

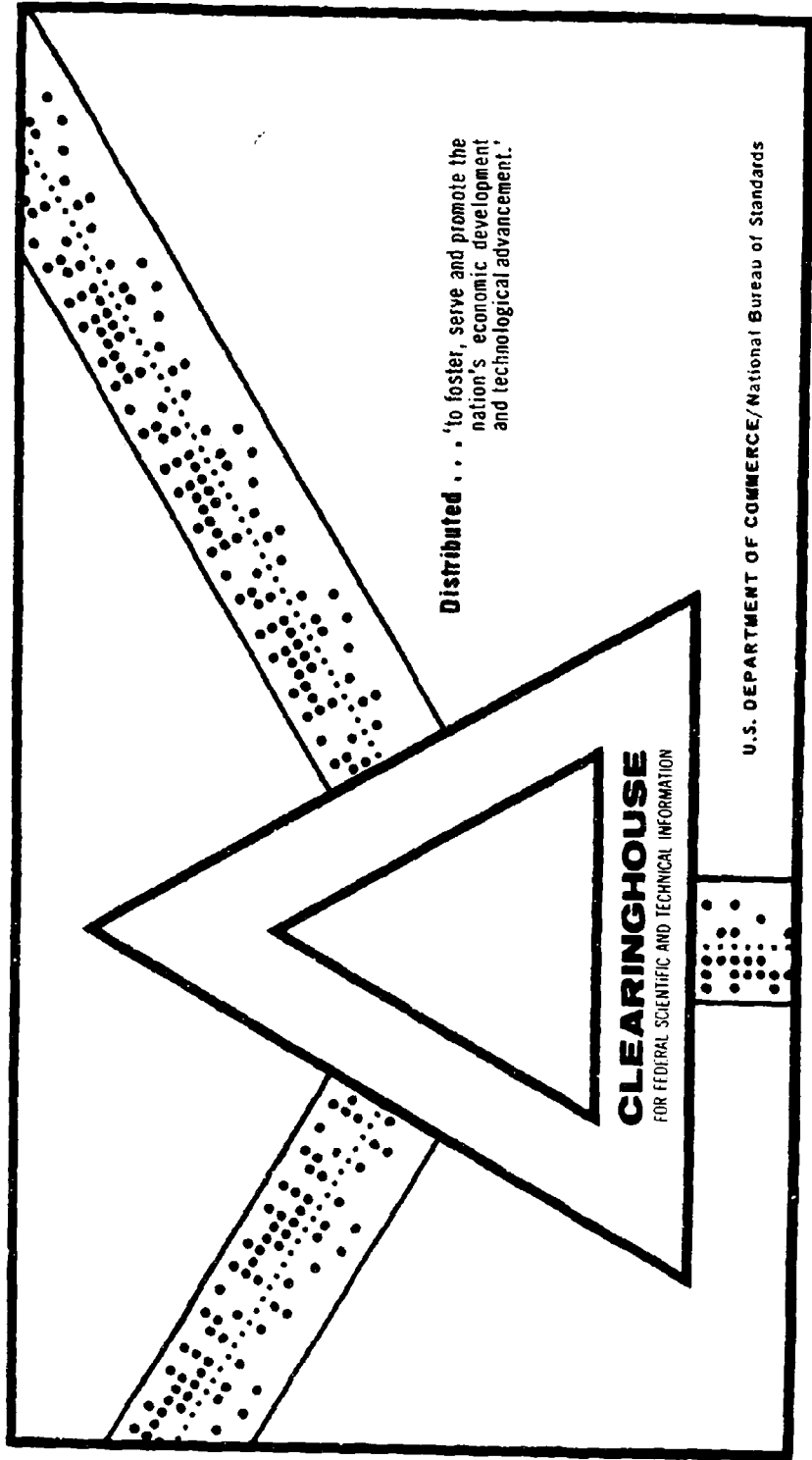
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAIN OF REEDS: SOME POLITICO-
MILITARY IMPLICATIONS

V. J. Croizat

Rand Corporation
Santa Monica, California

October 1969



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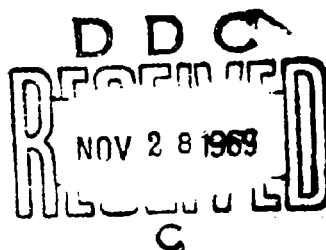
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PREFACE

The Plain of Reeds is a sparsely populated area of limited productivity lying astride the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border. It comprises a large part of the older or inland portion of the Mekong delta. Access to the Plain is limited to a few waterways and even fewer roads, and movement within the Plain is difficult because of rudimentary internal communications, heavy grasses, and marshy terrain. Indeed, much of the Plain lies under water during and immediately after the rainy season.

The reclamation of the Plain of Reeds for use as a resettlement area has long been contemplated by both the South Vietnamese government and international bodies, notably the Mekong Committee, which includes representatives of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam. Despite this interest, a number of preliminary studies have revealed that the task of reclamation would be particularly difficult and costly, primarily because a major effort at drainage would be required and the unproductive soils would have to be treated. Thus from the purely economic point of view, the development of the Plain of Reeds has always been given a low priority.

Because the physical characteristics of the Plain have impeded the extension of government influence into it, much of the Plain has been a haven for communist forces and their supporting elements since 1950. This situation continues to this day. Therefore, when considering the national security interests of South Vietnam, it becomes apparent that the penetration of the Plain by government forces and its eventual resettlement could help eliminate one major center of communist infection. For this reason the high costs of reclamation could conceivably be accepted, provided the measures taken in the resettlement process were carefully related to the security situation.

The timeliness of this question invites a general consideration of some of the politico-military implications of the development of the Plain of Reeds.

SUMMARY

The manifold and complex problems involved in developing the Plain of Reeds are aggravated by the unfortunate relations that continue to exist between Cambodia and South Vietnam. Historically, Cambodia at one time included the whole of the Mekong delta, and expansion of the Cambodian boundary was arrested by the establishment of the French protectorate over Cambodia and the extension of French control over Cochinchina. Although the Cambodians and Vietnamese are now associated in the Mekong Committee (whose object is the development of the whole lower Mekong River basin) and in international agreements regarding navigation on the Mekong River, there are no diplomatic relations between the two countries, and their long-standing animosities have been accentuated by the Vietnam War.

Any major developmental effort will require that the waters that periodically inundate the Plain be properly managed--and these waters all come from Cambodia. Under these circumstances it is difficult to visualize an effective unilateral reclamation of the Plain carried out solely by the Vietnamese. Admittedly, some modest development may be undertaken along the southern periphery of the Plain; but this would have only limited impact on the basic problem, which is to restore the area to government control.

It is concluded that the development of the Plain of Reeds could be initiated by the Vietnamese but that this undertaking should be carried on within the context of an eventual international effort which would include Cambodia. The mechanism for such an association already exists and needs only to be properly exploited.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	5
III. POLITICO-MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS	21
Appendix	
A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY	35
Introduction	35
Early History	36
The French Colonial Period	44
The Indochina War	50
The Post-Indochina War Period	52
The Contemporary Scene	61
B. THE VILLAGES IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS OF SOUTH VIETNAM	70
C. AGREEMENTS ON INLAND NAVIGATION	74
REFERENCES	83

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAIN OF REEDS:
SOME POLITICO-MILITARY IMPLICATIONS

V. J. Croizat^{*}

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Plain of Reeds^{**} is part of the Mekong River delta and extends over much of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese frontier zone. It thus enjoys international status and is proximate to the economic and demographic heartland of South Vietnam. The question of the possible development of the Plain is accordingly related to other issues, some general knowledge of which is necessary to make the specifics meaningful.

The implications and desirability of development programs in Southeast Asia have been major topics of international concern for several years. A United Nations report of 1959 makes reference to a preliminary plan already existing in 1947 for the opening of 500,000 hectares^{***} of land to cultivation in the Plain of Reeds. This was to be accomplished by the erection of a dike to separate the Plain from the Mekong River so as to control flooding, and by the digging of a number of canals to facilitate drainage.⁽¹⁾ In a far broader context, President Johnson delivered an address at Johns Hopkins University on April 7, 1965, in which he discussed the interests of the United States in Southeast Asia and spoke of the cooperative effort needed for development there in these terms:

The first step is for the countries of Southeast Asia to associate themselves in a greatly expanded cooperative

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^{**} Numerous references continue to use the French name "Plaine des Jongs" for the Plain of Reeds.

^{***} 1 hectare = 2.47 acres.

effort for development. We would hope that North Vietnam would take its place in the common effort just as soon as peaceful cooperation is possible.... The United Nations is already actively engaged in development in this area... and I would hope tonight that the Secretary General of the United Nations could...initiate as soon as possible, with the countries of that area, a plan for cooperation in increased development. For our part, I will ask the Congress to join in a billion dollar American investment in this effort as soon as it is under way.

North Vietnam has not responded to this invitation, but the pace of activity has otherwise quickened, as evidenced by the establishment of the Asian Development Bank in December 1965. Of further significance relative to the use of multinational arrangements to support developmental activities is that Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam, and Thailand joined together in 1957 to form the Committee for the Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin. This Committee has since flourished (in great part because of support from the United Nations) and now proclaims its ultimate object to be "... the comprehensive development of the water resources of the lower Mekong basin ... for the benefits of all people of the basin, without distinction as to nationality, religion, or politics."*

This is a far-reaching object, for, as the Director of the United Nations' Asian Institute for Economic Development Planning pointed out in December 1966, the entire development of Laos and Cambodia depends upon the development of the Mekong basin, and so does the development of the most backward parts of Thailand and Vietnam.** An extension of this view is contained in a study⁽²⁾ prepared by the Institute to identify the nature and magnitude of the problems that are expected to arise between 1966 and 1988.

* This statement, from the annual report of the Mekong Committee, published in 1966 by the United Nations, constitutes a significant broadening of the original function of the Committee which, as its full name indicates, was to concern itself solely with the "Coordination of Investigations."

** The Plain of Reeds lies within "the most backward parts" of Vietnam.

One of the major problems derives from the fact that the population of the four riparian states is expected to double during the period. Thus, even if the gross domestic product triples by 1988, as is anticipated, the gross per capita income will rise only by about half.* This is believed to be the minimum rise that can have a meaningful impact upon the people. Its attainment will depend largely upon the rate of population growth; and if this rate accelerates too steeply, any economic gains will quickly be offset.

A second problem is that while imports are expected to triple during the period, exports will only double. Thus the foreign exchange gap will grow, and although adjustments in this are possible, they are unlikely, since the prospects for an increase in raw-material exports--particularly those of agricultural origin--are poor, and also because it will be necessary to continue importing machinery and manufactured goods to carry on the process of import substitution. It is estimated that under these circumstances, the region as a whole will require foreign assistance totaling about \$1 billion per year.

Finally, the study concludes that the overall investment in the various projects now contemplated by the Mekong Committee should amount to about 8 percent of the total investment in the region and should not exceed a total of \$4 billion. Of this sum, only \$1.4 billion should be invested in the first ten-year period.

How the Vietnam War will affect these findings and the whole future of these four countries remains unclear. For the moment, only Cambodia appears to be able to escape the more serious consequences of a war whose cost to the United States in the past year could have ensured the economic development of Southeast Asia for the remainder of the century.**

The other three countries are all deeply involved. Laos, which has been the scene of a bitter struggle between Pathet Lao and loyalist

*The per capita income of Thailand--the most advanced of the four riparian states--is now only about \$100 per year.

**While Cambodia has continued to pursue its policy of neutrality, there is growing evidence that its territory, like that of Laos, has been violated by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong to better support their operations in South Vietnam.

forces for more than a decade, is being used by North Vietnam as a haven and line of communications for communist forces committed to the war in South Vietnam. Thailand, harassed by an incipient insurgency along its northern frontier and occasionally disturbed on its southern borders by terrorists who are a legacy from the insurrection in Malaya, has permitted the United States to develop extensive base facilities on its territory and has engaged forces directly in combat in South Vietnam. Finally, in South Vietnam the growth of an elaborate infrastructure to support allied military operations has been accompanied by the destructive consequences of prolonged combat and major shifts in populations.

Regardless of what the long-range impact of the Vietnam War may be, it is evident that the war adversely affects the functioning of the Mekong Committee, which must have regional cooperation and stability if it is to pursue the developmental effort needed to open new lands to growing populations. At the same time, the situation in South Vietnam, the origins of which are already highly complex, has been made even more confusing by the contradictions that emerge from the prosecution of the War. Unlike the "usual practice" of beginning reconstruction only after the outcome of a "normal" war, in South Vietnam both destruction and construction are pursued at the same time. Thus, all military operations must be considered in the light of their political, social, and economic consequences, while no development plan can be contemplated without regard for the military situation that prevails in the area involved.*

*Reference 3 suggests there are two revolutions in South Vietnam; first is the communist insurgency that "is and always has been a contrived and consciously directed politico-military campaign." Second is a social revolution that "is something much more formless, much less the result of deliberate intent and much less amenable to anyone's control." Without seeking the judge this view, there is little question that the situation in Vietnam results from the interplay of innumerable contemporary and historical factors. It is because of this that Appendix A ranges as broadly as it does.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To the west of Saigon, the variegated and congested farmlands that produce for the capital market soon yield to an unbroken and monotonous landscape that reaches to the limits of the horizon. In the rainy season that normally begins in April, the land is flooded and a turbulent sky prevails for twenty out of every thirty days during the late summer months. After the rains have ended and the waters have receded, fissured and unproductive areas appear. These are formed as the sun bakes the surface and the standing waters evaporate to leave behind acid mineral deposits that limit plant growth to a few tolerant species of grasses whose presence inspired the name of the area--the Plain of Reeds.

The limits of this Plain are not easily defined, for they merge imperceptibly within the 65,000 sq km that make up the Mekong delta.⁽⁴⁾ This vast delta consists of two alluvial deposits laid down at different times. At first, as the Mekong River broke out of the corridor between the Dang Rek and the Annamite mountains, it deposited huge quantities of silt to form the "old delta."⁽⁵⁾ This old delta, which includes the Plain of Reeds, obstructed the natural drainage so that part of the waters flowed northward into a shallow depression, the "Cambodian Saucer," to form the Tonle Sap or Great Lake. The main river then continued in a southeasterly direction to eventually lay down a "new delta" (Fig. 1).

The French identified the Plain of Reeds as an area of 7000 sq km extending to the east of the Mekong River, 5300 sq km of which are located in South Vietnam and the remainder in Cambodia.⁽⁶⁾ A more precise definition, currently used by the South Vietnamese government and adopted here, includes the southern portion of the Plain that was excluded by the French because its morphology and level of development were believed to be more closely representative of the lower delta area. Regardless of the merits of the French interpretation, the Vietnamese consider the Plain of Reeds to be the area extending from the left bank of the Mekong River eastward to the Eastern Vei Co River, and from the lateral National Route 1 in Cambodia southward to National Route 4 in Vietnam (Fig. 2). These boundaries encompass some 9500 sq km, of which about 6500 are located in South Vietnam.⁽⁷⁾ Included in the South Vietnamese

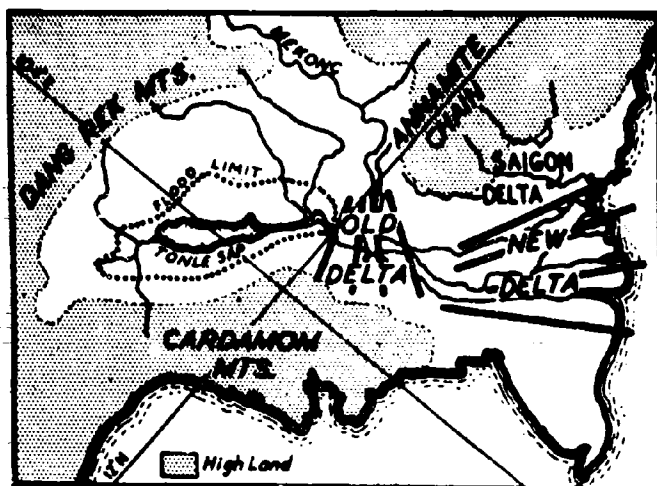


Fig.1—The Cambodian Saucer (5)

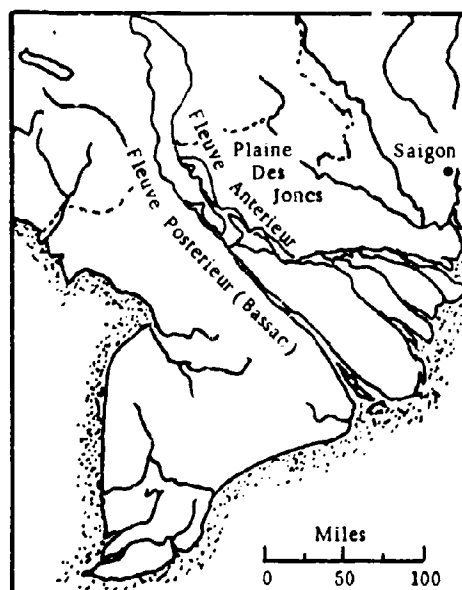
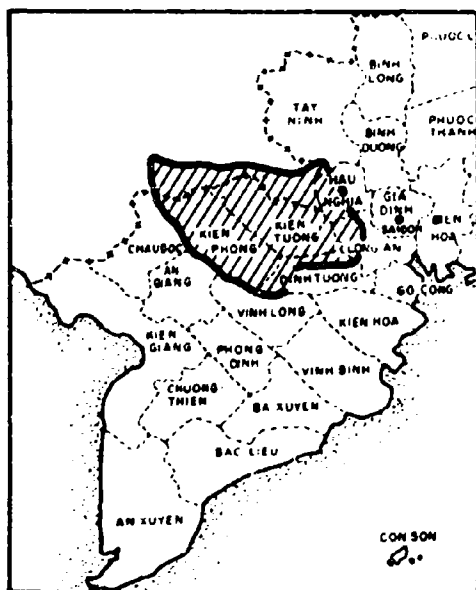


Fig.2—The Plain of Reeds (Plaine des Jones)

portion are the provinces of Kien Phong and Kien Thuong, and part of the provinces of Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Long An, and Ding Tuong. The one-third of the Plain that extends into Cambodia includes the southern parts of the provinces of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng.

Despite the inhospitable face that the Plain of Reeds turns to the casual observer, closer examination reveals that man has been able to sustain himself in the environment, primarily by conforming to the regime of the Mekong River.* (The Mekong River basin is shown in Fig. 3, and the basic characteristics of the Mekong River are given in Table 1.)

In the period of high waters from July through October, part of the waters of the Mekong flow into the Tonle Sap, quadrupling its dry-

* The Mekong River, 2600 mi in length, is the third largest river of Asia and by far the greatest waterway of the Southeast Peninsula. It rises in Tibet, from whose snows and glaciers also spring the Indus, the Salween, the Brahmaputra, the Yangtze, and the Huang. The source of the Mekong lies in the Dza Nag Mung range at an altitude of 16,700 ft, and for the first thousand miles of its southerly course it plunges most often through deep, narrow gorges carved in forbidding mountain terrain. But at the point where it emerges from China, it is some 1200 ft wide and lies at 1000 ft above sea level (see Fig. 3).

In its middle course, between Luang Prabang and Kratie, the Mekong River has an imposing and placid appearance. It nevertheless reveals its geologic immaturity by interrupting its calm flow with a series of nine rapids or falls. The most important of these are the Khone Falls where in 15 mi the Mekong crosses a transverse layer of basalt and drops 75 ft. This altitude differential is modest, but in terms of volume of flow, 2.5 million gallons per second, the Khone Falls rank as the second greatest waterfall in the world--having nearly twice the flow volume of Niagara. (8)

In the 100 mi between Khone and Kratie the Mekong passes over the last of its rapids. Below Kratie it assumes the characteristic form of a flood-plain river and continues onward for 400 km to the South China Sea.

In its upper reaches, the Mekong River receives its waters from melting snows, but in its lower basin, which comprises virtually all of Laos and Cambodia, more than one-third of Thailand, and the agricultural center of South Vietnam, the seasonal monsoon rains provide the main flow. The average annual rainfall over the whole of the lower basin is about 60 in. Virtually all of this falls during the summer period and causes the great fluctuations of water level that are characteristic of the river.

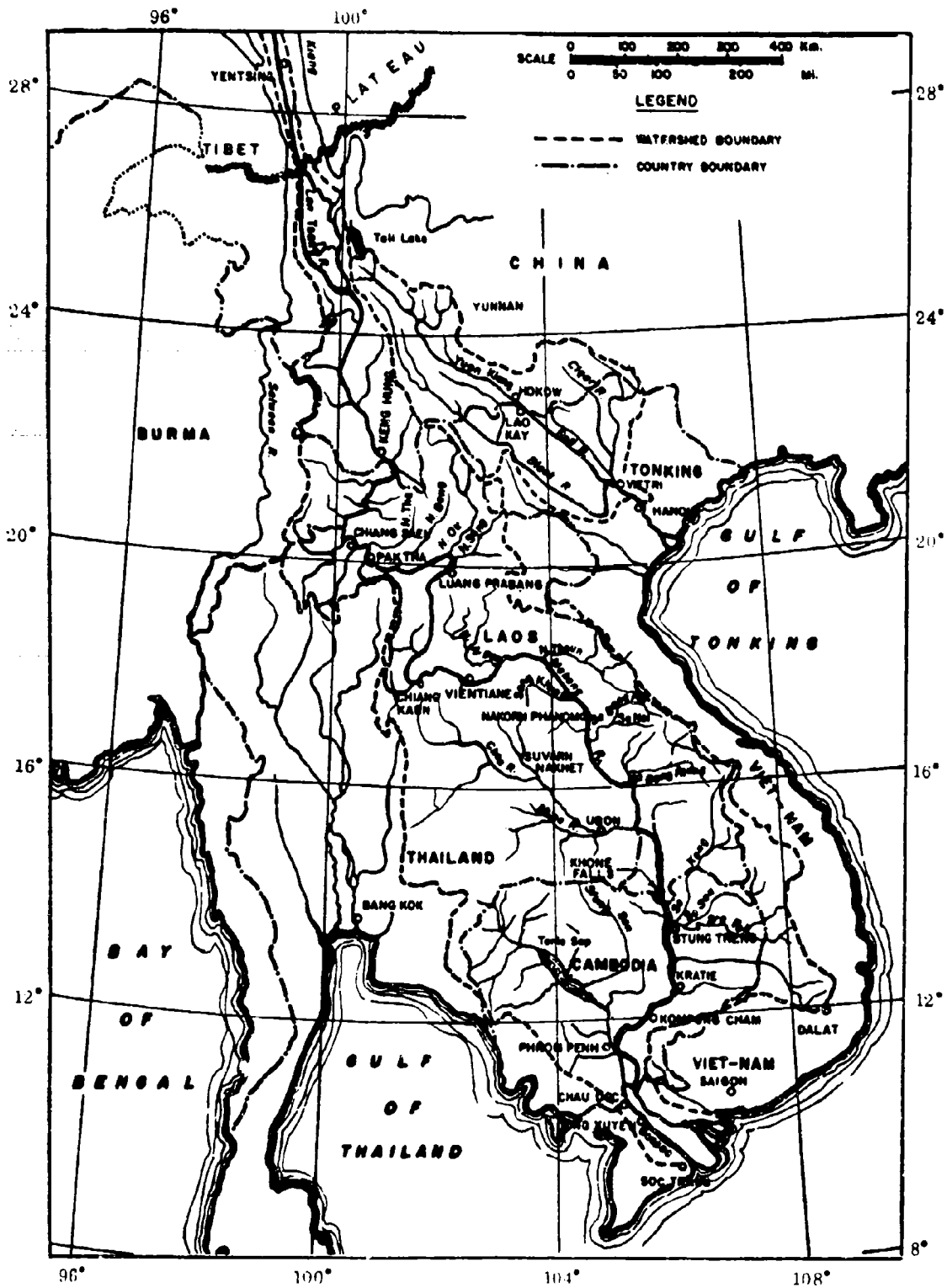


Fig.3—The Mekong River basin ⁽⁹⁾

Table 1
A SUMMARY OF BASIC DATA PERTAINING TO THE MEKONG RIVER⁽⁹⁾

Characteristic	Value
Total drainage area, sq km	795,000
Drainage of lower basin in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and South Vietnam, sq km	609,000
Length of main river, km	4,350
From source to Chiang Saen where Burma, Thai, and Laos borders meet (upper basin)	1,955
From Chiang Saen to the sea (lower basin)	2,395
Slope of river	
From source to China border	1:400
From China border to Vientiane	1:2,900
From Vientiane to river mouth	1:16,000
Maximum flood discharge, cu m/sec	
At Chiang Saen	11,900
At Vientiane	20,800
At Kratie	67,000
Average annual discharge, cu m/sec	
At Chiang Saen (1961-1963)	11,800
At Vientiane (1923-1944 and 1948-1963)	20,800
At Kratie (1933-1944, 1946-1953, and 1960-1963)	14,800
Minimum discharge, cu m/sec	
At Chiang Saen	570
At Vientiane	701
At Kratie	1,250

season expanse to over 10,000 sq km.* Despite the regulating effect of this phenomenon on the flow of the main river to the south, the volume of remaining water is such that it cannot be contained in the channels, and sheet flooding over much of the delta area occurs (Fig. 4). Following the end of the rains, the flow into the Tonle Sap reverses and much of the inundated area emerges as the waters recede. In the Plain of Reeds, however, this process is inhibited by the absence of

*Dobby⁽⁵⁾ states that the Tonle Sap produces more fish each year than does the North Sea and that the lands surrounding the lake are the chief rice-producing areas of Cambodia and constitute the core zone of the historic Khmer Kingdom.

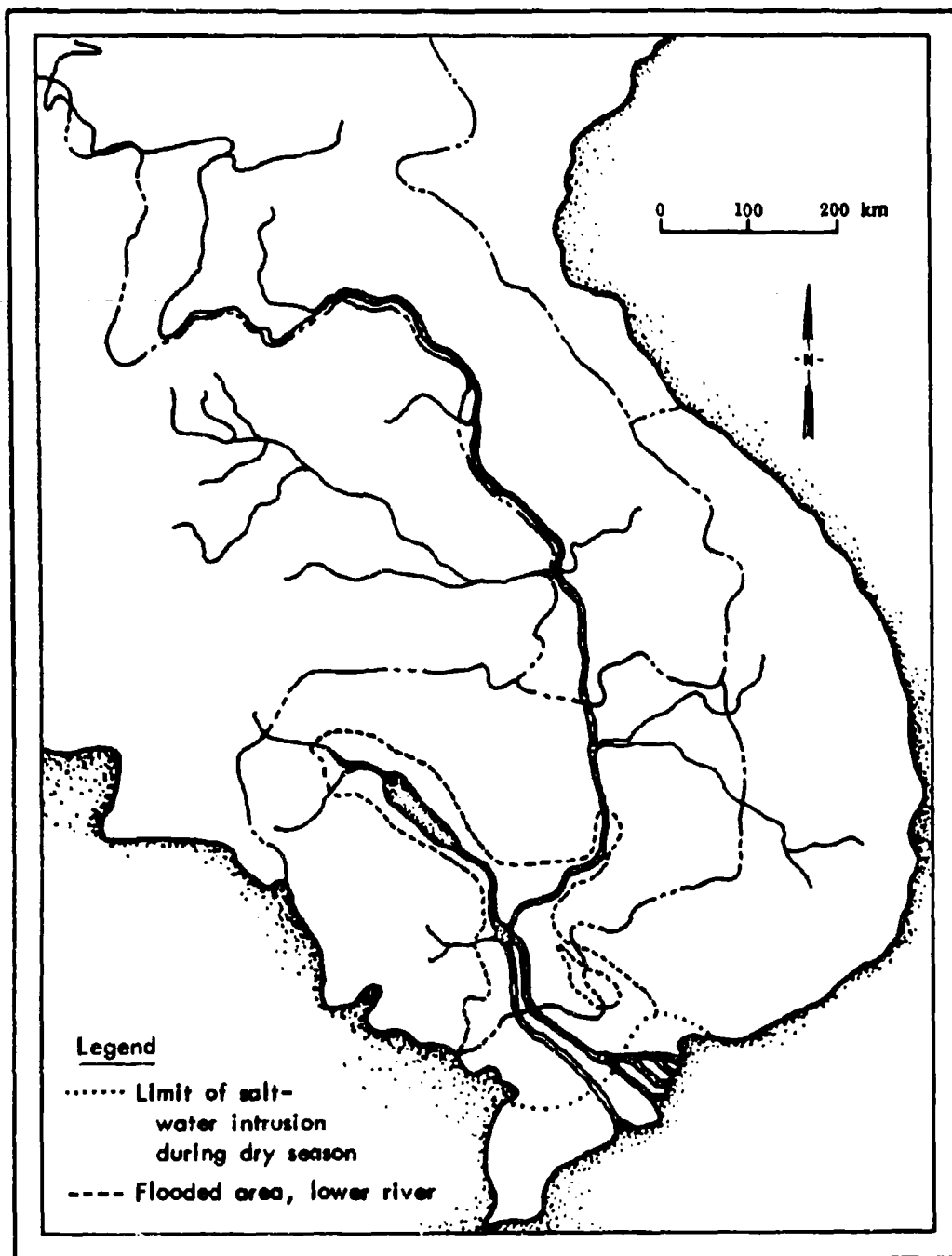


Fig.4—Inundated areas of the lower Mekong delta

any appreciable slope to facilitate drainage, and evaporation plays a large role.

This cyclic fluctuation in water level, coupled with an inland tidal effect, has largely dictated the agricultural practices that prevail in the Mekong delta area of South Vietnam. For example, in the area immediately south of Saigon, double-cropping of rice lands is possible; in the area centered on Cantho, the rice plants are transplanted twice each period, usually in August and September, with the harvest taking place in January; in the area that includes the mouths of the Mekong and the Camau Peninsula, the normal practice is to grow one rice crop with only a single transplanting; and finally, the Plain of Reeds and its vicinity is classed as a floating-rice area where the seed is broadcast in July and the crop is harvested in December and January. (10)

In terms of human activity, two separate areas of the Mekong delta may be identified. One extends south of Saigon and across the mouths of the Mekong where ease of access and fertile soils invited early colonization by the Vietnamese before the arrival of the French. There the settlements follow along the banks of the natural waterways, and the land is cultivated with individualistic irregularity. Population densities in this area range from about 150 to 250 inhabitants per square kilometer.

In the remainder of the delta, the opening of lands to cultivation was largely a French effort that began about one hundred years ago. The development of a system of canals to drain the area and facilitate transportation was undertaken in 1860. By 1936 this effort, which extended in part into the Plain of Reeds, had resulted in an increase in rice-land area from 0.5 million to 2.2 million hectares and a growth in exportable rice production from 57,000 to 1.7 million tons. Despite this growth, population densities remained low, fewer than 70 inhabitants per square kilometer. Settlement patterns, as would be expected, remained more open and in general conformed to the geometric uniformity of the canal system. (11) Table 2 provides more recent population data and reveals the continuing growth of the central delta provinces, located in IV Corps (shown in Fig. 5), accelerated in part by the resettlement of some half-million refugees who came down from North Vietnam during the evacuation in 1954-1955.



Fig.5—The four Corps areas in South Vietnam

Table 2
DELTA PROVINCES OF SOUTH VIETNAM⁽¹²⁾
(Comprising the IV Corps Area)

Provinces ^a	Area (sq km) ^b	Number of Villages ^c	Population ^b
Kien Giang	5,310	42	328,038
An Xuyen	5,033	23	240,076
An Giang	3,870	93	832,602
Chuong Thien	2,720	39	269,514
Phong Dinh	1,584	39	386,189
Ba Xuyen	4,803	69	605,895
Kien Phong	2,537	44	279,128
Vinh Long	1,819	81	555,561
Vinh Binh	2,578	75	538,641
Kien Tuong	2,285	21	52,429
Dinh Tuong	2,190	124	738,480
Kien Hoa	2,082	115	551,546
Totals	36,721	665	5,378,099

^aData are based upon 1963 Vietnam Province Maps. Since that time, new provinces have been formed as follows: Bac Lieu from parts of An Xuyen, Ba Xuyen, and Chuong Thien Provinces; Chaudoc from An Giang Province; Go Cong from Dinh Tuong Province; and Sa Dec from Vinh Long Province.

^bThe total area of South Vietnam is 171,665 sq km; the total population is 14,275,300.

^cThe areas and populations of the villages in the Plain of Reeds are given in Appendix B.

The population figures in Table 2 show that the average density is about 150 inhabitants per square kilometer, ranging from 350 per square kilometer in Dinh Tuong Province to less than 25 in Kien Tuong Province, located in the center of the Plain of Reeds. In contrast, the 9500 sq km of the Red River delta in North Vietnam support population densities averaging about 450 persons per square kilometer. In many rural areas this figure rises to 900 and in the more fertile lands densities exceed 1250 per square kilometer.⁽⁸⁾

An equally striking contrast between these two deltas is in the labor involved in the cultivation of rice. It has been estimated that in the south, it takes 70 man-days and 14 animal-days of labor to produce one crop of rice on one hectare. In the north, 200 man-days and

18 animal-days are required for the same task. Per capita rice production in the south, however, is more than twice that in the north, largely because of the more favorable conditions that prevail in the lower delta. Thus to meet the needs of the population in the north, rice lands have to be double-cropped. And this has been made possible only by the careful management of the water resources.* In the Mekong delta area, however, single-cropping alone produces a surplus of rice. Thus there has been little incentive, heretofore, to adapt the techniques of intensive agriculture and water management used in the north to permit double-cropping in the south. (11)

The Mekong River delta thus appears to be a highly productive agricultural area whose full potential has not yet been realized. The Plain of Reeds, however, although a part of this delta, is often excluded from this generality, primarily because of the "cat clays" that preliminary soil surveys have shown to exist there. These soils are formed in brackish sediments and are high in organic matter and sulfides. Evaporation causes these sulfides to oxidize, and the resulting sulfates promote the formation of sulfuric acid and aluminum sulfate, which are toxic to many plants. The remedies for this problem usually include heavy liming and the development of drainage systems intended to reduce the areas of standing waters.

It is significant that similar soils are to be found in the Chao Phraya River basin above Bangkok, where intensive rice cultivation is practiced. (13) Equally significant, there is an estimated reserve of 86 million metric tons of limestone rock suited for agricultural purposes in the Hatien area, which is readily accessible to the Plain of Reeds by barge traffic. (14) This suggests that while the acidic soils of the Plain constitute a problem, it is by no means insurmountable.

* To the traditional practices of wet-land rice cultivation that the Vietnamese acquired from the Chinese, the French added the benefits of mechanization. Shortly after the French annexed North Vietnam in 1882 they began to strengthen the dike system. This effort was greatly intensified in the twentieth century, when the main dikes in the central Tonkin delta area were reinforced to a total thickness of 150 ft, with heights of up to 40 ft. In addition, the existing irrigation works were supplemented by a series of new dams and canals, eventually extending a modern irrigation system over one-third of the rice lands of Tonkin.

Moreover, as indicated in Tables 3a and 3b, there is already rice-cropping, cultivation of other crops, and some animal husbandry in the Plain of Reeds.

The communication system of South Vietnam is representative of the heavy reliance placed upon the use of water transport. Throughout the country in 1964 there were only 6230 light and heavy trucks registered outside of Saigon. At that same time the Directorate of Navigation registry listed 3900 craft totaling over 150,000 tons. These craft made use of 2663 km of natural waterways and 2369 km of canals.* This density of inland waterways is overwhelmingly concentrated in the Mekong River delta** but is not uniformly distributed over that area. The Plain of Reeds is in general poorly served and includes only 233 km of significant canals. These are primarily the links that provide lateral communication between the Mekong River (the Tien Giang) and the Eastern Vei Co River.

With respect to roads, the situation in the Plain of Reeds is little better. As shown in Table 4, the road net in the Plain is modest and consists primarily of dirt roads whose utility during much of the year is marginal. (16)

The foregoing generalized summary of geographical factors indicates that the Mekong delta is a developing area whose exploitation has begun relatively recently.*** In the course of the French colonial

*The minimum class of canal included in this figure has a width of 10 m and a mean depth of 1.5 m.

**Immediately prior to World War II there were 1300 km of primary canals (minimum width 22 m, minimum low-water depth 2 m) in the Mekong delta. In addition, there were about 1000 km of secondary canals of variable width and depth. Canal-building activity was resumed at the end of the Indochina War in 1954, and by 1956 14 drainage canals, each 6 to 9 mi long, had been excavated, largely by hand. This work has continued primarily in connection with the reclamation of land for resettlement purposes and has been largely funded by U.S. economic assistance.

***The opening of lands in the Mekong delta increased rice production by 421 percent but upset traditional patterns of landholdings. In Tonkin and Annam over 98 percent of the landholdings remained small and accounted for 40 and 50 percent, respectively, of the cultivated area. In Cochinchina only 70 percent of the holdings were "small" and these accounted for just 15 percent of the used land. In contrast, 2.5 percent of the holdings contained 45 percent of the farm area. (17)

Table 3a
AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN PLAIN OF REEDS PROVINCES⁽¹⁵⁾^a
(1963)

Province	Province Area (sq km)	Crop Area (hectares) ^b							
		Rice ^c	Corn	Fruit Trees	Mung Bean	Manioc	Sweet Potato	Sugar Cane	Peanut
Dinh Tuong	2,190	158,580	250	9,150	...	200	280	350	10
Kien Phong	2,537	77,950	1,700	1,650	1,800	810	980	410	450
Kien Thuong	2,285	13,670	23	80	15	830	195	5	35
Long An ^d	2,248	143,080	10	200	...	700	35	4,510	400
									350
									100

^aPlain of Reeds provinces also grow some bananas, pineapples, soybeans, and garden vegetables. In addition, Kien Phong Province has a few hectares in jute and cotton.

^bA hectare is 10,000 sq m, or 0.01 sq km, or 2.47 acres.

^cRice land in South Vietnam totals about 2.5 million hectares producing about 5 million metric tons of rice per year. In Cambodia a total of 2.3 million hectares of rice lands produce 2.5 million tons of rice per year. In 1963 no rice was shipped from Saigon to Plain of Reeds provinces. However, the following shipments of rice were made to Saigon from these provinces: Dinh Tuong, 80,023 tons; Kien Phong, 12,526 tons (vice 797 tons in 1962); Long An, 94,832 tons.

^dLong An Province area includes the present Hau Nghia Province.

Table 3b
LIVESTOCK POPULATION IN PLAIN OF REEDS PROVINCES⁽¹⁵⁾
(1963)

Province	Buffaloes	Cattle	Pigs
Dinh Tuong	753	140	2,351
Kien Phong	115	486	537
Kien Thuong	110	16	90
Long An	710	198	1,843

Table 4

THE ROAD NET IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS PROVINCES
(kilometers)

Province	Road Type				Total
	Asphalt	Gravel	Laterite	Earth	
Hau Ghia	62.8	41.2	92.4	25.9	222.3
Long An	69.2	63.3	211.6	63.9	408.0
Dinh Tuong	135.6	149.5	35.0	79.2	399.3
Kien Phong	9.2	86.0	...	108.8	204.4
Kien Tuong	0.5	2.0	12.6	159.6	174.7
Total	277.3	342.0	351.6	437.4	1,408.7
Total SVN	5,493.7	3,655.9	2,531.7	8,345.9	20,027.2

period rice lands in the Mekong delta were increased fourfold. However, population densities in that area remain far below those of the Tonkin delta, where intensive agriculture and the careful management of water resources have long been practiced.

Understandably, the development of agricultural lands in the Mekong delta has been determined largely by their accessibility.* With vast tracts readily at hand to reclaim, there has been little incentive to reach out into inhospitable areas such as the Plain of Reeds. Moreover, reports of the infertility of its soils and the need for a drainage system have tended to place the Plain low on the list of development projects. As a consequence, the penetration of the Plain of Reeds has been more haphazard than planned and has thus far been confined largely to its periphery.

*The European penetration not only altered the pattern of self-sufficient subsistence economies that had prevailed but also produced an imbalance in the structure that it introduced. The European interest centered upon the development of sources of raw materials, primarily agricultural products, to meet the needs of foreign markets. This developmental effort, which included the necessary infrastructure to facilitate exploitation, required substantial capital. Thus, activity was concentrated in the more accessible areas and on a few of the more lucrative products. As a result, Vietnam and Thailand were extensively affected, Cambodia only slightly, and Laos almost not at all.

Physical problems of the type involved in bringing the Plain of Reeds into productivity have been encountered and overcome elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the reclamation of this area appears to be technically feasible. But, even assuming that the costs are manageable, there remains the question of the priority to be assigned to such an enterprise.*

Related to this question is the fact that the isolation of the Plain of Reeds has for decades encouraged its use as a haven for dissident elements. The French yielded much of the area to the Viet Minh during the Indochina War, and in more recent times the Viet Cong have made the same liberal use of its rudimentary infrastructure for basing and transit purposes. Equally pertinent, the Plain is a frontier zone marking the high-water mark of Vietnamese expansion.** This expansion was arrested by the French in the 1860s, but the animosities that grew out of the centuries of struggle continue to exercise their malevolent influence upon the relations that exist today among Cambodia and its Thai and Vietnamese neighbors. This is readily exemplified in the

*Reference 1 states that the Economic Study Mission to Vietnam did not consider it desirable to further increase the extent of rice lands in the delta; and that unless the lands were to be opened for purposes other than rice-growing, it would be preferable not to undertake major drainage or irrigation works in either the Plain of Reeds or the Camau Peninsula area. In summary, the Mission concluded that (1) priority of effort in terms of hydraulic works should be placed upon construction and improvements in areas already under cultivation unless activities other than rice-cropping were to be introduced; (2) to ensure the development of diversified agricultural production and the attainment of an economic balance between the two major areas of the country (the delta and the coastal plains), priority should be placed on creating irrigation systems along the coastal plains of central Vietnam; and (3) with reference to works that might be undertaken in the delta proper, priority should be given to the control of saline tidal waters rather than to inland drainage efforts.

**This is true only insofar as the political boundary is concerned. The Vietnamese have been emigrating to Cambodia since the late seventeenth century and today number about 350,000 in that country; they form about 28 percent of the population of Phnom Penh.⁽²⁾ The fact that the Mekong delta once formed part of the Khmer (Cambodian) Empire is evidenced by the fact that some 450,000 Cambodians remain today within Vietnam.⁽¹⁸⁾

limited trade that takes place among these nations today.* (The background for these relations in the context of the overall history of the Indochinese Peninsula from the beginning of the Christian era to the present is summarized in Appendix A.)

It is highly significant, nevertheless, that Cambodia is joined with its three neighbors in the Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin.**

At its inception, the Committee was concerned primarily with the development of the water resources of the basin for multiple purposes--power, irrigation, flood control, and navigation. Today, its range of interests has broadened to cover virtually all aspects of human activity in the area. A measure of the magnitude of these interests and the potential they represent is reflected in Table 5, which addresses mainstream projects under consideration, and in Table 6, which reveals in small part some of its accomplishments.

The Mekong Committee, whose charter stipulates that its decisions be unanimously agreed, thus serves the direct interests of its four members in matters affecting their internal development and provides them with a forum for dispassionate discussion when their relations are otherwise tenuous.***

Another such forum, which is presently inactive and excludes Thailand, is to be found in the Convention Regulating Maritime and Inland

* There is virtually no trade between Thailand and Cambodia. In 1965 out of imports totaling 557,700 tons, South Vietnam contributed 1,800 tons; out of a total of Cambodian exports of 812,000 tons, only 3,600 were destined for South Vietnam.

** An Executive Agent to manage the daily affairs of the Committee was designated in 1959. His office in Bangkok includes 24 professional posts and serves as the link between 21 nations now supporting the activities of the Committee, other agencies of the United Nations, and the ECAFE secretariate through which the Committee draws upon the resources of the United Nations. (19)

*** Cambodia did not attend the first two Committee meetings in 1967 because of difficulties that arose over the financing of the Prek Thnot dam. However, the personal intervention of the Secretary General of the United Nations helped resolve the problem. According to the Committee's Semi-Annual Report (first half 1969) "preconstruction agreements including the signature of bilateral agreements between Cambodia and the cooperating countries were virtually complete at the end of June 1969."

Navigation on the Mekong and Inland Navigation to the Port of Saigon.
Its antecedents and present text are provided in Appendix C.

Table 5
POSSIBLE MAINSTREAM PROJECTS ON THE MEKONG RIVER⁽²⁰⁾

Project	Purpose ^a	Location	Power Capacity (Mw)	Irrigated Area (millions of acres)	Navigation Improvement (mi)
Pak Beng	PNF	Laos	1.45	...	168
Luang Prabang	PN	Laos	0.56	...	66
Pak Kay	PN	Laos	0.06	...	60
Pa Mong	PINF	Laos/Thailand	1.80	2.50	204
Thakkek	PIN	Laos/Thailand	0.50	0.12	96
Khemmarat	PIN	Laos/Thailand	1.45	0.12	156
Khone	PN	Laos/Cambodia	1.00	0.12	30
Stung Treng	DINF	Cambodia	2.20	2.40	132
Sambor	PIN	Cambodia	1.60	0.36	48
Tonle Sap	PNID	Cambodia	...	7.20	72
Totals	...		10.62	12.82	1032

^aP = power; N = navigation; I = irrigation; F = flood; D = drainage.

Table 6
TRIBUTARY PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION⁽²¹⁾

Project	Purpose ^a	Location	Power Capacity (Kw)	Irrigated Area (acres)	Status
Nam Pong	PIFR ^b	Thailand	24,000	110,000	Completed
Nam Pung	PIFR	Thailand	7,000	60,000 ^c	Completed
Prek Thnot	PIF	Cambodia	18,000	168,000	Contin.
Lower Se Done	P	Laos	1,400	...	Contin.
Nam Dong	P	Laos	1,000	...	Contin.
Nam Ngum	PI	Laos	120,000	75,000	Contin.
Totals	...		171,400	413,000	

^aP = power; I = irrigation; F = flood; R = recreation.

^bIncludes improvement of fisheries.

^cPower to be released for free pumping of water to irrigate an additional 20,000 acres.

III. POLITICO-MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

On the basis of purely economic factors, there is little apparent urgency for the reclamation and resettlement of the Plain of Reeds. Studies previously made by Vietnamese agencies and several other national and international organizations give scant, if any, attention to this area. And when the Plain is addressed, references are made to the need for flood control, for extensive drainage, for soil treatment, and for the improvement and extension of its limited communications facilities. In short, the manifold difficulties and high costs attendant upon its development are the items most frequently stressed. Moreover, discussions by international bodies on the development of the Plain are at times related to the construction of the Steng Trung dam in Cambodia, which will have a decisive effect upon the control of waters in the southern part of the lower Mekong River basin.*

The urgency for developing the Plain of Reeds cannot, however, be decided solely from an assessment of the economic factors involved--nor does it necessarily have to be related to projects such as the Steng Trung dam that are a long way into the future. This view is clearly reflected in a letter dated May 18, 1964, wherein the Executive Agent for the Mekong Committee addressed the Regional Representative for Asia and the Far East of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in these terms:

As I am sure you know, one of the biggest problems to which the Mekong Committee hopes to address itself is that of the Plaine des Jones.... For many decades this area has been an economic and social problem area of major proportions, not least because any resources available for agricultural development have tended to be utilized in areas with better prospect for economic returns.... We are of course aware that the potential benefit/cost ratio of any such reclamation of the Plaine des Jones would probably be

* The Mekong Committee has a number of mainstream projects under consideration, among which that of Pa Mong, just west of Vientiane in Laos, is the most advanced. This project, which hopefully could be completed by 1980, will not have significant influence over the waters of concern to Cambodia and South Vietnam. The proposed dam at Stung Treng in Cambodia will, however, be of vital importance to both countries.

low. But there are abundant social reasons which might nevertheless mean that the Mekong Committee, and in particular, the governments of Vietnam and Cambodia, might after a detailed feasibility investigation has been carried out, decide to press for such reclamation.*

An even more compelling determinant affecting the issue of opening the Plain of Reeds to settlement is that of the Vietnam War. This arises from the fact that the Plain is largely communist-controlled and lies along a border area that facilitates illicit movement between South Vietnam and Cambodia. The national security interests of South Vietnam are thus directly involved, and these unquestionably would be served if the Plain were to be reclaimed and settled. But this is more than an engineering problem, for, as has already been demonstrated, the modest reclamation and resettlement programs that have been undertaken in the Plain in the past have suffered as much from the hostility of man as they have from that of nature.

The development of the Plain of Reeds thus appears to be a complex matter regardless of the perspective from which it is viewed.** This becomes even more true if the undertaking is to be given a high priority because of its national security implications. In this latter event, it would then become part of the constructive effort that parallels the destructive effort in wartime; this relationship is very characteristic of the Vietnam War and deserves some elaboration.

* During an interview in his Bangkok office, Dr. C. Hart Schaff, the Executive Agent for the Mekong Committee, kindly made available his private files on the development of the Plain of Reeds problem.

** A sudden ending of the Vietnam War would not necessarily make the problem of moving into the Plain of Reeds a much easier matter, nor would the national security interests for doing so be lessened. The prolonged exposure of the present population of the Plain to communist influence will tend to make it hostile to any government penetration, and it is for this very reason that this communist influence must be eliminated if the stability of the government of Vietnam is to be assured.

The idea that parallel and concurrent destructive and constructive efforts may be required in a war is not new.* This is the essential quality of the wars of pacification waged by colonial powers in assembling their empires. However, the concept has gained new prominence in modern times because recent wars are waged over ideological issues which present-day technology and techniques permit to be so manipulated that a total involvement of the people results.

This prominence is evident in the mass of literature that has become available in little more than a decade.** Many of these writings address the unconventional or unorthodox nature of such wars and often seek to identify separate phases or component elements of this type of human conflict. The contribution that much of this literary activity has made, and is making, to a better understanding modern war is acknowledged. There is, nevertheless, a danger that in this dissection process the intimacy between the destructive and constructive aspects may appear to lose its criticality. There can be no separate pacification phase in wars of pacification because in such wars action on the social, political, economic, and military fronts must go on at the same time, and these efforts must all be kept in balance.

This is clearly noted in the lessons drawn from the experience of the Indochina War by the French, who viewed pacification in the following general terms: (23)

For a province to be considered pacified, it is necessary for the authority of the legal government to manifest itself by the restoration of normal political institutions, for the clearing of the area to have been conducted by the people themselves and, finally, for the centers of population to have organized self-defense units capable of protecting the critical points of their province.

*The French General Allard delivered an address at SHAPE on November 15, 1957, in which he characterized the Algerian War as being conducted "under two categories [of missions]: Destruction and Construction." In his elaboration of this theme he stated, "These two terms are inseparable. To destroy without building up would mean useless labor; to build without first destroying would be a delusion." (22)

**Marine Corps Bulletin 1500, dated as early as April 10, 1962, contains a "Selected Bibliography on Counterinsurgency" that runs to 56 single-spaced pages.

The French admitted that these conditions were never fully attained in Vietnam and attributed this largely to the fact that they too often ignored the cardinal rule that "... all ground combat operations should have a political purpose." In an elaboration of this view, the French claimed that "... political action alone can resolve nothing; neither can military force alone produce decisive results."

Finally, in the summary of their findings on the nature of the pacification war in Indochina, the French concluded:

... there are no rules that are sacred or eternal ... but we can ignore what we have seen revealed in all of our colonial campaigns only at the price of certain failure.... The experience of eight years of war [in Indochina], however, suggests that the rules inherited from Lyautey and other great colonial leaders should be modified slightly to conform to the following postulate: it is not possible to undertake a policy of pacification in regions where the inhabitants have fallen under communist influence as long as the Marxist organization remains there. The revolutionary apparatus must be destroyed, or at least shattered, before the enemy's techniques of indoctrination can be countered by our own propaganda. The politico-social hold of the communist party denies to the individual all other forms of thought or life. The village cell, the informer, the administrator, ... all of these must be eliminated so that the individual can again exercise his own free will. With this reservation, none of the historical techniques lost their validity.

This is a singularly useful commentary, for it identifies the communist organizational structure as the one most important objective toward which the destructive effort in Vietnam must be directed. This was true during the Indochina War and remains true today. It also confirms the fact that wars of pacification are not pursued in violation of the principles of war that have emerged from centuries of conflict. Nonetheless, the need for consonant destructive and constructive efforts tremendously complicates the application of some of these principles at the highest levels of authority.

For example, the principle of the objective specifies that operations are to be directed toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. Another principle--that of unity of command--prescribes that the decisive application of power requires unity of

effort, and that while this may be attained by cooperation, it is best achieved by vesting a single commander with the requisite authority. But the question arises, Is the military, responsible for the destructive effort, to determine the objectives and exercise overall command, or shall the civil authority, concerned with the constructive effort, have the ultimate power of selection and decision?*

The question has not been answered in the Vietnam War. Moreover, circumstances such as the failure of past resettlement programs (e.g., the agrovillage and strategic-hamlet programs) suggest that even unity of purpose is not always attained. "In the case of both the agrovillages and strategic hamlets the committees responsible for their administration were not established until after the program had started." (24) But, administrative ineptness notwithstanding, the failure of the agrovillage and strategic-hamlets programs was largely due to the unrealistic views taken of security.**

Security, on preliminary consideration, appears to be little more than a military problem of the application of force.*** If this were so, all that would be necessary to provide security for an area would be to ensure that there are adequate police or equivalent units within it, and that these be reinforced, in case of need, by mobile reserve formations. The experience of the Vietnam War, however, reveals that such collective security measures are not always a guarantee that

* This dilemma was evident in Indochina in the 1949-1950 period, when the French High Commissioner, concerned with putting the best possible face upon the new French-supported government of Bao Dai, insisted on maintaining significant military forces in Cochinchina for security reasons, whereas the Commander in Chief of the French Expeditionary Corps, concerned with the imminence of Chinese Communist support for the Viet Minh, wanted to make the major effort in Tonkin to destroy Ho Chi Minh's forces before Chinese support could become meaningful.

** Ngo Dinh Nhu on August 23, 1962, stated that hamlet self-defense forces would be armed by the government for only six months. At the end of that time the weapons would be withdrawn and the defenders would be armed with whatever weapons they managed to capture from the communists.

*** The term "military" is used here in the broadest possible sense and applies to the use of armed forces of any and all types, including police.

security for the individual also exists. This fact has been amply confirmed over the years by the long list of officials, teachers, and other government workers who have been brutally murdered by the communists in villages that were ostensibly secure.*

Security, on closer consideration, thus appears to depend on the continuing presence of friendly forces that are at least in part provided from among the residents of the area concerned. Only in this way can the people be made to feel secure, for only in this way do the people have a direct interest in their own safety. This attitudinal aspect of security was noted by the French during the Indochina War; they wrote of their experience with local defense forces in these terms: "Militias must be the armed expression of the will of the society.... Any uniform rule would be wrong, for societies differ.... Anything and everything can be thought of and accomplished as long as the relation between the social group and its security force is retained." (23)

This emphasis on security is deliberate, for security is the one single factor that will determine the success or failure of any reclamation and settlement program for the Plain of Reeds. Without proper security, the program is virtually certain to fail; but even with proper security there is no guarantee of success.

If success is taken to mean the opening of the area to settlements that will be economically productive, socially progressive, and politically stable, then all of the factors that go into attaining these objectives must be given their full measure in the development planning. Moreover, the need for a fully integrated plan for the development of the Plain of Reeds must in turn also serve the broader national interests.

As an example, it appears desirable for South Vietnam to develop a regionally interdependent economy based upon diversified agriculture and light industry. The object would be to provide an improved balance

*According to AID statistics, there were 884 local officials murdered in villages in 1967. In addition, an average of 27 officials were abducted by the Viet Cong each month during the same year.

in living conditions among the different parts of the country, notably the delta and coastal areas. By thus promoting the growth of regional and national trade patterns, some of the undesirable aspects of excessive provincialism would be overcome. As a corollary, this would also contribute to a sense of national cohesiveness which should facilitate the exercise of government functions. This is particularly important, for, as pointed out in Appendix A, South Vietnam has a long history of political fragmentation.

The aim of developing such an integrated economy may at first appear to run contrary to the traditional patterns of life in South Vietnam that center around relatively self-sufficient village entities. However, it must be recalled that these patterns have largely been shattered as a consequence of the Vietnam War. Thousands of people have been uprooted and displaced in movements that began during the Indochina War; subsequent refugee migrations took place immediately after the Geneva Accords of 1954, and these have been accelerated greatly by the intensified combat operations of the last three years. These unfortunate events can nevertheless be made to serve the future interests of the people and their government--if in the resettlement process the people are given the knowledge and means to pursue a better and more productive life than they had in the past.* Evidently, if an area such as the Plain of Reeds is to be opened, it is essential that the settlement sites be readily accessible, that they include basic facilities, and that they be capable of becoming productive without undue effort or time. This will be all the more important in light of the fact that South Vietnam has become prematurely urbanized and unusual numbers of people may have found a greater appeal in this novel experience than in a return to the soil.

*This was the essence of the plan put forth by General Sir Harold Briggs for the resettlement of 423,000 Chinese squatters into New Villages during the Malayan Emergency. His aim was not only to resettle the squatters but "to give them a standard of local government and a degree of prosperity that they would not wish to exchange for the barren austerity of life under the communist's parallel hierarchy." (25)

It is evident that the politico-military considerations involved in the reclamation and settlement of the Plain of Reeds cannot in practice be divorced from the social and economic aspects of the issue. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the reclamation and other preparatory work that must be accomplished before settlement can take place cannot be undertaken unless adequate security exists--and this is a politico-military problem with both domestic and international implications for South Vietnam.

An extension of the areas of the Plain of Reeds that are presently under the control of the government of South Vietnam will require substantial military forces for two major reasons. First, the terrain is extensive and difficult, and it is well known by the communists who have long used the area; also, the resident populations, because of their prolonged subjection to communist influence, will be reluctant to provide any support to government forces.* Second, once government forces have gained control over an area they must be prepared to provide garrisons of sufficient strength to ensure that the communists cannot return.

This last point raises two related issues. First, there is little merit in undertaking search-and-destroy operations in the Plain of Reeds unless these are associated with plans to retain control over liberated areas. This will be particularly important when operating in populated areas where the effort must be placed on gaining the support of the people, whose contribution in terms of intelligence information should materially facilitate the continuation of operations elsewhere. The related issue is that military pressure against communist forces may encourage them to seek safety over the border in Cambodia, from where they can continue to harass or otherwise attempt to nullify the gains made by the government forces. To minimize this possibility, it thus becomes desirable that government forces make early efforts to control border areas that provide the communists with

*The terrain difficulties can be overcome in part by the use of helicopters, armored personnel carriers, specialized rivercraft, air-cushion vehicles, and other equipment available to Allied forces in South Vietnam.

easy access routes between Cambodia and South Vietnam. This is not intended to mean that the government of Cambodia sanctions communist use of its territory; rather, it is simply a fact that the communists disregard international boundaries when this serves their needs. In any event, the movement of South Vietnamese forces into areas contiguous to the Cambodian border will inevitably have international implications.

Cambodia has been engaged in intermittent conflict with the Thais since the fourteenth century and with Vietnam since the Vietnamese broke the power of Champa over 500 years ago. Cambodia thus looks upon the military power of present-day Thailand and South Vietnam with a concern that extends far into the past.* It follows that Cambodia's major interest is the preservation of its territorial integrity, and this, in essence, is the cornerstone of its foreign policy.**

Cambodia's fears in this regard were aggravated at the close of the Indochina War by its dependence upon the Mekong River for most of

* It must be recalled that the Mekong delta area that nourishes most of the people of South Vietnam was until the mid-eighteenth century part of Cambodia. Requests for its return by Cambodia were made in 1948 and repeated again during the 1954 Geneva Conference. These claims have not been pursued, but they are kept alive. Fuel was added to the fire in 1956 by Vietnamese claims over some offshore islands near Phu Quoc and by the blockade imposed by Vietnam that same year to shipping transiting the Mekong River to Phnom Penh. Of more recent date was the declaration by Prince Sihanouk that the Cambodians fleeing out of South Vietnam incident to military activity in the border areas during 1960-1961 were victims of Vietnamese persecution, which reflected a policy of cultural extinction. These views notwithstanding, there has been a continuation of border incidents since the intensification of the Vietnam War, and there is little question that the Viet Cong have found refuge in Cambodia, although apparently without sanction by the Cambodian government. Relations between Thailand and Cambodia have been no less acrimonious. An example of this has been the prolonged litigation over jurisdiction of the Phra Viharn temple located along the remote border in the Dang Rek mountains. The decision of the World Court in favor of Cambodia in 1962 on this issue precipitated troop movements and demonstrations that attested to the depth and intensity of feelings between the two countries concerned.

** The material on Cambodia's foreign relations has been drawn primarily from Refs. 26 and 27.

its foreign trade. Thus, in 1954 Cambodia demanded an internationalization of that waterway, which was accorded in a convention signed in Paris at the end of that year. (The text of this Convention is contained in Appendix C.) These fears were further allayed in 1959 when the port of Sihanoukville came into operation.*

Cambodia also has had a front seat for the drama of the clash between major power interests in Laos and more recently has been on the periphery of this same contest being waged in South Vietnam. It is evident that with this firsthand experience, Cambodia is eager to avoid any possibility that similar confrontations may extend over into its own lands. Finally, the text of many speeches made by Prince Sihanouk reveal an awareness of Cambodia's former grandeur and suggest that he would be pleased to acquire a greater measure of influence in international affairs. To pursue these objectives, Cambodia needs to retain its freedom of action, and this explains its persistent efforts to obtain formal recognition as a neutral state.

The diplomatic maneuvers employed by Cambodia in pursuit of its policy of neutrality have been varied. Cambodia severed its diplomatic relations with Thailand in 1958, resumed them in February 1959, and broke them again in October 1961. Earlier, in 1956, Cambodia signed an economic and technical aid agreement with Communist China and in 1958 extended formal recognition to that country.** Also,

* In 1964 the Port of Sihanoukville handled 186,842 tons of incoming cargo and 527,937 tons of outgoing cargo. During the same year, Phnom Penh handled 325,500 tons of incoming cargo and 382,200 tons of outgoing. (28)

** In the course of these and other relations, Cambodia received the following sums in foreign aid (some being in the form of loans) between 1955 and 1964:

<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>(\$ millions)</u>
United States	
Economic	309.7
Military	94.0
Communist China	48.1
France	53.2
USSR	49.3
Other bloc and non-	
bloc countries	29.0
United Nations	3.1

despite the fact that it looks upon all Vietnamese as traditional enemies, Cambodia had formal relations with South Vietnam until 1963 and has maintained contact with the Hanoi government. In 1966 Cambodia further agreed to the establishment of the North Vietnamese embassy in Phnom Penh. Moreover, in its steadfast quest for a guarantee of its borders, Cambodia has engaged in discussions with representatives of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Meanwhile, in May 1965 Cambodia requested the withdrawal of the U.S. diplomatic mission when it felt that pressures to identify itself with the West were contrary to its status as a neutral--a decision facilitated by the fact that U.S. forces were occasionally involved in the incidents that occurred along the border areas.

While Cambodia's concerns for its sovereignty cannot but arouse sympathy, it is evident that by consorting with the enemies of the Saigon government, Cambodia is exacerbating the difficulties of achieving a reconciliation of the differences between the two countries. Moreover, whatever Cambodia's motives may be, its actions usually will be judged in terms of the Vietnam War. And this, inevitably, will continue to provide grist for the propaganda mill. All of these problems are further aggravated by the use of Cambodian (and Laotian) territory for base and transit purposes to support Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army activities in South Vietnam.

In sum, Cambodia is engaged in a delicate international balancing act where it looks upon Thailand and South Vietnam as its most immediate burdens. However, while in the recent past Cambodia appealed to France to help ensure its survival, Cambodia today prefers to tread the narrow path between major power interests. Thus, it looks first to one, then to another, and at times to all, to retain the equilibrium which it believes provides the only assurance for its continued existence.

Despite the absence of diplomatic relations, Cambodia is associated with South Vietnam in the Mekong Committee and in a Convention intended to regularize navigation in the Mekong River. But it would be highly unlikely that, because of such association, Cambodia would fail to react in some form if Vietnamese forces were to

appear unannounced along the border areas in strength, particularly if such presence were to be a prelude to the settlement of substantial numbers of Vietnamese civilians in these same areas. Even if the Cambodian reaction to such developments took no other form than public denunciation, it would scarcely be to the long-range interests of the government of South Vietnam and its pursuit of internal stability to further weaken the already tenuous relations that exist with its immediate neighbor with whom it will have to cooperate if the plans of the Mekong Committee for the development of the lower Mekong River basin are ever to be brought to fruition.

On the strength of the generalized considerations that have been briefly summarized in this study, a number of tentative conclusions may be reached.

First, the development of the Plain of Reeds is already a matter of both national and international concern and, in any event, represents an undertaking of great magnitude, when contemplated in its entirety.

Second, as a consequence of the present war, South Vietnam is faced with a tremendous problem of resettlement. This will place heavy demands upon all of its resources, and these should be expended where there is the greatest prospect for an immediate return at minimum cost and effort.

Third, there are compelling national security reasons for South Vietnam to gain full control over the Plain of Reeds. But the military effort required for such a purpose will be great and will not have enduring results unless control is maintained.

Fourth, assuming that South Vietnam decides to commit the forces required to gain and maintain control over the Plain of Reeds, the intensification of operations in the border areas will increase the chance of incidents and will inevitably invite challenge by Cambodia as to the true motives of the Vietnamese government.

It follows, therefore, that the development of the Plain of Reeds by South Vietnam could best be undertaken in the immediate future as a modest enterprise extending progressively from the presently controlled and more heavily settled peripheral areas. Subsequent to the

initiation of this effort, the government of South Vietnam could agree to guarantee Cambodia's present boundaries and could announce, possibly through the medium of the Mekong Committee, its intention to reclaim its portion of the Plain of Reeds for resettlement purposes; South Vietnam could then invite the government of Cambodia to associate itself in the long-range aspects of the enterprise. Finally, it would be imperative that any Vietnamese effort to extend its military control into the Plain be related closely to carefully planned resettlement programs designed to provide local residents and new settlers with the means necessary to commit them to the area and ensure its continued productivity.

Appendix A

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Plain of Reeds forms part of the frontier zone separating Cambodia and South Vietnam. The term "frontier zone" is used here in its classical sense, reflecting the fact that as late as the eighteenth century most national groups were separated, one from the other, by zones that were either completely unsettled or at least less intensely developed than the norm for the national area.⁽²⁹⁾

Admittedly, this zonal concept is being replaced in modern times by that of the linear boundary, as shown on maps. This has been due in part to the growth of populations that make unused space an unacceptable luxury, and in part to the awakening of national consciousnesses seeking precise spatial definitions. The area separating Cambodia and South Vietnam, however, can still be considered a frontier zone, at least in regard to population distribution. Although almost half of the total population of South Vietnam is concentrated in the Mekong delta and its adjacent areas, the density in the Plain of Reeds is only about 25 people per square kilometer.

The population density throughout South Vietnam is almost three times that of Cambodia, which has an average population density of about 32 inhabitants per square kilometer. Only some 10 percent of its land is cultivated, although at least four times that area is arable.⁽⁸⁾ Moreover, even though the provinces of Svey Rieng and Prey Veng, whose southern limits fall within the Plain of Reeds, contain about 14 percent of all of the inhabitants of Cambodia, the population densities in the Plain portion remain relatively low.*

This point is particularly significant because it explains the basic concern of the Cambodian government and colors the conduct of its foreign relations. An examination of how this situation evolved is therefore pertinent.

*Some 17 percent of the approximately 350,000 Vietnamese in Cambodia live in the two Plain of Reeds provinces.⁽¹⁸⁾

EARLY HISTORY

The historiography of the Indochinese Peninsula shows that the development of the area has been determined in its broad lines by the Peninsula's access to the sea and by the longitudinal orientation of its relief. The presence of glass beads of Indian origin in neolithic debris found in Indochina and the identification of cultural traits in a maritime civilization extending from the Asian subcontinent through the Indochinese Peninsula to its offshore islands reveal that sea communications have existed within this vast area since pre-Aryan times.* This Indian influence has persisted over the centuries and has had a profound impact upon the people of the Peninsula. Indeed, of the nations included within peninsular Southeast Asia today, all except the two Vietnams reveal in their cultures a strong Indian heritage--and even the Vietnams are not totally exempt from this influence.

While the sea is generally held to be the prime medium that facilitated the extension of Indian cultural influence, the Indochinese peoples are believed to have come overland in a succession of migrations out of a Sino-Tibetan heartland.⁽³⁰⁾ The record of these migrations is unclear and no patterns have been discerned. However, the civilizations that followed these migrations have centered upon the major waterways. The Dvaravati and Thai Kingdoms dominated the basin of the Chao Phraya River,** Funan and Cambodia were the successive masters of the lands of the lower Mekong, and the Vietnamese gained their ascendancy in the delta of the Red River (Fig. 6).

At the beginning of the Christian era there were three powers in various stages of formation on the Indochinese Peninsula: the semi-autonomous kingdom of Nan Yueh reaching out of south China across the delta of the Red River, an emerging kingdom of Champa centered in Hue and extending along the eastern Indochinese littoral, and an association of principalities grouped under the name of Funan, comprising the lands from the lower Mekong River basin to the South China Sea.

* An Aryan people of uncertain origin are held to have moved into India from Persia sometime during the period 2000 to 1200 B.C.

** The Menam Chao Phraya is the river flowing by modern-day Bangkok.

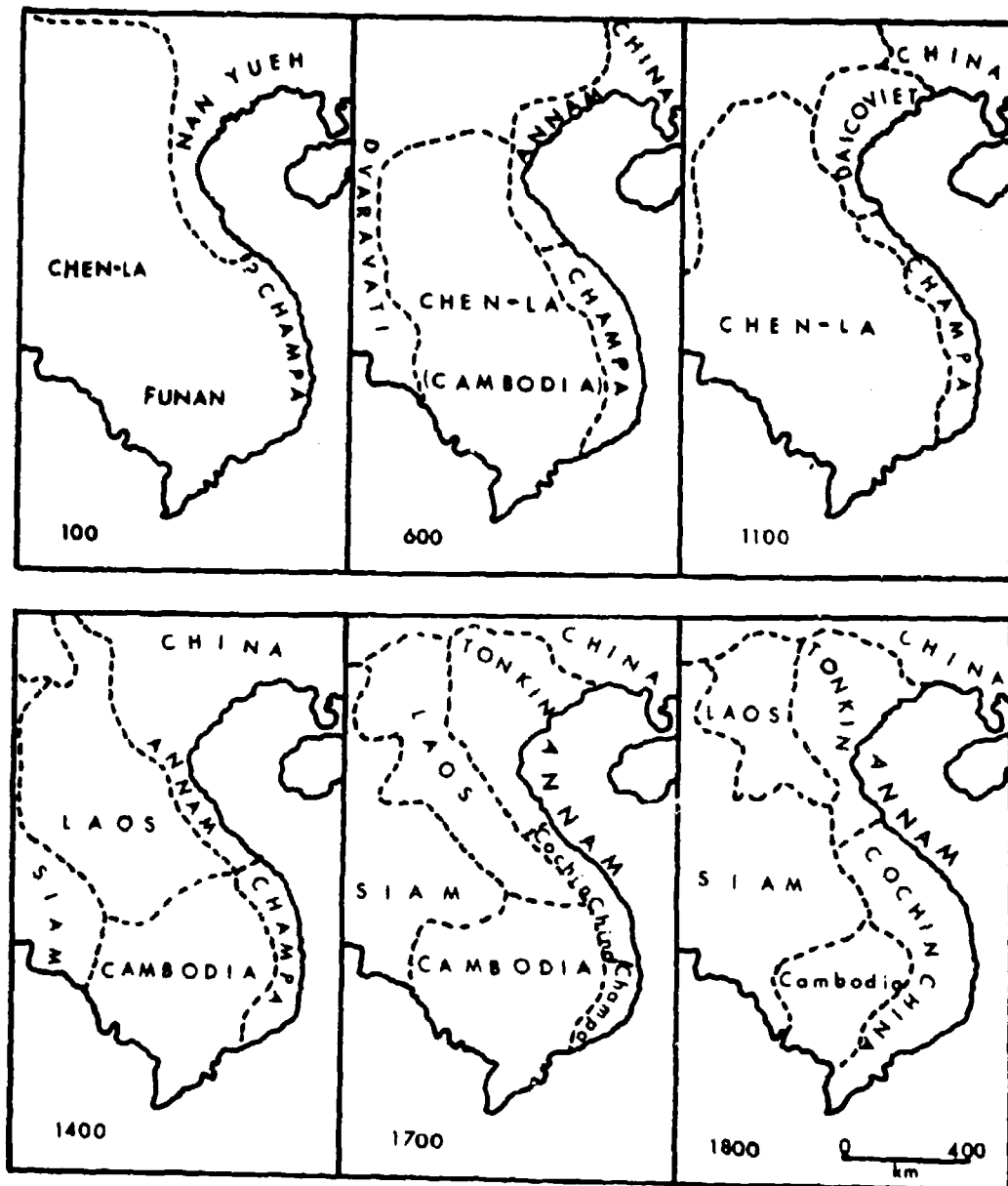


Fig.6—The political evolution of the Indochinese Peninsula
(dates and boundaries approximate)

Little is known of Funan. However, its capital, Vyadhapura, was for some time located near the present town of Ba Nam on the northwest limit of the Plain of Reeds. Vyadhapura was served by the port of Oc Eo near present-day Tak Eo. Archeological excavations of the port site reveal that:⁽³¹⁾

It was an immense urban agglomeration of houses on piles intersected by a network of little canals, part of an irrigation system extending for over 200 kilometres, which had been constructed, with wonderful skill, to drain what had previously been a cesspool of soft mud barely held together by mangrove trees, and to irrigate rice fields for the support of a large population mainly concentrated in lake-cities. These were linked up with each other and with the sea by canals large enough to take sea-going ships, so that it was possible for Chinese travellers to talk about "sailing across Funan" on their way to the Malay Peninsula.

The geographical situation of Funan with respect to ancient trade routes and its ability to draw upon the rich agricultural resources of the Mekong delta favored the extension of Funan's power. Thus, by the fifth century Funan had reached over into the Chao Phraya basin and across the Malay Peninsula to front on the Andaman Sea along the Tenasserim coast. But this vast empire was not to endure. In the century that followed, Chenla, one of the vassal states of Funan occupying the middle Mekong valley, revolted and eventually succeeded to the cultural heritage of its suzerain. However, Chenla never encompassed the full extent of the Funan domains, because even as the population of Chenla grew large enough to spill down into the delta to overcome Funan, other peoples moved down into the Chao Phraya valley to establish the Mon Kingdom of Dvaravati.

Following upon their succession to a reduced Funan, the Khmers of Chenla* centered their interests in the Tonle Sap area, with the result that the center of power shifted northwest out of the delta. By the ninth century, the first city of Angkor, reportedly greater than ancient Rome, had been founded upon the northern shores of the great lake.

*The founder of the Khmer dynasty, according to legend, is Kambu Svayambhuva, whose name can be traced through "Kambuja" to present-day Cambodia.

In the centuries that followed, the Khmer Empire radiated outward, reaching its zenith by the twelfth century. The area under its control at that time exceeded that of Funan at the height of its power and ranged from a common border with China, westward across present-day Thailand, and southward to include the northern part of modern Malaya. (8)

The question arises at this point as to how an agrarian society was able to control an empire of such magnitude. The answer appears to lie in the archeological investigations made by Bernard Groslier, which reveal that: (31)

The Khmers, who had inherited methods of irrigation from Funan, found the Angkor region ideal for the purpose of constructing a system of water utilization that would cause the soil to yield its utmost in the service to man. It was a system designed to solve the problem posed by too much and too heavy monsoon rain within too short a time. What they did was to construct a vast reseau hydraulique, which ensured that as much water as possible was conserved during the rains so that during the dry season it could be used rationally for both human consumption and the permanent irrigation of the paddy-fields. Aerial photography has enabled the plan of this remarkable system to be plotted. It depended upon the construction of immense storage tanks, the barays, one [of] which had a capacity of 30 million cubic metres, supplied with an ingenious apparatus for carrying off the water as and when it was needed. The whole region, running to some twelve and a half million acres, was minutely divided into square paddy fields, capable of yielding three, and even four, harvests a year. The complex net of waterways served other purposes also. It protected the soil from diluvial erosion through uncontrolled flooding in the rainy season. It seems to have controlled the annual inundation of the great Tonle Sap lake. Moreover, it provided an efficient means of travel and transport at any season of the year; even the moats of the chief monuments formed an integral part of it, enabling materials from the quarries to be brought direct to the building sites.

The city itself, so far from being an urban agglomeration, was rather a collection of water works stretching far and wide beyond the palace and its immediate temples, with a considerable population densely settled along its causeways and canals, and much of its land cut up into cultivated holdings. In this connection modern research has established the significant fact that each Khmer king, upon taking office, was expected to carry out works "of public interest," particularly works of irrigation, before starting upon his own temple-mountain.

Karl Wittfogel, in his far-ranging study of the institutional structure of political power, ⁽³²⁾ develops the thesis that the need for large-scale enterprises to permit the exploitation of water resources for agricultural purposes led to the development of highly regimented societies wherein individualism in the Western sense could not flourish. These societies he terms "hydraulic civilizations" to differentiate them from those whose farming economies involve only small-scale irrigation, which he calls hydroagriculture. The ancient Khmer Empire thus may be classed as a hydraulic civilization, as perhaps was Funan before it.

In this same fashion, the Vietnamese society that developed in the delta of the Red River could also be considered a hydraulic civilization. As already indicated, Vietnam emerges in history as the semi-autonomous kingdom of Nan Yueh.* In 111 B.C. the kingdom was integrated into the Chinese Empire, where at first it was permitted to retain its own administration. However, following a revolt in 40 A.D., Chinese administration and institutions were imposed, and these were continued to 939 A.D., when independence was finally gained. Thus, for more than 1000 years the fortunes of Vietnam were largely determined by the ebb and flow of dynastic power in China.

Independence from China did not usher in a period of tranquility for Vietnam. On the contrary, the internal struggles for power that had occurred even as Chinese domination was being challenged continued. Finally in 1010, with the beginning of the Ly dynasty, the Vietnamese government was no longer concerned solely with its survival. The centuries that followed were marked by considerable progress in economic and social affairs. During the 215 years of the Ly dynasty the system of dikes was improved, and peasant cooperatives were organized to better ensure the supervision and maintenance of the dikes. The military organization was structured to respond to the needs of agriculture, and

*The Vietnamese form of this word is Nam-Viet. The name An Nam, meaning pacified south, came into use in the seventh century and reflects the reaction of the Chinese to repeated Vietnamese attempts at insurrection. The name Dai Co Viet was adopted by the Vietnamese after they gained their independence in 939 A.D. The names Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina were used to designate the administrative compartmentation of the country under French colonial rule.

soldiers were permitted to return to their lands for six months of each year. In 1224, at the beginning of the Tran dynasty, the system of dikes was extended to the sea. Later, in the fifteenth century, under the Le dynasty, the government's concern with land use and the management of water resources was codified. A permanent staff of dike inspectors was created, and a commission was established to compensate landowners on whose fields the government built dikes. In times of peace the army was used to clear and drain lands and to construct dikes, roads, and canals. (33)

This early history of Vietnam was not, however, free of conflict. Chinese records make reference to raids along the southeastern limits of their Empire as early as the third century. These raiders were Chams, an Indonesian people who had settled on the narrow eastern coastal plains of the Peninsula to form what later became the Kingdom of Champa.

The story of Champa, whose artistic monuments done in Indian style remain scattered along Vietnam's coastline, can be readily summarized in military terms. In the north, the Chams conducted a prolonged strategic offensive in an effort to break out into the broad fertile lands of the Tonkin delta. This offensive did not succeed, and after centuries of conflict, the Vietnamese broke their power in 1471 and reduced Champa to a small, insignificant, dependent Kingdom that lingered until 1720, when it disappeared altogether.

In the south, the Chams engaged in a protracted strategic defensive struggle against the Khmers. This conflict was inconclusive and was resolved only when the growth of Thai power in the Chao Phraya basin engaged Khmer interests in that direction.*

Thus, the Kingdom of Champa served for centuries as a buffer zone between the expansionist Vietnamese and the equally dynamic Khmers. But when the power of Champa was broken and the direct confrontation

*The vigor of the Chams is attested to by the fact that in 1177 they captured and pillaged Angkor, following a surprise move along the inland waterways. Later, in 1371, in a final surge of power they seized and sacked Hanoi. These, however, were but ephemeral incidents and only served to sustain the hatreds of their opponents.

of the Khmers and Vietnamese finally occurred, the Khmer Empire was already in decline. The outcome of the contest inevitably was favorable to the Vietnamese.

The Thais, who with the Vietnamese were to progressively reduce and eventually crush the Khmer Empire, were first identified by the Chinese as southern "barbarians." By the seventh century these "barbarians" had evolved into the powerful Kingdom of Nanchao, occupying what is now western Yunnan. Little is known of this kingdom. However, there is evidence that the Thai people had long been infiltrating slowly toward the south, giving rise to the Shan, Lao, and Thai of today whose ancestry springs from this common hearth.* Following upon the Mongol conquest of Nanchao in 1253, these migrations were intensified, and by the fourteenth century the Thai power was firmly established in the basin of the Chao Phraya River. In this process, the Thais, who are considered to be remarkable assimilators, absorbed not only the lands of the Mons and Khmers they encountered but also their culture.

The eclipse of the Khmers began with the gradual erosion of peripheral provinces under circumstances that at first passed almost unnoticed among the people of Angkor. Unquestionably, this loss of dominion can be directly attributed to the aggressive policies of Thai and, later, Vietnamese rulers. But this is only true in part, for the decline of the Khmers coincided with the spread of a new form of Buddhism from Ceylon in the thirteenth century. This new form, Theravada Buddhism,** was characterized by a sense of simplicity and frugality

*Modern Thais look upon the ancient Kingdom of Sukhotai, whose power was centered in what is now northwest Thailand, as the "cradle of their civilization."

**Hinduism emerged in India as a religion associated with the caste system. It is also referred to as Brahmanism from the name of its highest caste, the Brahman, which provides its priesthood. The rise of Buddhism after 560 B.C. was due in part to a reaction against the power of the Brahmans and the complexity of the Hindu pantheon. In the first century A.D., Buddhism split into two forms--the Hinayana (lesser vehicle) and the Mahayana (greater vehicle). Hinayana Buddhism, also called Theravada, "the teaching of the elders," exalts austerity and salvation by personal example and looks upon Buddha as a man. In

that appealed to the masses and thereby undermined the highly centralized politico-religious authority of the king. The fabric of the hydraulic society was thus weakened and its power was no longer equal to the task of maintaining the integrity of the empire. This process of decline became irreversible after 1350, when the Thais progressively destroyed the hydraulic systems of Angkor.

Until the seventeenth century the Thais were the major threat to the Khmers, and the extension of the Thai power at the expense of the Khmers only was interrupted during periods when the Thais were forced to resist encroachments of the Burmese. Thus, when the Vietnamese appeared in the Mekong delta, Cambodia was already largely under Thai control. For this reason, the southward expansion of the Vietnamese in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was at first facilitated by the Khmers, who saw this expansion as a means of reducing Thai influence. But the confrontation between Thais and Vietnamese did not materialize as the Khmers had hoped, because of internal difficulties within Vietnam. These arose first in a struggle for power between two opposing families, and second in a rebellion that originated in the south and shattered the precarious balance of power that finally had been established. This issue was not resolved until 1803, when all of Vietnam was at last united under Gia Long.* The contest between Thailand and Vietnam was then resumed, only to end in a stalemate in 1846, when Cambodia agreed to pay tribute to both countries. The Cambodian king, however, recognized the difficulties of maintaining the stalemate

contrast, the Mahayana form looks upon Buddha as divine and preaches salvation through faith and good works. Mahayana Buddhism is found in China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Mongolia, while Hinayana Buddhism is found in Southeast Asia.

*In the latter part of the seventeenth century Vietnam was divided between the Trinh who controlled the north and the Nguyen who held the south. Following decades of conflict, the Nguyen built the Dong Hoi Wall in 1631 across Vietnam near the 17th parallel to block the movement of Trinh forces. There then followed a prolonged period of relative stability that was shattered by the rebellion of the Tay Son brothers in the South in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Tay Son progressively gained ascendancy over Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonkin, and by 1788 were masters of all of Vietnam. A surviving Nguyen nevertheless managed to regain power and eventually, after seizing Saigon, Hue, and Hanoi, became emperor under the name of Gia Long.

and appealed to the French. This began two decades of diplomatic intrigue and sporadic military activity that culminated in 1864 with the establishment of the French protectorate over Cambodia. (26)

THE FRENCH COLONIAL PERIOD

The French were the fourth European nation to come to Vietnam, following the arrival of the Portuguese in 1535 by 140 years.* These initial contacts were all inspired by hopes of trade. But, although the Vietnamese agreed to the establishment of modest commercial enterprises, they were too powerful and well organized administratively to tolerate the coercive practices that had favored European exploitation of other foreign lands. Thus, by 1700 the Dutch and the English traders had left Vietnam, and the French and Portuguese presence was maintained only by missionaries.

The French returned in the early nineteenth century to seek new trade concessions and the opening of diplomatic relations. But, as before, these efforts were generally unproductive. At the same time, the missionaries in Vietnam were becoming more aggressive in political affairs even as the Vietnamese were becoming increasingly isolationist and less conciliatory toward their foreign guests. As a result, the missionaries were subjected to various forms of persecution, and their appeals for help evoked a ready response from a French naval squadron serving in Chinese waters. In 1847 the squadron proceeded to bombard Tourane (Danang). Then, following the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858 that brought an end to the two-year war of the British and French against the Chinese, the French returned to Tourane and seized the city (Fig. 7). The following year, lured by the promise of more productive lands to the south, the French attacked and seized Saigon. By 1861 French control had been extended over the three provinces around Saigon, and this

*The French had managed to acquire considerable influence in Thailand at this time. However, upon growing evidence of French plans to assume a dominant position in that country, a coup occurred in 1688 and an antiforeigner regime in power. This marked the beginning of relations between Thailand and the West that was to last 150 years. (34)

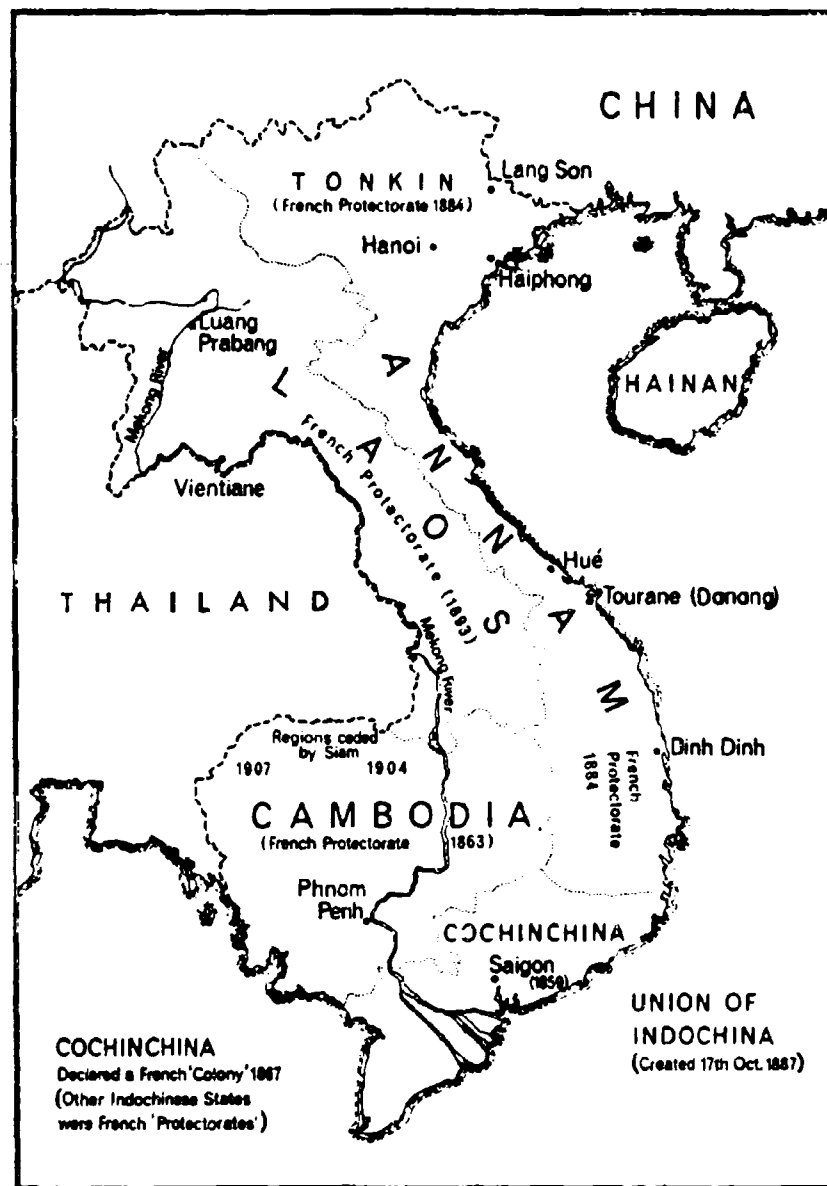


Fig.7—The French in Indochina

conquest was formally recognized by the Vietnamese in the Saigon Treaty of 1862.

The protectorate over Cambodia that followed, coupled with further French expansion over the whole of the Mekong delta lands, brought to a head the conflict of interests between the French and the Thais. This conflict was resolved in 1867, when in exchange for the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap, the Thais relinquished their other claims over Cambodia.

Up to that time the French had centered their activities in Cochinchina, not only because of the apparent potential of that area but also because they saw in the Mekong River a possible access route to the riches of southern China. To confirm this possibility, the French organized an expedition in 1866 to explore the river. After two years of extreme difficulties and hardships, the expedition returned to report that the Mekong was not navigable but that there was a waterway that provided communications between Yunnan and north Vietnam. That waterway was the Red River or, as the Vietnamese called it, the Song Koi.

As a consequence of this report, French interests turned toward the northern part of Vietnam, and the pattern of conquest that had taken place in Cochinchina was repeated. By 1883 Hanoi had been taken and the treaty that followed established the French protectorates over Tonkin and Annam.

The final step in the formation of French Indochina, the protectorate over Laos, not only reopened the conflict between the French and the Thais but almost precipitated a war between the French and the British.* This situation arose when the French laid claim to the Mekong River as the boundary between their domains and those of the

*The clash between French and British interests occurred over the determination of the boundary of northern Laos. In the prolonged negotiations that ensued, the British traded claims over areas east of the Mekong arising from their control over Burma for a joint guarantee of the independence of the Chao Phraya valley. Thus, by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1896 the independence of Thailand was assured, but at a cost of some 90,000 sq mi of its territory conceded to the British and French in the course of several boundary adjustments.

Thais. The Thais had gained control over the Kingdom of Vientiane in 1827 after they already had held dominion over the Kingdom of Luang Prabang for fifty years.* The French claim that these areas were rightfully theirs because of ancient territorial rights put forth by the Vietnamese who were under French protection was not accepted by the Thais. The French helped resolve the impasse by sending troops into Laos and by dispatching a naval force up the river to Bangkok. These French actions were decisive, and in 1893 the Thais yielded.

The Thais made further concessions to the French along the Laotian border in a treaty of 1904, and in another treaty in 1907, the Thais returned the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap. Thus, as the twentieth century began, the map of peninsular Southeast Asia looked largely as it does today.

The colonial interlude introduced into the Indochinese Peninsula yet another cultural influence to add to those of India and China--that of Europe.** The impact of this new influence was felt perhaps most strongly in Vietnam, where the mandarin state surrendered its power to a French-appointed civil service, and a Western legal code was superimposed over existing institutions. Yet, despite these changes in Vietnam, and the general policy of cultural assimilation pursued by the French, the more profound influence of the West was in the political and economic domains.

* Laos was divided into two kingdoms in 1707.

** The cultural influence of India in Indochina began to decline in the thirteenth century and is manifest today primarily in religious and social-culture patterns. That of China, however, continues as a dynamic element, particularly in the economic life of the area. Chinese minority groups have been identified in the social fabric of Indochinese countries for centuries. Early European reports of the sixteenth century indicate that the Chinese had great influence over commercial activity in Vietnam at that time. Later, with the establishment of the Europeans, the Chinese merchants gained even greater influence as international trade flourished. In 1950 some 90 percent of the foreign investments in Thailand were in the hands of its Chinese community. In Cambodia, the Chinese form an important element in the capital city of Phnom Penh and a few years ago controlled the export of fresh-water fish.

The establishment of the Union of Indochina in 1887 eventually led to a welcome period of internal political stability. Admittedly, this stability was less welcome and more precarious in Vietnam, where insurgent activity was recurrent,* but even there, French arms were able to keep the peace. Moreover, the arrival of the French brought an end to the external pressures upon Cambodia and Laos so that these two countries were able to survive, albeit as French Protectorates.

All of these changes were indeed significant. But it was in the realm of economic activity that the impact of the French was perhaps of greatest consequence. In general, the traditional economic patterns had centered around subsistence agriculture and a system of cottage industries. This had led to the emergence of the village as a self-contained economic entity.** When the French became established, these patterns were radically altered in favor of cash crops producing for external markets, and a taste for foreign imports was stimulated by the influx of manufactured goods. Under these conditions the economic self-sufficiency of the village gradually altered, although the social cohesiveness remained.

The decline of French power in Asia began in 1940, when their defeat in Europe made it impossible for them to continue to resist Japanese demands for base and transit rights in Indochina to further the Japanese plans against China. The arrival of the Japanese did not initially alter the political structure that the French had established in Indochina.*** Throughout most of World War II, the Japanese allowed the French to continue to administer the area. However, as the tide

* A unified Vietnamese Communist Party under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh was established in 1930. (17)

** Fisher⁽⁸⁾ suggests that it was the existence of the self-contained village that permitted ancient southeast Asian nations to survive the long periods of conflict that characterize their histories.

*** The Thais took advantage of the preoccupation of the French in December 1940 to open an offensive against Indochina in an effort to regain territories ceded to France in 1904 and 1907. The military action was inconclusive, but through the intermediary of the Japanese, the Thai territorial claims were satisfied. These lands were returned following the end of World War II (Fig. 8).



Fig.8—Boundary adjustments from World War II

of the war in the Pacific turned against Japan, French resistance movements in Indochina became more defiant. The situation became increasingly intolerable for the Japanese, and on March 9, 1945, they struck against the scattered French garrisons in the country. The facade of remaining French authority was thus shattered, and the Japanese assumed direct control over Cochinchina. Shortly thereafter, on March 11, Bao Dai proclaimed the independence of Vietnam, reuniting Tonkin and Annam under his hereditary title of Emperor. The King of Cambodia declared the independence of his domain on March 13, and this was followed by a similar declaration on behalf of Laos on April 20.

THE INDOCHINA WAR

In the meantime, the Vietnam Independence League, formed under Ho Chi Minh in south China, had infiltrated into north Vietnam, and by May 1945, six provinces of Tonkin were controlled by the Viet Minh.⁽³⁵⁾ Moreover, shortly before the end of the Pacific war, the Viet Minh had organized a People's National Liberation Committee to prepare the way for the eventual establishment of an independent government. The opportunity to implement this plan came in the month between mid-August, when the Japanese capitulated, and mid-September, when the first British and Chinese occupation forces arrived in Saigon and Hanoi, respectively.* On August 25, Bao Dai abdicated, and on September 2, a declaration of independence was signed in Hanoi by Ho Chi Minh. The Republic of Vietnam thus created claimed authority over the whole of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina.

The French were then enabled to return to Indochina. On January 7, 1946, their protectorate over Cambodia was restored. On March 6, they reached a preliminary agreement with Hanoi, wherein they recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a "Free State of the Indochinese Federation within the French Union." Finally, in August, the French regained control over Laos, and the outward form of French Indochina

*In accordance with agreements reached during the Potsdam meeting in July 1945, Indochina was to be divided at the 16th parallel for the purpose of postwar occupation. The southern part was to be a British responsibility, and the northern part was to be Chinese.

thus reappeared. But the inability of the French to define the status of Vietnam in terms that were meaningful to the government of Ho Chi Minh led to a series of surprise attacks by Viet Minh forces against the French in Hanoi on the evening of December 19, 1946. This marked the beginning of the Indochina War and the final phase of French colonialism in the Far East. The end of this phase came with the Geneva Agreement of July 1954, when Indochina was once again fragmented into separate independent states.

The major battleground of the Indochina War was Tonkin. This area was the seat of Viet Minh power and provided direct access to Communist China, whose support was to become decisive.* The French, aware of the threat implicit in Chinese assistance, made every effort to crush the Viet Minh before all of China became communist. But their resources were inadequate for the task, and after 1949 they were barely able to contain the Viet Minh, despite an ever-increasing commitment of forces.**

The issues in the north were thus relatively clear-cut. In the south, however, the lack of political cohesiveness among the people and their distance from the northern communist center substantially lessened the influence that the communists could exercise. Thus the Viet Minh were unable to consolidate their power in the south; of particular importance, they were unable to come to terms with the sects, all of whom eventually arrived at some accommodation with the French. As Douglas Pike put it: (38)

During the Viet Minh War the chief problem in the south was not how to kill the French but how to build a tightly knit, loyal, dedicated, and competent administrative organization that would not easily be betrayed or disintegrate when first threatened. The southern area was operated on a network basis, not as a Viet Minh governmental structure as in the north. An estimated two million Southern Vietnamese lived under this base system and never saw a Frenchman from one month to the next; another five million lived in what were called contested areas.

* An excellent summary of this assistance is given in Ref. 36; additional data are contained in Ref. 37.

** In early 1954, at their peak strength, the noncommunist forces in Indochina totaled 497,450 men. Of these, 235,721 were in the French Expeditionary Corps and 261,729 were in the armed forces of the Associated States. (23)

THE POST-INDOCHINA WAR PERIOD

This contrast between north and south continued after the Indochina War. While the return of Ho Chi Minh to Hanoi in mid-1954 was a significant personal triumph, it represented little more than another shift in location for a government that had been in operation since 1945--and continues in operation to this day. In the south, however, the war ended with an absentee Bao Dai exercising power through Premier Ngo Dinh Diem, by sufferance of the French. The first change occurred in October 1955, when the Republic of South Vietnam, presided over by the same Ngo Dinh Diem, came into being. This was followed by a constitutional assembly, elected in March 1956, and the continuing rule of President Diem until November 1963, when he was overthrown in a military coup that then led to the establishment of no less than six governments in rapid succession.*

From the very beginning, these governments were beset with difficulties--aside from the obvious one of retaining power. One of the earliest of these difficulties was the precipitate appearance in the south of hundreds of thousands of homeless people,** many of them Catholics,

*The government of Nguyen Ngoc Tho (86 days); the rule of General Nguyen Khanh (260 days); the government of Tran Van Huong (84 days); the interim government of Nguyen Xuan Oanh (19 days); the government of Phan Muy Quat (112 days); and the government of General Nguyen Cao Ky that began in 1965 and was transformed to that of Generals Thieu and Ky by the elections of 1967.

**Statistics on the evacuation of North Vietnam are confusing because they include military personnel and their dependents, as well as civilian refugees. Moreover, they do not list individuals who made their way to the south without passing through centers where records were kept. With these reservations, data acquired by the author incident to his participation in the evacuation while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps in North Vietnam from August 1954 to February 1955 can be summarized as follows: In August 1954 the French had 31 refugee centers around Hanoi filled to overflowing. In addition, there were some 20,000 refugees in the Hai Duong area and perhaps 15,000 more around Haiphong. To help resolve the problem, the French organized an airlift utilizing 30 C-47 aircraft and by the end of September had airlifted 133,400 people to the south. At the same time, French naval and commercial shipping, augmented by U.S. Navy transports, moved 177,318 persons in August and 155,075 in September. The overall statistics kept at the MAAG office in Haiphong reveal that the U.S. Navy evacuated a total of 310,846 persons, 68,787 tons of equipment and supplies, and 8,135 vehicles. The French airlifted a total of 147,000 persons and moved another 350,000 by sea. They also moved out 400,000 tons of equipment and supplies, and 15,000 vehicles.

who left the north under the provisions of Article 14(d) of the Geneva Agreement of July 20, 1954.* These people had to be resettled and, as will be seen below, had to be woven into an economic fabric that depended upon a system of land tenure in the process of reform.

Another of the serious problems that confronted the Diem government concerned the strength and composition of the Vietnamese armed forces. The essential element of this problem was that at the end of the Indochina War the Vietnamese forces totaled about 210,000, whereas U.S. support agreements as finally arrested in early 1955 covered only 150,000 men in all services. Thus a partial demobilization was required even as the question of what to do with the semi-independent sect forces--the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen--was being addressed. The Binh Xuyen forced the issue by challenging the Diem government in April 1955 and were destroyed in the fighting that followed. The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao responses were less emphatic, and some contingents accepted integration or demobilization, while others went into dissidence.**

Difficult as these problems were, they nevertheless could be identified and actions could be initiated with a view to their resolution. For example, in 1954 the government of South Vietnam, with the assistance of the United States, undertook a number of projects primarily intended to help resettle refugees from the north. Three of these projects contemplated the use of some 900,000 acres of rice lands in the Caisan, Bac Lieu-Camau, and Plain of Reeds areas. By 1956, the most advanced of these projects, the one at Caisan, had produced its first crops after 14 drainage canals, each 6 to 9 mi in length, had been dug by hand.*** In the same general context but in the domain

* From the date of entry into force of the present Agreement until the movement of troops is completed (300 days), any civilian residing in a district controlled by one party who wishes to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district."

** While some of these sect elements did join the Viet Cong, dissidence was most often directed against the Diem government rather than being a manifestation of support for the communists. This was particularly true of the Hoa Hao, who returned to favor with the Saigon government once Diem was overthrown.

*** The United States provided \$10 million and 100 tractors to help prepare the first 75,000 acres of the project.(8)

of military affairs, the reorganization and retraining of the Vietnamese armed forces was begun in 1955. This initially was a combined effort on the part of U.S. and French military advisors. However, by 1956 the entire responsibility had passed to the hands of the Americans.*

In the press of these events, little was heard of the Vietnamese in the south who decided to avail themselves of the Geneva Agreement to move north, and even less, if indeed anything at all, was known of any Viet Minh who might have remained behind.** There were, nevertheless, areas in the south that were considered unsafe even after the war had ended, because they were "Viet Minh-controlled."*** Thus, while there

* The Vietnamese armed forces were established through the instrumentality of a Franco-Vietnamese Convention signed on December 30, 1949. The Vietnamese Army units that were subsequently organized were primarily light-infantry battalions, whose cadres and administrative and logistic support were provided by the French. The transformation of this army to independent status thus required the creation of the necessary supporting formations. In addition, at the time the Americans assumed responsibility for assisting in the transformation, the memories of the Korean and Indochinese Wars were still very fresh. The Chinese Communists had supported the latter and overtly intervened in the former. Their aggressiveness had thus been manifest, and there also existed in North Vietnam a battle-tested army that was double that of South Vietnam. The immediate and direct threat to the survival of South Vietnam in military terms was thus believed to be that of overt aggression--either by North Vietnam alone or in conjunction with the Chinese Communists. It was this combination of factors that led to the organization of the Vietnamese Army in 1955 on the basis of divisional formations.

** Bernard Fall⁽³⁹⁾ states that about 80,000 Viet Minh and dependents moved north, while something like 10,000 cadres and activists remained in the south.

*** The French view of such areas was stated as follows: "What we have observed in Indochina confirms a fact already well known in our African possessions: there exists a permanence or continuity in the centers of unrest. History and geography reveal that certain regions are traditional cradles of insurgent movements, and these later serve as preferred areas for guerrillas. It is in the provinces where the population has always shown itself to be proud, bold, and independent that the revolt has taken on the most acute and intense forms (the Plain of Reeds, the region of Vinh, the mountains surrounding Langson, etc.)."(23) It is to be noted that Article 15(f)2 of the Geneva Agreement identifies the Plain of Reeds as an assembly area for Viet Minh forces being repatriated to the north.

may have been a feeling in some official circles that all was not well, there was insufficient evidence--or recognition of evidence available--to suggest that the communist cells remaining in the south were to give rise to the most difficult of all problems for the south to resolve: that of its survival as a separate national entity.

With respect to this last point, it is to be recalled that the Geneva Agreement of July 20, 1954, partitioned Vietnam through the establishment of a "provisional military demarcation line." The Agreement further provided that political and administrative measures in the "two regrouping zones" on either side of this line would be in the hands of the party whose forces were regrouped there, "pending the general elections which will bring about the unification of Vietnam." A "Final Declaration of Geneva Conference," dated the day after the Agreement (i.e., July 21, 1954), elaborated upon the issue of general elections, prescribing that these were to be held in July 1956 under the supervision of an international commission, following consultations "between competent representative authorities of the two zones from 20 July 1955 onwards."⁽⁴⁰⁾

The wording of the Agreement and the later Declaration make it quite clear that partition of Vietnam was conceived of as a temporary arrangement which would end with the general elections to be held in mid-1956. Under these circumstances, and on the basis of a well-founded confidence that such elections would inevitably be favorable, the north apparently made little effort at first to exploit its communist apparatus in the south. Indeed, some Viet Minh even joined in the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. But the government of the south had not been a signatory to the agreements terminating hostilities, and Diem could scarcely be expected to endorse elections that would presumably result in the demise of his rule.

Thus, as it became clear that elections were not to be held and that the Saigon government was making efforts to extend and consolidate its control over the countryside, resistance to Diem--by both communist and noncommunist elements--intensified. A measure of the growth of this resistance can be deduced from the various government programs concerned with the critical issue of land use and land reform in the rural areas.

It will be recalled that before the French penetration in the south, holdings of 2 to 12 acres were typical. However, in the new delta areas opened to settlement by the French, the land units were much larger--many ranging from 1250 to 2500 acres and some even larger. These tracts were usually subdivided into tenant holdings, and in the 1930s such tenants represented about two-thirds of the rural population of the delta. The rentals paid by these tenants normally consisted of 40 percent of the crop; and what was left was often inadequate for the tenant's needs and had to be supplemented by loans of both rice and money obtained at very high interest rates.*

In 1954, therefore, when the Diem government had to initiate prompt measures to meet the urgent requirements for refugee resettlement, it also had to give consideration to the complex and difficult land problems that had arisen after the pre-World War II developmental efforts. The first step taken was Ordinance 2 of January 1955, which required 774,000 rent contracts to be registered so that, in theory at least, legal protection for rents and occupancy rights was provided to about one-third of South Vietnam's rice growers.⁽⁴¹⁾ This was followed by Ordinance 57 of October 1956, which had three major provisions: First, land rents were set at 15 to 25 percent of the crop yield. Second, some 1 million acres of rice lands representing tracts in excess of 100 hectares (247 acres) per landowner were purchased by the government and resold to tenants, to be paid for in six yearly interest-free payments. (Perhaps 300,000 tenant families had benefited from this program to 1960.) Third, the government purchased 665,000 acres of French-owned rice land and took over an additional 490,000 acres of lands without clear title. None of these lands were redistributed to individuals but rather were rented out by the government or farmed by the Army, or title was passed to village councils for use as communal land.

The merits of these measures are not to be minimized. Yet the fact remains that they were inadequate in their scope and were not

*Most of the landlords were Vietnamese, but the Chinese dominated the money-lending, rice-processing, and marketing activities.⁽²⁾

implemented in a satisfactory manner. The peasant in Vietnam appears to be more interested in fair rents and reasonable taxes than in land titles. Moreover, the whole land problem with which he is vitally concerned is complex, and statistics regarding it are often misleading. As a result, the land-reform program conceived and controlled at the national level did not prove to be properly responsive to the needs of the countryside.*

The communists were equally, if not more, conscious of the importance of the land issue, and as they expanded and consolidated their power in the south, they placed their main emphasis on that theme. In areas that they controlled, the communists distributed lands and claimed only a maximum of 15 percent of the crop as rental, while pointing out that the government claimed 25 percent. The landless were naturally receptive to communist promises of land reforms, and peasants with land holdings were in a better bargaining position regarding rents in areas that were disordered. In short, the extension of communist power was favored by an excellent organization attuned to the aspirations of peasants who for the most part lived in areas where government influence was weak, if it existed at all.

Toward the end of the 1950s the contest for control of the countryside had become increasingly violent. The communists were engaged in a campaign of subversion and terrorism. But while this was directed primarily against individuals, the government reacted with artillery and aerial bombardments whose effects were far less discriminating.

*Land reform is an objective of both the communist and noncommunist regimes in Vietnam. Thus, the issue has become highly political, and its worth in terms of the true desires or needs of the people is difficult to ascertain or measure. In this context, note should be taken of certain conclusions reached in a recent Rand study:(42)

From the point of view of government control the ideal province in South Vietnam would be one in which few peasants operate their own land, the distribution of land holdings is unequal, no land redistribution has taken place, population density is high, and the terrain is such that mobility or accessibility is low. It is suggested that the greater power of the landlords and relative docility of peasants in the more "feudal" areas accounts for this phenomenon.

Thus, "...the South Vietnamese Army's response to the insurgency problems posed by the Viet Cong activities was frequently such as to alienate the traditionally suspicious rural people."⁽²⁴⁾ At this same time the government proposed to meet the problem of rural subversion and guerilla war with a plan to establish self-contained and protected communities. The "Agroville" scheme inaugurated in 1959 was intended to settle between 300,000 and 1 million people in a number of "key rural agrovilles." These communities were to provide improved social and economic conditions to the settlers, while at the same time, because of the security measures envisaged, the insurgents would be denied the opportunity of gaining the cooperation of the people.

The concept of the agrovillage appears to have been valid, and certainly the communists were quick to recognize that the resettlement of peasants in protected communities posed a direct threat to their plans for extending control over the countryside. However, the implementation of the concept left much to be desired. The areas selected for the agrovilles were unsuitable, compensation was inadequate, the peasants were required to undertake the preliminary preparation of the land by digging drainage canals and cutting roads, the fields were at some distance from the homes, and, above all, resettlement required moving from an established community into one that had to be developed from nothing. Because of these problems and other administrative difficulties, only 23 agrovilles were inaugurated in two years, and by 1961 the plan ceased to be promoted.⁽²⁴⁾

At that same time, the Vietnamese press began making references to "tactical hamlets in areas of strategic importance"--a term that was quickly shortened to "strategic hamlets." This transition from the agrovillage to the strategic hamlet occurred because of the increasingly obvious inadequacies of the former. It was also undoubtedly influenced by the arrival of a British Advisory Mission to Vietnam in September 1961. This mission was headed by R.G.K. Thompson, who, as a former Secretary of Defense for Malaya, had been closely associated with the resettlement measures taken there to counter the communist terrorists.*

* Considerable attention was being given by U.S. authorities in Vietnam to the British experience in Malaya. Unfortunately, somewhat

The greatest impetus to the strategic-hamlet program (officially launched by the Presidential Decree of February 3, 1962, which created the Inter-ministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets) was, however, provided by the direct interest and involvement of Ngo Dinh Nhu, the President's brother.

Unlike the agrovillage concept, which envisaged resettlement in large communal areas, the strategic hamlets were planned on a smaller scale. They were to be developed from existing settlements where possible, or new and fortified settlements were to be built where this appeared necessary. The emphasis of the strategic-hamlet program was to be on defense, although the social and economic aspects were not to be neglected in any way.

The defects associated with the strategic-hamlet program, like those of the agrovillage scheme, were not matters of vision but rather of implementation. Many of the errors committed in the development of agrovillages were repeated, but the most serious miscalculation of all was the rapidity with which the government intended to create the 11,000 to 12,000 hamlets that supposedly were to shelter the entire population. The statistics of this effort are most difficult to reconcile. As Osborne⁽²⁴⁾ points out, the Vietnam Press in June 1963 reported that 289 strategic hamlets had been completed in Gia Dinh province, while in July the same source reported the figure as 266. Later, on October 1, 1962, President Diem stated that 7,267,517 people were in strategic hamlets that were completed or being completed. On October 11, the Minister for the Interior reported that 4,322,234 persons were living in strategic hamlets.*

less attention was given to differentiating between the situations in Malaya and South Vietnam, with the result that "...It can be clearly demonstrated that the attempt to use the resettlement techniques of the Malayan Emergency risked failure from the outset."⁽²⁴⁾

*The situation concerning the two Plain of Reeds provinces as of January 16, 1963, is given in a government report as follows:⁽²⁴⁾

Kien Phong Province: Of 189 strategic hamlets planned, 80 completed and sheltering 132,663 people out of a total of 246,343.

Kien Tuong Province: Of 66 strategic hamlets planned, 59 completed and sheltering 29,984 people out of a total of 56,043.

Regardless of what figures are used, the fact remains that by 1962 the overextension of the strategic-hamlet program was already apparent, most notably in the realm of security, where the means made available for defense were not equal to the task.* This again may be taken as a measure of the communists' reaction to a program that was intended to isolate them from the people upon whose support they had to rely. The communists struck not only directly at the hamlets but also at the various government representatives, such as teachers and antimalaria teams, through whom the social and economic reforms were to be made. Thus, while in its early stages the strategic-hamlet program did hold promise and some success was achieved, it soon collapsed, as had the agrovillage program. After the coup of November 1963 the strategic-hamlet program came to a virtual halt, although the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets was not dissolved until March 1964.

The concept of a protected community was nevertheless retained, and a system of "new life" hamlets was begun in 1964. This program was conducted at a much slower pace than the strategic-hamlet development; in any event, the greatly intensified military activities that followed upon the commitment of U.S. combat forces into Vietnam in 1965 virtually precluded any program as ambitious as that of the strategic hamlet. Finally, in 1966 the Revolutionary Development effort that continues to the present emerged.

* In July 1962 the GVN announced that a strategic hamlet would be considered completed when the people had (1) cleared communists from the area and coordinated population control measures with the police committee and hamlet chief; (2) coordinated control of people and of resources with the VN Information Service, indoctrinated the population, and successfully organized all of the population; (3) instructed and divided work of all people as to their obligations when disaster strikes; (4) completed defenses--such as fences, spikes, communication trenches, hidden trenches in all houses; (5) organized two special-forces cells; and (6) held the election of an advisory council. (38)

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

Revolutionary Development is defined as follows in an official U.S. government publication:⁽⁴³⁾

Revolutionary Development is the name given [by Americans] to the joint Vietnamese-United States effort to provide village and hamlet residents with security against Viet Cong attacks; to restore effective government authority; to initiate political, economic and social development; and to gain the willing support of the people toward these goals. In summary, "RD" is designed to create a bridge of understanding and mutual commitment between the people and the government of Vietnam.

The RD program is being implemented by teams of Vietnamese, trained in a variety of skills, who live with the villagers and help them organize for security, self-government and economic progress. More than 30,000 Vietnamese RD workers are now involved in this program. At the end of 1966, more than 4,400 hamlets containing almost 7,000,000 persons were secured.

Self-government and self-help are key elements of the RD program. During 1966, more than 5,700 self-help projects were undertaken by village and hamlet residents with the assistance of RD workers, local government officials and A.I.D. representatives. These self-help projects include the construction of classrooms, markets, village wells, clinics, village roads and small bridges. Villagers decide what they want most and provide labor and locally available materials; A.I.D. and the Vietnamese government provide other necessary materials and equipment (e.g., cement, roofing, pumps and school books).

In May 1967, U.S. civilian and military programs in support of Revolutionary Development were combined with those of the U.S. armed forces and were placed under the direction of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.*

Much of the technical assistance provided by A.I.D. in such fields as agriculture, education, public health, public works, public safety and equipment maintenance is in direct support of the RD program.

*The Vietnamese government has established a "super ministry," The General Commission for Revolutionary Development, to facilitate the pursuit of this effort. Montgomery points out that the Commission "has achieved some remarkable successes in the countryside" but that "no way has yet been found for integrating its activities with those of the ministries normally concerned with operations in rural areas (health, agriculture, and education, especially)." Thus, he concludes "...the concept of Revolutionary Development serves an immediate need, but not a long range one."⁽⁴¹⁾

On the communist side, the parallel response took the form of the "combat hamlet." According to communist documents, "Areas in which the enemy's oppressive administration has been smashed and in which the masses have been organized into associations...but which have not yet constructed combat hamlets cannot call themselves liberated...nor can a village that has [NLF] control but is still not a combat hamlet call itself liberated." Of particular significance, close liaison with guerrillas was required because "guerrilla units have a major task in helping construct combat hamlets." (38)

The security concerns of the combat hamlet were not unlike those of the strategic hamlets, and the two concepts had many points in common. What was different in the combat hamlet was the organization of mutual aid teams called "voluntary labor brigades." These were essentially rudimentary collectives for farming and for the digging of canals and irrigation ditches needed to bring added lands under cultivation. It is important to record that the communists visualized this effort as being gradual and voluntary. Another communist document, issued in 1964, states that "...collectives must indoctrinate and mobilize the people and develop their spirit for joint projects. Compulsion must not be used to force people to join collectives; they should be so exemplary that all people will wish to join them." (38)

Notwithstanding these benevolent sentiments, the fact remains that people living in communist-controlled or influenced areas are expected to contribute directly to the movement. As stated in a recent Rand Paper: (44)

Production taxes [in communist areas] range anywhere from 20% to 80% of individual incomes. And part of those goods not formally "taxed" away must, under equal compulsion, go to feed and house fighters passing through the villages, to purchase "liberation bonds," to provide clothing for the war effort, or must be sold to the Viet Cong at lower than actual market prices.... Equally as onerous are the vast number of services which the Viet Cong demand, such as the building and maintaining of combat hamlets, local sabotage activities, special production and trade missions, and regular porter or other "corvee labor" duties. Ultimately, every person of age and strength is incorporated in some way into the Front's fighting ranks.

The foregoing summary of plans, programs, and events in South Vietnam since 1954 reveals that the conflict which took on a more formal aspect after the appearance of the National Liberation Front in 1960 engages both sides over essentially the same issues--the gaining of politico-military support and the continuation of economic activity. The communists have been relatively successful in gaining politico-military support in the rural areas because of their superior organization. However, this success has not been gained without coercion of the people and resistance by the government. And this in turn has resulted in a general insecurity that has encouraged the peasant to leave his lands. Thus, there has been a substantial reduction in economic activity in terms of land under cultivation.* Moreover, the peasant removed from his land has become a refugee needing to be cared for and resettled, or he has become one more member of a rapidly increasing urban population (see Table 7).

Table 7
POPULATION STATISTICS FOR AUTONOMOUS CITIES,
1956 TO 1967^a

Year	Hue	Danang	Dalat	Cam Ranh	Saigon	Vung Tau	GVN Total	% of Total GVN
1956	93,236	99,851	23,744		1,794,360	5,800	12,366,000	16.3
1960	103,870	104,800	48,840		1,400,000		14,072,000	11.8
1964	103,930	143,600	55,160		1,370,558		14,354,000	11.7
1967	140,000	237,000	77,700	33,500	2,204,900	42,100	16,591,000	16.5

^aData from the National Institute of Statistics. A population study made in April 1967 by Patience Laurient gives the population of district and provincial capitals and autonomous cities as 6,560,068, or 40 percent of the population. If other populous areas were added, the urban count might reach well over 50 percent.

*Montgomery states that "according to an estimate made in Region III, 70% of the land in Vietnam is uncultivated; 25% of the adult male population is lost to the farms; only 60% of the lands in the delta region that were farmed in 1963 are still [in 1967] under cultivation."(41)

With reference to this last point, Montgomery summarizes the urban problem as follows: (41)

The growth of cities has come prematurely to Vietnam. There was no industrial or long term economic development to support it, and with no municipal authorities to plan it, urbanization has caught the government completely by surprise. Saigon's estimated metropolitan population grew from 1,794,000 in 1956 to at least 2,204,900 in 1967 (some estimates are much larger). The six other autonomous cities have grown comparably but their boundaries have remained unchanged; their administration is as it has been; and their available land has been put to irrational and chaotic use.

A particularly distressing aspect of the urbanization problem arises from the fact that there is little official difference between rural and urban administrative organization and procedures.* The result is that municipal administration functions at a pace that is not compatible with the pressing needs of ever-growing cities. Moreover, the provincial authorities and the national government are concerned with refugees only in terms of resettlement programs, and nothing is done about the problems of refugee squatters in cities.

In any event, the refugee problem is formidable and involves a substantial sum of money for refugee relief and related technical support. In FY 1967 the United States budgeted \$16.586 million for this purpose, while the Vietnamese government contribution was \$VN 796.841 million. For FY 1968 a substantial increase was envisaged, reaching a total of more than \$19.5 million plus almost 1.5 billion piasters. (45)

The statistical data on the numbers of refugees and their status is only partially representative of the magnitude of the problem because it evidently includes only those individuals recorded in government statistics. With this reservation in mind, at the end of 1965 there were 697,155 refugees in all of South Vietnam, of which 258,247

*Saigon is administratively a province, consisting of nine districts comprising 56 villages and encompassing 710 hamlets. The National Government holds 12.3 percent of the total land of Saigon--six times the amount used for industrial purposes and twenty-five times the amount put to commercial uses. (41)

were resettled, while the remainder were in temporary shelters. In 1966 these figures had increased to a total of 977,027 refugees, of which 348,881 had been resettled. This resettlement effort had involved the development of 1225 resettlement sites and the construction of 50,777 resettlement housing units. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The refugee situation as it appears in the two provinces wholly enclosed within the Plain of Reeds since refugee action began in 1964 is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS PROVINCES ⁽⁴⁵⁾
(Cumulative totals, except where indicated)

Province	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Kien Phong					
Refugee arrivals	5,000	9,399	9,399	14,399	19,399
Refugees returned and resettled	5,000	9,399	9,399	14,399	19,399
Refugees trained	...	...	6	6	6
Resettlement sites	2	5	5	5	5
Resettlement housing units	1,000	1,749	1,749	2,749	3,749
Temporary camp sites ^a	...	...	...	5	5
Temporary camp housing units	...	...	...	120	120
Kien Tuong					
Refugee arrivals	...	1,356	3,364	4,000	4,500
Refugees returned and resettled	...	1,356	3,364	4,000	4,500
Refugees trained	...	...	5	10	20
Resettlement sites	...	...	1	1	1
Resettlement housing units	...	...	470	770	1,070
Temporary camp sites ^a	...	...	...	4	4
Temporary camp housing units	...	...	...	200	300

^aTotal not cumulative.

The foregoing statistics reveal that the refugee problem in the two Plain of Reeds provinces is presumably being satisfactorily controlled, since the number of refugees is equaled by the numbers of

people returned or resettled. No impression is conveyed, however, of the general security conditions that prevail in the area. Such an impression does emerge from the candid remarks found in the interview of a U.S. AID provincial representative, conducted at the end of his assignment in the Kien Tuong province. (47) Extracts from this 40-page interview follow:

A very desolate place, it is also very poor.... It has a small population of about 55,000, but a very large refugee population.... The area was never controlled by the French.... In 1952 they suffered a severe setback and left and never returned...at the end of the Indochina War the Viet Minh actually had the province capital. It has long been a [insurgent] resupply area, not too much of the direct support...but an infiltration route, training area, etc.... Almost everything you do in the province is from September until late November. During the height of the monsoon, this province is under water...South of Moc Hoa, the province capital, ...is a large area of canals... this is the only part of the province that is really productive. The canals were mostly dug by the French... but as soon as they got them dug the Viet Minh moved in, long before the war started.... The majority of the people, the natives, in three of the four districts are Buddhist. They are pro-VC.... In 1956 Diem decided that in order to pacify this general area...--he was convinced he could not convert the people down there--was to take northern Catholic refugees and wholesale resettle them into the area. He was going to set this up as a model province. He moved close to 20,000 Catholics into the area. The indigenous population at that time was about 30,000 to 35,000.... Diem had taken old land, brought in dredges and dug out canals.... One of the biggest problems was...Diem [also]...took over large tracts of semi-waste land used as grazing land. There are a lot of cattle in Kien Tuong. He gave this land to these Catholic refugees and no one ever reimbursed [the villagers]...for it.... There is a certain amount of animosity...between the natives who are predominantly Buddhist [and the Catholics].... The groups are actually tied together because poverty seems to bind them together and there is plenty of poverty in Kien Tuong....

Given this background, we then have the La Grange canal which runs east-west across the province.... The north-south road...is our one link with the outside world but the east-west canal is to the people, the primary means of communications.... [In early 1964] we had hamlets all along this canal, running from the west at Kien Phong which is the next province.... In January of 1965

the VC took the farthest western hamlet on the canal.... The government did not even make an attempt to go back in.... They bombed the village. A relief force was sent the next day, got to within one kilometer from the hamlet...and requested an air strike. They did not even go in to check the results later. We got a few refugees out of the area; I think most of them went to work in the VC area. These people were not really pro-VC, but they were definitely not pro-Viet government.... On August 29, 1965, the Viet Cong struck at nine hamlets all along the canal.... In a matter of hours they overran four of the places.

A different perspective is obtained in a Los Angeles Times article of January 1968, occasioned by the departure of the senior U.S. advisor to IV Corps. According to this article, friendly troops in the delta total about 40,000 regular Vietnamese Army, 50,000 Regional Forces, and 60,000 Popular Forces.* In 1967 these forces went on the offensive, and it was then possible to deploy 114 of the 59-man Revolutionary Development Teams into the delta. The article further states that the 80,000 (also listed as 40,000 to 50,000 in a later edition) estimated Viet Cong strength has remained generally constant since 1965, but the enemy's combat capabilities have declined. This last point is difficult to reconcile with another comment in the same article that the Viet Cong are now equipped with the latest and most powerful weapons. A further refutation of the point occurred during the 1968 Tet offensive.

This difficulty of reconciling statements and statistics concerning Vietnam has been long-standing and has not been limited to any one

*U.S. AID has programmed \$14.6 million for FY 1968 to expand the Police Field Forces Provincial forces to 22,500 men organized into 122 companies to be deployed nationwide. Related to this program is the plan to train, equip, and deploy 11,000 National Police in a series of mobile posts and 807 fixed posts to control movements of resources along roads and waterways. Two hundred of these National Police are to be stationed in 32 checkpoints in Kien Phong province by the end of 1968, and 80 are to man 26 permanent checkpoints in Kien Tuong province by the same time. Finally, AID is also supporting a program intended to provide the GVN with a marine police force. During 1968 this force is to develop toward its goal of 3400 men manning 20 bases, 92 patrol boats, and 270 interceptor craft. It is anticipated this effort will permit the gradual replacement of the U.S. Navy's River Patrol Force in the delta.(48)

subject or source. An example of greater import than that cited above is the revision of U.S. intelligence estimates of enemy strengths in South Vietnam. This took place at the end of 1967 following seizure of additional enemy documentation and analysis of new data obtained through prisoner interrogation. According to these estimates there are about 118,000 men in the communist main forces, of which about 82,000, or 70 percent, are North Vietnamese. They are supported by between 35,000 and 40,000 administrative and logistic personnel, and from 70,000 to 90,000 guerrillas. What is particularly significant is that the strength of the Viet Cong political apparatus is now believed to be between 75,000 and 100,000 persons--approximately double the previously held estimate. Finally, there are presumed to be 120,000 to 150,000 Self Defense Militia. In short, the estimates of the enemy's political and military manpower in South Vietnam at the end of 1967 range from 418,000 to 483,000. (49)

Of related pertinence are the comments contained in yet another article: (50) According to the data provided by the Hamlet Evaluation Survey (HES), about 67 percent of the population of South Vietnam is now "under government protection." But the monthly HES reports indicate "substantial reversion of formerly secure hamlets in northern provinces as a result of a coordinated effort by Main Force battalions and local guerrillas against U.S. Marines and Vietnamese Army in the First Corps area.... Now the communist forces seem to be trying the technique further south...at Loc Ninh in the Third Corps area and Dak To in the Second Corps area...." Finally, the article mentions that whereas it was anticipated that there would be 40,000 defectors in 1967, there were only 26,000 on hand by the end of November 1967 and the rate was going down.*

In summary, the military situation as assessed in the press at the beginning of 1968 involved approximately 200,000 communist combat forces, against which were arrayed something over 700,000 allied combat personnel. In I Corps, over 70,000 communist troops were opposed by 140,000

* Data obtained at the Chien Hoi Ministry in Saigon in April 1968 reveal that Chien Hoi ralliers for the first three months of 1968 numbered 1174, 876, and 486, respectively. The figures for the first three months of 1967 were 2272, 2917, and 5557.

allied forces; in II Corps, some 45,000 communists were held in check by more than 180,000 friendly troops; in III Corps, 30,000 enemy were confronted by almost 250,000 men; finally, in IV Corps, 40,000 main force and guerrilla personnel were deployed against over 140,000 government troops and 8000 U.S. soldiers. These figures are intended to provide only a general order of magnitude, for developments since the Tet offensive of February 1, 1968, have caused substantial changes in the ratios. Moreover, by mid-1968 the infiltration of enemy forces had been significantly increased above the previous monthly rate of about 6000 men. Uncertainty over the statistics of enemy strengths is thus inevitable.

A similar uncertainty prevails regarding the status of villages and hamlets throughout the country. The greatly intensified combat that characterized the first half of 1968 has made it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the pacification effort. Indeed, press opinion spans the full range of possibilities from the view that the enemy has brought pacification activities to a virtual halt, to the opposite view that little has changed regarding the extent of controlled, contested, and enemy-held areas.

Thus the contemporary scene in Vietnam can be viewed from many vantage points. And the temptation to do so is difficult to resist, especially when one attempts to present a brief, yet comprehensive and objective, overview. The danger is that the existence of a single focus and a single issue in Vietnam, as in all of Southeast Asia, may be lost in the overwhelming abundance of printed material on the subject.

This focus is the peasant; the issue is his political commitment; and the nature of the task is revealed in the following lines penned by an unknown Chinese poet some 2300 years before Christ: (51)

From break of day
Till sunset glow
I dig my well,
I plow my field,
And earn my food
And drink.
What care I
Who rules the land
If I
Am left in peace?

Appendix B

THE VILLAGES IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS OF SOUTH VIETNAM^(12,52)

Village	Area (sq km)	Population	Notes
Hau Nghia Province			
Binh Hoa	181	8,300	Hau Nghia Province was formerly part of Long An Province.
My Qui	112	3,900	
My Thanh Dong	<u>143</u>	<u>8,300</u>	
(3 villages)	436	20,500	
Long An Province			
Thanh Loi	106	5,500	The present Long An and Hau Nghia Provinces together cover 2,248 sq km and contain 94 villages with 475,806 population. Of these totals, just under 40% of the area and some 15% of the population are included in the Plain of Reeds.
Binh Than	111	1,800	
Long Ngai Thuan	61	2,400	
My Lac Thanh	32	5,200	
My An Phu	33	6,700	
Loi Binh Nhon	13	6,841	
Khanh Hau	9	1,479 ^a	
Binh Duc	28	2,800	
Nhi Binh	20	5,400	
Binh Phong Thanh	26	11,046	
Huong Tho Phu	<u>10</u>	<u>3,300</u>	
(11 villages)	449	52,466	
Tay Ninh Province			
An Thanh	24	1,672 ^b	The whole of Tay Ninh Province covers 3,902 sq km and contains 51 villages with a total population of 283,342.
Binh Thanh	21	6,329	
Phuoc Luu	14	2,396	
Phuoc Chi	<u>45</u>	<u>3,091</u>	
(4 villages)	104	13,488	
Dinh Tuong Province			
Phu My	44	6,336 ^b	The whole of Dinh Tuong Province covers 2,190 sq km and contains 124 villages with a total population of 738,480.
Tan Hiep	2	2,618 ^a	
Tan Huong	13	6,174 ^a	
Tan Hoi Dong	8	3,154	
Tan Hoa Thanh	20	4,375	
Tan Ly Dong	42	6,682	
Tan Ly Tay	4	4,965 ^a	
Than Cuu Nghia	9	6,441 ^a	
Hung Thanh My	82	2,819	

^a Approximately one-half of the village area is included in the Plain of Reeds.

^b Approximately two-thirds of the village area is included in the Plain of Reeds.

Village	Area (sq km)	Population	Notes
Dinh Tuong Province (Cont.)			
An Thai Dong	6	3,298 ^a	
My Duc Dong	9	3,168 ^a	
My Duc Tay	65	10,123	
My Loi	40	4,918	
An Thai Trung	15	3,803 ^b	
Thanh Hung	34	5,983 ^b	
My Thanh	39	5,736	
Hau My	56	13,805	
Hau Thanh	11	7,000	
Hoa Khanh	25	8,398 ^c	
My Thien	61	7,957	
Nhi Qui	12	4,160 ^a	
Binh Phu	17	6,552 ^a	
My Hanh Dong	28	4,834	
My Hanh Trung	9	3,703	
My Phuoc Tay	35	5,165	
Nhi My	11	5,417 ^a	
Phu Nhuan Dong	15	3,702	
Tan Binh	16	4,781	
Tan Hoi	10	3,766	
Tan Phu Dong	5	2,855	
Diem Hy	4	2,330 ^a	
Duong Diem	8	2,567	
Long Dinh	22	7,430	
Nhi Binh	34	9,315	
Phuoc Thanh	10	4,198 ^a	
Thanh Phu	8	4,075	
Hoi Cu	24	8,742	
(37 villages)	785	171,966	
Kien Phong Province			
An Binh	11	3,982	The whole of this Province is contained within the Plain of Reeds.
My Tra	13	11,498	
Nhi My	38	6,295	
Thien My	182	6,420	
Hoa An	11	9,073	
My Ngai	26	8,500	
Phong My	120	10,093	
Tan An	10	3,880	
Tan Thuan Dong	26	6,592	
Tan Thuan Tay	9	5,282	

^a Approximately one-half of the village area is included in the Plain of Reeds.

^b Approximately two-thirds of the village area is included in the Plain of Reeds.

^c Approximately one-third of the village area is included in the Plain of Reeds.

Village	Area (sq km)	Population	Notes
Kien Phong Province (Cont.)			
Tan Tinh	10	2,807	
Tinh Thoi	14	4,986	
Thuong Lac	12	6,040	
Thuong Phuoc	54	5,200	
Thuong Thoi	61	5,421	
Tan Thanh	114	5,946	
Thong Binh	83	4,476	
An Binh	22	8,658	
Binh Thanh	179	5,076	
Long Khanh	27	13,698	
Long Thuan	21	7,107	
Phu Nhuan	42	11,199	
Tan Hoi	12	3,384	
Binh Hang Tay	21	3,744	
Binh Hang Trung	61	4,771	
Binh Thanh	29	7,328	
Long Hiep	42	7,050	
My Hoi	9	4,370	
My Tho	31	6,384	
My Xuong	17	4,384	
My An	101	10,932	
My Qui	78	3,854	
Thanh My	69	3,561	
My Hoa	101	4,016	
Thanh Loi	91	3,561	
Binh Thanh	157	5,893	
Tan Phu	255	10,352	
Tan Thanh	73	5,564 _b	
Tan Hue	32	na	
Tan Long	21	9,779	
Tan Quoi	29	14,705	
An Long	36	5,599	
An Phong	34	6,231	
Phu Thanh	153	1,437	
(44 villages)	2,537	279,128	
Kien Tuong Province			
Tan Lap	108	2,392	The whole of this Province is contained within the Plain of Reeds
Tuyen Thanh	97	5,225	
Binh Hiep	62	2,855	
Binh Hoa Thon	95	349	
Thanh Tri	54	780	
Tan Hoa	49	2,970	

Village	Area (sq km)	Population	Notes
Kien Tuong Province (Cont.)			
Tan Binh	86	532	
Thanh Hoa	139	242	
Nhon Hoa	112	2,424	
Nhon Ninh	148	10,647	
Tuyen Binh	67	1,309	
Vinh Loi	121	1,552	
Hung Dien	167	985	
Vinh Thanh	159	2,783	
Thai Tri	252	8,551 ^c	
Tan Dong	137	2,005	
Thuy Dong	94	1,943	
Thanh Phuoc	101	1,442	
Thanh Phu	52	600	
Phong Phu	75	1,186	
Thuan Nghia Hoa	<u>110</u>	<u>1,657</u>	
(21 villages)	2,285	52,429	
Grand Totals			
(120 villages)	6,596	589,977	

Appendix C

AGREEMENTS ON INLAND NAVIGATION*

The utilization of the Mekong River and associated waterways has been regularized in a series of agreements that were reached in three separate but related stages.

The first of these was the Franco-Siamese Convention of 1926** which addressed the freedom of navigation on the Mekong River to be enjoyed by Thailand and the three other riparian states. Article 10 of this Convention provided for the establishment of a permanent Franco-Siamese High Commission tasked with "providing the two interested governments with all useful information and to develop all regulations necessary to ensure the fullest cooperation in matters regarding the control of navigation, sanitation, and security along the border area." These regulations were to include penal sanctions that were to be enforced simultaneously by both governments when agreed by them. Regulations concerning improving navigability and sanitation were promulgated and approved in 1929. Other proposals regarding navigation and river police have never been accepted by Thailand. The Convention was nevertheless retained, even after a new Franco-Siamese treaty "of friendship, commerce, and navigation" was signed on December 7, 1937. The Convention continued in effect throughout World War II and was again confirmed by the Franco-Siamese Accord signed in Washington on November 17, 1946.

*This historical information is drawn from a doctoral thesis filed with the University of Toulouse by Suphasin Jayanama in November 1965 entitled L'aménagement du Mekong Inferieur en Droit International Public.

**This Convention was based upon a series of previous agreements, notably the Treaty of July 15, 1867; the Treaty of October 3, 1883; the Convention of February 13, 1904, with Protocol of June 29, 1904; the Treaty of March 23, 1907; the Treaty and Protocol of February 14, 1925. The agreements from 1867 to 1907 all related to the cession of territory by Thailand to France and the establishment of the Protectorate over Cambodia in 1863 and over Laos in 1893. The Treaty of 1907 defined the boundary between Laos and Thailand.

The second stage was necessitated by the emergence of the Associated States in 1949 as independent states within the French Union. In view of this development, France invited representatives of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to meet at Pau between June 29 and November 29, 1950, to discuss matters of common interest deriving from the new international status of the Mekong River. At the conclusion of this meeting a Convention was signed regulating maritime and river navigation on the Mekong and on the approach to Saigon. The provisions of the Franco-Siamese Convention of 1926 were also confirmed. Of particular significance was the recognition of the right of access to the port of Saigon by all of the Associated States. Other states, not members of the French Union, were also accorded freedom of navigation but only on the Mekong proper; i.e., access to the port of Saigon was not included.

Finally, after the Geneva Agreements of 1954, the full independence of the former Associated States invalidated the Pau Convention. Accordingly, a meeting of representatives of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam was held in Paris from August 26 to December 29, 1954, to arrive at new agreements regarding the utilization of the Mekong River and associated waterways. It is to be noted that although this conference convened in Paris, France was not represented, nor was Thailand. Nevertheless, the interests of Thailand are served by the provisions of Articles I and II of the Convention that resulted from this meeting, although Thailand is not a member of the Commission of the Mekong created to implement the provisions. It is also significant that a further bilateral agreement between Cambodia and South Vietnam was signed on December 29, 1954, concerning the use of the Port of Saigon by Cambodia.

As could be anticipated, this latter agreement has not served to eliminate difficulties. Cambodia has interfered with Vietnamese shipping to Phnom Penh by failing to honor crew passes issued by the Vietnamese government. Vietnam in turn has insisted on the right of having its customs representatives escort or be embarked on shipping transiting the Mekong waterways within Vietnamese territory. Moreover, it has insisted on the right to inspect cargos of shipping entering and leaving

its territory. These various requirements have grown in importance for South Vietnam as the war has intensified, with the result that Cambodia and Vietnam have yet another item to aggravate their relations.

Notwithstanding the necessary restrictions on navigation of the Mekong River and its associated waterways imposed by the Vietnam War, the Convention of Paris signed on December 29, 1954, remains a valid instrument; its translated text is reproduced on the following pages.

CONVENTION
REGULATING MARITIME AND INLAND NAVIGATION
ON THE MEKONG AND INLAND NAVIGATION ON THE APPROACH TO
THE PORT OF SAIGON

(Signed at Paris December 29, 1954)

His Majesty the King of Cambodia,

His Majesty the King of Laos,

His Majesty the Chief of State of Vietnam,

Considering the unusual geographic configuration of the Mekong in Indochina, which makes this river a thoroughfare of common interest to the three States,

Desirous, within the framework of their friendly relations, of maintaining and consolidating cooperation among their countries, whose economies are interdependent,

Convinced that free navigation on the navigable course of the Mekong will develop these economies as well as the cooperation of the three States among themselves, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter,

Have resolved to conclude the present Convention.

For this purpose they have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

His Majesty the King of Cambodia:

His Excellency Au Chheun, Minister of State;

His Majesty the King of Laos:

His Excellency Leuam Insisienmay, Minister
of Finance;

His Majesty the Chief of State of Vietnam:

Mr. Nguyen Van Thoai, Minister of the Plan and
Reconstruction.

Who, having exchanged their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed upon the following provisions:

ARTICLE I

On the basis of equality of treatment, navigation shall be free throughout the course of the Mekong, its tributaries, effluents, and navigable mouths located in the territories of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, as well as on the waterways giving access to the Port of Saigon and to the sea.

For purposes of the customs laws and regulations of each riparian State, navigation between Phnom Penh and the sea by way of the Mekong and the waterways mentioned in the preceding paragraph shall be considered maritime navigation. (Explanatory notes.)

ARTICLE II

Such freedom of navigation is automatically granted to the States that have recognized the High Contracting Parties diplomatically. It shall become effective after the adherence of each State to the protocol annexed hereto prescribing the conditions of navigation.

As regards States that have not recognized the High Contracting Parties diplomatically, freedom of navigation shall be subject to their consent. (Explanatory Note).

ARTICLE III

Each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes, in respect of the other two, to refrain from adopting any measure that might directly or indirectly impair navigability or make it permanently more difficult, and to take, as promptly as possible, the necessary measures to remove all obstacles and hazards to navigation.

If such navigation requires regular upkeep, each of the High Contracting Parties shall, to that end, have an obligation toward the other two to take the measures and to carry out the necessary work in its territory as quickly as possible.

ARTICLE IV

Subject to compliance with the provisions of the preceding article, the High Contracting Parties reserve the right to utilize the waters of the Mekong, its tributaries and effluents in their respective territories, for industrial or agricultural purposes.

Barring legitimate reasons for objection by one of the High Contracting Parties, especially by the State whose territory is concerned, based either on essential conditions of navigability or on other vital interests, a riparian State may not refuse, when requested by either of the other High Contracting Parties, to carry out the necessary work to improve navigability, if the said High Contracting Party or Parties offer to pay the full cost thereof and, subsequently, a fair share of the increase in maintenance costs. The work may not be undertaken if

the State in whose territory it is to be done maintains its legitimate reason for objection.

The State bound to carry out the work of maintenance may free itself of that obligation by entrusting it to one or both of the other High Contracting Parties. As regards improvement projects, the State bound to carry them out shall be released from that obligation if it authorizes one or both of the High Contracting Parties making the request to carry them out in its place. Execution of the work by States other than the State whose territory is concerned shall be without prejudice to the latter's right to supervise the execution, and to the prerogatives of its sovereignty over the navigable waterway. The State whose territory is concerned will, for its part, undertake to assist the executing country to the fullest extent possible in all circumstances.

ARTICLE V

In the spirit of the present Convention and with a view to facilitating its application, the High Contracting Parties agree to take concerted action on the following questions:

Police and navigation regulations to be established by each of the High Contracting Parties on the navigable waterway under its sovereignty;

Programs and projects for the improvement of waterways, their installations and equipment;

Work projects of benefit to industry, agriculture, etc., to the extent to which they might seriously and permanently impair navigation;

Apportioning of costs of maintenance and new work among the High Contracting Parties;

Questions relating to duties, fees and taxes of any kind levied by each of the High Contracting Parties by reason of navigation on the waterways defined in Article I;

All other questions recognized to be of common interest.

ARTICLE VI

A Commission composed of representatives of the High Contracting Parties and known as the Commission of the Mekong is hereby created. This Commission is charged with obtaining compliance with the provisions of the present Convention and with ensuring the concerted action referred to in the preceding article, particularly as regards:

1. The preparing of navigation regulations;

2. The suggesting of useful projects to the riparian States;
3. The receipt of communications from the States concerning any improvement projects planned by them;
4. The proposing of a system of charges and their collection.

This Commission is authorized to receive requests, proposals and recommendations from natural and juridical persons of all nationalities, including representatives of foreign countries, using the waterways described in the present Convention, or, at the request of either Cambodia, Laos, or Vietnam, to hear the said persons.

It shall address its studies and recommendations to the Government concerned.

This Commission shall have a Secretariat with headquarters at Phnom Penh. It shall hold its first meeting in January 1955 and at that time draw up the regulations governing its organization and functioning.

ARTICLE VII

In the event of litigious questions arising between the High Contracting parties in the application of the present Convention, which cannot be settled by mutual agreement or through diplomatic channels, they will submit the dispute to the courts provided for in the agreement on conciliation and arbitration to be concluded within three months of the signing of the present Convention.

ARTICLE VIII

This Convention shall be ratified.

The instruments of ratification shall be exchanged between the Government of the High Contracting Parties.

ARTICLE IX

The present Convention shall enter into force on January 1, 1955.

Done at Paris in three copies
December 29, 1954

For Cambodia:

His Excellency
Au Chheun

For Laos:

His Excellency
Leuam Insisienmay

For Vietnam:

Mr. Nguyen Van Thoai

ANNEXED PROTOCOL
TO THE CONVENTION REGULATING MARITIME AND INLAND
NAVIGATION ON THE MEKONG AND INLAND NAVIGATION ON THE
APPROACH TO THE PORT OF SAIGON

The Governments of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Kingdom of Laos, and the State of Vietnam have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE I

With a view to enjoying the full benefit of freedom of navigation throughout the course of the Mekong, its tributaries, effluents, and navigable mouths,

It is requested:

Of the States that have recognized the States of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam diplomatically, and

Of the States that have not yet recognized the States of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam diplomatically, but to which the latter States have agreed to grant such freedom of navigation,

That, through exchanges of notes with the States of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, they declare their willingness to abide by the terms and conditions respecting navigation which are specified in the present Protocol.

ARTICLE II

Navigation throughout the course of the Mekong, its tributaries, effluents, and navigable mouths, must conform to the requirements prescribed by the riparian States, particularly in sanitary, police and customs matters and with respect to the maintenance of general security.

ARTICLE III

Such riparian State shall have the right to subject the transportation of persons and goods to certain conditions, provided that these conditions fully respect the provisions relating to equality of treatment.

ARTICLE IV

Freedom of navigation shall not be in violation of the national laws and regulations of the riparian States concerning the importation and exportation of goods, or immigration and emigration.

ARTICLE V

Navigation shall give rise, on a basis of equality of treatment, to the payment of duties, fees, taxes and charges payable in accordance with the territorial laws in effect.

ARTICLE VI

The provisions of Articles II, III, IV, and V shall be applied without prejudice to those of Article I, paragraph 2, of the Convention regulating navigation on the Mekong.

ARTICLE VII

Cabotage from one part to another located on the course of the Mekong, its tributaries, effluents, and navigable mouths shall be reserved to the vessels of Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese registry.

However, these States reserve, insofar as they are respectively concerned, the right to authorize the vessels of States enjoying freedom of navigation on the Mekong to engage in such trade.

Done at Paris in three copies on _____
for annexation to the Convention Regulating Maritime and Inland Navigation on the Mekong and Inland Navigation on the Approach to the Port of Saigon.

For Cambodia:

His Excellency
Au Chheun

For Laos:

His Excellency
Leuam Insisienmay

For Vietnam:

Mr. Nguyen Van Thoai

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