whatever solution comes out of the Paris talks, South Viet Nam is to undergo a big period of reforms, in which the role of the Buddhist leadership would be extremely important, if they could develop a clear concept of national revolution.

As I have mentioned earlier, relevant material on the subject is enormous. This bibliography includes books and other sources which I have access to and found useful in writing the thesis, but they are not the least a complete reference list in the field. In this bibliography, I have used the following order of arrangements for both English and foreign sources: Books, articles, official papers, newspapers and periodicals, documents. For Vietnamese and French sources, I have included a translation right under each original title. I have also joined to the bibliography the subtitles of Vietnamese journals and periodicals to give the reader an idea on their nature.

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