STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE VIET NAM CONFLICT:
A CASE STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION OF ACTIVIST STUDENT POLITICS
IN VIET NAM, FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE PARIS ACCORDS, 1954-1973

by

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY
at the
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
August, 1975

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NOV 21 1975
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This thesis interprets the political activities of Vietnamese students in terms of changing and conflicting values in the educational environment and the political culture.

Part I analyzes major conflicts in the political culture arising from the concurrent existence of three incompatible sets of behavioral cues: traditional-Mandarin, French colonial, and modern, world-contemporary.

Part II documents the rapid growth and change in the composition of the university student population, analyzing these changes in terms of tensions between traditional expectations and present realities.

Part III describes empirical political responses to the above-described changes.

Part IV focuses on policies and responses of the major forces in the world external to the universities; the Government of Viet Nam (GVN) and the National Liberation Front (NLF); it assesses the consequences of these two markedly different policy orientations in terms of their relative effectiveness in shaping student politics to serve desired policy goals.

Part V presents conclusions as to the results of the interactions of the various conflicting forces. The conclusion is that in the period 1954-1973, Vietnamese students were unable to discover any consistent, culturally sanctioned behavioral options, and were rendered politically impotent by the conflicting forces within the educational environment and the larger political culture.

Thesis Supervisor: Ithiel de Sola Pool
Title: Professor of Political Science
DEDICATION

To those proud, dedicated and dignified Vietnamese people who tried so hard to find a way, I dedicate this thesis with profound respect.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and writing of this thesis continued over a span of several years—a period of both personal and professional development and change. I am indebted to many people, whose help in various ways enabled me to complete my dissertation.

I am profoundly indebted to four people in particular for their contributions, which were immeasurable: my parents, Lawrence A. Pratt, M.D. and Alice E. Palmer, M.D., have given me opportunity, encouragement and above all, the example of their own lives; my teacher and mentor, Ithiel de Sola Pool, has been instrumental in shaping my entire educational development throughout my graduate school years; and my husband, John D. Shilling, has given love, supportiveness, substantive contributions and patient assistance, enabling me to finish this work.

Two friends, Janice Perlman and Meg Power, deserve special mention. Their intellectual companionship and friendship were and are invaluable supports. My daughter, Kaile Shilling, made her own very special kind of contribution, and I have learned a great deal from her.

To all of these people, my deepest thanks, appreciation and love.

I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Professor Sam Popkin for his interest and helpful advice, to Professor Harold Isaacs for his moral support and wise counsel, to Professor Lucian Pye for providing much inspiration and insight, and along with Professor William Griffith for their helpful comments and careful reading of the final draft.
There are many Vietnamese whose friendship, interest and help I deeply appreciate. Dr. and Mrs. Nguyen Luu Vien, and Dr. and Mrs. Philippe Tho deserve special thanks and recognition. To dozens of other Vietnamese scholars, officials, students and journalists, my thanks are no less sincere for being necessarily anonymous.

Much of the final research and writing of the thesis was made possible by a fellowship awarded by Southern Illinois University. I am grateful to the Center for Vietnamese Studies, and in particular to Professor Nguyen Dinh Hoa, for assistance in completing my work.

I am greatly indebted to Jo Hill for her cheerful patience and thoroughness in typing and editing the manuscript, and to Jackie Sobel for her assistance in typing the final draft.
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INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of interest in student activity in recent years, and especially in student political activism. Vietnamese students have been among the most dramatic and visible of these political activists.

It is the object of this thesis to interpret these activities in terms of changing and conflicting values in the educational environment and the political culture in which the student finds himself. The analysis will show that the traditional Vietnamese culture clearly defined one set of acceptable behaviors -- behaviors which provided a mutually consistent, socially sanctioned role for students within the larger political culture. The colonial system less clearly defined another set of behavioral orientations not entirely compatible with the traditional set. The contemporary philosophy and system of education provides yet a third, still less clearly defined set of beliefs and attitudes towards political action. As the major themes of these three dominant political cultures are partially or wholly incompatible, and moreover, the culture itself is still undergoing profound change, contemporary students are left with no acceptable behavioral options.

Political action may also be viewed as an existential attempt on the part of a minority to redefine and create acceptable and viable role models and new identities for the student actors. The conclusion of the analysis is that contemporary Vietnamese students have no mutually consistent and acceptable behavioral options. This implies a continuation of sporadic, unpredictable and incoherent political activity on the part of Vietnamese students, which will tend toward violence in the measure that the surrounding general
political environment responds to violence with renewed violence and with inconsistency.

Theories of Student Activism

Most of the literature dealing with student political activism is based on theories of specific causality, applied cross-culturally. For example, a study showing that humanities students tend to be more radical than science students claims that there is "probably" a tendency for all students everywhere to reflect similar predispositions depending on their respective fields of study.

It is part of my thesis that these hypotheses are inappropriate in that the causes of student political activity are in large part culture specific. Many of the common reasons cited thus may be considered as necessary causes; but the culturally determined causes must be considered as sufficient causes in determining the fact and form of political activism. These culture specific causes can be generalized in terms of types of causes rather than specific ones. Students everywhere share certain predispositions which can be attributed to their stage and station in life: youthful idealism, a general absence of full adult responsibilities, and flexible schedules may combine to make political activism particularly appealing and possible for students; but activism actually occurs only when stimulated by salient and conflicting changes in the educational environment and/or the political culture, or by obvious contradictions between accepted values and current practice.

For example, rather than saying that "field of study" inclines students to more or less political activity, we would say that those students who are
more cross-pressured and conflicted concerning their identities within the political culture may be more predisposed towards political activism; it may then follow as a corollary and may be demonstrated empirically that humanities students, say, are more cross-pressured than science students in a given country or at a given time.

The literature is filled with many such specific findings, data, assertions and hypotheses concerning the causes and concomitants of student activism. As most specialists in the field will agree, however, the problem has been to find "a sense of order in all of these insights to keep from being intellectually swamped by their volume and variety."\(^1\)

Similarly, my own research has led me to the conclusion that attempts at classification, in the hopes of developing a specific-cause theory of student activism are misguided. Huntington's observation regarding the study of military politicization applies with equal force to the study of student activism in politics:

> The effort to answer the question, "What Characteristics of the military establishment of a new nation facilitate its involvement in domestic politics?" is misdirected because the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military but the political and institutional structure of the society.\(^2\)

As noted above, however, the majority of current theorizing focuses on specific causes; and all such theories are bedeviled by similar and serious problems: they do not explain changes over time in the degree of activism of a given student population; they are not generalizable cross-culturally; and they are almost all arguable in that for any specific cause adduced, numerous
counter-examples can be found.

To say, for example, that student activism is partly a function of "stage of life" is probably correct to some extent, following Weber's observation that "youth has a tendency to follow a pure ethic of absolute ends while maturity is associated with an 'ethic of responsibility'". However, this does not explain the fact that even where student activism is greatest, most students remain inactive. Nor does it explain why, in the same place, students are active on year and quiet the next. In short, "stage of life" is a constant, common to all students everywhere; it cannot explain specific outbursts.

Among other contributing factors, it is commonly held that student activism is most pronounced within various "outgroups." Thus, Ronald Dore, in his research on Japanese education since the Meiji Restoration, found that student opposition to government policies originated within the private universities, which were more remote from government influence -- and job recruitment -- than the imperial universities. Similarly, studies ranging from Brazilian and Panamanian law students to Chinese students in the late 1930's show a correlation between lower class origins and political, especially radical activism, giving further credence to the notion that "marginality" is associated with both activism and radicalism. S.M. Lipset has argued that this correlation between marginality and activism is a most natural state of affairs, since "The need of a younger generation to establish its independence corresponds to the tactic of revolutionary movements to seek recruits among those who are not yet integrated into the institutional system."

On the other hand, Glaucio Soares points out that several studies --
including one by Lipset himself -- "have shown that political interest and participation are higher at the upper socio-economic levels." And, as Soares and others have noted, university populations, especially in underdeveloped countries have tended to be relatively homogeneous with regard to class and status levels; for in many cases, university education has been a privilege of the elite. Again, Lipset himself provides a counter-example to the marginality-activist theory when he notes that:

Their self-consciousness as a distinctive group with high status and with relative immunity from severe repression has also continued into independence. In societies where learning has been associated with religion and earthly authority, students, as aspirants to that learning, have enjoyed great respect. University students, too, are quite often the off-spring of families of some eminence in their respective countries. Their status as kinsmen of the incumbent elites, and as prospective members of the elite themselves, affords them a special position among oppositional groups. They tend to be confident that the harsh suppression to which other oppositional groups are subject will not fall to their lot. This too encourages their entry into the political sphere.

It has also been generally accepted in many quarters that activism is most prevalent among students in the "softer" academic majors. Metta Spencer's findings in her study of Indian students is representative: "Students in the social sciences and humanities were more politicized and more leftist than were science students, who in turn were more so than the students preparing for professions." My own data partially contradicts the generality of this hypothesis, in that students from the Faculties of Medicine, Science, Agriculture and, recently, Pedagogy, were found to be among the most active. Moreover, the activism among students of the different faculties varied greatly and unsystematically from year to year. Oglesby's research in the U.S. also confirms that it was from among the most "serious" students that the most
active participants in the "New Left" came.\textsuperscript{11}

Oglesby's analysis also contradicts the popular but generally un-supported notion that student activists are in symbolic rebellion against parental authority. Rather, he found that the majority of student activists were simply supporting in deed the fundamental values supported (albeit sometimes only in word) by their parents.\textsuperscript{12}

We could go on citing examples and counter-examples almost indefinitely, but the point is already clear. We will argue that student activism is the result of a particular, generally unique combination of circumstances in a particular place at a particular time in history. In other words, the specific-cause theories may be regarded as enumerating the necessary conditions for student political activism. The sufficient condition is that of a changing political culture, which is providing fewer, and less strong and consistent cues concerning which behavioral options are "acceptable" and socially sanctioned; alternatively, the trigger may be obvious and salient discrepancies between accepted ideals and current practice.

The Development of Vietnamese Student Politics

The body of the thesis is divided into five parts: Part I describes and analyzes the major areas of conflict within the cultural environment. This source of conflict within the political culture is termed the "conflict of three cultures;" and it arises from the existence of three concurrent but mutually inconsistent sets of behavioral cues: traditional-Mandarin, French colonial, and modern, world-contemporary.

This first conflict source is sharpened and made acute by the second
source of conflict within the student milieu, which is discussed in Part II: the rapid growth and change in the composition of the university population itself. Statistical documentation of the direction and extent of these changes is presented and analyzed in terms of the resulting tensions between traditional expectations and present realities.

Part III then describes the empirical political responses to the sets of changing conditions described in Parts I and II. The development of Vietnamese student activism is presented chronologically. It is traced from its roots in the Indochina War, through the naive "golden period" surrounding the fall of the Diem regime; the rise and subsequent failure of the social welfare movement is then discussed, noting that this marked a major turning point in the development of student politics. Finally, the nation-wide organization of an activist, oppositional student movement is described, as is its wary manipulation by the NLF and eventual neutralization by the GVN.

Part IV focuses on the policies and responses of the two major political forces in the "real world" external to the university, the GVN and the NLF. The implications of their policies with respect to students is analyzed in terms of their appropriateness to the changing Vietnamese political culture. The consequences of the two very different policy orientations is then assessed in terms of their relative effectiveness in shaping the student political force to serve desired policy goals.

The goal of the NLF is shown to have undergone a major change. Initially the attitude of the NLF was one of class opposition to the student elite. As the composition of the student body shifted from an elite to a mass base and the needs of the NLF itself changed, there was a dramatic shift in policy.
Students were actively recruited and an attempt was made to mobilize student political power and to incorporate students as a strategic and organizational element within the NLF. This policy is shown to have had certain short-term success, but long-term failure.

The GVN policy has been one of attempting to neutralize students as a political force. In the short run, this policy has sometimes produced disastrous results. In the long-run, it has succeeded -- at least in terms of its own goals.

Part V presents the conclusion -- the result of the interaction of the various internal and external conflicting forces which impinge upon the political behavior of the Vietnamese student. The conclusion is that this combination of warring factions has been destructive. A generation of Vietnamese students has been unable to discover any culturally-sanctioned, acceptable forms of political behavior. And in that respect they are symbolic of the larger dilemma of their society: wrenched brutally and irrevocably from traditional "known" patterns, faced with inconsistent and contradictory cues, they have been rendered politically impotent.
Introduction


4. This conclusion is inescapable, based on an examination of the literature; it is consistent with the findings of my own research.


7. Ibid., 18.


12. Ibid.
PART I

EDUCATION AND THE CHANGING THEMES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL CULTURES
INTRODUCTION

In this part, I will discuss the dominant themes of the three major periods in Vietnamese educational history: traditional, colonial and contemporary. I will outline the philosophy, and discuss the methods of the various educational systems as applied to the students. These themes will then be analyzed in terms of their implications for student political behavior.

For each historical epoch, the section on Educational Philosophy seeks to answer questions about the purpose(s) of education -- why were students educated, to what end were their studies directed, and for what roles and positions in the general society did their education prepare them. The sections on Educational Methods deal with who was educated under each system -- what were the characteristics and qualifications of students; what kinds of institutions were the schools of the period; what were the content and methods of the educational system, and how were they related to the purposes and goals. Finally, the section on Implications for Political Behavior will relate the philosophy and methods of the various educational systems to the implications for political behavior, and will discuss the relationship of education to the particular political culture in general.

According to this schema, we shall see that the traditional educational system provided a strong, mutually consistent set of cues regarding political behavior. The major themes of the traditional education focused upon the absolute nature of authority, avoidance of conflict and control of emotions, dependency on external controls, obedience and submission to superiors, and "correct" ritualized behavior in the service of cosmic harmony. The
educational system was designed to train an administrative elite, which depended upon the examples of the Confucian classics, and the correct observance of ritual behaviors as the basis for the proper governing of the state. The educational system of traditional Viet Nam is thus seen as an integral part of the larger political culture, reflecting and reinforcing it both implicitly and explicitly.

The French educational system retained the traditional emphasis on training an elite for administration. To a certain extent, it also continued the traditional reliance on the absolute authority of the teacher and reliance on memorization as an external guide to correct behavior. However, absolute obedience was not a political requisite outside the classroom, and independent action and thought was encouraged in various ways by the curriculum and methods of education. It is thus argued that, for various reasons, the educational system was at many points inconsistent with the larger political culture, and that a minority of the increasingly conflicted elite began to engage in systemically disruptive political behavior.

Finally, it is argued that the contemporary educational system has until most recently been uncertain and inconsistent both as to its purposes and its methods. The result, in a political culture which is itself undergoing profound and rapid change, has been chaotic, undisciplined and often violent political activity on the part of a large minority.
CHAPTER I

THEMES OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The "traditional" forms of education in Viet Nam prevailed with astonishing sameness for almost one thousand years. Overlapping the traditional period somewhat, the total duration of French influence lasted barely one century. The contemporary phase, beginning with Independence in 1954, has made its impact felt during a scant two decades. The habits of one thousand years are not easily eradicated; and the persistence of traditional ways and beliefs is empirically obvious in the behavior of many contemporary youths. It is therefore fitting to begin our study of education and political behavior with an investigation of these profound historical roots.

Confucianism and Educational Philosophy in Traditional Viet Nam

The doctrines of Confucianism which were at the root of the traditional educational system were well established in Annam during the thousand years of Chinese rule which preceeded the historical reality of Viet Nam as a separate and independent state by the year 940.¹ By this time, however, Confucian philosophy was already a blend of many doctrines; it contained elements of Taoism, which taught non-interference with the Natural Order, as well as traces of the Legalist School which stood in opposition to Taoism. In addition, Vietnamese Confucianism was influenced by the Mo school which emphasized concern with the public interest, and by the yin-yang, or negative-positive school.²

As the foundation of the Vietnamese social and political cultures,
Confucianism was based not on revealed religion, but rather on a comprehensive and all-embracing ethical code. The kinship ties on which the philosophy of Confucianism rested centered on the notion of loyalty to the family and clan -- a reflection of the Confucian virtue of hiem, or filial piety. "Centuries of hiem indoctrination made the Vietnamese organizational animals in the same way that many Americans are political animals -- instinctively so."³

Confucianism, above all else, is a doctrine of social and political hierarchies. It defines the attitudes which each member of the society and polity should have by a set of well-defined rules; and it prescribes the formulae for the three predominant sets of personal interactions, in Vietnamese called Tam Cuong. These interactions are between ruler and subject, Quan Than, between father and son, Phu Tu, and between husband and wife, Phu Phu.⁴ It also dictates a moral code for the man of virtue, Quan Tu, who should be a living example of the five cardinal virtues: humanity, equity, urbanity, intelligence, and honesty. Moreover, the man of virtue should follow a path of moderation and avoid expressing passion in any direction. Equanimity is the mark of Confucian cultivation.

The filial piety which one exhibited towards one's parents was the model for devotion and submission to one's teacher, and beyond that, for loyalty to the emperor who, as the Son of Heaven, represented a father-figure par excellence. The duty of reverence and obedience to the father was thus applied more generally to all classes of subordinate-superior relationships.

The Confucian doctrine, in its Vietnamese adaptation, conceived of a "natural order" of things, and it was the task of the educational socialization
process to reinforce the familial one, insuring that this order was preserved by keeping in check passions which would disturb the order.

The Vietnamese "Trinity": Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism

For our purposes, it is only necessary to touch briefly on the nature of Vietnamese Taoism and Buddhism and on the ways in which these influences have been incorporated into the basic framework of the Vietnamese Confucian tradition. The basic point to be made is that the mingling of these philosophies resulted in compatible cultural pluralism. The educational system was entirely dominated by Confucianism, but the other philosophies were in any case, reinforcing.

As stressed previously, the foundation of Vietnamese society rests not on revealed religion, but on ethics; essentially a syncretic blend of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. In fact, the main characteristic of religion in Viet Nam is that:

The Vietnamese have never considered themselves exclusively Confucianist, Buddhist, or Taoist. Vietnamese literature is filled with references to the harmony of the three religions, calling them "three roads to the same destination."5

In practice, the ethical teachings of these three philosophies have been mutually reinforcing in the traditional Vietnamese society.

Vietnamese Taoism is derived principally from the teachings of the Chinese scholar Lao Tzu, and is based on the concept of the participation of man in a natural order. This order depends on the equilibrium between the two elements yin and yang, which represent the constant duality of nature. Thus, the Taoist must refrain from disturbing the natural order; and in fact,
he must conform to it in every circumstance. The Taoist considers the taking of initiative to be in vain; thus, he disdains the active life, and adheres to the principle of passivity. As can be seen, there are many similarities between Confucianism and Taoism; and the net effect is an emphasis on submission, obedience and negative valuation of individual initiative.

Buddhism, on the other hand, reinforces the other doctrines by emphasizing the renunciation of desires. Again, the stress is upon the necessity of living an exemplary life, based on the observation of fixed rules governing moral and virtuous conduct; only by suppressing desire can Nirvana be attained.

Thus, the predominant philosophical ingredient in traditional Vietnamese culture was Confucianism, reinforced by smaller doeses of other compatible ethical systems. Providing a uniform model for all interpersonal relations as well as for all institutional behaviors, Confucianism was a remarkably consistent foundation of both society and state. "The 'government' of the family and the village, and the empire derived from one single set of instructions. Thus a change in one implied a change in all the others."7

Education for the Mandarinate

It was the Confucian conception of the state which gave rise to the mandarinate; and it was the mandarinate, as administrative system of the empire which determined the nature of the educational system. For the purpose of education was to train mandarins. In a more profound sense, the system was deliberately designed to perpetuate mandarinal rule; and education was the crucial link in the political socialization of the Vietnamese, uniting government and governed within a single, consistent framework. "This resulted in a curious
sociological and unique historical fact: if only the educated could enter
the ranks of the mandarins and if the mandarins had a monopoly on political
power, the educated minority of Viet Nam was in fact the country's 'ruling
class.'

Mandarinal rule in Viet Nam, moreover, was distinguished by a classical
perfection never attained elsewhere. The early Vietnamese dynasties had
wasted no time in their attempt to create "a well-organized state with a
strong central administration, for which the China of imperial unity and
order was their model." Civil service examinations were introduced in 1073;
schools to train future civil servants were established the following year;
and a formal hierarchy of officials with nine degrees of civil and military
mandarins was decreed in 1089.

This system endured almost intact until the mid-Nineteenth Century, when
it began to be undermined gradually as a result of increasingly determined
French incursions. Even so, the mandarinate was an incredibly durable institu-
tion; and the National College (for mandarins) was abolished along with the
triennial Royal Examinations only in 1917.

Never was the ideal of "a gentleman and a scholar" held in higher esteem.
For these were the necessary and sufficient qualifications for the simultaneous
attainment of the highest political offices and the highest social status. In
this way, the educational system became inseparably and explicitly bound to
both social and political authority. Confucius had taught that the state
was "to be ruled by 'chun-tze' (the perfect gentlemen). The authority of these
new rulers had to be based on virtue and education." Therefore:
What the mandarins needed was not technical proficiency for complicated governmental functions but a claim to authority that no one would dare to attack. To give them such authority was the purpose of their endless studies and difficult tests. This made the mandarins' seemingly quite irrelevant intellectual training as practical a preparation for the exercise of power as ever was designed. It was more than a systematic ideological indoctrination. It was above all a profound and immensely successful system of justification of governmental authority, erected upon the only universal and indestructible foundation for any man's claim to be obeyed by other men: intellectual and moral superiority, demonstrated in impartial tests that only a man who was thoroughly learned could pass. And the learned alone, Confucius had established, travel the roads of wisdom, which are also the roads that led to the moral perfection of man....The possession of knowledge became thus inseparably connected with the right to exercise authority, and intellectual capability became the only sure basis for a man's claim to an office of the state. 14

The Confucian Educational System

The educated minority in traditional Viet Nam constituted a very special status elite, if not necessarily an economic one. The traditional ranking of social classes placed intellectuals first, followed by farmers, artisans, and tradesmen and merchants. But it is important to note that this social differentiation was based on occupational classification, not an economic status. "Elle est basée sur la profession et non sur la fortune." 15 And, as Buttinger has pointed out:

The mandarins obviously were not an economically anchored ruling class, or even a firmly closed group of Vietnamese society, but rather a group of changeable composition with all the main features of a so-called elite. 16

Formal education was a remote possibility for the bulk of the population. Although the competitive examinations for the mandarinate were open to all in
principle, the rigorous and lengthy period of study required practically precluded the entry of peasants into the hierarchy of the ruling elite except in rare instances. Further restricting access to the ranks of the educated elite was the fact that the sons of mandarins enjoyed certain institutionally sanctioned advantages. The "College of the Children of the State" established in 1076 accepted the children of officials exclusively, while another special college, Quoc Tu Giam accepted brilliant students from non-mandarinal origins only on rare occasions. 17

For the select few possessing that necessary and rare combination of intelligence plus means, the actual process of formal education usually got under way somewhere between the ages of four and six. There was no fixed time for beginning, however; nor was there any definite limit on the length of time required for studies, since one's education was theoretically terminated only if and when the royal exams for the mandarinate were passed. "The years of study and the passing of preliminary examinations might well have made him a middle-aged or elderly man." 18 by the time this exalted pinnacle was attained, however, since a student could not be said to be educated until he had absorbed "no less than all the knowledge that existed, or was recognized as existing under the prevailing Confucianist views." 19

The instruction itself, moreover, was not a public affair. Schooling most often took place within the confines of the family, where the children could be supervised constantly by parental authority. Alternatively, children were sometimes sent to study at a neighboring house or at the home of the teacher himself. Not infrequently, the student boarded in the home of his tutor. Under the constant surveillance of the parents or their friends and of
the teacher, the student's behavior was constantly being compared to the Confucian ideal as elaborated in the Canons -- and corrected when it failed to measure up.

The role of the teacher was particularly important to the traditional education system. Treated with enormous deference and respect, they were accorded the status of honored guests when they came to teach their lessons. From the student's point of view, he was expected to regard the teacher with the same reverence and awe with which he regarded his father. The duty of the teacher was to act as a moral perceptor of youth. A close teacher-disciple relationship was considered essential to education, with the teacher "...treating his students as if they were sons or younger brothers, and being trusted and loved by them as if he were their father or elder brother." 20

The crucial importance of the teacher for the political culture, however, lay in his role in developing and refining the child's conceptions regarding relations with authority:

The authority of the teacher reinforced parental authority not only explicitly through preachment of filiality, but also indirectly -- and perhaps more meaningfully -- by maintaining for the adolescent the same image of authority as a diffuse and unapproachable source of control that he knew at home. 21

The image of authority as absolute, which was initially perceived in relation to the parents, was perpetuated and stabilized by the teacher. It was an authority from which there was no appeal, and the student had no recourse but to accept the obedience and submission prescribed and expected as fitting and proper behavior on his part.

Their teachers were their absolute masters. Such was the prestige of the scholar that it was almost inconceivable that
a father take the side of a son against his teacher, and so well known was this fact that cases of complaints by sons must have been extremely rare. The teacher could and did inflict corporal punishment whenever he felt it necessary.22

The rigid and unyielding authority of the teacher was paralleled by the severe and arduous discipline of the learning process itself. The system was based almost entirely on learning by rote; and the first few years were taken up with the "painful matter of blind learning through memorizing sounds."23 Later came the tedious and monotonous repetition of brush strokes necessary to master the difficult, ideogramatic Chinese calligraphy. Indeed, "traditional Vietnamese education accorded well with its medium. Each word was a thing-in-itself [and] the writing was therefore without abstraction, for each word has its own atmosphere, impossible to translate into Western languages and irreducible to categories."24 Again, the student learned by imitation; and the entire process, as Solomon has noted, was "unlikely to develop in a young student self-confidence through a feeling of achievement within his limited capabilities."25

After years of memorizing sounds and symbols, the student at last attained the stage at which he was prepared to begin memorizing the Confucian Classics. Taken together, the five Books which comprised the Confucian Classics "were regarded not only as the final authority upon questions of ancient history and practice, but as the embodiment of the moral law of Confucius and his predecessors, and the source of all wisdom and knowledge."26 The five Classics comprised: The Book of Changes, I Ching, a guideline for interpreting divinations; the Book of History of Book or Documents, both a record of and model for governmental behavior; the Book of Odes or Book of Poetry,
interpreted as being a collection of commentaries on officials and their actions; the Ritual, a collection of precepts for daily life and of philosophical pronouncements, and the Spring and Autumn Annals, a brief chronology of events in Confucius' native state. The five Books were supplemented by Commentaries, designed to aid the student in discovering the moral of each story. Students were simply required to learn by heart what was taught, and were not permitted to question or discuss the content of their lessons.

And while attainment of knowledge was the evident purpose of education, the Classics made it clear that knowledge and learning were in the service of personal "cultivation" and "rectification": the virtues by which the sage kings of ancient China had maintained social order.

The essence of Confucian teaching, then, was the inculcation of the five virtues deemed necessary for political life: human-heartedness, righteousness, proper conduct in accordance with the rituals, wisdom and good faith. To be worthy of governing, the student should also develop the four traits of a good administrator: simplicity, honesty, industriousness, and rectitude. Finally, the four essential duties: loyalty, filial piety, fraternity and gentleness should govern all human relationships.

Above all else, cultivation meant living by the Doctrine of the Mean; and the cultivated man was one who did all things in their due degree, and did nothing to excess. Personal rectification consisted of continually adjusting and ordering one's behavior in accordance with the rules and moral precepts laid out in the Classics. In theory, then, there could be no such thing as a "lapsed" Confucian, because the fundamental principle of the entire system was practice and more practice until proper conduct became natural habit.
Traditional Education and Political Behavior

Because the Confucian educational tradition was by conception training for political administration, its methods and the attitudes it sought to develop give us a rather explicit picture of the behavior presented to a student as appropriate to politics, and the values and goals which Confucian government sought to attain.30

The educational system of traditional Viet Nam was an integral part of the larger political culture, reflecting and reinforcing it both implicitly and explicitly. In particular, as we have seen, the student was presented with an image of authority as absolute and indivisible. It was the teacher who personified authority in the educational system, and the model of authority he represented was entirely consistent with the familial and political models of the general culture.

We have seen that there was a syndrome in the traditional educational system which may be characterized as emphasis on "correct" behavior and the proper ordering of relationships, avoidance of conflict and restraint of emotions, and dependency on external sources of control by reference to the authority of the teacher or that of the Classics as behavioral guides.

The implications of this syndrome with respect to political participation and political opposition are profound indeed. In good times, and under a virtuous emperor, the ruler's Heavenly Mandate was acknowledged; and the proper citizen was diligent in the performance of the prescribed rituals, was reverent and obedient to his superiors, and strove to hold in his emotions, accepting and submitting to the dictages of a kind but all-powerful institutionalized father figure.31 Just as "the withdrawal of adult controls would lead to a confused 'running wild' of the adolescent's physical impulses"32 in the
classroom, the maintenance of strong authority was considered essential to maintaining the harmony of the State.

It is important to note here also that the only time when opposition to authority was sanctioned by the traditional system was when the ruler was judged to have lost his Mandate by virtue of incorrect and improper behavior. Even then, however, open opposition was never tolerated at any time. Thus, any opposition was forced to organize clandestinely. Further, rebellion could never be other than total; for, as psychologist Walter Slote has observed with what could hardly be a greater understatement, "Up to the present, negotiation and conciliation seem not to be well-established Vietnamese conceptual forms within the authority context."\textsuperscript{33}

Finally, while clandestine organization and total opposition characterized traditional political dissent, it must be explicitly stated that students were not political activists under the traditional system except rarely, and then only as individuals. It is true that local mandarins were sometimes foci of local opposition, and court mandarins were sometimes centers of political intrigue. Students were therefore necessarily aware of these traditional modes of political activism; and once they became mandarins, they could be expected to become participants -- either in the ritualized performance of political duties or in the equally ritualized behavior of political dissent. The point remains, however, that the phenomenon of students organized \textit{que} students for purposes of political activity was unknown.

Summary

To summarize, then, the traditional Vietnamese educational system was based
on the Confucian ethic. It was specifically designed to train a small status elite for political administration, and the ranks of the mandarinate were filled exclusively by the graduates of the educational system.

In addition to teaching literacy and the fundamentals of government through the memorization of historical examples, the purpose of education was to inculcate the principles of correct and virtuous behavior. "Cultivation" in the Confucian sense, consisted of denial and repression of one's emotions and the attempt to do all things in their proper measure in order to maintain harmony and equilibrium in one's life and, by extension, in the life of the nation.

Interpersonal relationships were presented explicitly as being hierarchical in nature: there was no sense of equality in relationships. On the contrary, authority was not something to be shared, and all interaction took place within the framework of a dominant-submissive structuring of roles. Hostility and aggression towards authority was not permitted expression; and independent initiative was actively discouraged in favor of reliance on behavioral models and acceptance of guidance from external sources. But although the authority of the teacher was to be feared, submitted to and respected, it was also at the same time nurturing and supporting; and it was the vehicle through which the student was assured access to the security and honor of the elite. For no matter whether or not he passed the final and highest level of mandarinal examinations, the mere fact of education and literacy entitled the student to a position of prestige and respect within his community. Thus:
While raising anxieties in the child about academic performance through excessive demands and physical punishments, [the traditional educational system] also provided a clear if painful path, and distant yet appealing goal, by which the child could by his own diligent efforts relieve these anxieties.
CHAPTER II
THEMES OF FRENCH COLONIAL EDUCATION

The impact of French colonial policy in education was massive and fundamental; in the relatively short span of their rule, the French systematically and completely undermined the Mandarinate, and with it the educational system which was at its base. In its place, they substituted a superficially similar but substantively different educational system which was inconsistent and incompatible both with traditional Vietnamese culture and with the aims of colonial policy itself. These conflicts and inconsistencies carried in them an inherent revolutionary potential, which was finally manifested in the creation of a revolutionary class, rooted in the university.

Philosophy of French Colonial Education

There were many superficial similarities between traditional and colonial education; and in the words of one contemporary Vietnamese educated within the French system, "It is extremely difficult to make a distinction between the French colonial influence and the continuity of Vietnamese traditions. They are similar in form if not in substance."35 One must not be mislead by this congruence of forms, however; for the substance -- the philosophy and purpose -- of French education was radically different; and while the similarities of form made for relatively easy acceptance of the change in education systems, the differences were to prove unsettling to both the old and new political cultures.

The aims of French policy in education, as in other areas, "vacillated
between the ideal of assimilation and the goal of association.\textsuperscript{36} Ideally, education was to provide the alchemy for turning Vietnamese into Frenchmen, in the benevolent, if condescending spirit of the "Mission Civilatrice."

In practice, French interest in educating Vietnamese varied with the political climates in both France and Indochina; and it was not until the last years of the colonial era that France began to make a serious commitment to educating the "natives." Even then, the system was entirely French, and the guiding principle was the training of a select minority to staff the lower levels of the colonial bureaucracy.

In short, educational opportunities for Vietnamese were very little, and very late. The few who reached the top did receive the very best quality education France had to offer; and they were so unique that almost every one of them became prominent in public life following independence. There never was any effort on the part of the colonial administration to promote popular education, however. Education in the colonial period thus remained at least as elitist as it had been under Mandarinate; and the total number of Vietnamese able to pursue advanced studies during the entire colonial period was appallingly small, particularly in the south.

It was only in 1902 that the more liberal Governor-General, Paul Beau, opened the lowest positions of the administration to Vietnamese. And it was five years after that, in 1907, before he created the so-called "university" of Hanoi, aimed at the "moral conquest" of the Vietnamese.\textsuperscript{37} But "His promotion of education did not repair the damage done of the earlier governors who had unwittingly destroyed the traditional education and had succeeded in re-establishing schools only on paper."\textsuperscript{38} The Vietnamese had become "more
illiterate than their fathers had been before the French occupation." And even the moderate advances undertaken under Paul Beau were temporary; for Beau was recalled in 1907 and the "university" of Hanoi was dissolved in 1908. It was not until 1912 that the French permitted the Vietnamese to enter a French secondary school. A full decade passed between its "temporary" closing and the reopening of the University of Hanoi under Governor-General Sarrault in 1918, the date usually given for the founding of a Vietnamese university.

Beau's liberal gesture, then, was followed by a reactionary hiatus; and it was finally the pressures of World War I which made it necessary for the French to:

Break into the traditional educational system and train Vietnamese to fill the secondary levels of the colonial and commercial administration. After that war they abolished the Confucian schools throughout Vietnam and replaced them with a small primary education system, two lycees, and the faculties of law and medicine at the University. In Tonkin, where the loyalties of the mandarins to the old regime remained as strong as they did in the center, the new students grew up on a dangerous blend of modern Western education and Vietnamese tradition.

As late as 1931, a cumulative total of only slightly more than 39,000 Vietnamese had had five years of primary education, just over 4,000 had nine years of primary school, and only a few hundred had any advanced study under the French system. The total outlay in higher education during the entire colonial period was contained in fourteen lycees and a single university in Hanoi.

As viewed by the French, then, education was a gift, not a right, bestowed upon a select elite of Vietnamese, who could by this means acquire the benefits
of French civilization. The French philosophy and attitude towards educating Vietnamese was accurately reflected by General DeLattre in his address to the annual Prize Day ceremony at the Lycee Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon, in 1951. The continuing applications for admission, the diligent efforts and brilliant performances of so many young Vietnamese scholars bore witness, he said,  

...to the interest which all Vietnamese take in things of the intellect and particularly in French culture, which was and will remain for Viet Nam the privileged means of attaining modern culture.45

French Educational Methods

Leopold Cadière, writing at the height of the colonial era, observed with some dismay the crucial difference between Confucian and French educational methods. The traditional system, he noted, was an integrated whole, in which the students' more formal studies were enmeshed in a reinforcing framework of the larger moral and ethical influences of family and society. The French system, Cadière lamented, had separated out formal education and made it a compartmentalized activity, pulling out the moral purposes which had previously underlain and given cultural justification to the long years of study:

Quelle difference avec les grandes casernes que sont nos écoles modernes, ou l'enfant est laissé à lui-même, isolé, seul, au milieu de la foule qui l'entoure! Quelle différence avec l'enseignement de la morale tel qu'on pourra la donner, froidement, séchement, dans ces maisons.46

The French repeated the traditional tendency to see professors as absolute authorities, with one important difference: the personal and emotional bonds between student and teacher we no longer inherent; and the moral basis and purpose of instruction was gone. The authority of the teacher was limited to
the classroom -- a situation which was entirely appropriate according to French cultural norms, but strictly at odds with those of the Vietnamese.

At the university, as in the lower levels, learning continued to be largely a process of memorization of lectures; and the same lectures were generally repeated year after year with little or no change. Since attendance was not compulsory at most Faculties of the university, many students simply bought verbatim notes for courses which interested them. A student then passed or failed an entire year's work by taking one set of final examinations. Since the system was explicitly designed to select out only the few most qualified students to continue, the number of failures each year was large; a 90% failure rate was not unusual in some faculties, for example.  

The substance and content of the curriculum were, of course, at the heart of the French system. And here, the emphasis was entirely on French culture. The goal was to provide a literary education, but only in a rather narrow sense. Upon entering the high school level, the student had to choose whether to major in mathematics, science or literature. And this choice limited the options available to him at the university level, should he qualify for such advanced studies. The student then made a career choice upon entering university -- a choice which could be hedged only by enrolling simultaneously in more than one faculty.

Despite the failures of colonial practices, due in part to continuing difficulties in coping with nascent student activism, the colonial period did lay the foundations for a revolutionary popularization and modernization of education in post-independence Viet Nam. The cornerstone which made this subsequent construction possible was the introduction of a Romanized script,
quốc ngữ, which made functional literacy feasible in a relatively short period of time. It remained for independent Viet Nam, however, to make the Romanized script rather than French compulsory throughout the school system as of 1954, and to finally replace French with Vietnamese at the university level in 1967.

French Education and Political Behavior

In political terms, the French conquest of Viet Nam must be seen as a disruption not only of the Vietnamese government itself, but also of the entire authority system upon which government in Viet Nam was based. By means of vastly superior physical force, plus an utter disregard for local tradition, the French had both the means and the temerity to threaten the Emperors, and to force them to do the bidding of their colonial masters. Since, as we have seen, authority was regarded as absolute and incapable of being compromised, the French created an inherently untenable and unstable state of affairs. Having launched the equivalent of a frontal assault on the very foundations of legitimacy and authority, the French required the Vietnamese to accept the totality of French sovereignty.

The situation was only exacerbated by French attempts either to absorb or to assimilate the local elite. Far from providing the alchemy for turning Vietnamese into Frenchmen, the educational system instituted by the French became the crucible wherein Vietnamese nationalists and revolutionaries were formed.

Although French education, like Confucian education was designed to produce a class of administrators, there was a crucial difference in status. With their diplomas, French students had access to the top levels of the administra-
tion. Their Vietnamese classmates, however, were restricted to the lower level posts of minor clerks and functionaries. The tiny handful of Vietnamese who obtained French degrees had presumably obtained the highest levels of French culture. Yet, these students were unable to advance within the French political and social structure; and it was increasingly difficult to reconcile the exalted status supposedly conferred by a French university degree with the limited opportunities available.

Relegated to a secondary role in the colonial bureaucracy, the native assistants "naturally...did not dream of aspiring to serve as examples of conduct for their compatriots;"\(^{49}\) and the new type of administrator could no longer regard himself as being more than "a passive cogwheel in the government machine."\(^{50}\)

In succumbing to the French, the entire system had lost the "Mandate of Heaven," and not just a particular monarch. The prestige of the mandarins, moreover, was deliberately destroyed by the French by a systematic undermining of the educational foundation upon which it rested. The French sought to discredit the class for political leadership of the independence movement;\(^{51}\) but they unwittingly created a class of new-style "mandarins:" an educated elite, with far more dangerous and revolutionary ideas than the old mandarins.

The French policy of assimilation did combine with the traditional Vietnamese respect for education to produce a tiny elite of highly Westernized Vietnamese. By the very fact of its Westernization, however, this group also lost the right to claim leadership; and the only way such a claim could be reestablished was:
...by conspicuously rejecting...affiliations with the French.

The peculiar emphasis of French rule helps to explain why the present leadership of South Vietnam, probably the most Westernized in all Southeast Asia, places the most emphasis upon recapturing features of the traditional culture.52

Herein lay the dilemma and the basic internal contradiction of French education. While French culture was held out as being superior in every way, and while French education was touted as the means to attainment of this superiority, the diligent student upon graduation found he was no longer entitled to the highest honor and status -- neither in terms of the traditional society, of which he was no longer a part as a result of his French education, nor in terms of the French culture of which he had become a very unimportant member.

It may be assumed safely; moreover, that the traditional socialization agents such as religion and the family went on relatively unchanged, and that the student was therefore subjected to parallel and often contradictory influences. The Confucian system had been an integral whole. The substitution of French for Confucian education meant that the system was no longer in harmony; as one of its parts had come hopelessly unbalanced, the entire structure was bound to shift.

While the traditional system continued to inculcate the virtues of subordination to superiors, the superiors, now French, were no longer behaving correctly so as to merit allegiance. The French taught equality, where Vietnamese believed in hierarchy.53 The French taught personal liberty, where the Vietnamese believed in control and the sacrifice of the individual to the
group. The French taught universal Fraternity, where the Vietnamese society was based on a carefully structured hierarchy of in-group loyalties. The strain was too much. The existence of two mutually contradictory patterns of socialization into the political culture could not long endure; and institutionalized forms of the Mandarinate were made to fall. The national felt need for a new cosmogeny which arose with the collapse of the Confucian institutions helps explain "the peculiar vulnerability of the Vietnamese to the appeals of total ideological systems." 54

Summary

French direct control in higher education lasted approximately fifteen years. Yet in that brief span, the colonial experience succeeded in destroying the traditional system in the realm of education, if not in the general political culture. At independence, the "Vietnamese thus inherited from the French an educational system which favored the few, lacked social foundations, and neglected technical skills needed for national development. And it remained for the contemporary Vietnamese to grapple with the problem of trying to reconcile the political culture of the educated elite with that of the society at large.

It is also clear why it was during the colonial period that the first manifestations of student political activism were seen in Viet Nam: the French had introduced the European tradition of regarding the university as a place of political and intellectual sanctuary; they had introduced the teaching of what where, to the Vietnamese, revolutionary ideas; they had weakened the traditional authority of the teacher, and with it the tradition
restraints and controls on individual expression; they encouraged high expectations and aspirations among students which could never be fulfilled given the restrictions of colonial policy; and they promoted the idea of personal political involvement without providing opportunities and channels or even permitting it to occur among Vietnamese. This indeed was a revolutionary combination; and in retrospect, the development of Vietnamese student activism, which will be described in Part III, seems to have been predictable.
CHAPTER III
THEMES OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

The Vietnamese who assumed responsibility for education following Independence in 1954 inherited an education system which was foreign, designed for an elite, and in its rigid emphasis on rote memorization, ill-suited to the requirements of development. They were faced with the challenge of transforming this system into one which was nationalistic, designed for a mass learning clientele, and stressing the technical and pragmatic training needed for development. It was a challenge for which Vietnamese educators were ill-prepared. The tiny minority of Vietnamese who had advanced degrees was necessarily responsible for shaping the country's educational future after Independence; and they had little choice but to draw upon the only resources and training they had -- all entirely French. Thus the irony of French influence on Vietnamese educational practices is that this influence was more widespread since independence than it was during the colonial period itself.

In this way, the French presence within the Vietnamese educational framework was maintained for a considerable period following Independence, although it was obvious from the beginning that this presence was diminishing as French nationals departed in increasing numbers. The situation was complicated by the growing influence of more and more American advisors, and by frequent and abrupt changes of and within governments. The result was a hodge-podge of ad-hoc programs in the tangle of which it was difficult to discern a common thread.

That educational policy in the years since Independence has been marked
by a great deal of uncertainty and confusion is therefore understandable. Only in retrospect do the aims of contemporary education become clear; and only recently have they begun to be articulated. In the meantime, educational goals tended to be viewed primarily in quantitative terms.

Contemporary Educational Philosophy

One searches in vain for official statements which might give a clue to educational philosophy in the first decade of independence. The obligatory references to "modernizing the educational system to meet the needs of the nation" are naturally present. However, no attempt was apparently made to translate this vague generality into practical terms until well into the 1960's. Nowhere does one find any commentary or discussion concerning what kinds of education might be appropriate, nor any reference to what the "needs of the nation" actually might be -- nor how the educational system might best serve these needs. The basic educational decisions which must be made by all less-developed nations -- elite vs. popular, public vs. private, general vs. technical -- were not only not taken, but it is hard to discover any evidence that the questions were even raised. The causes of confusion and indecision during the first decade of independence were many: the fact of continuing and increasing insecurity, especially in the changing flux of "advisors," and most of all, the frequent, jarring and sometimes tragic changes in government and within governments which precluded continuity and the development of coherent policy on the part of the responsible Vietnamese themselves.

In the absence of any overall educational philosophy and policy, it was therefore "chiefly on the quantitative plan that the Department of National
Education was bending its efforts. As the official record of the Diem administration stated in the chapter on Education, the only concrete purpose in the field of education was to "Extend education to all social strata and to the remotest regions of the country." There is no mention of any corresponding "qualitative plan;" and the chapter goes on to elaborate the details of expansion -- increases in the numbers of schools, increases in the numbers of classrooms, increases in the numbers of teachers -- more students in more provinces taking more subjects, staying in school more hours and more years. But nowhere is any mention made of what was studied, or why. As late as 1969, a Vietnamese professor could still observe that "the present system of education in Viet Nam is not so much different from the French system of the 1930's." An American official in the Ministry of Education was even less complimentary, remarking that "We have the French system of education, but it is not the French system of today; rather it is the French system of 1890. Education in France slowly has been moving away from the older orientation that still persists here."

Beset by problems, the Vietnamese nevertheless initially moved to implement a number of important changes that were clearly intended to achieve goals which were articulated only much later; and it is possible in retrospect to deduce certain de facto purposes from the melange of projects and programs. Behind the "Decade of Development" program of educational expansion launched in 1960, for example, was a large American influence and the optimistic American assumption that democracy would follow on the heels of mass literacy. Critics of the American influence in Vietnamese education have pointed out that U.S. A.I.D. has spent millions of dollars financing programs which are
"American value laden [and] full of such generally untested assumptions about education and development." The sheer weight of this influence, in terms of numbers of advisors and numbers of dollars, clearly accelerated the pace of educational changes in Viet Nam; and the result has almost certainly been a difference in kind as well as in degree.

A second purpose, implied by the Vietnamization of language and curricula at the primary and secondary levels, was that of creating a national identity. The problem here is that while the teaching of what Harold Isaacs has called "Culture Past" has succeeded in maintaining a sense of racial identity and pride, there is simply no such thing as a common South Vietnamese "Culture Present" which could provide the basis for a contemporary South Vietnamese national identity. 61

A third purpose, inherent in the establishment of a National Institute of Administration in 1955, was the retained, long-standing educational goal of forming an administrative elite to staff the upper levels of the administration. As we learn from a 1971 University of Saigon bulletin, the university additionally viewed itself as being charged with the "Evaluation, creation and dissemination of cultural, scientific, and technical knowledge necessary for development and progress." 62— in other words, the training of middle-level skilled cadre and technicians required to operate a modernizing economy. Finally, higher education was to develop the highly-skilled corps of men and women needed to staff the service professions.

The absence of stated priorities and goals notwithstanding, decisions were being made and projects were being implemented which had the cumulative effect of disrupting the French-model educational system. Finally, in
September 1968

more than 60 of the nation's educational leaders voted to turn away from the old French literary and elitist approach. Giving a new orientation to national education, the inter-university seminar at Nha Trang passed a resolution declaring that "in order to respond to the present needs of the country and to adapt itself to modern times, higher education should (1) be vocationally oriented and (2) be aimed at the mass of the people."  

It is true that this 1968 decision was largely a reflection of what was already happening, and that the "needs of the country" were still largely unspecified. More importantly, however, there was at last a consensus of sorts among leading Vietnamese educators concerning priorities and directions; and they had given formal sanction to the current evolutionary trend -- a trend which marked a radical departure from the elitist, non-practical orientation of Vietnamese education during previous centuries.

For the purposes of this thesis, then, we will accept this combination of de facto and belatedly articulated purposes as defining the broad goals of modern education, i.e., mass education, a stress on technical, functional and vocational instruction; and the reincorporation of national relevance through the introduction of Vietnamese language and through special courses in history and culture.

Contemporary Educational Practice

We have seen in the previous section that contemporary educators have been working towards a definition of goals suitable to the post-Independence purposes of development. In practice, however, these goals have been imperfectly and inconsistently implemented for a host of reasons, many of which have been touched upon in the previous section.
It should be borne in mind that the educational methods used in Viet Nam during the period of study were primarily the antiquated ones inherited from the days of French rule. The outline of this system has already been sketched in the previous chapter; it will suffice therefore to reiterate the major problem areas from a contemporary perspective.

Viewing the "needs of the nation" economically, the structurally elitist educational system has been wasteful in the extreme. At the university level, with the exceptions of Medicine, Denistry and Pedagogy, all Faculties have graduated less than 5% of their total enrollments. The duplication of basic courses in each of the different Faculties is an additional drain on scarce resources.

The second major problem area concerns the inappropriateness of content and curricula -- in modern parlance, the "irrelevance" of an educational system designed for an elite cadre of civil servants.

With the change to a mass learning clientele, a substantial proportion of the students in school are being miseducated. The content of....courses, heavily dominated by the questions on qualifying examinations, is still drawn to a great extent from the developed world, which is remote from the experience of today's student, especially the rural peasant child....The heavy reliance on examinations encourages rote learning of irrelevant information. Even in technical courses adherence to standards and practices set in the developed countries inhibits the education of students to solve the problems of their own environments in more appropriate ways. The fact that these practices are often the choice of local people does not diminish their bad effects.

Finally, implementation of new goals in higher education has been further inhibited by the institutional resistance to change which is common to all universities. To be sure, this problem is particularly pronounced in the case
of Vietnamese universities. Not only do such inherent institutional features as lifetime chairmanships make for greater resistance; but the demands placed upon the system have also been exceptionally great. In just over one decade Vietnamese universities have changed or attempted to change: their teaching staffs from largely French dominated to entirely Vietnamese; the language of instruction; their entrance procedures, grading systems, curricula and course content, and to a large extent, their physical plant as well. In the context of attempts to undertake sweeping changes, the tenacity of both traditional and French attitudes necessarily influences the ways in which contemporary goals are implemented.

This situation is perfectly summarized and reflected in the speech by the Rector of the University of Saigon on the occasion of the convocation opening the Academic year 1970-71. The two major purposes of the university according to Dr. Tran Quang De are:

> On the one hand, development, transmission and dissemination of the national culture. On the other, contribution to the development of the national economy.  

Further elaboration made it clear that the first goal represents a preservation of the traditional concept of education as a moral and spiritual force in the life of the student. It is important to realize that Rector De was giving voice to a prevalent -- indeed almost universal -- attitude among Vietnamese concerning what education should accomplish; and this attitude remains firmly ingrained, despite the fact that this lofty goal has been translated into practice only to the extent of offering courses in "Vietnamese civilization."
The second goal, of "contribution to the development of the national economy" would seem to be entirely contemporary. Rector De again reflects the attitudes of most Vietnamese educators and students, however, in his interpretation of this aim. As the Vietnamese see it, the role of the university is to collaborate in the decision-making process, setting priorities and developing national plans. As a corollary to this, "Research by the University must be carried on to develop specific plans to upgrade national agriculture, exploit and market local raw materials, improve and adapt technology to local industries." Thus will the university fulfill its mandate to contribute to national development. Specifically, the university -- the professors and students who comprise the academic community -- does not regard its mandate as being limited to the training of people with the skills needed to implement all the research and planning. The new mass of students retains the attitude of the old elite: the educated man, ideally, is a gentleman -- a thinker and planner, and not a doer. And the expectations and aspirations of contemporary Vietnamese students are still largely a reflection of that premise.

The the dilemma and the lament of the contemporary student: their university degree confers high status aspirations, but it is often practically worthless in the real-world job market. They are trained to think and plan on an abstract level; but they often cannot compete with graduates of special private and technical high schools, whose concrete language and typing skills, for example, are highly valued by employers.

The order in which changes in educational goals have been implemented has proceeded from the primary to the secondary, and only recently to the
university level. There have been lags and gaps at every stage, and a lack of meshing and continuity between stages. The result, inevitably, is a lack of fit between goals and achievements. The educational system has been trying to do something, but has had great difficulties, both in defining what its aims actually are, and in overcoming the tenacity of existing patterns. The students who have been forced to "wear" this ill-fitting educational garment have begun to express their discomfort in increasingly strident tones. And it is precisely these gaps and lags which have provided the impetus for restructuring education: as education became more mass-oriented, the masses have demanded increasing "relevance," i.e., practical applicability.

Contemporary Education and Political Behavior

The aims of contemporary educational policy have been building towards diversification and decentralization of authority, an introduction of experimentation and scientific method, an increasing degree of student participation in the educational process, and greater emphasis on the cultivation of pragmatic skills to an ever-greater student mass. If the goals and aims of modern education were well integrated with other socialization processes and with the norms and practices of the political culture as a whole, we might expect to see the emergence of a wide range of "modern" political forms: development of durable organizational vehicles, the growth of a loyal cadre, an increasing use of negotiation, bargaining and compromise to settle demands of the various power interests, and a greater willingness on the part of the citizenry simply to participate in the political process in various legitimate ways.
In fact, there have been limited attempts to petition officials and establish negotiating committees. When students organized to demand total reform of the university, for example, one of their first actions was to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss their proposals. When no concrete results were obtained or even promised, and when their professors suggested that the students' time would have been better spent at the beach, the students concluded that discussion is useless and that mass action might be more effective. Subsequent demonstrations by the University Autonomy Movement did succeed in focusing attention on the issues and polarized the faculty into pro- and anti-autonomy groups.

Another earlier example of "modern" political involvement of an entirely different nature is seen in the so called District Eight Program. In this program, students were allowed to assume control and responsibility for the most problematical district in the greater Saigon urban area. The students attempted to introduce participatory democracy and self-help as a basis for dealing with the areas' crime, NLF infiltration, and its total lack of basic services, such as garbage collection, schools and public health facilities. When the success of the program was manifested by the election of its student leaders to represent the District Eight in the National Assembly, the GVN moved swiftly to replace the students with government appointees to take over the running of the program.

These two brief examples will be developed in greater detail in Chapter V, which analyzes contemporary student activism in terms of a response to various conflicts faced by the students and as a search for acceptable modes of political behavior. However, they are also most instructive illustrations
of the point we have been making here. Given the aims of current educational policy, we would expect to find, and indeed find, examples of "modern" political activism. Insofar as these attempts are effective, we would expect also to see their increasing use and development into recognizable, repeated patterns of political behavior.

But, as the goals of modern education are incompletely integrated and implemented, so also is the political behavior of the students inconsistent, erratic and chaotic to the extent that their attempts to engage in modern forms of political activity are deliberately frustrated or unreinforced by the major forces in their political environment -- the GVN and the NLF.

In their political environment, then, students are presented with parts of these different and often conflicting models. In their attempts to evolve acceptable modes of political behavior, they tend simultaneously to pick and mix various often incompatible aspects from each. Sometimes, they attempt "modern" forms of political action, but when they do, they are frustrated and/or unreinforced; thus, these "modern" responses continue to be mixed with traditional and colonial era political styles, such as clandestine organization and a tendency towards total opposition rather than compromise.

The Conflict of Three Cultures

The proceeding chapters have laid the foundation for analyzing the first of two internal conflicts faced by contemporary Vietnamese students. This is the conflict which will be referred to as the "conflict of three cultures." This shorthand term is intended to designate the entire syndrome of cross-pressures which result from the existence of three inconsistent and often
incompatible sets of behavioral cues, which in turn have been shown to depend on the peculiar mix of traditional, French and contemporary cultural inputs in the Vietnamese socialization processes.

The first conflict has been exacerbated by the second source of internal conflict, that of the rapid growth and change in the composition of the student population itself. We will now proceed to document the statistical basis of this second conflict in the next chapter. In the following chapter, we will then present a detailed discussion of the joint effects of these two classes of conflict: the conflict of three cultures and the conflict of rapid change and growth. These joint effects will be presented in terms of students' political responses in their search for acceptable forms of political behavior.
FOOTNOTES

Part I


5. Douglas Pike, 12.


9. Ibid., 297.

10. Ibid., 144.

11. Ibid., 144.


17. Ibid., 290 and 319 n.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 291.

20. de Bary, 439.


23. Solomon, 104.


25. Solomon, 104.

26. de Bary, 6.

27. Ibid., 4-7.


29. Nghiem Dang, 324.


32. Solomon, 106.

33. Slote, 29.

34. Solomon, 107.

35. Letter from Nguyen Huu Chi, former Chief of Quang Nam Province, April 15, 1969


40. Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon, 427.

41. The French Lycee in Hanoi was opened to Vietnamese in 1912 by Governor-General Albert Sarraut, "who tried to kill nationalism by kindness," according to J.S. Furnivall, Educational Progress in Southeast Asia (New York: 1943), p. 87.
42. Fitzgerald, 61.
45. Speech by General de Lattre to the Annual Prize Day ceremonies at the Lycee Chasseloup-Laubat, Saigon, 1951.
47. These data and the evaluation of French educational methods in Viet Nam are taken from "Student Records from Vietnam," (Saigon: United States Operations Mission, Education Division, 1964).
48. This practice, called "doubling," is described more fully in Chapter IV.
49. Nghiem Dang, 60.
50. Ibid., p. 4.
53. French failure to practice equality vis-a-vis the Vietnamese does not necessarily mean that the concept was not absorbed by Vietnamese students.
54. Sacks, p. 263.
57. Ibid.
58. Letter from Nguyen Huu Chi.
61. The terms "culture past" and "culture present" originated with Prof. Harold Isaacs, M.I.T.


67. Ibid.

68. This description of the meeting between leaders of the U.A.M. and Prime Minister Khiem was provided by one of the participants in an interview in Saigon, April, 1971.

PART II

CHANGES IN THE STUDENT POPULATION
INTRODUCTION

We have argued in previous chapters that contemporary Vietnamese university students were conflicted due to the existence and persistence of incompatible and inconsistent sets of cultural cues; and that this internal conflict was aggravated by the rapid growth and change in the nature and composition of the student population itself. We will now proceed to establish evidence of that conflict on the basis of our interview data, and on the basis of a sample survey of student attitudes; and we can document the quantitative and qualitative changes in the composition of the student body on the basis of a statistical analysis of enrollment records.
CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE CHANGES IN THE STUDENT POPULATION

The Growth of Total Enrollments

The increase in student enrollments is the most striking feature of educational development in the post-Independence period. While rapid growth of enrollments is generally found in all developing countries in the post-World War II period, the Vietnamese case is made more dramatic by comparison with other Third World examples. The World Bank has compiled world-wide enrollment figures for the years 1960 and 1966. Between 1960 and 1966 in developing countries as a whole, growth rates were 6% at the primary level, 10.3% at the secondary level, and 11.6% at the higher (mostly university) level.\(^1\) Comparable figures for Viet Nam in the same time span are 5.8%, 13.2%, and 18.6% at the primary, secondary and university levels respectively (See Fig. 1.).\(^2\)

In absolute figures, these increases represent an addition to the Vietnamese educational system of over half a million primary students, over a quarter million secondary students, and 20,000 university students in the six year period. The increase at the university level, moreover, had to be absorbed almost entirely by existing facilities of the three existing universities.\(^3\) Thus, although smaller in absolute terms, the growth of student enrollments at the university level resulted in greater strains than did growth at the primary and secondary levels which were accompanied by -- albeit less than adequate -- expansion of the physical plants.

Viet Nam has always had a rather narrowly peaked educational pyramid and a
### Figure 1

**Enrollment Growth Rates by Educational Levels and Regions 1960-1966**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<td>Number of Pupils (Thousands)</td>
<td>Percentages</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia - South Viet Nam</td>
<td>73.368</td>
<td>11.982</td>
<td>1.421</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Viet Nam</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing Countries</td>
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<td>18.186</td>
<td>2.191</td>
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<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>248.486</td>
<td>63.927</td>
<td>11.174</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


** Excluding Japan, Mainland China, North Korea and North Viet Nam
high drop-out rate. At every level, only a small percentage of those who entered could be expected to complete a given cycle. This pattern is changing, however. In order to detail this change more precisely, and in order to provide a basis for estimating the size of the next year's university freshman class, we have calculated the size of the high school graduating class for every province, for every year since independence for which data are available. During this period, 1958-1969, the growth rate of the "Premiere classe" (senior class) enrollments was as great as 22.6% when private school enrollments are included. (See Figures 2 and 3). This compared with a total secondary level increase of 14.8% between the same years, 1958 and 1969. The upper level classes in general and the graduating class in particular, then, had growth rates which were faster than the overall secondary school growth rate. This means that the shape of the educational pyramid was changing during this time, as noted above; and it was changing in the direction of becoming wider at the top. Here we see dramatic evidence that the shift from elitist to mass education was taking place at the high school level during this period.

The effects of this shift were also being felt at the university level during this time. The growth rate for total university enrollment during the years 1954-1971 was 19.5%, representing the staggering addition of an estimated 66,500 students in just 17 years, or an average annual increase of almost 4,000 students per year! In other words, enrollments in Vietnamese universities were increasing almost twice as fast as higher education enrollments in developing countries as a whole. And this increase, moreover, was taking place despite a diminution of the relevant age cohort due to casualties and dislocations produced by the war.
FIGURE 2
PREMIERE CLASSE ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATES, PUBLIC, SEMI-PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS, 1956-1969
FIGURE 3

PREMIERE CLASSE ENROLLMENT DATA, PUBLIC, SEMI-PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS
1956-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>PRIVATE &amp; SEMI-PRIVATE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>1004</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1109</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1444</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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<td>3007</td>
<td>7357</td>
</tr>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>5759</td>
<td>3314</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
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<td>6500</td>
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There is a kind of built-in escalatory force in almost all educational systems whereby the curricula are designed to prepare students for the next level, and all academic pressures are in the direction of continuing education. Except in higher education, the system is not designed to turn out a finished educational product. Hence, in the absence of specific restraints, the policy of instituting universal primary, and more recently, mass secondary education was bound to lead to parallel university growth. The Vietnamese have retained the French practice of regarding the high school diploma (Lycee Baccalaureat) as sufficient qualification for university entrance. At the same time, Vietnamese educators have been faced with the necessity of maintaining standards of quality in certain critical Faculties such as medicine, administration and pedagogy. To meet both the political and social demands for continued open admissions, and the practical necessity of maintaining quality, Vietnamese educators have introduced a selective entrance exam system, designed to limit enrollments in those areas where there is high priority on the maintenance of quality. According to this compromise, enrollments in five faculties were "controlled" beginning in 1963. These faculties were pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, pedagogy and architecture. The remaining three faculties of law, letters and science were left uncontrolled to absorb the entire brunt of the increased admissions. Of the controlled faculties, architecture enjoyed a continued growth as larger numbers of its graduates were sorely needed to aid in a variety of wartime construction projects. Aside from this one exception, however, all the controlled faculties experienced a dramatic brake and sometimes reversal of their growth
trends following the inauguration of the limited admissions policy. By contrast, growth in the uncontrolled faculties continued apace (See Figures 5-8).

That this growth does not reflect the individual preferences of the students is obvious. One has only to look at the dramatic shift in growth trends before and after the controls were instituted. Between 1954 and 1962, the faculties of Pharmacy, Medicine and Pedagogy were growing at the rates of 39.1%, 14.0% and 48% respectively. After entrance exams were required in these faculties, the growth rates dropped to minus 1.9%, 2.7% and 2.8%.

Further evidence that the students' preference choices were blocked by the new controls is found in the choice of academic majors on the part of the high school graduating classes. Responding to the modern emphasis on practicality and technical education, and the shift away from the French literary approach, the majority of students chose academic majors in experimental science, physics and math. These sections experienced rapid growth rates of 13.2% and 14.8% over the years 1960-69, while the letters section grew at a modest 5.2% during the same period (See Figures 8 and 9). With the exception of architecture, which was allowed to continue expanding for the reasons noted above, there was a sharp reduction in the growth rates of all controlled Faculties post-1962. By contrast, the uncontrolled faculties all continued to show significantly higher growth rates since 1962.

Although these rates do show a slight tapering off from the initial post-independence spurt, the absolute numbers of students are now so large as to preclude their absorption by existing facilities. The Faculty of Letters, for example, demonstrated a 41.3% growth rate prior to 1962, at a time
FIGURE 4

ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATES OF SELECTED "CONTROLLED" FACULTIES,
FIGURE 5
ENROLLMENT DATA OF SELECTED CONTROLLED FACULTIES,
UNIVERSITY OF SAIGON, 1954-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>2112</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>639</td>
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AVERAGE GROWTH RATE 22.5% 8.1% 14.7% 25.0%
GROWTH RATE PRE-1963 39.1% 14.0% 48%
GROWTH RATE POST-1963 - 1.9% 2.7% 2.8%
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<td>5893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>11609</td>
<td>5900</td>
</tr>
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</table>
when it was admitting a maximum of 1,000 additional students per year. Since 1962, the growth rate in the Faculty of Letters had dropped down to an average of 11.5%; but this rate represents current admissions in excess of 5,000 new students annually!

The physical plant and teaching staff of all combined Vietnamese universities remains inadequate to handle this large influx of students. The University of Saigon, which alone accounts for 70% of total enrollments, has expanded its facilities very little since its creation. With the exception of the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry, which are the showpieces of the university, other Faculties continued through the period of this study to use temporary quarters in remodeled kindergarten schools, high schools or military barracks. The Rector of the University estimated that the existing facilities in 1972 could adequately accommodate a maximum of only 10,000 students, or less than 20% of the actual enrollment. 4

Hue University had the highest growth rate of any university between 1957 and 1962, an amazing 34.7%. Following student and Buddhist demonstrations in the old Imperial capital, in 1963, a political decision was made to discontinue further increases in support for the university there. As a result, the enrollment at Hue stabilized, increasing at a mere 2.1% yearly -- a rate which, incidentally, is on the same order as those of the "controlled" Faculties at the University of Saigon (See Figures 10 and 11).

Thus, the strain of increased numbers of students was borne primarily by the three "uncontrolled" Faculties of the University of Saigon.

In addition, a number of new universities, both public and private, have been opened recently in response to the pressing need to distribute the huge
FIGURE 11
ENROLLMENT DATA, UNIVERSITIES OF SAIGON AND HUE, 1954-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
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<th>HUE</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>9820</td>
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</table>
student population somewhere away from overcrowded Saigon and politically sensitive Hue. Besides Delat, a private Catholic university begun in 1960 under the patronage of the Diem administration, there have been five new universities opened in the years 1965-1971. Van Hanh, a private Buddhist university, started in 1965; and a new state university was opened in Can Tho in 1966, with the specific mandate of providing "relevant" higher education for the Delta IV Corps region, particularly in the field of agriculture. The other three universities were all added at the very end of the period of this study, and all three are privately endowed by various religious groups: Minh Duc is Catholic, and the other two are backed by the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects. Together, these universities (i.e., all universities other than the University of Saigon) enjoyed a combined growth rate of 37.9% between 1960 and 1971, although in absolute figures, they accounted for only about 13,880 out of 68,600 students in 1971. It is interesting to note that this spurt in growth coincides exactly with the tapering off in enrollments at Hue University (See Figures 12 and 13).  

In addition to inadequate increases in physical facilities to meet rising student needs, budgets and teaching staffs have also failed to keep pace. The University of Saigon, for example, had its budget increased from 61,593,000 to 281,000,000 piasters between 1960 and 1970, an average annual increase of 16.4%. Considering the rampant local inflation and the devaluation of the piaster, this seemed hardly adequate to keep up with a student population which was growing at an average of 15.2% per year during this time -- to say nothing of financing the modernization and expansion of outdated equipment and facilities.
FIGURE 13
ENROLLMENT DATA, ALL UNIVERSITIES, 1954-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Saigon</th>
<th>Hue</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954 (Saigon founded)</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>3380</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957 (Hue founded)</td>
<td>4090</td>
<td>360</td>
<td></td>
<td>4450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>6230</td>
<td>640</td>
<td></td>
<td>6870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>7920</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td></td>
<td>9180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 (Dalat founded)</td>
<td>9820</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>11,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>15,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>14,520</td>
<td>2330</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>17,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>16,820</td>
<td>3090</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>20,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>18,810</td>
<td>3340</td>
<td>1515</td>
<td>23,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965 (Van Hanh founded)</td>
<td>20,805</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>2432</td>
<td>26,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 (Can Tho founded)</td>
<td>24,530</td>
<td>3005</td>
<td>3372</td>
<td>30,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>24,510</td>
<td>3190</td>
<td>5358</td>
<td>33,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>27,400</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>7186</td>
<td>37,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>34,820</td>
<td>3415</td>
<td>8049</td>
<td>46,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>41,048</td>
<td>3701</td>
<td>11,859</td>
<td>56,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 (Minh Duc Cao Dai Hoa Hao founded)</td>
<td>50,340</td>
<td>4499</td>
<td>13,810</td>
<td>68,649</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nor did this minimal budget increase allow adequate means to augment the chronic shortage of teaching staff, or permit any in-service upgrading of the present staff. The numbers of teaching personnel at the University of Saigon rose at an average rate of only 9% annually from 1961 to 1970, and of these, fully two-thirds are below the standards that have been set. \(^7\)

The slow growth rate of faculty members is not surprising when one considers that the pool from which new professors are drawn was expanding very slowly (See Figure 14). Between 1960 and 1970, the University of Saigon granted a total of only 5,852 degrees (exclusive of Licentiates, which are considered non-terminal degrees). Moreover, if one subtracts degrees in pharmacy, pedagogy, medicine and dentistry, the total is only 352, the recruiting pool from which the most rapidly expanding Faculties had to be staffed. Given the low salaries of university professors, most competent graduates are drawn off into more lucrative positions. The chronic shortage of qualified graduates, plus low salary incentive, thus combined to promote the continuation of part-time professors, who commute between several universities each week. "At Hue, which is typical, these part-time, visiting professors outnumber the permanent staff by two-and-a-half to one."\(^8\)

Thus, there was sustained and rapid growth in the student populations of Viet Nam's high schools and universities between Independence in 1954 and the signing of the Peace Accord in 1972. Partial exceptions to this trend were the University of Hue, and the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Pedagogy at Saigon, which all underwent rapid growth in the initial 1954-1962 period; their growth rates were not sustained in the 1963-1972 period because enrollments were deliberately limited beginning in 1963. In the case
FIGURE 14
NUMBER OF GRADUATES, UNIVERSITY OF SAIGON 1960-1970

Faculty of Law: 1,897 Licentiates
19 Doctorates

Faculty of Science: 979 Licentiates
15 Diplomas of Graduate Studies
24 Doctorates of the Third Cycle
2 Doctorates of Engineering
4 Doctorates of State

Faculty of Pedagogy: 1,764 Second Cycle High School Teachers
607 First Cycle High School Teachers
19 Professors of Normal Schools

Faculty of Pharmacy: 1,716 Pharmacists

Faculty of Architecture:
Section Architecture: 57
Section Urbanism: 18
Section Technician in Architecture: 150

Faculty of Dental Medicine: 203 Dentists

Faculty of Medicine: 1,191 Doctors

Faculty of Letters: 1,715 Licentiates
63 Diplomas of Graduate Studies

of the University of Saigon, limitations were motivated largely by a desire to maintain quality, and in the case of the Faculty of Pharmacy, to stop profiteering by excessive numbers of graduates; in the case of Hue, the reasons for curtailing growth were specifically political and were aimed at dampening student activism.

In all cases, however, there is a similar pattern of more rapid growth rates in the years preceding 1963, and somewhat slower growth rates after that year. Nevertheless, the absolute numbers were still increasing, to the point where Saigon University, to take the most dramatic example, found itself admitting nearly 10,000 new students in the last year of the study.

This increase in the student population was not matched by parallel increases in other components. The teaching staffs and budgets were augmented at much slower rates, while -- with the exception of the addition of several new universities late in the period -- physical facilities grew almost not at all. And the new universities, while adding somewhat to the total combined physical plant, were a drain on teaching resources elsewhere; they did not hire new teaching personnel for the most part, but shared the limited supply of other existing schools. With the few exceptions already noted, then, the result was a growing deterioration of educational quality for a growing number of students.
CHAPTER V
QUALITATIVE CHANGES IN THE STUDENT POPULATION

Introduction

In addition to growing at a rapid rate throughout the latter part of the 1950's and the decade of the 1960's, the student population was undergoing important internal changes in its composition. Once the exclusive perogative of the sons of the urbanized elite, higher education was becoming accessible to the sons and daughters of all classes and all regions. The concomitant changes in the male-female ration, in the students' regional and religious backgrounds, in their family status, and in their age distribution had a profound impact; and the implications of these changes with respect to student political activities will be analyzed in a later section. But first, let us establish the statistical evidence of these changes.

Sex and Age Distribution

Throughout the Vietnamese educational structure, the proportion of female students has been on the increase. At the lower levels, this increase has been particularly rapid, due in part to the relatively smaller numbers of girls enrolled in the base years. At the primary level, the percentage of girls enrolled was traditionally very small, as education was considered primarily a male perogative.

At upper levels, however, there was a slightly higher percentage of girls compared to the lower levels. This can be explained by the fact that higher education was in the past the privilege of the elite; and this Westernized
elite tended to educate their daughters as well as their sons. Thus, there were few girls and many boys in the elementary grades. Few students continued their education beyond the primary level; but of those few that did go on, an increasingly higher percentage were female.

Despite the relatively higher starting point, the growth rate in female enrollments continued to be significantly higher than the male growth rate even at the secondary level (See Figures 15 and 16). For the terminal year of secondary education, for which we have detailed data for the entire 1958-69 period, we find that this pattern holds not only nationally, but for each region considered separately. (See Figures 17-24).

Nationally, the high school graduating class was expanding its enrollments at an average annual rate of 17.0%. The percentage of males was increasing at 15.5% nationally, and the percentage of females was increasing at 21.1%. An interesting sidelight is that the greatest discrepancy between male and female growth rates is found in III Corps, where the pace of female enrollments exceeded that of the males by an average of 5.8%. The III Corps area, which includes Saigon, had the greatest number of schools and students at the beginning of the period, and enrollments at that time were heavily dominated by males. Thus, as male and female enrollments tended to equalize over the decade, the rate of increase of females was very fast. In other Corps areas, there were very few schools and fewer students at the secondary level in the immediate post-Independence period. From the start, a relatively higher proportion of girls enrolled, and this proportion increased throughout the decade. Thus, while female enrollments outpaced the male in all regions, the greatest proportional increase is found in the III Corps-Capital military
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>130</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>497</td>
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<td>9,518</td>
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<td>11,995</td>
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<td>13,729</td>
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<tr>
<td>4330</td>
<td>14,960</td>
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<tr>
<td>6421</td>
<td>20,201</td>
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<tr>
<td>5108</td>
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**FIGURE 18**

ROLLMENT DATA, 1958-1969: I Corps

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<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>519</td>
<td>437</td>
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<td>187</td>
<td>980</td>
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<tr>
<td>749</td>
<td>1426</td>
<td>323</td>
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<tr>
<td>478</td>
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<td>263</td>
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<td>723</td>
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<tr>
<td>946</td>
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<td>2426</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>691</td>
<td>1246</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 19

PREMIERE CLASSE ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATES, 1958-1969: II Corps
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>414</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1439</td>
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<td>1534</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>1594</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>2920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>577</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>553</td>
<td>545</td>
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<tr>
<td>763</td>
<td>985</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2367</td>
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<tr>
<td>490</td>
<td>1866</td>
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<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>1684</td>
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<tr>
<td>725</td>
<td>2227</td>
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<tr>
<td>5479</td>
<td>2468</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2907</td>
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<tr>
<td>855</td>
<td>3663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>649</td>
<td>3211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 23
PREMIERE CLASSE ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATES,
1958-1969: IV CORPS

TOTAL 52.0%
FIGURE 24

PREMIERE CLASSE ENROLLMENT DATA, 1958-1969: IV CORPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>226</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>1258</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>1577</td>
<td>1144</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>1649</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>2474</td>
<td>1828</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>3681</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>1386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>2421</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
region, which has always accounted for the greatest absolute numbers of students.

At the university level, we have data broken down by sex only for the University of Saigon. The figures here parallel the national figures for the high school graduating class. Overall, the university grew at 17.5%, with male enrollments averaging a 16.3% increase annually, and female enrollments averaging 21.6% per year (See Figures 25-26). Although data is unavailable for other universities, it seems reasonable to postulate that the trend might be similar to that of the high school graduating class. That is, female enrollments are definitely increasing more rapidly than male enrollments across the board, as sex distribution tended to equalize over the decade. However, the rate of this increase might be expected to be highest for those schools which were most well-established and had the highest absolute numbers of students to begin with. The most recently established universities on the other hand, should reflect the more modern tendency towards equal enrollments from the start.

Although we have been emphasizing the rapidity with which female enrollments have been increasing with respect to male, we should make it clear that this is still only a trend -- albeit a very important one, with profound ramifications with respect to political behavior, which will be discussed in due course. For the present, as for the past, the student population continues to be heavily dominated by males at all levels in terms of absolute numbers. While the proportions are changing quite rapidly, the sex ratio is still very far from approaching one to one; and it will be many years before equality is reached, if indeed it ever is.
There is one relatively recent factor working towards an equalization of male and female enrollments in higher education which is hopefully only temporary, and that is the military draft. Implemented in 1964, the draft promulgation law has affected both the proportion of male enrollments and the age distribution of the university student population, decreasing both. It has had a similar, but much less pronounced effect in the sex and age distribution of the high school senior class.

The drain of male students began to be felt in the academic year 1964, as draft regulations were first tightened significantly in November of that year. The new draft law allowed exemptions only in the case of special family situations ("sole surviving son," etc.). The draft law was further tightened in April of the following year, 1965, thus affecting enrollments beginning with the 1966-67 school year. The relevant portion of the draft law was very straight-forward and very far-reaching; it simply "abolished all the conditions for exemption and postponement of draft based on family situation and on previously issued decrees." 9

Students did remain exempt, but only if they maintained student status, and then only for their exact period of study. The real catch was "maintaining student status." Previously, one had only to enroll and pay the token tuition fee to qualify as a bona fide student. In fact, until the 1964 and 1965 changes in the draft regulations, there was not even a requirement that a student pass the year-end examinations in order to re-enroll the next year. The year-end exams qualified one to advance to the next year's work. But anyone could -- and did -- simply repeat the same year indefinitely, continuing to stay draft exempt just so long as this "enrollment" was maintained. Even
when restrictions were tightened somewhat to permit only one repetition of each year, a student could still conceivably drag out his university career to as long as fourteen years by deliberately flunking each year just once!

An additional loop-hole, if one were needed, was provided by the practice of "doubling." Briefly, "doubling" consists of simultaneous enrollment in more than one Faculty. Doubling is practiced for many reasons, including the attempt to leave open or defer career decisions. It was also a convenient method of avoiding the draft. To take a hypothetical example, a student could avoid the draft by deliberately flunking one year and passing the next. The year before completing the full cycle in a given Faculty, he could enroll in another Faculty, dropping out of the one he was about to complete and re-starting the flunk-pass routine in another Faculty. While it is highly doubtful that any student engaged in such a prolonged and premeditated draft dodge, it is certainly true that doubling helped keep many young men in school beyond the time when they normally would have been drafted.

Statistics on the incidence of doubling are unfortunately not available, since each Faculty keeps its own enrollment data separately, and does not generally note in its student records whether or not a student is enrolled in any other Faculty. First-year student records are kept in a central Registrar's Office, and students are asked to list all Faculties in which they are enrolling. However, these data are never tabulated, and are kept only for the current academic year; and in any case, students whose motivation for doubling is avoiding the draft are apt to discreetly omit any reference to multiple registration.

When the draft regulations were tightened, though, individual draft
records were centralized. And while students were permitted to continue the practice of doubling, they were no longer able to use it as a draft loophole, with the institution of the "one fail only" rule. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that male enrollments did not increase as fast as female.

This combination of circumstances also explains why the average age of the student population dropped steadily throughout this period. Although lack of data makes it difficult to measure this decline, at the university level it is safe to infer that the decrease in the numbers of repeaters, and the elimination of the "professional student" category must have resulted in a significant decrease in the median age of the student body.

A random sample of over 500 Saigon university students in early 1966 provides a rough estimate of the student population as a whole. Fully 22% of the students were over 25 years old, and 8% gave their age as being "above thirty." The modal age of the student population was between 22-25 years at the time of the 1966 survey, when the effects of the 1964-65 draft regulations were just beginning to be felt. We assume that the average age had been even higher before this time, and has probably declined still further since that time before stabilizing.

Another factor contributing to this decline in average age was the continuing growth of the university itself. With the admission of ever-larger freshman classes, the numbers of younger students must have increased proportionally. If we assume that trends in the high school graduating class presage those in the university to some extent, then this effect should be even more marked, since the high school graduating class was also getting younger every year. Here we have quite complete data to show that the average age of a
public high school senior dropped by a full year, from 19.4 to 18.4 between 1962-63 and 1969-70. The decline in average age was even more pronounced in private secondary schools, with the average age decreasing from 21.0 in 1962 to 18.4 in 1969. In the past, certain private high schools had accepted students who had failed to pass their final year of high school, thereby giving them an additional year of draft refuge. Looking just at male students, they were on the average consistently younger than their female classmates, and this age gap increased slightly over the period (See Figure 27).

Thus, there were parallel trends at both the secondary and university levels of slower rates of increase in the numbers of male students, and of decreases in the average age of the student population as a whole. Given the drain-off of male students, and the prohibitions against repeating more than once, the rapid and continuing growth of the university during this time is all the more remarkable. To understand this growth more completely, we must now look to the changes in regional growth patterns at the secondary level, to see where all these additional students were coming from.

Regional Origins

Between its founding in 1956 and the 1971 academic year, the University of Saigon added a total of over 48,000 students to its current enrollment figures. We have stated that the university student population was originally a small, urbanized elite group, and the data confirm this.

In 1958, there were just over 6,200 students at the University of Saigon. Hue, the only other university existing at that time, enrolled 640 students, or
FIGURE 27
MEDIAN AGE OF PREMIERE CLASSE: 1962-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MALE Public (Semi-Public &amp; Private)</th>
<th>FEMALE Public (Semi-public &amp; Private)</th>
<th>TOTAL Public (Semi-public &amp; Private)</th>
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<td>19.7 (20.9)</td>
<td>19.4 (20.0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-64</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-65</td>
<td>19.0 (20.7)</td>
<td>20.0 (21.7)</td>
<td>19.2 (21.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>19.3 (21.5)</td>
<td>19.9 (21.6)</td>
<td>19.4 (21.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-67</td>
<td>19.0 (20.0)</td>
<td>19.4 (19.5)</td>
<td>19.1 (20.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-68</td>
<td>18.8 (19.7)</td>
<td>19.0 (19.5)</td>
<td>18.9 (19.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>18.6 (19.5)</td>
<td>18.8 (19.7)</td>
<td>18.7 (19.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>18.3 (18.3)</td>
<td>18.7 (18.5)</td>
<td>18.4 (18.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only about one-tenth as many as Saigon. In the same year, Saigon city accounted for 1,986 students in their senior year of high school, which represented the entire graduating class in Region III. Hue had a mere 418 students in its high school graduating class; and again, this represented the entire total for the I Corps region. Region II in the central highlands had only 58 students in its single senior class in Dalat. Region IV, the most populous in the nation, had no students at that level! In short, the two major cities, Saigon and Hue, alone accounted for all but 58 of the nation's total graduating class of 2,462 in 1956.

Hence, we infer that the majority of university students were urbanized elite. Certainly, almost all had to have finished high school in the same city where they went to the university. In those areas which lacked facilities for students to complete their secondary education, families would be obliged to send their children either to Saigon or to Hue. Clearly, it was primarily the wealthier families who could afford to do so; and thus even if many of the high school seniors in Saigon originally came from other provinces, which is doubtful, the fact that they came from the most well-to-do families and that they were living in the nation's two major cities during their final years of high school is enough to justify characterizing them as both urbanized and elite.

In 1969, there were over 46,000 university students in Viet Nam. Of these, 34,800 were at the University of Saigon, and 2,200 were at Van Hanh, making a total of about 37,000 university students in the city of Saigon. Hue had 3,400 students in the same year. Referring again to the statistics for the terminal year of secondary school, we find almost 6,200 students enrolled in
Saigon in 1969, and still only 645 in Hue. Together, they accounted for only slightly more than 6,800 out of the roughly 15,000 students finishing high school that year, or approximately half, whereas eleven years before, these two cities contained virtually all of the nation's high school seniors. Obviously, the huge influx of university students in Saigon city was no longer coming entirely from the city's own high schools. Even the University of Hue, despite the fact that it was growing at a much slower pace, could no longer be drawing all of its students from the city of Hue, since the average growth in the size of Hue's high school graduating class during that period was exactly zero.

The growth pattern of Hue University is particularly interesting. It was noted previously that the University of Hue experienced a rapid average increase of 34.7% between 1954 and 1962, and that this rate dropped to a modest 2.1% in the 1963-69 period. Other universities by comparison showed a more gradual tapering off, with Saigon averaging 24.7% prior to 1963, and all universities combined (including Saigon) averaging about the same, 27.4% for that period. Since 1963, Saigon's growth rate was 13.1%, with all others growing at a similar combined average of 14.7%.

Interestingly enough, the political decision to stop the further rapid growth of the University of Hue apparently affected the growth at the secondary level in I Corps as well. Prior to 1963, Premiere Classe enrollments in I Corps grew at an average annual rate of 32.8%, and dropped to 7.2% in the 1963-69 period, paralleling the trend at the university level. Thus, it is still possible to account for the overall growth pattern of the University of Hue by assuming that the majority of its students came from the I Corps region.
(See Figures 28-29).

The analogous situation most definitely does not apply for the University of Saigon. Although as discussed above, it must have drawn almost all of its enrollment from Saigon high schools in 1958, it surely no longer does so. Once again, the survey data of University of Saigon students are consistent with this conclusion. At the time of the survey, in October 1966, only 22% of the respondents listed Saigon as their place of birth. The University of Saigon has averaged a 15.4% growth rate over the school years 1958-1969, whereas the combined senior class of the city of Saigon has increased at an average annual rate of only 11.8%. It is clear that there was an important change during these years in the composition of the student population in terms of regional origin; and one has only to look at the growth rates of the Premiere Classe enrollments for the various provinces and regions to see where these new students must have been coming from.

Leaving aside the I Corps data, which have already been presented, we see that the total national Premiere Classe enrollments averaged a 17.0% increase per year between 1958 and 1969. The III Corps area, which includes Saigon, was the farthest below the average, with 14.5%. I Corps, already discussed above, was the next lowest, with a 15.2% average annual increase. Both II Corps and IV Corps were significantly above the average, with annual growth rates of 28.3% and 52.0% respectively. Even when we discount the first year of the series in IV Corps, so as to avoid distortion due to its exceedingly low starting point, it still shows an average annual growth rate of 30.1% -- higher than any other Corps area (See Figures 15-24).

There is good reason to assume that there was little or no increase in
the percentage of applications discussed above. The proportion of applications that went to II and IV Corps it seems likely.

A final, the student population was Prior to partition, the majority of decades enjoyed the capital. Whether 1956, almost the population were that a higher send their children to Saigon Students "North of the to calculate have entered must have been a politically Northern-born..."
in the regional origins of the student population at the University of Saigon. In general, this trend can be summarized as a shift to the south, with fewer students coming from the North, and more coming from the Delta region. Additionally, this shift implies that relatively fewer students are of urban elite backgrounds than was the case in the immediate post-Independence period.

Religion and Social Class

Although difficult to estimate with precision, the students' religious backgrounds are of great interest with respect to their contemporary political behavior; for much of recent student politics in South Viet Nam has been seen as an expression of underlying religious struggles.

It is a truism among Vietnamese that the Catholics, although a tiny minority, are by far the best organized and disciplined among the many political factions, and therefore have a strong political voice. It is also generally held that the Catholics were consistently given special favors throughout the years of the Diem regime, and that therefore their political power was unjustifiably great, out of proportion to their numerical strength. Looking at the specific data for the universities, we find all of the above arguments to be partially true. Catholics are a distinct minority, but a minority of roughly 15% of a highly fractionalized whole cannot be regarded as a "tiny" minority.  

Furthermore, although only 10% of the students claim they are members of any organization, 3% of them list membership in the "Thanh-nien Sinh vien Cong-giao" (Catholic Youth and Students League). No other single organization is named by more than 1% of the students -- including the supposedly powerful
Saigon Students' Union. Since respondents were asked to list all of the organizations to which they belonged, an indication of the level of participation was sought by a follow-up question, "Which organization are you most active in?" A number of previously-listed organizations dropped below the 1% response level; but again, 3% of the respondents said they were most active in the Catholic Youth and Students' League. Interestingly enough, however, only one student in the entire sample named the League when asked, "What organization do you feel plays the most important part in student life at your school?" It would seem, then, that the Catholic student's organization, although probably the best organized and strongest of any overt student group, represents a potential rather than actual political force.

Buddhism is commonly regarded as the religion of the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese. During the anti-government demonstrations of 1963, for example, a sympathetic American press portrayed the political struggle in terms of religious persecution. Over 85% of the population, it was often asserted, was Buddhist; and the Buddhist religion was being suppressed by a tiny clique of ruthless Catholics. Students, who were often allied with the Buddhists in their political struggle, were generally regarded as being "over 85%" Buddhist too. In fact, although the percentages were undoubtedly higher at Hue and Van Hanh, only a bare majority, 51%, of Saigon University students call themselves Buddhists; and only 1% of the students belong to the "Sinh-vien Phat-tu" (Buddhist Student Group).¹³

Of the remainder of students, 6% have no religion or belong to various sects. Of the rest, fully 28% still claim ancestor worship or Confucianism as their religion. We assume that this response is roughly correlated with
the prevalence of traditional attitudes. We further assume a priori that there is inherent conflict between the persistence of such traditional belief structures and the intellectual attitudes of a modern university.

That such conflicts do exist there is no doubt. For the ways in which they are expressed, we turn now to an analysis of student political activism between Independence and "Peace" to see how political behavior paralleled the build-up of the various sets of conflicts inherent in the profound changes just described.
Part II

FOOTNOTES


3. The only new universities opened during this period were Van Hanh, in Saigon, and Can Tho in the Delta. They opened in the 1965 and 1966 academic years respectively. In the 1966-67 school year, they accounted for a combined total of only 1500 students.


5. During this same period, the Vice-Rector of The University of Saigon, Dr. Do Ba Ke, was backing the development of a community junior college system for Viet Nam, with an eye to decentralizing both enrollments and financing, and to providing a flexible educational program which could be adapted to local needs. Again, while the concept reflected the contemporary goals of providing technical, relevant skills, it remained in the planning stages throughout the period of this study.

6. Again, with the exceptions noted above of the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry.

7. Dr. Do Ba Ke, Chairman of Graduate Program in Education, quoted in Educational Development in Viet Nam (Saigon: Vietnam Feature Service, April, 1971), TCB-093, p. 9.


10. This is important in terms of political activity, since there appears to be a positive correlation between length of time in school and the predisposition to join student political organizations. According to the results of the Saigon Student Survey, 1966 (Saigon: Center for Vietnamese Studies, October, 1966).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.
PART III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISM
INTRODUCTION

Student political activism was simply unknown during Imperial times. There was, to be sure, a minor tradition of political involvement and of clandestinely organized opposition among the mandarins; and as prospective members of this intellectual elite, some students undoubtedly participated in political activities at various times as individuals. However, the prospect of inclusion in the governing elite, combined with the restraints of family control and the geographical isolation of students precluded the formation of a critical mass of activists necessary for the development of a true student movement.

During the colonial era, the existence of a university and several lycees gave physical proximity to large numbers of students for the first time. In the climate of widespread popular support for opposition to French rule, students participated in numerous ways in the attempt to undermine and eventually overthrow the colonial regime. French suppression of such activities, however, was as complete as possible; and again, the evolution of a student political movement was impossible. Many students became active politically by joining the Viet Minh, whose recruiting efforts in the University of Hanoi paid off in a generation of national leadership. With respect to student politics, however, the important point is that in joining the Viet Minh, students were forced to choose between school life and political life. To become a Viet Minh cadre required the forfeiting of student status. The possibility of being both a student and active in political opposition was non-existent in colonial times.
Student political activism and the recognition by the students themselves that they constitute a significant political force is a phenomenon of recent development in Viet Nam. This thesis focuses on the decade 1963-1973, the period of most intense political activity among students. The history of this period is tragic, dealing with the rise of exhuberant hope and potential out of an environment filled with chaos and confusion, the near-promise of fulfillment, the subsequent rise of negative forces; and finally, the collapse of the movement and the extinguishing of hope.

The events of this decade are divided into several major phases. The first phase began in 1963, with the development of active opposition to the Diem regime, culminating in a Coup d'Etat in November, 1963. For students, this was a time of promise and hopes for new beginnings. The initial reaction was enthusiastic, and students were exhilarated, sensing the power of their own collective action for the first time. Their activities were episodic, however, and did not constitute a continuous movement, amounting only to a series of incidents. Two years of anti-government protests by the students, which contributed to the overthrow of no less than nine regimes, ended with the anarchy of street battles among warring factions of students in 1964.

Student response to natural disasters sparked the creation of a social welfare movement in 1965-66. Populism was a powerful motivation for the development of this positive and constructive tendency, symbolized by the Summer Youth Program (SYP) and the District 8 Project.

1966 marked the most significant turning point in the evolution of student politics. The positive trend failed, mainly due to the lack of consistent support by the GVN, and to the sabotage of certain of the students'
projects by the NLF. With the decline of the social welfare trend, opposition to the GVN hardened into a sustained movement. At the same time, the NLF reevaluated its policy towards students, and thereafter became more directly involved in student affairs.

The next two years were characterized by heavy NLF influence in the student movement. The University Autonomy Movement (U.A.M.) became the center of both overt and covert, Communist and non-Communist opposition to the government. By 1971, the U.A.M. too had failed as a vehicle for the expression of students' political interests; discredited by NLF infiltration, weakened by GVN suppression, the U.A.M. was ultimately ruined by its own misjudgements of strategy and tactics.

By the time of the signing of the Peace Agreement in January, 1973, all possibilities for participation in political life had been exhausted. There simply were no more acceptable options, no means to contribute and channel the energies of politically active students. By January, 1973, Vietnamese students had been effectively neutralized as a constructive political force.
CHAPTER VI
THE ANTECEDENTS OF CONTEMPORARY ACTIVISM

As noted in previous chapters, there was simply no such thing as student political activity during the entire time of Imperial rule in Viet Nam. In the first place, study was mostly a solitary affair, with one teacher instructing at most four or five students, and usually only one; the simple geographical isolation of students effectively precluded any possibility of association or organization as a group. Second, students remained within their extended families during their long years of study; and the combination of family duties and responsibilities plus the long hours of study left little time for other activities. Third, the family ethics of that time did not permit unsupervised association of unmarried children outside the home. And finally, students lacked the moral authority required for political leadership.

The situation was completely different for those who passed the mandarinal exams, however; and mandarins were among the most frequent challengers of imperial authority.

Thus, while students per se were not political participants, it is important to note that the example of opposition and revolt, and clandestine organization among accredited intellectuals was a tradition which was firmly entrenched prior to the entrance of the French.

The first half century of the colonial period was marked by continued but sporadic opposition to French rule led by mandarins. During the second
half century, with the abolition of the Mandarinate (1917), the belated opening of lycees to the Vietnamese (1912) and the reopening of the University of Hanoi (1918) we find the first entry of students into participatory politics.¹

Like the imperial rulers who preceded them, the French prohibited the open expression of political dissent; and student political activity was organized and carried out clandestinely, paralleling the style of mandarinal opposition in earlier centuries. So effective was the French blockage, in fact, that much of the most important development of Vietnamese politics in general and of student politics in particular, took place outside Viet Nam, primarily in southern China, in France itself, and to a much lesser extent, in Japan. During the 1920's, for example, there was

...a sort of 'underground railroad' by which Vietnamese students (most were from better-off homes, few from the villages) could get secretly to China for further (particularly political) studies and, from about 1920, receive military training at the Whampoa Military Academy outside Canton or, further afield, go to Tokyo, Paris or Moscow.²

Beginning in the early 1930's and continuing until Independence in 1954, the Viet Minh and their precursors were the predominating political influence among students. This influence was necessarily strongest in the North, and particularly in Hanoi, the location of the nation's only university at that time; the majority of the Communist leadership was to emerge from the ranks of the student body of the University of Hanoi. Even in the South, however, students were recruited into youth organizations, and were frequently used to provide liaison between the various branches of the burgeoning revolutionary organization.

It goes without saying that political participation among students, as among other groups, remained clandestine throughout most of this period. French suppression precluded all overt and public expressions of dissent.
The only outlet was the illegal, revolutionary one of joining the Viet Minh or one of the smaller, less effective secret societies. Yet, despite the fact that much of the revolutionary leadership was drawn from the ranks of the University of Hanoi, students did not play a major role as a distinct, identifiable group.

Nevertheless, the success of the war of independence was the primary political lesson learned from the history of this period. The extremely limited educational opportunities available under the French and the popular support for the anti-colonial war had made the Viet Minh influence disproportionately large; and the Viet Minh's educational effort was intense, particularly among the educated minority. The impact of Marxist-Leninist teachings was profound; and to this day, many of the basic tenets of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine are simply taken for granted by educated Vietnamese as a starting point for any political analysis--often without conscious awareness of any connection with Communist doctrine, and sometimes without regard for any facts which may contradict these firmly held beliefs. Thus, even without any interference by the Viet Cong, the development of student political activism in the post-Independence period was bound to reflect the heavy penetration of Marxist-Leninist ideas.
CHAPTER VII
STUDENT POLITICS FROM INDEPENDENCE, 1954
TO COUP D'ETAT, 1963

Introduction

Following the signing of the Geneva Accords there was no widespread or
organized reaction among students, nor indeed among the populace at large.  

In the South, the lack of response is hardly surprising. The University
of Saigon had only just opened, and its student body consisted of a mere
2,150 members. The founding of the Saigon Student Union coincided with
the establishment of the university itself. It was not very long, however,
before students made a dramatic entry into overt, participatory politics.

From the outset, the Southern students at the University of Saigon
were confronted with a massive influx of Northern refugee students from
Tonkin, the majority of them Catholic and militantly anti-Communist.  
This group considered itself culturally and intellectually superior to
its "country cousins" in the South; and these students were further set
apart by their easily identifiable differences of accent and even of dress.

Paradoxically, although Viet Minh influence had been far stronger in
the North, it was the Southern students who were responsible for the
formation of the Saigon Student Union.  Perhaps because of their lack of
direct experience with the reality of Viet Minh control, and their admiration
for the romanticized revolutionary ideal, the Southern students remained
more sympathetic to the Viet Minh and later the NLF.
The Northern, predominantly Catholic students had no such predispositions. Many of them came from wealthy families and had suffered financial ruin under the Viet Minh, having been designated "class enemies of the people" by the Communists: All had already lost their ancestral homeland, and all feared religious persecution and personal retaliation in the event a Communist regime were to be established in the South. In short, they all had good reason to hate the Viet Minh.

This regional and ideological friction became the basis for the establishment of the first political alignments and rivalries among the university student population. The Northern students countered the Southerner's Saigon Student Union with the formation of their own National Student Union (Tong Hoi Sinh Vien Quoc Gia). The more sophisticated Northerners then outmaneuvered their Southern classmates by arranging for the National Student Union to be South Viet Nam's accredited member in the International Student Conference.6

This early organizational activity soon led to a number of public demonstrations, marking the first entry of Vietnamese students into national, participatory politics as students. There were several such demonstrations in 1955 and 1956. One of the first of these was a demonstration by the Northerners protesting the presence of an American destroyer in Saigon harbor, whose mission was to prevent destruction of French property and to prevent reprisals against French citizens. The students objected to the appearance of American support for the continuation of French interests and influence in Indochina.

At first, the Government of Viet Nam (GVN) supported and even encouraged these strongly anti-Communist Northerners. The climax of their influence can be dated precisely. On July 20, 1955, the Northerners staged an angry
demonstration in front of the Majestic Hotel in Saigon, where all the members of the ICC were lodged, to protest the ICC's failure to register and denounce these violations. The ICC members were prepared to regard the affair as a serious diplomatic incident, and to hold the GVN responsible for having instigated the students. The GVN responded by disavowing all support of the students, and by actively discouraging and restraining further demonstrations by students. The GVN thereby demonstrated that it was serious about carrying out the Geneva Accord, the diplomatic incident was smoothed over, and the precedent for government intervention and manipulation of student politics was established.

Like the GVN, the Communist opposition, represented by the still-intact secret cells of the Viet Minh, was eager to manipulate the students for their own political ends. By 1956-57, the organization of underground cells was begun, concentrating initially on lycéens. The initial agitation of these groups focused on the students' genuine grievance against the "concours" system, whereby only the top percentage of those passing special screening exams were admitted to the next higher level. This French-inspired system ensured a narrowly peaked educational pyramid, weeding out a majority of students at each level.

Led by the members of secret cells, students were incited to protest this unjust discrimination, and to demand the right to continue their education, with promotions to the next grade being automatically granted to those who successfully completed the previous year's work. Several students were arrested in the course of the protests, providing the Communists with a rallying point for their organizational efforts. Schoolchildren by the thousands were roused to demonstrate their heroic virtue and loyalty by contributing their breakfast money to a defense fund for their imprisoned
comrades. The day of the trial, thousands of students massed outside the courthouse to demonstrate their solidarity. Finally, President Diem himself shrewdly intervened and had the case dismissed on technical grounds, thereby defusing an extremely explosive situation.

Undoubtedly shaken and angry at having been outmaneuvered by a combination of Communists and children, Diem moved to counter the growing influence of the Communists among students. In 1958, youth cadre of the regime's official National Revolutionary Movement (NRM) party were designated to represent South Vietnamese students at international student conferences. Other agents of the GVN—in particular secret agents of Nhu's Can Lao party—were infiltrated into student and youth groups. The left-leaning Saigon Student Union was a special target; so much so that the students themselves joked that their numerical power was due to the fact that there were as many spies as regular members. Initially, these GVN agents were merely observers and reporters; but by 1960, GVN domination and control of the regular student organizations was complete, with governing boards securely in the hands of government appointed or approved student officers.

Having successfully restrained the overt oppositional activities of students, the government then set up the Republican Youth organization to direct the activities of students and youth in programs supportive to the regime. Established in 1960-61 under the Directorate General of Youth, members of the Republican Youth were urged to "deserve the title of police of the Personalist Republican Regime."

An important element in the Republican Youth was the emphasis on paramilitary training for females as well as males. Under the patronage
of Diem's influential sister-in-law, Tran Le Xuan, this emphasis on female recruitment and on provincial organization diminished the importance of the Republican Youth in urban areas, and especially in the largely male university population.  

Although the Republican Youth was the most important youth arm of the government, at least fifteen other organizations were formed to serve as recruiting bases for youth and students (See Table below). In large part, this proliferation of organizations was considered necessary in order to provide alternatives to the burgeoning number of Communist fronts. For students from elite or civil servant families, membership in such organizations was expedient; refusal to join could call into question the parents' loyalty to the government.

GVN Youth Organization Membership, 1957-1962*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>1957 Membership</th>
<th>1962 Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican Youth (men)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Youth (women)</td>
<td>305,574</td>
<td>370,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Youth (children)</td>
<td></td>
<td>175,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Boy Scouts Assn.</td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>2,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Girl Guides' Assn.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Boy Scouts' Assn.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Youth</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Labor Youth (men)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Labor Youth (women)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Youth</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>18,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist Youth</td>
<td>33,426</td>
<td>51,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Revolutionary Movement Youth</td>
<td>235,629</td>
<td>301,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>1957 Membership</td>
<td>1962 Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Revolutionary Youth</td>
<td>112,269</td>
<td>17,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart Youth Assn.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valient Hearts</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>9,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,602,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the Republican Youth, these groups were all organized from the top down, and their influence on university students was superficial at best. In sum, there was virtually no influence of students on the GVN in the last years of the Diem regime; rather, the situation was vice-versa: all student leaders were either appointed or approved by the GVN, and all legal student organizations were directly controlled by the government.

It was undoubtedly this facade of obedient cooperation and passivity which led American observers to misinterpret the political situation among students at that time. Simply put, growing American interest and involvement coincided with a period of increasing arrests, suppression and control of student politics; and the vast majority of Americans believed the veneer of calm that they saw to be more truely profound. They were at a loss for explanations when the smouldering politics of the student world finally burst into flame. According to Douglas Pike, an otherwise astute analyst:

In the Diem era the youth of Vietnam were notoriously apolitical, a genuine puzzle to Americans and others who had experienced student activities in Japan, Korea, and elsewhere in Asia. Students eschewed politics and exhibited interest in only social activities until the Diem-Buddhist clash somehow ignited them.

What Pike and others failed to see was the growth and deepening of covert organization among highschool and university students. Throughout the period 1957-1962, the Communists and to a lesser extent the Independents,
continued the development of their covert student and youth cadre.\textsuperscript{16}

With the formal establishment of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam (NFLSVN) in 1961, an organizational structure was created to implement the specific policies and program goals of the Communist opposition. Immediate, short-term and long-range plans were developed for all elements of the population, including students.

Student involvement in activist politics became dramatically visible with anti-government riots and demonstrations in 1963. It is worthwhile, however, to review the situation immediately prior to the point of explosion: 1) the government controlled all legal student organizations and activities; 2) the NLF had a small but highly disciplined network of covert cadre, hitherto largely inactive and therefore unexposed; 3) the overwhelming majority of students, neither pro-GVN nor pro-Communist, were completely inactive and uninvolved in political life; but as a group they shared a growing number of legitimate grievances, including increasing insecurity due to the insurgency, the stepped-up military draft, the problems of increasing quantities of students and deteriorating quality of education, greater job competition due to greater numbers of highschool and college graduates, and growing government restraints and even interference in the academic life of the university. In this context, the outbreak of violence and intense political activity among students is more understandable.
CHAPTER VIII
STUDENT POLITICS FROM COUP D'ETAT, 1963
TO PARIS ACCORDS, 1973

The story of the last desperate struggle of the Diem government is
by now familiar. The original incident seems trivial in retrospect: the
government ordered the Buddhists in Hue to fly the national flag whenever
the Buddhist flag was flown. No such restrictions had been required of
Catholics, and the Buddhists charged the government with discrimination
and religious persecution.

Resentment over Diem's handling of the dispute burst into nation-
wide student-youth demonstrations and protest meetings, organized
chiefly in the universities at Saigon and Hue. A sudden and, at
first, essentially spontaneous alliance was formed between the
students and the Buddhist leaders, an alliance chiefly responsible
for creating the conditions that toppled the Diem regime.

With the Buddhist hierarchy acting as the strategy planners,
and its planning was brilliant, and the students serving as the
militant activists, the population centers in Vietnam became a
sea of seething discontent. The infection of political fever
began with the university students, soon spread to secondary-
school ranks, and by late August 1963 involved hordes of youth
as young as twelve years. The government rounded up hundreds of
these and placed them in immense temporary prisons. Many of them
were the sons and daughters of high officials in the Diem
government, who, when their parents came to secure their release
refused to leave the prison unless all arrested students were also
released.17

Duncanson alludes vaguely to the role of the NLF in fostering the
students' protests:

As the UN assembled its Fact-Finding Mission, there were demon-
strations in Saigon University, and agitators stirred up a number
of school children ('of good family,' in the phrase of the Lotus), many of whom, below the age of criminal responsibility, the Government also detained briefly, and stupidly, to the consternation of their parents, largely civil servants. 18

In fact, the injection of small numbers of NLF student cadre was a crucial element, which helped give form to the chaotic, angry mass of young people. 19 Their manipulation of issues and their aid with tactical and logistical support helped sustain the momentum of protest—a momentum which the visible, spontaneous and unsuspecting student leadership was not capable of maintaining at that time.

On August 22, Foreign Minister Vu Van Mau resigned, and in a speech to Faculty of Law students at Saigon, he denounced Ngo Dinh Nhu's secret police raids. Mau then tried to leave the country, but was arrested at the airport. 20 This incident marked an important turning point in the students' struggle. Previously, students had been demanding negotiations and compromise. Hereafter, their aim was overthrow of the government, or at least of Nhu and the Can Lao apparatus. Within two days of Mau's speech, students organized another protest demonstration. A young girl student was killed in the melee, thousands of students were arrested and jailed, and high schools and universities were closed indefinitely by the government. 21

Although the coup of November 3, 1963 was carried out by the military, students and Buddhists were given credit for its success. The Buddhist disavowal of political aspirations, however, coupled with the traditional status conferred on intellectuals combined to make students the popular heroes of the day.
The young Vietnamese and particularly the Saigon University students considered themselves the heroes of the overthrow of the Diem regime. They felt that they had been the torch that ignited the explosion, that only they had the courage to take to the streets to openly oppose Diem, and that they therefore deserved a major voice in the post-Diem governments. This resulted in the absurd situation of the prime minister seriously negotiating with 16-year-olds who demanded that they be permitted to pass on governmental decisions and decrees.22

The situation was not quite as absurd as Pike describes it. In the first place, student leaders tended to be a good deal older than their American counterparts, with most in their late twenties and early thirties. Also, the government leaders they presumed to advise were mainly military men. The traditional Vietnamese esteem for scholars and deprecation of military men makes the students' advisory role more legitimate than Pike supposes, at least in the eyes of the Vietnamese themselves.

In December, a group of student leaders met and submitted a list of project proposals to the "Counsel Militaire de la Revolution" (MRC) outlining a course of libertarian reforms which completely ignored the need to deal with the continuing and mounting problems of insecurity and insurgency. The MRC in any case was totally unprepared for the students' initiative; and not knowing how to react, simply ignored the students' gesture. The moment and the opportunity for cooperation passed and was lost; the students determined to regroup and organize in order to press their demands for change.23

The students' first attempts to create an organizational vehicle on their own following the Coup was a sorry failure. The Organization of General Associations of Student Delegates was set up, with each Faculty of the University sending one to four representatives, who in turn
elected an Executive Committee responsible for all important decision-making. Disputes soon arose over the elections formulas, which favored smaller Faculties; and the ensuing factional struggles rendered the organization politically impotent. 24

With their internal battles for power, their lack of agreement on programs or plans, and the disappearance of a real focus for opposition, it was apparent that students constituted an effective political force only in the negative sense. Their capacity to organize for sustained, positive input was non-existent. At the time of the coup, the Diemist-controlled student groups simply stopped functioning. The old Saigon Student Union was banned, as were the other Diemist youth groups, and an interim executive council was selected to organize new elections in four months.

The combination of a leadership vacuum at the top of all existing organizations plus the developing factionalism within the student movement led to a proliferation of groups. The abundant vacancies for student officials were filled mostly by those who had distinguished themselves by their roles in anti-government protests. These students were generally fiery orators with no platforms and no organizational bases of their own. They were joined by small numbers of NLF cadre in certain organizations, who existed in symbiotic harmony with their more visible classmates. The NLF cadre stayed strictly in the background, providing issues, suggesting actions, and somehow obtaining whatever logistical support was necessary. The visible leaders harangued crowds, gave press conferences, signed ghost-written editorials in student publications, and when arrested, became martyred heroes among their classmates. 25
Yet in retrospect, the failures were forgotten, and only the glow of heroic, successful struggle remained. By comparison, with the complete degeneration of the student movement in 1964, the events surrounding the coup of 1963 were indeed the "golden days" of the student movement. Still politically naive, students united against a common enemy, won, and believed in their power to effect important change. But 1964 was to mark a bitter disillusionment and reassessment.

The year 1964 began with the first of a long series of governmental upheavals, the January 29 coup of General Nguyen Khanh against the military junta. This was followed shortly by changes in the military draft law which directly affected student politics. The conditions for draft exemption were narrowed so that family commitments or maintenance of student status were the only remaining grounds for deferment. "Students secured further protraction for their period of exemption, whether deliberately or not, whenever their courses were suspended on account of their political agitation against the Junta of the moment."27 This situation was balanced to a certain extent, however, in that students who were arrested during "illegal" demonstrations (and this included virtually all of them) were liable to lose their student status, and thus were oftentimes drafted while under detention. This led to a messy cycle of demonstrations and arrests from which the government was hard put to extricate itself. Students charged, correctly, that the government was using the military draft to punish and intimidate student protestors. The government's actions led to protests, which resulted in further arrests, which generated additional demonstrations in an escalating battle between student demands for justice
and governmental need for order.

Meanwhile, the General Association of Student Delegates had collapsed in March, due to a failure to achieve compromise on the internal disputes. In April, the Saigon Student Union was re-formed, and the development of factional politics there paralleled those of the now defunct General Association.\textsuperscript{28}

Under a new elections formula, an Executive Committee was chosen at large, and was supposed to be "balanced" by a Student Council, made up of presidents from each of the fifteen Faculties. The Student Council then elected a Leading Council, whose powers and responsibilities vis-a-vis the Executive Committee were not clearly defined. Disputes over policy control erupted immediately. By July, the Leading Council and Executive Committee were issuing mutual denunciations; the split was so complete that each published a separate news weekly, claiming the right of its own group to representation of Saigon University students.\textsuperscript{29}

This competition, and the need of both rival groups for logistical support led to an extremely important, though largely unnoticed new development. For the first time, student groups became consciously affiliated with external political parties and religious groups. In the process, the students necessarily became involved in the additionally existing factional struggles within and between these groups.

The escalation of political struggle mounted "at a pace determined only by the capacity of the Vietcong to take advantage of the situation" to borrow a phrase out of context from Duncanson. Youth Salvation Committees were set up in Hue and other Annamese cities to oppose the
Khanh regime's increasingly dictatorial attempts to restore order. Anamese versus Cochinchinese regional rivalries were augmented by religious disputes, as Buddhists attempted to make up for disproportionate Catholic gains consolidated under the Diem regime. Militant Buddhist demands for rebalancing were met by militant Catholic opposition to any effort to weaken their position. By August, anti-Khanh demonstrations were joined by bloody and vicious Buddhist versus Catholic riots, in which students played a major role. The NLF was not uninvolved either, and participated in its typical fashion as agitator and catalyst, playing off the warring factions against one another in the interest of promoting disruption and thereby further weakening the Saigon government. "For example, in the notorious riot in Saigon when youths in a jeep rushed from Catholic to Buddhist headquarters 'warning' each that the other was about to attack it." 

Clearly, August marked the lowest point in the history of the student movement. Children not yet in their teens were beaten to death in the streets of Saigon by the warring bands of students. The Executive Committee of the Saigon Student Union had maintained physical control of the student union headquarters, located in the center of town, a short walk from the two largest Faculties, Law and Letters. But the Leading Council repeatedly tried to take over the headquarters. Khanh tried desperately to regain control and put an end to the by-now uninterrupted series of street fights. To this end, he proposed a new constitution giving himself virtually dictatorial powers. A new wave of rioting and opposition ensued, with the
major anti-Khanh demonstrations being organized at the SSU headquarters. The SSU center, in fact, was a focal point of opposition to the regime, publishing new denunciations and manifestoes almost daily. Those students who opposed the Executive Committee were backed by Khanh, and were given full support in a commando-type raid which succeeded in wrecking the SSU headquarters. This incident served only to discredit those who had participated in the raid. There was moral outrage and righteous indignation on the part of many previously neutral students; for according to the intricate ethics of student politics, it was a breach of honor for any students to act on behalf of the GVN.

General Khanh began backing off, and attempted to regain power while changing the unpopular military facade of his regime. Cao Daiist Phan Khac Suu was named Head of State, with respectable old Tran Van Huong as Prime Minister, and replacements at the top levels of virtually every Cabinet ministry.

From the point of view of the development of student politics, however, the most significant events were those in Hue, not Saigon. The students were once again allied with the militant Buddhists, lately organized into the Vien Hoa Dao (Institute for the Propagation of the Dharma). The Central Buddhists were far more disciplined than the students; and unlike 1963, the students were to a large extent manipulated by and subordinate to the Buddhist militants, rather than being equal partners in the struggle. When rioting students in Hue vandalized and finally set fire to the USIS Abraham Lincoln Library in Hue, in the absence of a strong organizational vehicle of their own, they laid themselves open to charges
of having been used either by the Vien Hoa Dao or the Viet Cong—or both. Although students continued to participate in Vien Hoa Dao-led demonstrations against Huong, the burning of the USIS library marked a point of most significant change for the student movement in Hue. A joint US-GVN decision was reached that it was "high time the tail stopped wagging the dog" in the words of one US official.33 Students and Buddhist leaders who had been shuttling between Hue and Saigon were forced either to stay home or to try to integrate themselves into the power hierarchies in Saigon, as "military priorities" suddenly forced a curtailment of civilian air traffic. Government support for the University of Hue was abruptly limited, admissions levels were fixed and not permitted to increase, classes were suspended at the first sign of trouble, and the USIS library was moved to Da Nang, out of reach of the university students in Hue.

Finally natural disaster intervened to provide catharsis and denouement to the tragic upheavals of 1964. Record monsoon rainfall in late autumn caused massive destruction and displacement. Reacting as though punished by angry gods for their role in disrupting the cosmic harmony, students set about atoning for their political excesses by devoting themselves wholeheartedly to social welfare. The dissolution of both the Executive Committee and Leading Council of the Saigon Student Union was paralleled by the creation of the Work Committee for Central Viet Nam (Uy Ban Cong Tac Mien Trung).34 More than 800 students cooperated somewhat haphazardly with US and GVN logistical support, which was less than efficiently provided amid the chaos of continuing war and continuing rainfall.35 Slogging through the mud to provide blankets, food and first
aid relief, students were re-converted of their nobility and virtue. More important, the satisfactions of positive contribution were a welcome contrast to the divisive, ugly in-fighting of the past year's oppositional struggle. The flood relief program provided both experience in social welfare activities and recognition that better organization was necessary to achieve greater efficiency and to maintain the momentum of the program over a longer term.

Mass demonstrations by students abated as Prime Minister Huong resigned in January, 1965, and was replaced by Dr. Phan Huy Quat, while General Khanh went abroad for an indefinite stay. The Vien Hoa Dao continued its promulgation of public turmoil, and militant Catholic students supported Col. Pham Ngoc Than's abortive coup in February, but for the most part, students were no longer involved in large scale oppositional activities following the floods of November, 1964.

In March, the enfeebled Saigon Student Union held its annual elections under yet another new set of regulations. Partly in hopes of finding a solution to the continual internal squabblings, and partly because its forces were in such disarray that it was not possible to organize direct elections, the SSU resolved to choose its leadership by indirect elections. It was left to the individual Faculties to organize their own elections for Faculty Chairmen. Once chosen, the fourteen Chairmen then elected a subset of their number to an Executive Board. On the surface, the weakened SSU and its Executive Board remained relatively inactive and inconsequential from the point of view of student politics throughout 1965. The SSU's significant act in 1965 was to vote unanimously never to apply to the
government for legal status. Failure of the SSU to apply for recognition as a legal organization had been a touchy issue between government and students since the fall of Diem. The government always tolerated the existence of this numerically largest and politically most important student group; but when the activities of the Saigon Student Union became too threatening, the government could move in with the justification that the SSU was, after all, illegal. Further, since the SSU headquarters actually belonged to the GVN, the government had a number of options in hindering student activism short of policy intervention. The government could and did cut off telephone services and/or electricity, or in extreme cases, actually close the building. The Executive Board's stand on this issue served to formalize the permanent rift between students and government.

Students had been used, manipulated and suppressed by the Diem regime, they had initially sought involvement and cooperation with the immediate successors to Diem, and failing that, they were now locked into a position of mutual distrust and hostility with the GVN. By 1965, the students had correctly surmised that there was no place for them within the framework of government programs, and that the government's policy, having failed to direct and control student organizations, aimed at containing and neutralizing them. From here on in, students regarded any alliance with the government as corrupting and besmirching the honor of youth. Their point of view was a simplistic one: they were clean, virtuous, honorable, noble and courageous; the government was dirty and corrupt, incompetent, illegitimate and unworthy. Any errors or misdeeds of students in the past
could be explained by the corrupting effect of alliances with government.

A second development of major importance to the student movement was a change in NLF policy. Unnoticed, and underground, the effect of this shift was not to be felt for many months. Although it will be discussed and documented in greater detail in the next chapter, it is worth taking chronological note here of that policy change. NLF policy toward students had begun with the analysis that as a class, they were untrustworthy allies, and were to be used and manipulated.

Due to the changes within the student population, however, as well as to changes in the situation of the war and the beginning massive build-up of American troops, the NLF re-evaluated its student policy. The changes in the make-up of the SSU provided the opportunity; with greater emphasis on individual Faculties, the NLF could achieve control of the SSU simply by gaining control of the governing boards in a few faculties. Several Faculties were known to be apolitical at that time, and the few candidates for office in these Faculties were too disorganized and undisciplined to offer resistance to slates secretly backed by the NLF. Thus, NLF influence, if not control, was readily established in those Faculties which had previously had the weakest internal political structure. With the indirect elections formula, the NLF was eventually able to establish an important influence in the SSU.

In mid 1965, however, neither the NLF nor the SSU were prominent in student affairs. Rather, the energies of a majority of youth were directed into social welfare activities. In April, 1965, Minister of Youth and Sports, Nguyen Tan Hong, was instrumental in setting up the
National Youth Commission with the purpose of promoting unity among various groups and making them "a powerful force to serve the nation and people." Delegates at the founding meeting selected four of their number to study means to set up the proposed Commission. Two of the four represented scouting associations, and the other two represented the GVN-sanctioned Viet Nam World Association of Youth and the Voluntary Youth Association, which had been coordinating activities of a number of the social welfare organizations.

Rather than troubling to negotiate with opposition groups to find some means for including them in the government-sponsored effort, the uncooperative Saigon Student Union and other anti-GVN groups were by-passed. There was a sense of the immediacy of the need to harness the energies of the many students eager to make a positive contribution to their country.

With the International Voluntary Service (IVS) and Rand Corporation researcher, Prof. Edward Britton acting as intermediaries between USAID, the GVN and the students, the Summer Youth Program got underway with high hopes of continuing the good works begun during the flood relief project of the previous fall.

Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat resigned under pressure in June, 1965, the attacks on him having been supported largely by militant Catholics, including students. The two-year regime of Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky which replaced Quat on June 8, 1965, was to provide a measure of stability to the GVN, in contrast to the continual chaos of the nine previous governments between 1963 and 1965. The massive build-up of American troops which was underway by this time initially provided a morale boost to the South
Vietnamese. The flamboyant, unconventional Ky immediately issued a set of "Revolutionary Proposals" calling for fuller involvement of youth in the national battle. Ky made a number of personal appearances at student meetings, and encouraged the promising and positive tendency of the student movement symbolized by the Summer Youth Program.

On June 23, Dr. Tran Ngoc Ninh was appointed Minister of Education; a doctor and teacher, and generally well-liked by students, the youngish Dr. Ninh's appointment as Minister of Education was interpreted as a concrete sign that the government intended to seriously reassess and improve its relations with the students. The Minister of Youth and Sports, and the new Minister of Education were directed to work with student groups and to assist in every way possible in the formation of the National Youth Commission, which was to be given responsibility for setting priorities for financial support of student activities. 42

The short honeymoon between Ky and the students was interrupted by the tightening of draft laws, following the government's announcement of a national mobilization policy. That Ky's "Revolutionary Proposals" urging "fuller involvement of youth in the national battle" had a literal interpretation came as a shock to most students. Whether Ky had even intended this initially is open to question; but he was under overwhelming pressure at that time from the Americans, who were already feeling the criticism back home as American boys were being sent to fight in a country that had so far refused to fully mobilize its own sons. The students, however, were unaware and unsympathetic to the pressures on Ky. The Hue and Saigon Student Unions protested immediately. By now, it was late June,
schools were closed, large numbers of the most active and committed students were already involved in the Summer Youth Program, and the protests did not amount to much.

Thousands of young people, the majority of them senior high school and university students, participated in the first Summer Youth Program (SYP) during the summer of 1965. Classrooms and privies were built, some of which later collapsed; student musicians entertained around the countryside, and hundreds of small "self help" projects were undertaken with the intention of helping the peasants. Some of the peasants, naturally, were skeptical at first, distrusting these elite city youths, many of whom were experiencing rural life for the first time. Despite a number of setbacks, the students generally emerged with a nobility of purpose and a personal sense of having been cleansed by hard and charitable work. A new wave of populist sentiment arose within the academic community particularly; and it was not long before student publications were extolling the peasantry as the true repository of Viet Nam's cultural heritage.43

The principal tangible result of the populist tendency was yet another proliferation of student and youth groups, each one promising to participate under its own leadership in continuing the SYP.44 A number of these groups also felt that by setting up their own training programs, they could now provide better planning and more effective "cadre" to future SYPs. Not all the groups were motivated entirely by nobility of purpose, of course. USAID support for the SYP had, as usual, provided huge amounts of
funding. Student activities had previously been carried out with minimal, usually non-existent budgets. The injection of large sums of money provided a new factor in the student movement, and hundreds of new "leaders" emerged anxious to cash in on Uncle Sam's largesse.

The SYP had succeeded in uniting a number of major elements of the student movement into a constructive effort to build up rather than tear down. Included in the SYP were the Buddhist Student Union in Hue, the Hue Students Union, Catholic and Cao Dai youth groups, and scouting associations. The Saigon Student Union was the most important of the excluded groups. Throughout the entire summer, the SYP was subjected to a constant barrage from SSU publications which purported to offer evidence of corruption, misuse of funds, general bungling of projects and exploitation of youth by Americans as well as GVN. Hue students were not entirely satisfied either; and the leadership of the Hue Students Union and Hue Buddhist Student Union came close to disrupting the entire program on several occasions in their objections to Saigon students' centralized control. Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, all of the groups which participated in the opposition to the SYP subsequently joined militant Buddhist monk, Thich Tri Quang's National Salvation Movement.

By the end of the summer of 1965, with the return home of many of the 7,000 SYP volunteers, the anti-draft mobilization campaign began to build up steam. In Hue, the protest was aimed primarily at Thieu, possibly because he was Annamese and therefore the best-known member of the junta in that area. But I Corps Commander, General Nguyen Chanh Thi, was an arch-rival of Ky's; and General Thi's sympathetic quasi-alliance with the students in Hue seriously undermined Ky's position vis a vis the youth
in that area, too. 46

In Saigon, the Students Anti-Corruption League was formed. In principle, their mission was to ferret out corruption in government and to preserve the purity of the SYP as well. However, the group was directly allied with Prime Minister Ky, and many believed its members were actually paid by him. In any case, its potential misuse against Ky's personal and political enemies was obvious, and it was discredited as being a front for the GVN— or at least for that part of the GVN loyal to Ky. 47

Demonstrations by the Students' Anti-Corruption League were countered with protests by the radical element opposing the draft, the corruption of the SYP and the GVN in general. It looked like another round of escalating turmoil was inevitable, when Ky suddenly intervened directly to defuse the mounting protest. A "mobilization in place" policy was announced whereby students were "drafted" immediately. However, they were permitted to remain in school as long as they maintained bona fide student status. 48 This maneuver partially mollified the students and saved face for the government, which was able to give in to the students without actually retracting its announced policy. This face-saving device was to cost dearly, though, in undermining all of the more serious, constructive trends in the student movement, specifically, the SYP and the District 8 project.

The GVN followed up its "mobilization in place" decree by providing a superficial "military training program" during school vacations. The main result of these brief sessions was to bring large numbers of students together, making oppositional recruiting and communications easier for a time.
With the removal of the draft issue, the protest abated momentarily. Within a few weeks, however, the protests geared up again, with a slight change in focus. The student unions in both Hue and Saigon began agitating for elections, arguing that without elections, the GVN was illegitimate. Also, for the first time, anti-Americanism became an important issue among the activists:

The people will not support the government as long as there is no elected government. We must recognize that the majority of those who support the Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam do so out of discontent and disillusionment with the many regimes beginning with and following that of Ngo Dinh Diem...The more Washington authorities supersed our foreign policy, imposing conditions for war and peace to Viet Nam, the more the Vietnamese people will lose respect for their nation and prestige among foreign countries.

We need a government elected by the people, endowed with power to voice the thought of a nation holding its master-right both in internal and external affairs, and chiefly to make final decisions, in terms of agreements, as to invitations of foreign troops to participate in Viet Nam's warfare.49

These themes were echoed even more stridently in Hue, where the publication "Sinh Vien Hue" ("Hue Student") asserted that the GVN's authority was "limited to Saigon."50 The publication was disproportionately important due to the fact that it was the only newspaper being published in Hue at that time. Anti-American editorials had reached the level of "hysterical propaganda" according to U.S. officials.51 As American concern mounted, Prime Minister Ky was finally persuaded to order the suppression of "Sinh Vien Hue"; but Corps Commander Nguyen Chanh Thi, the students' sympathetic ally, failed to implement the order on the grounds that this would undoubtedly result in intervention by the Buddhists, and he could not assure the safety of the general public in the event of such an intervention.
The students published a "confidential" open letter to General Thi, praising the General, "you have fought courageously because you are more than courageous," and attacking Thieu:

General Nguyen Van Thieu and his followers...give out corrupted, enslaving and disordered solutions to cope with the tense atmosphere of warfare and society. Thus, it's obvious that General Nguyen Van Thieu and his followers are opposed to the people's revolutionary aspirations and our desire to better society.53

A Commission for Youth and Students Struggle Leadership was set up, and the government promptly charged that both the Commission and "Sinh Vien Hue" were secretly funded and infiltrated by the NLF.

The situation at the end of the year 1965 was that of a stand-off. The GVN was selectively favoring a few, cooperative groups in limited ways. Protests and agitation were again on the increase, although somewhat limited by the complicated maneuverings aimed at establishing a National Student Union. Ill-fated from the start, the GVN hoped that the SSU would become more tractable if submerged into a larger, more powerful National Students Union. The SSU, on the other hand, sought to strengthen its own position by dominating the NSU, thus forcing the GVN to deal with a recognized student organization rather than by-passing the existing student unions on the grounds that they were not truly representative. Each side had a stake in the formation of a National Union, but the interests of the respective sides were diametrically opposed. The Minister of Education was blunt when challenged to defend his choice of delegates to student conferences abroad:

I have selected [them] to attend the Asian student conference in Korea because I wanted the delegates to present truthfully the view of the war cabinet. I think that
the Ministry of Psychological Warfare has acted on the same considerations in selecting the delegation to visit the U.S. 54

Not only was the Saigon Student Union being by-passed for failing to represent all the nation's students, it was also being by-passed for failing the represent the government.

The Ministry of Education furthered its efforts to weaken the SSU by withholding its customary contribution of operating funds for the student union headquarters, leading to a further hardening of lines between the GVN and SSU. 55

As the universities recessed for the Tet holiday in early 1966, it was clear that trouble was brewing. It was also clear that the relative unity of the previous summer had once again broken down. Three major tendencies were discernable at this point: pro-government, anti-government, and the independent social welfare movement.

The social welfare movement represented the first positive and independent trend in the development of student activism, and the story of how this movement was crushed by the in-fighting between pro- and anti-government forces is the most significant feature of the years 1965-67. In fact, the year 1966 was commonly cited by most student leaders and in many student editorials as the most important turning-point in student affairs, since it marked the beginning of the end for the social welfare movement.

The pro-Government forces were almost entirely supporters of Prime Minister Ky at that time, and were members of his Anti-Corruption Youth League. Lacking any ideological foundation or systematic program, their
activities consisted of a series of incidents, which did not add up to any coherent influence on policy directions. The most important incident was the disruption of a news conference held by a visiting American pacifist group. The students' egg throwing and shouting of anti-Communist slogans made international headlines for a day, as did their calling for the bombing of China. However, the students' actions generated much international reprobation and little approval for GVN policies, and they faded out of notice again shortly after these incidents.

The second major tendency in the student movement was the radical, anti-government group, represented primarily by the Saigon Student Union, the Hue Student Union and the various "struggle committees" established in Hue.

Interestingly, however, anti-government agitation was also issuing from a number of highs schools by this point. Earlier, in the anti-Diem riots of Summer, 1963, and again in the Catholic-Buddhist fights of summer 1964, high school students had been the "shock troops" of the major demonstrations. At that time, the younger students were clearly under the leadership of their older brothers and sisters. In fact, the university students deliberately used the lycees whenever possible on the assumption that riot police would be more reluctant to move against children than against the older students, many of whom were in their twenties and thirties. The participation of high school students in the anti-GVN "struggle movement" of 1966 represented a significant change. For the first time, the opposition arose within the lycees, and was not organized and instigated by the universities. This development was largely ignored
at the time. Almost certainly, however, it represented the first fruition of the NLF's decision in 1965 to work with urban students and intellectuals. Careful, covert preparations over a period of several years now produced an organized, anti-government response when the right issue presented itself. The highschool students now joined the university students as equal partners in the struggle. Interestingly, a number of the leaders of the highschool struggle groups resurfaced a number of years later as leaders of the Student Autonomy Movement in Saigon. A few of these crossed over from the GVN to the NLF side during the Tet offensive of 1968.

Having lost the anti-draft issue, all the opposition groups were now focusing on the illegitimacy of the current government, on demands for elections, and increasingly, on anti-Americanism. The specific issue around which opposition coalesced in March, 1966 was the firing of I Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi. Students, joined by militant Buddhists, had led the protests against Gen. Thi's ouster. Prime Minister Ky, speaking in the relatively safe territory of predominantly Catholic Dalat suggested that the Buddhist opposition was not in the best interests of the country; sympathy strikes and agitation by students, Ky added, would have no effect on government policies. Students and Buddhists seized upon this slight to their patriotism and staged mass anti-government demonstrations, making the protest a national rather than Annamese issue. On his return to Saigon, thousands of students from one of the city's largest highschools walked out of classes.

They shouted anti-government slogans and draped banners around the school demanding the downfall of Premier Ky and other "traitorous" generals of the ruling junta. 58
A new, militant organization, the Youth and Students Council for the Protection of the People sprang up overnight to coordinate the mounting student agitation. This time, the GVN was quick to point out the sinister implications of this disciplined, "spontaneous" group. Somehow, they were turning out technically proficient and professionally competent propaganda, always based on an element of truth. They charged, for example, that Vietnam was "too subservient to the Americans":

In a reference to the Honolulu conference of Vietnamese and United States leaders last month, one speaker said: "President Johnson invited General Ky on one day and on the next day our leader is already in Hawaii. He showed too much haste. Then, when he came back, he signed away parts of our country as military bases for 99 years."59

Students were distributing Council leaflets daily at the Vien Hoa Dao Buddhist center and other key locations; but the government was too preoccupied trying to maintain order, and feared that if police appeared to arrest the leaflet-distributors, they would seek refuge in the Vien Hoa Dao, leading to a forced choice between government capitulation or another ugly showdown with the Buddhists reminiscent of Nhu's pagoda raids in 1963. Instead, the government did nothing to stop the Youth and Students Council, which in any case disappeared when the immediate crisis subsided. Instead, Ky ordered troops to "recapture Hue and Da Nang," which were by now in a state of anarchy as a "Civilian and Military Revolutionary Force" battled government representatives and institutions, and attacked the American Consulate.60
In May, student headquarters were raided in Saigon while troops entered Hue to restore order. Interestingly, the general public had apparently been alarmed by the student-Buddhist uprisings; for Ky's "get tough" policy was accepted without further protest once the demonstrators were arrested.61

Most of the summer then was spent in preparing for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which had been scheduled for September. The promise of elections gave the protesters one less issue, and the opposition fell to squabbling about whether or not to participate in the elections. Duncanson reveals an interesting paradox in the complicated development of activist politics: despite their insistence on the necessity for elections,

There can be little doubt that a factor in the disturbances had been the desire of the Vien Hoa Dao and some other groups to prevent any election from taking place because of their unpreparedness to face an electoral campaign. In the absence of regular party memberships to support Western representative politics, an election in Vietnam is a gamble liable to result in sudden eclipse for even the most vocal politicians. The members of parties and sects invited to sit in the various councils during these years never proclaimed the affiliations they stood for, as if wanting still to preserve the secret-society character of their organizations...The clamour for democracy had not been accompanied by any effort to found a political party with a programme such as Western observers might have supposed was their intention; it had served more immediate purposes of nullifying the initiatives of the authority of the moment. 62

Just prior to the elections, the government closed the monthly bulletin "Tinh Thuong," published by students of the Faculty of Medicine in Saigon. This was an important event, marking the first time the GVN had ever officially and successfully suspended a student publication; and "Tinh Thuong" was the last remaining outspoken government critic still
functioning in the student political world at that time. It was a measure of the depth of penetration of the opposition that this action caused barely a ripple in the relatively quiet summer of 1966. The NLF apparently did not dare risk committing its underground cadre, and the superficially visible activists were all in jail. There was nothing in-between.

The third major tendency in the student movement during 1966 was the continuation of the social welfare-populist orientation which began with the flood relief of November, 1964 and the Summer Youth Program of 1965. This tendency was visible in a greatly expanded Summer Youth Program, and in a unique and innovative project which came to be called the District 8 Project. These two programs will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Students and the GVN, since the government's handling of these two projects illustrates many facets of the complicated relations between government and positive, but would-be independent students.

In brief, the District 8 Project was initiated by students in an attempt to assume responsibility for coping with the problems of government. With the approval and initial backing of Ky, students were permitted to take over the government of Saigon's most hopelessly problematical slum district.

Both the SYP and District 8 grew in size and importance during 1966, signifying the first sustained, positive tendency in the development of Vietnamese student activism. Both were beset with similar problems: First, it was almost impossible to get funding while simultaneously maintaining independence from the GVN—a necessity if credibility among
students was to be maintained; second, it was difficult to sustain a program without permanent, full-time cadre, yet any volunteer who wanted to work full time forfeited his student status and thereby became liable for the draft as a result of the GVN's "mobilization in place" policy; finally, both groups were plagued by fall-out from internal, GVN factional fights which resulted in shifting support for the Projects. Specifically, pro-Ky Minister of Youth and Sports, Trieu, resigned. Trieu had been a principal supporter of both the SYP and District 8 projects, in opposition to the Minister of Education, Dr. Philipe Tho. With Trieu gone, the Ministry of Education's opposition carried much more weight.

For all these reasons and more, this positive tendency in the student movement waned into insignificance by early 1967; but the full history of these developments is more appropriately discussed from the point of view of the GVN's student policies in Chapter IX.

The school year 1966-67 began quietly, with preparations for the elections absorbing the interest of most students, who had apparently decided to wait and see what the results of the elections would be. The prevailing attitude was that all the turmoil had produced no concrete results. Several student leaders whom I interviewed in the summer of 1967 expressed the opinion that students still had the capability of bringing down any government any time they wanted to; but they had grown wiser from experience, and realized that overthrowing a government did not produce improvements. Therefore it was only fair to give the newly elected
Constituent Assembly a chance to "do something" before students became politically involved again. The Buddhists were preoccupied with their own new university, Van Hanh, which opened in Saigon on October 17th.

Some students attempted to generate a new wave of activism over the issue of Vietnamization of education. The demand to use Vietnamese as the language of instruction was a specific part of a larger demand for university autonomy. But the agreement between France and Viet Nam on the maintenance of French schools in Viet Nam was about to expire anyway, and the Minister of Education reasonably declared that while Vietnamese should be the primary language of instruction in all schools, students majoring in the sciences should be expected to have a working knowledge of French and/or English. The Minister further declared that all Vietnamese professors would henceforth be required to lecture in Vietnamese. This satisfied most of the students, although it produced no small amount of grumbling among the largely foreign-educated faculty. Mainly, it was clear that the language issue was not sufficiently charged to serve as the focal point of the university autonomy struggle. The abolition of a separate, French educational system was formalized by an agreement between France and Viet Nam on August 1, 1967, and became effective with the 1967-68 academic year.

As the year 1966 ended, students were politically quiet. Some were engaged in the District 8 Project, some were preparing the next summer's SYP activities, many were being entertained by such government sponsored
distractions as the "Lowlander-Highlander Solidarity Youth Convention" held in Pleiku the first week of December. Many were also enlisted in the GVN's Revolutionary Development cadre training program in Vung Tau. Although a large undertaking, the latter program had virtually no influence on the development of student politics per se, as all cadre were sent to work in rural areas after completion of the training course.

1966 was indeed a major turning point in the student movement, marking the failure of social welfare efforts. 1967 was significant for another reason: it was a time of solidification and clarification of tendencies, and a year when students were under increasing pressure to choose sides or remain outside in the political arena. The option presented was not whether to work for the NLF or the GVN; as always, the students preferred to maintain at least an illusion of independence. Rather, the issue was whether to attempt to change the system by working within it or whether to attack it from outside.

The leaders of the District 8 program typified those who decided to work within the system. Encouraged by the initial success of their reforms in District 8, and later in adjoining districts which had been added to the program, the participants decided to try their hand at better government on a larger scale. The leaders of the District 8 program stood for election to the Constituent Assembly and won with the support of overwhelming majorities in their poor, urban constituency.

Those who chose to continue fighting the system from the outside gathered together under the banner of the University Autonomy Movement, a group which was to dominate student politics for the next several years.
The University Autonomy movement (UAM) was both a slogan and an organization. One leading leftist politician, Ho Huu Thuong, claimed that the Autonomy movement was begun by a very small group as early as the 1964-65 academic year. Other respondents dated the Autonomy Movement from the time of its appearance as an organization in 1967. The time lag is important, for there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that several years were devoted to preparation, building of cadre, and "consciousness raising" among students concerning the many and varied issues associated with the problem of autonomy. Thus, the unofficial newspaper of the Autonomy group, "Dat Moi" ("New Land") began publication in 1966, a year before the Autonomy Movement surfaced as an organized, political entity. There is no doubt that the NLF was involved in this effort, although to what extent it is impossible to say. For, as always, the movement was built upon legitimate, existing grievances, and was supported by a majority of the thoughtful members of the academic community.

Professors as well as students were genuinely concerned with the problems posed by the governing structure of the university. As a state institution, all funding was channeled directly through the GVN, and direct financial support from alumni or foundations was not permitted. Rectors and deans were appointed by the government, and faculty meetings were unknown; as faculty had no power in departmental affairs, there was nothing to discuss. Even the most moderate academics were understandably opposed to this degree of governmental control and the threat it posed to intellectual freedom.
Thus, the point of departure for the University Autonomy Movement was a consensus within the academic community that the government should not interfere in university affairs to the extent then current. The only thing missing was an immediate issue which could serve as a catalyst and rallying point for the opposition. The issue presented itself in 1967 over the firing of the Dean of the Medican School, Dr. Pham Bui Tam.

The firing of Dr. Tam was a perfect issue for many reasons. First, Dr. Tam was an entirely sympathetic person. Quiet and dignified, he had the perfect manners of the traditional Vietnamese scholar, and was well liked and respected by many students for having retained his essential Vietnameseness despite an entirely French education. Second, the firing was the indirect result of heavy American involvement in the development of a new, model medical school for Viet Nam. Drastic changes were required in the shift from a French to American style medical education. These changes involved breaking up the fiefdoms which resulted from the fact that department chairmen were appointed for life terms under the French system. The French-educated Dr. Tam, who had presided over the old system would find it difficult and perhaps even embarrassing to make the changes required. In an effort to minimize the chances for personal antagonism, and because no single person was willing to bear the responsibility of replacing the Dean, Dr. Tam's position was taken by a five-member governing board, which was to be in charge of reorganizing the medical school. Officially, the change had to go through the appropriate GVN Ministry, as required by law; but the Minister of Education was himself a physician and colleague of all those involved. To avoid awkwardness, the decree firing Dr. Tam and appointing the new governing
board was signed by Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky. 67

According to one Chairman of the University Autonomy Movement, the firing of Dr. Tam was only the springboard from which to launch a protest against a large number of grievances related to the overall problem of autonomy. 68 Initial protests and demonstrations on behalf of Dr. Tam were soon broadened into a general attack on the system, and the U.A.M. served as a coordinator for hundreds of protests organized around specific issues. It was commonly agreed that the U.A.M. was the most important factor in the student movement between 1967 and 1971. According to Ho Huu Thuong, the Autonomy Movement was:

The common denominator of all other movements" [during this time] "behind which the students protest repression, but behind which they also escape repression somewhat. It is a facade for anti-repression, anti-police, anti-Cambodia [opposition to the invasion of Cambodia], pro-peace, anti-Laos, anti-military service. It's a legal cover, a legal cover for the Right to Life Movement, and the Struggle for the Improvement of Prisons. They must struggle to improve the prisons, since under this regime one [who protests] is bound to land in prison, so they must make them bearable. But it's all a kind of front, a front for every struggle. 69

Asked to define what Autonomy means and what it would consist of if achieved, politician Ho Huu Thuong listed six specific elements: 1) no GVN representatives inside the university, no police on campus, 2) elimination of irrelevant courses, 3) development of courses necessary to society and Vietnamese life (technical education), 4) administrative independence from the GVN, with student representation on faculty councils, 5) no Army interference under the guise of military training—abolishment of military training for university students, and 6) official recognition of the University Autonomy Movement. 70
The Chairman of the Autonomy Movement in 1971 said that GVN acceptance of administrative and financial autonomy of the university was insufficient. Autonomy also required, he said, total democracy in the university, particularly with respect to equal status and representation of students. Additionally, autonomy meant allowing freedom of expression in debating all points of view. "Students want to participate in all activities and decisions in the university itself, and decide how to improve society to meet the aspirations of the people."  

Radical student leader, Huynh Tan Mam claimed there were three primary objectives sought by the Autonomy Movement, only one of which was directly related to university affairs. The three objectives were: 1) recognition of the university as sanctuary, with a total prohibition against police on campus, 2) the struggle for peace, by means of protests against military initiatives of the government, 3) improvement of the people's lives, by means of opposition to taxation, protests against illegal arrests, and support for the rights of the working class.  

A fourth representative viewpoint was stated by a law professor sympathetic with the basic goals of the Autonomy Movement. Autonomy, in her view, would consist of administrative and budgetary independence. Administrative independence meant that the faculty and not the GVN would be responsible for making decisions on hiring, tenure and curriculum. Financial autonomy would mean allowing salary levels to be set by representatives of the university rather than the GVN, and it would mean allowing the university to accept private, outside money. Another point in the achievement of autonomy would be freedom of activities and meeting within the university; but, she claimed, this point was too delicate to
be dealt with in the present circumstances, so it was first necessary to concentrate on the achievement of the other points.

This brief sampling of opinions makes it clear that the strength of the Autonomy Movement lay in the fact that it was all things to all people. Everyone could find some element in its program to support; and the achievement of any of its specific aims served only to encourage supporters to struggle harder for acceptance of other issues.

The structure around which the University Autonomy Movement was formed was a Faculty-based political organization. Originally, the Movement was organized within several selected Faculties in order to present a slate of candidates for election to the Saigon Student Union. This was highly unusual, for it was the first time that any single group had presented slates of candidates in more than one Faculty.

The founding of the UAM as a separate organization is an interesting phenomenon in retrospect. The Medical School had not been among the activist members of the Saigon Student Union. Rather, the Medical students had been involved in the flood relief work of 1964, in the Summer Youth Program, and in the District 8 Program and other predictably humanitarian causes. The first glimmer of change was the organization of a small seminar in 1966 to protest the repression of Buddhists in Central Viet Nam. Suddenly, the Faculty of Medicine became a focal point of agitation in 1967.

Even more interesting was the appearance of an Autonomy chapter in the previously quiescent Faculty of Pedagogy, where most of the students were on scholarship, and counted on working for the government after graduation. Heading the Autonomous chapters in both Pedagogy and the
Minh Mang boys' dormitory was one Ho Huu Nhut. Although the Minh Mang hostel had long been known as a center for radical student politics, Ho Huu Nhut himself was relatively unknown prior to assuming leadership of the Autonomy Movement. He was elected Chairman of the Autonomy Movement by the ten chapters existing at that time. When the Autonomy list won the student government elections in the Faculty of Pedagogy and a number of other Faculties, Nhut had enough backing to get himself elected Chairman of the Saigon Student Union.

Nhut was a southerner, but the majority of other Autonomy Movement leaders came from Kien Hoa and Quang Nam province in Annam. Several of them, in fact, came from a single highschool in Da Nang, Phan Trieu Chinh highschool, which was the major senior highschool serving Quang Nam province.

According to one of the most well-known student leaders at that time, who was intimately familiar with the complexities of student politics, the sudden appearance of a new and disciplined organization with obviously competent and seasoned leadership was mind-boggling:

Myself, during three years I worked closely with the student movement, but I didn't know who is Ho Huu Nhut. And suddenly, he appeared as chairman of the Autonomous group...That was in '67, but before that he had no name among the students. He didn't know me, and I didn't know him; and if he had ever done anything among the students, he must have known me, because I worked in the Saigon Student Union, and I worked in the movement; and in all the demonstrations at that time, my name has been mentioned. But when I first met him, I didn't know he was Mr. Nhut! And he didn't know who I was. And we were totally strangers to each other. But when I talked with him, I saw that he was wise, and already a mature leader. And I asked myself, where did this leader come from? Where did these unknown, new leaders come from? Where did they get this experience? And during that time there were many new leaders appearing suddenly.
(Interviewer: "So in the case of Ho Huu Nhut, do you think that he was already a VC cadre, secretly, at that time he emerged as a student leader?")
Yes. I think that he must already have had regular exposure somewhere in order to be so mature.75

According to another informant, a member of the Autonomous Movement, the Autonomy group always maintained a secret organization of underground cells, separate and apart from the Saigon Student Union.76 By coordinating strategy and tactics within this organization, Autonomy Movement members were always able to control the SSU while giving the appearance of acting as individuals rather than as a bloc. The same informant said that the secret meetings were attended by members who never joined any public demonstrations, and that these persons usually had major responsibilities for planning. By remaining in the background, the "brains" of the movement were thus never exposed to the possibility of arrest.

From their position both within and outside the SSU, the Autonomy group members were also able to coordinate the wide range of protests which ensured. Until 1970, however, they always tried to work within and behind the cover of other existing groups, preferring to keep their numbers and strength hidden behind these various "fronts." Thus, for example, a Buddhist slate was presented in one faculty, despite the fact that the candidates were almost all Autonomy Movement members.

In this context, the sudden eruption of hundreds of protests in the second half of 1967 is understandable, even though the issues and external conditions had changed very little from the first half of the year. Waves of attacks created a climate of opposition to all authority.
Unprecedented and shocking incidents occurred, symbolizing the degree to which young people had been torn loose from traditional constraints in the process of becoming politicized. The Vice-Chairman of the highschool Baccalaureate exam was stabbed to death in Nha Trang, and other examiners were beaten in Can Tho for being too severe in enforcing discipline in the exam room. The older generation was especially horrified, as this type of behavior threatened basic assumptions of the traditional political culture: This was "an inadmissible crime, like patricide, because a student killed his teacher." 77 A crisis of conscience arose, and newspaper editorials agreed that the events represented a "national shame."

The tradition of manhandling examiners was set during the days of the late president Ngo Dinh Diem. It started when the son of the police chief of Faifoo beat up his examiner whom he accused of failing him. We failed then to nip this tradition in the bud. We failed as fathers and as citizens. Children have been led to think that they share in the power their fathers hold. 78

The last statement was certainly correct. The incident forced a re-examination of policy in the Ministry of Education, and was partially responsible for a reorientation of the educational program, a reorientation which had important consequences in the years to come. Yet, there was no going back, either. Student political power, whether constructive or destructive, was a fact of life; the general public had developed second thoughts about whether students were heroes or devils, and whether it wouldn't have been better to return to the old days when students did not dare question authority; but by 1967 it was much too late to reconsider.
As the 1967-68 school year opened, the nation's attention was focused on the national elections, set for September. The Autonomy Movement was not visible per se, continuing to submerge itself in other existing groups; but its members were extremely active in the Saigon Student Union. Ho Huu Nhut and others issued a Manifesto on behalf of the SSU, urging all military men to resign their government posts while running for election. Further, they demanded that the GVN should not prohibit any candidates from running, a major issue at that time. Finally, they demanded complete freedom of speech and press for the duration of the elections. The students vowed to remain aloof from electioneering in order to maintain their virtue; but they promised to struggle to assure that the elections were fair, and they set themselves up as self-appointed poll watchers, calling themselves the Student Democratic Movement against Dictatorship. Their struggles led to a number of arrests, and in many cases the path to prison led directly to Army enlistment, and not by choice. This led to further protests. Members of the Student Democratic Movement sent a letter of protest to the Chairman of the National Leadership Committee, and the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, arguing that:

The sending of students who have been held by the Authorities to the (military) training center means that the military obligation is a "sin." This is not the first time such a problem has occurred. It occurred in 1963 and 1964. We still remember that during the recent Presidential election campaign, you came to the military training center to boost the soldiers' morale. And, two months later, you sent the people, whom to you are guilty, there. This, surely, adds more difficulties to the Information Ministry when this organization sends it appeal to youths saying that military obligation means patriotism and the carrying out of the duties of a citizen in an independent and free country.
The protest was soon broadened to include a demand that demonstrations be legalized as a right of a democratic society. Failing this, students should at least be permitted to assemble for any and all purposes within the sanctuary of the university.

As the Autonomy Movement in all its various guises continued to foment turmoil, another group of students had succeeded in its bid to get inside the system. The District 8 leaders had been elected to the Constituent Assembly, and were determined to spearhead a drive to change the system from within. From their new positions as members of the establishment, the former student leaders were highly critical of the tactics of the Autonomy Movement. This type of opposition was entirely destructive, they argued, and no constructive results could possibly come of it. The Autonomy Movement members countered that the system was so far corrupted that nobody could change it from within, and that the only possible outcome was for those who tried to become corrupted themselves. Meanwhile, the students still working in the Project, as well as the people of District 8, were deprived of important on-the-scene leadership. Unfortunately, the dire predictions of both sides proved to be correct.

Two out of three District 8 leaders who ran were elected to the Lower House, both as opposition candidates. The GVN charged that the project had become politicized, and no longer qualified for support as a promoter of purely social welfare. Supplies and support were cut, and the GVN assumed control, attempting to carry out the plans of District 8 using civil servants and USAID logistical back-up. 81 Ironically, electoral success made the members of District 8 less effective in their
constituency; to compensate, the delegates once again sought involvement in and support from their original base, the student population.

As the school year 1967-68 got under way, the U.A.M. continued its campaign in a fairly low key, lobbying with members of the newly elected legislature to pressure the GVN to permit greater latitude in organizing meetings within the university. With the approach of the Lunar New Year, however, most students concentrated on preparations for the Tet holiday.82

Traditionally, Tet is a family celebration, but this year students hit upon a scheme to justify holding school parties just before and after the holiday without interfering with students' family commitments during the days of Tet itself. The enthusiasm which went into organizing these festivities was largely social. Vietnamese culture was only just beginning to permit meetings between males and females outside the family, and even so, girls from good families attended only in the case of legitimate, ceremonial occasions, such as friends' weddings or national holidays. Thus, a committee was organized to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the victory of national hero Trung Quang. Quang had ordered his troops to celebrate Tet five days early, then ousted the Chinese overlords in a surprise attack as they were celebrating the Lunar New Year.

There were those who, with the benefit of hindsight, saw sinister implications in the fact that many of the plays, songs and posters seen at the students' festivities were "revolutionary" and anti-foreign; but by that time, such "revolutionary" overtones were commonplace wherever students gathered. Again with the benefit of hindsight, some observers recognized a Communist plot in the leaders' invitation for those involved
in preparations to sleep over at SSU headquarters, in order to prepare a second celebration after Tet. Most of the students, however, simply felt that the party was a great success; and the organizing committee agreed to remain intact to prepare a repetition of the celebrations five days after Tet, again following the precedent of General Trung.

The Viet Cong launched simultaneous, nationwide attacks on all major urban centers in what became known as the Tet Offensive of 1968. The anticipated "general uprising" of the population failed to materialize, and thousands were killed in the bloody weeks of street fighting, particularly in Hue and Saigon. Student liberals, many of whom had admired the revolutionary purity of the guerrillas, watched in horror as their heroes slaughtered innocent civilians. In Hue, the fighting was prolonged and intense, and many formerly sympathetic students were killed by the NLF or lost members of their families in senseless massacres.

A number of students who had been underground NLF cadre crossed over to the NLF side during the Tet offensive; they surfaced later in Communist zones as members or officials of various fronts, such as the Alliance of Peoples' Democratic and Peace Forces. The most prominent of the students who crossed over at that time were Ho Huu Nhut, chairman of the Autonomy Movement and Saigon Student Union president, and Tran Trieu Luat, a well-known leader of the student movement since 1963.82

Luat's case was intriguing. He first participated in the student movement in 1963, leading a demonstration against Diem at the Faculty of Science where he was then enrolled. Later, he switched to the Faculty of Pedagogy, where he remained prominent in the student movement as a
satirist and editorialist in anti-GVN newspapers. Despite the fact that his father was a high-ranking member of the rightist VQGDD party, and secretary to Nguyen Van Huong, Luat was among the first wave of students to join the Communists during the Tet offensive. Later, the NLF's Liberation Radio announced that Luat had been killed in a B-52 raid. According to one informant, however,

There are at least two hypotheses about his motivations. The first is that he was a government agent and he was found out, and so they killed him. The other is that he was killed in a B-52 raid, as the Liberation Radio announced. And we suspect that the first hypothesis might be the true one because of two reasons: first, his family is GVN, and the NLF never trusts these types of people, and they don't accept them to become cadre; second, this seems like the first time that Liberation Radio announces about such a death, about losing such a person by a B-52 raid. And also, you know about those B-52's, and yet it's very strange that such a raid could kill only one person. Yet they announce only one name, and give him a big hero's funeral. So you see, they are very clever! They let the GVN secret intelligence know that its agents are so easily found out, and that they will kill such people; but at the same time, for most of the people who don't know he might be an agent, the Front doesn't admit such a bad mistake. So they win both, either ways.84

Other students charged that those who joined the NLF did so only to avoid government arrest; but clearly, most of them were, if not cadre, at least in touch with the NLF prior to the Tet offensive. Many SSU members were in fact arrested after Chairman Nhu crossed over; NLF flags and leaflets were discovered in the SSU headquarters during the Tet offensive, and the building was later destroyed in the fighting.85

The majority of students spontaneously offered their services to relief work. Unlike the flood relief effort of 1964, however, the disaster was so extensive that no single, coordinated response could materialize.
The committee which was organizing the planned post-Tet celebrations in honor of Trung Quang immediately constituted itself as the nucleus of a Student Rescue Committee. This group began functioning almost immediately, without taking time to coordinate the participation of existing organizations. Rescue Committees sprang up in various universities and Faculties, such as the Rescue Committees of Van Hanh University and of the Buddhist Student Union; and many of these worked through the General Student Rescue Committee. The spontaneity and diversity of the Rescue Committees was obvious. Leaders guessed that there were about 500 officers in the General Student Rescue Committee (GSRC) since the leader of each independent group was automatically an "official" of the GSRC. Highschool and university students from Saigon, Dalat and Van Hanh participated, including an estimated 60% of Saigon's 22,000 students. \(^8^6\) Hue, still under fire, could not be included. The GSRC maintained six centers, 24 mobile aid teams, and two mobile medical teams. Relief work was subsidized by CARE, IVS and the GVN. \(^8^7\)

The GVN required all relief organizations to coordinate their activities through the government. But in the chaos of that time, the GVN was anything but coordinated itself. In the words of one student leader, "Each ministry seems to have its own refugee centers." \(^8^8\) In any case, the GSRC declined to associate itself with the GVN on the grounds that many students were working in contested areas, and open affiliation of the GSRC with the GVN would increase the danger to volunteers. Besides, working through the GVN would take a lot more time, and people's needs were too urgent to wait.
Meanwhile, the government-sanctioned National Youth Council, with fourteen member organizations, geared up to sponsor its own "Youth Committee for Relief of War Victims." They urged a "unified command" with the GSRC to coordinate rescue operations, but those already participating in the GSRC efforts were too busy in the field to spend time developing organization charts. Their response was that there was plenty of work to be done for everybody, and the Youth Committee should just come in on its own and start working. 89

While both groups of students did what they could to provide relief to the stricken urban population, few of them--apart from those in Hue--appeared to reevaluate their political opinions of the GVN as a result of the offensive. Rather, they were reconfirmed in their previous attitudes. Those who were anti-Communist became more so, petitioning the government to arm the anti-Communist students into youth defense squads. The welfare-oriented National Youth Council wanted to revive the social work concept of 1966. The GVN opposed both proposals. The majority of students were reconfirmed of the GVN's weakness, corruption and inability to govern. For the moment, they intended to remain apolitical, concentrating only upon the immediate crisis.

The most significant change in the student movement as a result of Tet was the change in attitude towards the NLF. Supported by American pressure to allow freedom of speech, and incited by the proximity and visibility of the GVN's errors, students had been attacking their government regularly since 1963. At the same time, many of them had secretly admired the more distant image of "revolutionary purity" and the legendary discipline and self-sacrifice of the NLF cadre. There had been a certain
sympathetic feeling among students for the NLF, even though most of these same students opposed the idea of a Communist regime in the South. Still, in the event it should come to pass, the majority of activists seemed to be under the impression that they would be granted some kind of special status as long-time opponents of the GVN, and as believers in the need for "revolutionary change." The Tet offensive permanently shattered students' illusions regarding the V.C. and any imagined kinship of spirit based on "revolutionary" ideals.

Nowhere was this change more pronounced than in Hue, where students had built up a certain trust based on proximity and association over a period of several years. The formerly remote heroes of the jungle turned into real soldiers, killing the people of Hue who had never done anything to harm the V.C. The tacit understanding, the modus vivendi which the people of Hue had developed with the NLF was buried in the mass graves. After Tet, compromise with the NLF was no longer a possible political option. This was particularly true for students, and profoundly true for the students of Hue.

After all was said and done, nothing but a sense of emptiness and futility among the students emerged from the Tet experience. The new impetus for social welfare work subsided, due to lack of interest among students as well as lack of support by the government. In the Saigon Student Union, law student and long-time student leader, Nguyen Dinh Trung was elected to replace Nhut. Under Trung's leadership, the SSU demanded and got a new headquarters--an empty room far from the center of town. By June, the SSU was, in the words of one American official, "Worse than
ever, with dove-like statements which are earning them five-year sentences. The government has neither suppressed them completely nor offered alternatives." On June 15, the SSU newspaper "Sinh Vien" published a denunciation of the war, urging a political settlement. An editorial signed by Truong stated that

We are determined not to accept a war when this war is burning out the future of the people, when this war is being pushed on through foreign pressures.91

A second article in "Sinh Vien," reprinted from the French magazine "Etudiant," said:

We consider what the United States Army is doing to a wretched people in an underdeveloped country as something utterly immoral, something which has never happened in history.

The 'Sinh Vien' issue, which appeared within the last few days, had a strong anti-American tone. The paper also contained a poem and comments that many observers construed as pro-Vietcong. The poem urged South Vietnamese to 'rise up' and crush the white-faced enemies.92

Trung was arrested several times in the ensuing series of protests. Finally, he too crossed over to the NLF sometime in late 1968.

For its part, the NLF was badly damaged by Tet. Many cadre had been committed to the fight in hopes of creating a general uprising, and many had been killed, arrested or exposed, forcing them to retreat from the cities to Communist zones. After Tet, the NLF stressed the building of new cells in the cities, "legalizing" as many as half of their cadre, and working to create new movements among students.93

Violence and confrontation erupted once again, albeit on a much
smaller scale at the start of the New Year in 1969. The Law School organized elections to replace Trung, and the police intervened to arrest all the candidates of the Autonomous list. All were charged with being collaborators, and all of them in fact had had Communist contacts, since they were former friends and classmates of Trung's. The other candidates agreed to stop the elections, since no one wanted to be elected under the circumstances. Finally, the police released those arrested; but even so, there were continuing protests and demonstrations—some of them having more to do with political in-fighting among Law School candidates than with opposition to the GVN. When the elections were finally held, the Northern Catholics' slate won by one vote over the other three lists, the Autonomy group, a Southerners bloc, and one slate of independents.

In the absence of Trung, and the removal from power of the U.A.M. chapter in the Faculty of Law, the remainder of the year 1969 was relatively quiet. Most students were still too numb from Tet to risk any involvements at that time. In addition to those who crossed over, many of the more active students were arrested in the aftermath of Tet as the GVN continued its "mopping up" operations. Organization within the student movement was obviously much weakened after Tet, and little could be done aside from picking up the remaining pieces and starting from scratch to rebuild the shattered movement.

A good deal of this rebuilding was centered in the Faculty of Medicine. Another relative unknown, Huynh Tan Mam, was elected Vice-Chairman of the Medical Students Representative Committee, concurrently Chairman of the Minh Mang dormitory and Chairman of the U.A.M. chapter
there. Mam followed the by-now familiar pattern of Autonomy Movement members, advancing from the Students Representative Committee in his own Faculty to membership on the SSU Executive Committee. The then current SSU chairman, Nguyen Van Quy, graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture, and became a civil servant to avoid being drafted. Assigned to a remote area by the GVN, he was unable to continue as SSU Chairman. Quy was replaced as Chairman of the Faculty of Agriculture and of the U.A.M. Chapter there by a senior agriculture student, Nguyen Hoang Truc. A native of the long-time NLF stronghold of Kien Hoa province, Truc went on to become editor of the influential SSU newspaper "Sinh Vien." Quy's place as head of the SSU, however, was assumed by Huynh Tan Mam. With the support of other U.A.M. members on the SSU governing board, Mam was elected over the heads of several non-U.A.M. members whose higher positions on the Executive Committee theoretically entitled them to become acting president until the next elections.

Under Mam's leadership, the SSU became very active indeed. SSU support was given immediately to a combined protest against the rise in newsprint prices, and in support of a number of journalists who had been arrested. Mam, as head of the SSU also invited the student unions of Hue, Van Hanh, and Can Tho universities to form a National Student Union.

At their initial meeting, the delegates decided that due to the impossibility of organizing national elections, they would designate a provisional committee called the "Representative Committee for a National Student Union" until such time as nationwide elections made possible a
really national union, eligible for membership in the International Student Conference. Mam was elected Chairman of the Representative Committee, with three Vice-Chairmen, one from each of the other participating universities. The Committee quickly agreed on a common platform of support for struggles for peace, opposition to foreign influence and control, demands for university autonomy, and support for basic, but unspecified economic reforms. Various committees were also set up. One of the most important of these was the Life Rights Committee, responsible for dealing with problems related to the social and economic well-being of the people. It was decided to keep control of the Life Rights committee on a regional level, since conditions varied greatly with each locality; no overall chairman was chosen for the Life Rights committees. The other major committee was the Student Action Committee. Ha Dinh Nguyen, chief of the Action Committee of the SSU was designated as head of the National Student Action Committee, responsible for coordinating national demonstrations and protests.

The members of the National Student Union Representative Committee used their various titles shrewdly to create the impression of mass support. Thus, for example, foreign journalists covering student demonstrations were careful to note that a particular protest was backed by the N.S.U. as well as by the student unions of Hue, Can Tho, Van Hanh and Saigon, and by the powerful University Autonomy Movement--unaware of the fact that all of these were more or less the same people.

On occasion, Mam used his title as Chairman of the NSU Representative Committee where reference to the SSU alone was inappropriate. Such an occasion was the "Declaration of Peace by the South Vietnamese Students"
issued on Christmas Eve, 1970. This document, which was later "ratified" as a peace treaty between American, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese students stated that:

WHEREAS...

The present war is part of the United States government policy which is continuing the policy of invasion by the French colonialists in Asia and Africa and particularly in Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The successive governments of South Viet Nam have been the instruments of the American governments, and as such they have not been able to achieve democracy, sovereignty and the welfare of the nation; they have always been going against the Peace aspirations of the people. Moreover, they brutally repress and exterminate all the nationalistic and patriotic Vietnamese, particularly the Vietnamese students.

THE STUDENTS OF SOUTH VIET NAM SOLEMNLY DECLARE:...

To end the war, all U.S. and allied forces must immediately withdraw.

There must be formed a government which includes all the patriotic elements truly representative of all the people and working for Peace and Independence leading to the Reunification of the nation of Viet Nam.96

Because of his disruptive and pacifistic activities, and because of his continuing contacts with American pacifists, Mam was arrested many times. The first arrest, on March 11, 1970, came shortly after Mam had captured the Chairmanship of the SSU. After Mam's arrest, the Acting Presidency of the SSU was assumed by the next higher ranking member of the executive board, Toai. Toai was a former Faculty of Pharmacy student who later switched to the Faculty of Law after taking three years off for "political activity." Toai was an independent, whose "Renaissance of South Viet Nam" slate was elected in the Faculty of Law when the Catholics
withdrew in favor of the Southerners in order to prevent a victory by the Autonomous list. A good public speaker, Toai was in the forefront of those demanding the release of Mam and the other students who had been arrested with him.

The mass demonstrations, however, were organized and led by Nguyen Hoang Truc, Chairman of the Faculty of Agriculture and of the Autonomy chapter there, and by Ha Dinh Nguyen from the Faculty of Letters, who was to become head of the Student Action Committees of both the Saigon and National Student Unions.

The government closed the schools on March 20, in hopes of dispersing the protestors and inhibiting communications among students. The protest organizers, however,

...divided up the city into districts, and each district was appointed a district leader. There were one hundred district leaders, and above them ten chiefs. When meetings were held to discuss top operations, only the chiefs met. Thus, when a decision was made to undertake some action, the district chiefs would notify their respective leaders, and the leaders would in turn notify the students in their districts. But it often happened that notice of the actual objective and/or site of a demonstration was not given to the students until sometimes as short as ten minutes beforehand. Because of the smallness of the inner circle, and the timing of the informing of the students, maximum security could obtain. Thus, fewer encounters with the police, fewer aborted actions, and more successful operations than in the previous history of the SSU.97

This was the first time the SSU had used a communications network based on area. Previously, all communications had gone through Faculty chairmen to the students in their Faculties. The new technique helped minimize the effect of what SSU leaders claimed was heavy infiltration by GVN agents.
During the height of the movement, we held press conferences daily, announcing some planned action. Individual chiefs were then informed of the designated meeting places for that day's protest. However, no protest would be held. Instead, observers would go to each of the designations, and wherever heavy police and riot troops appeared, the students could surmise that the chief who'd been given that dummy location was an informer.

Now no action would be taken against such a person; however, he would no longer be trusted. Instead, he would be deliberately fed information we wanted the GVN to have--i.e., more phony locations. The agents, of course, were always wrong in their information to the government, so the government would come to suspect them, too. This is the best possible 'just desserts' for such individuals. After many days of giving out such false predictions, a real action would be staged, after the police were judged to have relaxed their degree of alertness.98

In April, the protest was dramatized with a hunger strike by students on the steps of the National Legislature. In the tense atmosphere which prevailed, police were subsequently used to break up a small, routine meeting of the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Law. This action revitalized the issue of university autonomy, and brought in professional support for the students. The Dean of the Law School, Nguyen Do, wrote a series of letters to the Rector of the University strongly objecting to this violation of autonomy, and urging the Rector to intervene officially with the police and the Ministry of Justice.99

To the pleas of the professors were added charges by parents that the imprisoned students were being tortured. A number of Supreme Court justices finally took it upon themselves to investigate. The Court ruled that the students' imprisonment was illegal, since they had been tried and convicted by military courts, which had no jurisdiction in the case.
Sixteen out of forty jailed students were released on June 10, 1970, including Huynh Tan Mam. A "welcome back" rally was held at the Faculty of Agriculture, the main purpose of which was to exhibit the newly released students, to show publicly the marks of torture. Outraged at the maltreatment their classmates had so obviously borne, angry mobs of students were incited to burn several nearby American cars, and to capture a cache of gas cannisters and grenades from the police.

Subsequent demonstrations were staged to demand the release of those students still in jail, and the deferrment of those who had been drafted while in prison. 100

Schools were reopened on June 20, in hopes that students, not wanting to lose a year's work would get off the streets and back to classes. The SSU, meanwhile, was obliged to hold belated elections for the presidency of its Executive Committee. Mam's return had created an awkward situation, since Mam had been only the Acting President, and had been replaced in that job by Toai. No precedent existed for this situation, since neither Mam nor Toai had clear claim to the title. The dilemma was solved by announcing that the elections which should have taken place in early Spring had had to be postponed due to the GVN's closing of the schools, but that belated elections would now be held.

Toai felt he had proved his leadership capabilities during his tenure as Acting President, and hoped to beat Mam in the elections. The Autonomy Movement had backed Toai's leadership of the struggle to release Mam and the others; but now U.A.M. support was thrown behind their own candidate, and Mam was elected. His position was somewhat tenacious, however,
since he had been released on probation, pending the hearing of his case by a civil court. Theoretically, the SSU by-laws prohibited Mam from becoming President under these circumstances; but the by-laws were interpreted by the U.A.M. majority in the Executive Committee as not applying in this specific case.

Once the elections distraction was over and Mam was back at the head of the SSU, the protest against the drafting of imprisoned students was escalated. The issue was broadened to include opposition to the required military training program for students during school vacations. On July 1, a small group of students in Hue managed to burn the records of the training program office there. On the sixth of July, the National Students Union issued a statement on behalf of "all university students" collectively and categorically refusing to participate in the training program. Two weeks later, students were holding mass meetings at An Quang pagoda, headquarters of the militant Buddhists in Saigon.

This was too much. The GVN had been extremely patient with militant students, but the prospect of yet another militant student-Buddhist struggle alliance was intolerable. President Thieu personally announced that any further agitation or disruption by students would be dealt with summarily.\textsuperscript{101} Four days later, on July 21st he made good on his promise as police broke up a "student solidarity march" to the palace in support of visiting American pacifists.\textsuperscript{102} The arrests at this time did weaken the protest significantly, although disruptions continued at a lower level for some time. Mam was not among the peace marchers, but he managed to get himself
arrested again at the end of August. As much of a problem in jail as out, Mam helped organize a hunger strike among the students in prison. Their fast was so successful, a number of students had to be hospitalized to prevent their dying in prison.

Mam was too well-known to allow him to become a martyr; and the Americans, worried about public opinion at home, were pressuring for Mam's release. In October, Mam was released along with two other students, Le Van Nuoi, Chairman of the National Highschool Students Association, and Tran Hoai, Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the Highschool and University Students Union in Hue. With these prison mates and others, Mam worked up a "peace offensive," culminating in the "Declaration of Peace" already quoted above, and the ratification in December 1970 of a Peace Treaty between American, South and North Vietnamese students. Although these maneuvers once again made international headlines, they had little impact on student politics in South Viet Nam.

In fact, these public relations efforts represented a desperate attempt on the part of the U.A.M. to sustain the momentum of a protest which had run out of steam. Manifestoes were issued and press conferences held, but the truth was that the mass of students refused to take to the streets. Fear of GVN reprisals and the continued imprisonment of a number of leading student tacticians were not the only reasons why further mass actions failed to materialize.

The U.A.M. had badly miscalculated its position on several important issues; and these errors were so grave as to prove fatal to the movement
in 1971. It has been mentioned repeatedly in this chapter that the Autonomy Movement used a front tactic until 1970, always camouflaging its own organization behind an existing student opposition group. This relationship was mutually beneficial, as the U.A.M. concentrated on

...all the issues which are favored by students: University autonomy, the release of all students that have been arrested, anti-foreigners, pro-peace; and they have very good slogans. And they are very well organized, they control all; and they win the hearts of the students and all the public opinion.103

Gradually, however, students became disaffected with the U.A.M.'s front tactic. Those who voted for a Buddhist slate fronting for the U.A.M. came to realize that the list supported only U.A.M. approved issues, and did nothing for the Buddhist students. Others were similarly disenchanted as the U.A.M. members turned increasingly towards national and even international issues, ignoring the still pressing needs of students and the universities.104

Having lost their legitimate claim to power in several important Faculties, a number of members seemed to panic, and attempted to retain control through illegitimate means. In the Faculty of Pedagogy, the manipulations were so clumsy as the discredit the entire U.A.M. Briefly, the situation in 1971 was that the Faculty of Pedagogy had been controlled for several years by the U.A.M., most recently by a list which had been elected as Buddhist. In 1971, the same slate stood for reelection, but having realized that the U.A.M. was "out of control of the students," the Pedagogy students voted for the opposition list. This list won with a slim majority, and was announced as the winner just prior to a long holiday weekend. But the election committee, controlled by the previous
year's winners, declared that the opposition list had committed many campaign violations, and thereby forfeited the election.

The impropriety of this action was as great as it was obvious. Students were outraged to the extent of spontaneously boycotting classes to protest the election fraud. The Council of Faculty Presidents of the SSU was obliged to meet in emergency session, and decided to invalidate the entire election and organize and entirely new election.

And that event had two significances: first, it's an uprising of the silent majority. The opposition list was very badly organized, and if the students did anything so quickly (as the boycott), it's because the actions of the Autonomous chapter were so hard; it boggled the mind. And the second significance is that it's the first time the Autonomous group has been killed politically in the eyes of the students. And it was very strange, because the Autonomous is usually so careful to take care of all details, and plan very carefully.

The final blow in the downfall of the U.A.M. was the result of its misjudgements during the national election campaign of 1971. Huynh Tan Mam and other Autonomous leaders backed Field Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky as a tactical maneuver, hoping to break the continuity of Thieu's power. Most of the U.A.M.'s previously unexposed cadre were committed to the "election offensive." For the purposes of this campaign, U.A.M. members were forced to act as a legal group, necessitating a curtailment of their attacks on the government, and after that, to acceptance of limited negotiations with the government. Unfortunately for the U.A.M., the government appeared most reasonable in its negotiations with the students, granting certain demands and promising to investigate and give serious consideration to others. Most students were satisfied with the GVN's
response; and the U.A.M.'s backing for further actions decreased considerably, leaving only a handful of hard-core militants to carry on the struggle.

When all other candidates withdrew and Thieu was elected, the GVN was at last able to paralyze the student politicians completely. By the time the peace accords were signed in January, 1973, the student movement was again fractioned, frustrated and impotent. The GVN, not wanting to appear as repressive and dictatorial as the Diem regime, permitted just enough student opposition to demonstrate the government's liberalism. But by the time of the signing of the January agreement, the most significant truth about the student movement was that it was empty of meaning--it had lost its raison d'etre: the hopes that students could contribute something of value, something positive to change or improve their country's policies were gone.
Part III

1. It will be recalled that the University of Hanoi was originally founded in 1902, under the liberal Governor-General, Paul Beau. It was closed in 1908, "Because of subversive agitation among the students," according to Dennis J. Duncason, Government and Revolution in Viet Nam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 106. Beau was recalled, the university remained closed, and it was not reopened until after the First World War. Thus, the "official" founding of the University of Hanoi is usually dated from 1918.

2. Duncason, 125.

3. Ibid., 208. Beginning with 1954, the focus of this thesis is entirely upon the evolution of student politics in the South.


5. Interview with former student leader, Do Ngoc Yen, Saigon, 1971.

6. Ibid.

7. Details of this incident were pieced together from interviews with three people who participated in the demonstrations. Two were members of the National Legislature at the time of the interviews in April, 1971, and one was a high level communist defector, who was interviewed in a Chieu Hoi center in March, 1971. This protest is also described by Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, Vol. II: Vietnam At War (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 1167 n.

8. University students apparently were not actively recruited until about 1960; growing Communist attention to university students at that time paralleled the broadening of students' class backgrounds. ("Vietnamese Students' Struggle," Vietnamese Studies [Hanoi, 1965], pp. 53-57).

9. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen.

10. 8 Years of the Ngo Dinh Diem Administration, 970.


12. Ibid.

13. 8 Years of the Ngo Dinh Diem Administration, 473.

15. Pike, 70.


17. Pike, 70.

18. Duncanson, 337.

19. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong, high ranking Provincial Chief of Education and Propaganda and Communist Party member who defected to the GVN in September, 1970. He was interviewed in March, 1971, Saigon.


21. Ibid., 470.

22. Pike, 70.


24. Marr, 43.

25. Interview with student leader, Nguyen Van Toai, Saigon, March, 1971. This relationship apparently became clear to certain student leaders after some of these cadre crossed over during the Communist Tet offensive of 1968.


27. Duncanson, 413.

28. Marr, 45.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Tu Do (Saigon), August 28, 1964, quoted in Duncanson, 348.

32. Marr, 130 n. This incident was also described in several interviews with a subsequently united, newly-elected Saigon Student Union Executive Board in July, 1967.


35. Ibid.

36. Unless otherwise noted, information on student activities in 1965 is based on journal notes made while I was a student at the University of Saigon that year, on a research grant administered by the University of Michigan.


38. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen. Specifically, NLF influence was exerted through the vehicle of the University Autonomy Movement according to this informant and others.


41. Marr, 47.

42. David G. Marr,

43. Pratt, 78.

44. Ibid. Unless otherwise noted, the material on the Summer Youth Program in this section is based on field research, done under contract with the Simulmatics Corp., Summer, 1967.

45. Marr dissertation, 51.

46. Duncanson, 352.


49. Dan Toc, Nos. 3-5 (Saigon, August, 1965).


51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

54. Tran Hgoc Ninh, M.D., Minister of Education, quoted in Sinh Vien, No. 2 (Saigon, November 13, 1965).


60. Duncanson, 352.

61. Ibid., 353.

62. Ibid.


64. Ibid. A series of articles in November, 1966 dealt with the agitation for Vietnamization of language and curricula.

65. Ibid., December 5, 1966.


68. Interview with the Chairman of the University Autonomy Movement, March, 1971.

69. Interview with Ho Huu Thuong.

70. Ibid.

71. Interview with Chairman, U.A.M.

72. Interview with radical student leader, Huynh Tan Mam.

73. Interview with Professor of the Faculty of Law, University of Saigon, April, 1971. This respondent asked that her name not be used.

74. I interviewed Nhut in July, 1967, shortly after he came to prominence in student politics. Nhut was one of the first student leaders to cross over during the communist Tet Offensive of 1968.

75. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen.

76. This informant asked to remain anonymous. As a member of the U.A.M. Executive Board, however, I assume he discussed the content of our interview
with other members of the Board. When asked if there were any NLF involvement in the secret, shadow organization, the language of his response seemed deliberately ambivalent, "Well, we don't know about that."


79. Information for this section is drawn from copies of the original documents, given to me by members of the SSU Executive Board, and from interviews with Nhut and other members of the UAM and SSU Executive Boards in Summer, 1967.

80. Letter to the Chairman of the National Leadership Committee and the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, signed Le Thiu Boi, Nguyen Long, et. al., Saigon, October 14, 1967.


82. The account of Tet, 1968, and the students' involvements in organizing the Trung Quang celebration is based on the interviews with Do Ngoc Yen and Huynh Tan Mam.

83. The names of defectors to the NLF and information about their activities after crossing over were highly publicized by Liberation Radio. The reports of Liberation Radio were monitored by the U.S. Government and printed in Principal Reports From Communist Press Sources (Saigon: Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office).

84. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen.

85. Interview "not for attribution" with an official of the National Police, March, 1971.

86. According to U.S. Embassy assessments made available to me.

87. Ibid.


89. Ibid.

90. Letter from Mr. Lars Hydle, U.S. Foreign Service Officer, July 8, 1968.


92. Ibid.

94. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen.

95. The following account is based primarily on the interviews with Do Ngoc Yen, Huynh Tan Mam and Nguyen Van Toai, April, 1971.

96. "Declaration of Peace by The South Vietnamese Students," signed by the South Vietnam University and Highschool Students (Saigon: By The Viet Nam National Student Union, December 24, 1970).

97. Interview with Nguyen Van Toai.

98. Ibid.

99. Copies of these letters were made available to me by University officials.

100. The students remaining in jail were not arrested in the same group with Mam and the others. Rather, they were "left overs" who had been arrested during a Christmas, 1968 peace march according to Do Ngoc Yen.


103. Interview with Do Ngoc Yen.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.
PART IV

TUG OF WAR:
STUDENT RELATIONS WITH THE
GVN AND NLF
INTRODUCTION

Relations between students and government have been problematical since Independence. As the last chapter will detail, the NLF has sought either to manipulate students or to make them allies, organizing or mobilizing them, insofar as possible, to serve predetermined policy goals. The GVN, in contrast, has viewed students as an actual or potential threat, and has therefore sought to neutralize them as a political force. In the absence of a clear and consistent policy of its own, the government has been in a position of reacting to the students' initiatives after they are already underway.
CHAPTER IX
STUDENTS AND THE GVN

The government was prevented from developing and implementing an adequate student policy during the period of study primarily due to the necessity of giving priority to the war effort. Almost as important, however, was the continuing internal instability and political factionalism within the government, which made the application of a consistent policy impossible. Additionally, the presence of U.S. advisors was a destabilizing influence in government handling of student activists; and American pressure sometimes forced the GVN to behave in ways which were incompatible with its own inclinations. Americans tried to force GVN officials to distinguish between "good" and "bad" student activism, and to inculcate the ideal of a loyal opposition. The government, on the other hand, regarded all opposition as disloyal; and it viewed all student activists with suspicion and considered all student movements to be dangerous and threatening.

Elements of the Student Threat

The threatening aspects of a student movement as perceived by the GVN are several. First, there is an underlying awareness of the Vietnamese historical pattern, in which certain sects or regional officials have developed their own fiefdoms, rivaling the power of the central government. In the early years of the Diem regime, the government was hard put to
break up these independent centers of power in order to consolidate its rule. Several of the GVN officials interviewed in the course of this study drew explicit parallels between student activism and the threat of the earlier independent armies to justify government action in preventing further development of various student organizations.

In addition to these historically based fears, the students pose a very contemporary threat in the realm of job competition and placement. As pointed out in earlier chapters, Vietnamese students traditionally have expected appointment to responsible positions in government administration within a few years of graduation. The rapid expansion of the student population, however, plus the entry of large numbers of military personnel into government have frustrated these expectations. Nevertheless, students continue to insist that the participation of soldiers in government is contrary to the Vietnamese political culture, and that the military should be replaced by scholars. The students consider themselves to be scholars, and they are therefore a threat not just because they want to remove the present military rulers, but because they actually want to replace them.

A third and related element of the student threat is the students' continual appeals to traditional morality. Exposure and denunciation of government corruption in student publications have been coupled with editorials on traditional virtue, whereby the ruler theoretically embodied and symbolized the state of the nation. Accusing the government of moral bankruptcy under these circumstances is implicitly equivalent to attacking its legitimacy. The American government, for its part, was clearly embarrassed by continuing and obvious evidence of GVN corruption, and agreed at least
tacitly with the students' demands for an end to these practices.

Again drawing upon elements of the traditional political culture, students have sought to maintain the identity of their status with that of the old scholar-officials; and on this basis, students believe themselves not only capable of but entitled to formulate alternate policy positions. Student attempts to formulate and influence national policy have understandably been viewed as threatening by the GVN. Government opposition to students' insistence on their right to influence decision-making was solidly supported by the Americans in this case. With little appreciation for the historical roots of the students' demand for a role in policy-making, Americans viewed the students' pretentions as merely absurd.

The final and most important element contributing to the government's view of the students was the very real fact of NLF infiltration of the student movement, which will be detailed in the next chapter. The existence and repeated exposure of subversives within the student movement gave credence to the government's charge that student politics were controlled by the Communists. Many government officials, and particularly the police, were sincere in their belief that all opposition to the government was Communist-inspired if not actually controlled.

U.S. advisors, on the other hand, tried to force the GVN to distinguish between "good" and "bad" student activists, and tried to inculcate the notion of a loyal opposition. Depending on the receptivity of the many successive ministers and officials, the American pressure was more or less capable of producing government tolerance of student activism. At times, U.S. officials succeeded in temporarily by-passing the GVN in order to support student
programs which Americans regarded positively.² In several instances, where Government Ministers and officials were themselves sympathetic and receptive to student projects, the Americans practically overwhelmed them with support. In general, however, the Americans and Vietnamese were at odds in their perception of student activism; and American efforts to co-opt student programs for the benefit of the GVN served only to increase the extreme unevenness and inconsistency in the government's dealings with students.

Even without the discrepancy between its views and those of the U.S., however, the GVN was already badly handicapped in its attempts to formulate and apply any sort of consistent policy towards students. Reorganizations of the bureaucratic structure were carried out frequently in hopes that organizational changes would somehow improve performance in dealing with the monumental problems with which the government was trying to cope. Personnel changes were even more frequent than bureaucratic reforms, and top-level shifts in the Ministry of Education were carried out no less than seventeen times during the period of this study, 1954-1973 (see Table 30). Fourteen of these changes occurred after the 1963 Coup d'Etat, and the Ministers of Education served under eight different Prime Ministers. Whereas the three Ministers of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime served terms of three years apiece, the average tenure of a Minister of Education between the 1963 coup and the January, 1973 Accords has been only 5 1/2 months.³ Of the twelve Ministers since 1963 (two of them served two terms) there were one highschool teacher, four university professors, five medical doctors, one judge and one pharmacist. Except for the two who had served previous terms, none of them can be considered to have had experience in governmental
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<tr>
<th>Regime</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Minister of Education</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Republic (1954-Nov. 1963) 9 years</td>
<td>Ngo Dinh Diem former mandarin</td>
<td>1. Nguyen Duong Dan, Licence in Math, High School teacher, ex Ambassador to Italy, now lives in Europe</td>
<td>3 years (1955-1957)</td>
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<td>2. Tran Huu The, Dr. in Science, Professor Saigon Faculty of Science, ex-Ambassador to the Philippines, now lives in Europe</td>
<td>3 years (1958-1960)</td>
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<td>3. Nguyen Quang Trinh, Dr. in Science, Professor Saigon Faculty of Science, ex-Rector U. of Saigon, now teaches in France</td>
<td>3 years (1961-1963)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963 Coup and thereafter (Nov. 1, 1963-Oct. 30, 1967) 4 years</td>
<td>Nguyen Ngoc Tho former mandarin, businessman, Vice President under Diem</td>
<td>4. Pham Hoang Ho, Dr. in Botany, Professor Saigon Faculty of Science, ex-Dean Saigon Faculty of Pedagogy, Rector of Can Tho University (1966-May 1970), now teaches at Saigon Faculty of Science.</td>
<td>3 months (Nov. 4, 1963-Feb. 7, 1964)</td>
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<td>5. Bui Tuong Huan, Dr. in Law, ex-Dean Hue Faculty of Law, Rector U. of Hue, now Senator</td>
<td>9 months (Feb. 8, 1964-Nov. 3, 1964)</td>
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<td>Gen. Nguyen Khanh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tran Van Huong High School Teacher (1st time)</td>
<td>6. Phan Tan Chuc, Dr. in Law, Professor Saigon Faculty of Law, Lawyer</td>
<td>1 1/2 months (Nov. 4, 1964-Dec. 15, 1964)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regime</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Minister of Education</td>
<td>Length of Time</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Nguyen Van Truong (1st</td>
<td>Diplome d'Etudes Superieures in Math, Instructor Hue Faculty of Pedagogy, ex-Director</td>
<td>2 months (Dec. 16, 1964-Feb. 19, 1965)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>time)</td>
<td>General Secondary, Elementary, Popular Education, now instructor Saigon Faculty of</td>
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<td>Pedagogy.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Phan Huy Quat, M.D.</td>
<td>Nguyen Tien Hy, M.D. Secretary of State without portfolio in Gen. Khiem's Cabinet</td>
<td>4 months (Feb. 20, 1965-June 18, 1965)</td>
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<td>(until early 1972).</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Guen. Nguyen Cao Ky</td>
<td>Tran Ngoc Ninh, M.D., Professor Saigon Faculty of Medicine</td>
<td>13 months (June 19, 1965-July 21, 1966)</td>
</tr>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Nguyen Van Truong (2nd</td>
<td>Nguyen Van Truong (2nd time)</td>
<td>4 months (July 22, 1966-October, 1966)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>time)</td>
<td>11. Nguyen Van Tho, DDS (1st time) ex-Director of Cabinet Ministry of Health, Professor</td>
<td>12 months (Nov. 1966-October 30, 1967)</td>
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<td>Saigon Faculty of Dentistry, now Dean of that Faculty.</td>
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<td>2nd Republic</td>
<td>Lawyer Nguyen Van Loc</td>
<td>12. Tang Kim Dong, Dr. in Law ex-Dean Can Tho Faculty of Law, Professor Saigon Faculty</td>
<td>6 1/2 months (Nov. 1, 1967-May 18, 1968)</td>
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<td>(since Nov. 1, 1967)</td>
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<td>of Law and Private Bank Manager</td>
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<td>President:</td>
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<td>13. Nguyen Van Tho (2nd time)</td>
<td>4 1/2 months (May 19, 1968-Sept. 25, 1968)</td>
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<td>Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu</td>
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<td>14. Le Minh Tri, M.D., Professor Saigon Faculty of Medicine, assassinated Jan. 6, 1969</td>
<td>3 1/2 months (Sept. 26, 1968-Jan. 6, 1969)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regime</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Minister of Education</td>
<td>Length of Time</td>
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<td>Gen. Tran Thien Khiem</td>
<td>Le Minh Lien, Licence in Law Judge, Vice Minister under Le Minh Tri.</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>5 1/2 months (March 12, 1969-Aug. 30, 1969)</td>
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<td>Nguyen Luu Vien, M.D., Pasteur Institute Lab, Deputy Prime Minister under General Nguyen Cao Ky, and now.</td>
<td>16.</td>
<td>8 1/2 months (Sept. 1, 1969-June 14, 1971)</td>
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<td>Ngo Khac Tinh, Pharmacist, former Congressman under Ngo Dinh Diem's regime (until November 1963 coup), Minister of Information immediately before becoming Minister of Education</td>
<td>17.</td>
<td>June 15, 1971 to present</td>
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administration prior to assuming the post.

In light of the above, the failure of the GVN to develop a coherent policy, and the inconsistency of the government in dealing with students seems to have been unavoidable. Coupled with this, the government's over-riding need to maintain order in the emergency situation of on-going warfare and insurgency explains much of its actions in suppressing overt student opposition. Its unarticulated policy of neutralizing even non-oppositional student activism can be more clearly demonstrated by an examination of its actions in the case of the Summer Youth Program (SYP) and the District 8 Project.

Both of these programs were initiated by the students, and were backed by varying amounts of support from American friends and officials. Although it is impossible to date the beginning and end of this social welfare period of the student movement, it lasted roughly from late 1964 to 1968, a period which coincided with nine changes in Education Ministers. Given the variations in a particular Minister's receptivity to the two programs, and the consistency of student efforts and American pressures, it is reasonable to deduce that the government was forced to acquiesce to the establishment of these two programs. Initially, factional divisions and internal political instability prevented the GVN from mounting a consistent, unified effort to block the development of an independent student-directed movement. In time, however, as the programs grew and deepened, developing self-sustaining organizational lives of their own, the government viewed them with increasing suspicion.

A stabilization of internal power eventually permitted the government to move in, discontinuing the program in the case of the Summer Youth Program, and resuming control over District 8.
The Summer Youth Program

The Summer Youth Program was begun as an effort to continue a social welfare movement which developed during a flood emergency in 1964.4

The flood relief work represented a spontaneous undertaking on the part of university students to respond to the effects of the disastrous flooding in Central Viet Nam in November, 1964. Students from the Universities of Saigon and Hue, with the support of other young people, collected supplies and money which, aided by logistic support from the GVN, they were able to deliver and distribute to the needy victims. A Student Work Committee for Central Viet Nam (Uy Ban Cong Tac Mien Trung) was established to coordinate the students' activities with the official flood relief program overseen by the GVN's Flood Relief Committee. The effort enlisted more than 800 students in first aid and relief work, in addition to those engaged in the collection and distribution of supplies.

The GVN had virtually nothing to do with creating or encouraging the student organization, and its role was largely confined to that of providing logistic support -- primarily transportation. Problems were bound to arise, and did. Students arriving in the disaster area came into conflict with local civil and military officials concerning the role the students were to assume; the authorities in Saigon generally did not choose to intervene when arguments arose. Supplies were often delayed, and general coordination was poor.

Under the circumstances, these shortcomings were largely excused by the students on the grounds that communications between central and provincial authorities were inevitably bad as a result of the flood itself, that students
and GVN authorities had no previously established channels of cooperation; and the Huong government itself was so badly handicapped by political pressures and maneuverings that it was forced to step down shortly after the relief activities got underway. 5

Given such plausible explanations for the difficulties, the more important results were that the GVN and the students had worked together at all, that much was accomplished by the program, and that -- most significantly -- the various student and youth groups had cooperated together for the first time and had apparently discovered a cause which could unite them at last: social action.

The enthusiasm bred out of participation in this socially useful activity generated further efforts to sustain the program; and a more permanent organization was created to coordinate further social welfare efforts. This organization was to become the Summer Youth Program.

The SYP had the ambitious aim of uniting existing youth groups in a cooperative effort to recruit and train five thousand volunteers to undertake social service projects in rural areas. As a corollary to this, it was hoped that the return to the countryside would reestablish contacts between the urbanized, alienated and acculturated youth, and the peasantry which was regarded by the students as having embodied and preserved the true and pure Vietnamese culture.

In fact, the SYP was able to achieve considerable success during its short life; and especially when compared to previously non-existent or unsuccessful efforts to mobilize student support, it marked a definite trend for the better. The accomplishments of the SYP were all the more remarkable
considering the tremendous obstacles which beset its inception.

The most obvious flaw in the program was that -- unlike the flood relief effort -- it was all too visibly aided by Americans, who came close to adopting the role of intermediary between students and the GVN; and in some cases, the American officials helped the students to circumvent GVN efforts to control or supervise the program.

A second major problem area had to do with the objective of uniting the various student and youth groups. Originally, the plan was presented by the Minister of Youth to a diversified group of student leaders who were invited to form a Founders Committee. Unfortunately, many prominent leaders and would-be leaders were left out -- including the powerful Saigon Student Union, as well as all other groups felt to be unfriendly to the GVN or its policies. Predictably, those who had been overlooked joined with other advocates of student independence in charging that SYP leaders had once again sold out to the proverbial Yankee dollar. And certain local branches -- most notably the Hue students in collaboration with local Buddhist youth groups -- came close to disrupting the entire program in their opposition to Saigon's centralized control. Throughout the entire summer, the SYP was the target of a constant barrage from student publications purporting to offer evidence of corruption, misuse of funds, general bungling of projects and exploitation of youth by Americans.

However, the sheer force of having adequate financial backing for the first time (about 19 million $VN) enabled the SYP to carry on in the face of these enormous difficulties. Some 7000 youths actually participated in SYP projects in twenty-six provinces. Thus able to continue despite
its early lack of notable achievements, the SYP resolved some of its initial difficulties and the program was expanded in 1966. Some of the original stigma remained, of course, and enthusiasm decreased somewhat once the novelty wore off. Even so, support for the SYP among students was on the increase, and a sizeable core of experienced, dedicated participants was being formed. The important thing was not the failures and set-backs but the fact that lessons were learned and mistakes were being repeated less frequently. Most of all, and this cannot be stressed too strongly, the SYP marked the beginning of a constructive, mass-scale mobilization of students. They had found a cause to work for; and a modus vivendi was evolving between students and the GVN despite lingering mutual distrust.

The program had originally been approved by the GVN only with the greatest reluctance, however. In fact, it is questionable whether the government ever approved the project at all. Rather, as indicated above, the SYP was stimulated and subsidized from its inception by USAID and other American agencies. The GVN, torn by its own more pressing internal problems at the time, was simply unable to block the program.

In time, however, the government stabilized; and when it did, there were renewed attacks on the SYP. The original Minister of Youth who had supported the program was replaced, and supervision of the SYP came increasingly to the Ministry of Education. The original Minister of Education at the beginning of the Summer Youth Program was Nguyen Van Truong. He was replaced by Dr. Nguyen Tien Hy during the four months of the Phan Huy Quat regime. Dr. Hy in turn was replaced by Dr. Tran Ngoc Ninh who served until July, 1966 under Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky. Government support for the SYP from the Ministries of Youth and Education was extremely inconsistent under the
circumstances. Succeeding GVN Ministers did not hesitate to join in the charges that youth was becoming a tool of the Americans; and there was a good deal of truth in the allegation that USAID and the various youth groups were deliberately conniving to short-circuit and circumvent GVN channels when possible. On their side, many of those involved directly in the SYP felt that they were better off avoiding the government, which had always been more of a hindrance than a help anyway as far as the students (and not a few American officials) were concerned.

The GVN ministries, however, were formidable opponents once political conditions stabilized. Documents and contracts were dredged up to substantiate the legitimacy of the government's role in controlling such projects as the SYP. Pressure was exerted on lower and mid-level personnel to conform. And the GVN judiciously waited until the departure of high-level American supporters before making its move. Finally the GVN won its point: appropriate government agencies, primarily the Ministry of Education, were involved in the project, and funds and approval had to be cleared through the various departments concerned.

All of this was going on during the Summer of 1966, while the program itself was underway. By now, the SYP organization was strong enough to sustain its momentum; and the actual field work was relatively undisturbed by the upper-level administrative turmoil.

With subsequent changes in GVN personnel, however, there was even stronger disapproval by key officials. Dr. Ninh had wanted only to establish GVN control over the program; he did not seem interested in abolishing it. Dr. Ninh was replaced briefly by Nguyen Van Tuong, who was succeeded by
Dr. Nguyen Van Tho in November, 1966. Having gained control of the SYP, the Ministry of Education now refused to approve funds and logistic support. Dr. Nguyen Van Tho had ample grounds for opposing the program. The "revolutionary spirit" of the students had waned, apparently. The abuses of funds and corruption had visibly increased between 1965 and 1967. There was little "training of cadre" going on, Dr. Tho felt, despite funding allocated for this purpose; and there was even less discipline. Groups of friends could get together and "join" the program for a weekend lark in the countryside at government expense, according to Dr. Tho.

Many sound works were still accomplished by the sizeable core of dedicated students who continued to give their best; but the withdrawal of encouragement and support from the government, which had insisted on taking over the Program's direction, contributed to a declining morale within the student ranks. Charges of selling out to the Americans had been bad enough, and most of those involved in the SYP were already on the defensive. Now, they were accused of being pawns of the government. The necessity of working under GVN control made it increasingly difficult to recruit dedicated students, since those predisposed to activism seemed also to object to government control. The program suffered further when the government, boxed in by its "mobilization in place" policy, refused to allow temporary draft exemptions for students working full time during the winter to organize the next year's activities. Without these full-time workers to supervise activities and financial accounting, the quality of work decreased as financial abuses increased.

Dr. Tho decided enough was enough, and the project was simply dropped.
Why, he reasoned, should the GVN continue paying for a project for which it received no credit, and whose results were unimpressive.

District 8: The New Life Foundation

A program which had been proposed and re-proposed by youth and student leaders since the 1963 coup against Diem was the District 8 project. This project was finally accepted by the government and launched during the initial flush of enthusiasm and promise generated by the SYP.

By early August of 1965, the core of ten to twenty young promoters of the District 8 concept had sold Premier Ky on their idea; and Ky's support was sufficient to override the often bitter opposition of other officials. What these young people presumed to do involved nothing less than taking over and administering an entire district of Saigon -- in particular, the poorest, most desperate slum in the city, with a population of over 100,000, heavily infested with rats, disease and V.C.9

To accomplish their purpose required that the youth be empowered to replace existing GVN officials with their own hand-picked cadre, who thus became de facto members of the GVN themselves.

The problems which were inherent in the plan are immediately obvious. From the viewpoint of the students and youth, they had always shunned even the remotest association with the GVN; now, they were proposing to become part of the government with which their relations had always been strained and difficult at best. The GVN, not surprisingly, was loath to give such responsibilities -- and power -- to its young critics. And the bureaucratic and legal complications entailed in removing civil servants and
replacing them with outsiders were formidable. But in the end, the project was approved by Premier Ky.

Some say that the GVN acquiesced in order to teach a lesson to the youth, so that they would learn and perhaps even come to sympathize with the difficulties the GVN faced. According to this version, the young people were expected to fail in their attempts at reforming and rehabilitating the area; for youth groups had always had great difficulty cooperating with each other, let alone with the GVN. Others held that the directness and audacity of the project simply appealed to the spirit and personality of the impatient young Premier. And no doubt there was some truth to both versions. But the decisive factor in the end may well have been the very hopelessness of the situation in District 8 itself. The general consensus was that at least things couldn't possibly get worse.

Internal Problems

The problems inherent in the proposal began to manifest themselves almost immediately. The program, once approved, was authorized and allocated an operating budget of ten million piasters; strategy meetings were begun to map out the specific details for implementing the program. During these sessions, however, serious differences in approach arose:

...a policy argument developed between those who favored initial concentration of available young, volunteer cadre on only one or two social problems and those who wanted to draw up a comprehensive plan, research the problems, and then attack them all with revolutionary zeal. The former individuals argued that to alter the people's unfavorable image of local officials, there was a need for early, positive, visual results, rather than some "shotgun approach" that parcelled out the limited number of motivated young cadre available at first. Thus they wanted a strict set of project priorities. The others argued, however, that District Eight, being the poorest
district in Saigon with a population of about 106,000, had desperate problems of water supply, hygiene, basic education, unemployment, infiltration by the NLFSVN, and much more—all interrelated and all retarding influences. Attack one problem and your successes would only be smothered by the other problems. This view carried the day, with the others either assenting or drifting away from further participation. Since the number of initial participating cadre was directly dependent on how many youth leaders would commit their groups to assisting the District Eight experimenters, those who drifted away were sorely missed. On the other hand, it was essential to agree on a basic strategy in advance, so that divergent purposes and activities would not ruin the program.10

However, the much-reduced cadre core, numbering about twenty, with its leadership group now dwindled to five, finally got underway, and moved into a local meething hall which was to serve as its dormitory and headquarters in District 8. Styling themselves the "Youth for New Life Movement" or "New Life Foundation" (Xay Doi Moi), they set out to recruit local youth into their cadre ranks. They also called upon other youth and student groups -- primarily those already involved in or with experience in social action work -- to send participants. Although about twenty additional volunteers subsequently presented themselves:

...most of these turned out to have either shallow commitments or more narrowly political interests and they also dropped out eventually; some of them were exploiting the program to publicize certain political figures and trying to recruit followers of their own, giving their work an overly and obvious political tone unacceptable to the program leaders.11

The attempt to use the Project to generate support for various political interests was also unacceptable to the GVN; and the government insisted from the start that the Project be entirely oriented to social
welfare, and completely apolitical.

External Problems

In addition to their own internal difficulties, the "Youth for New Life" encountered all of the expected externally-related obstacles, and then some.

To begin with, money was a major problem area. The funds which the GVN had promised to subsidize the program were stalled; and it was not until three months later that the first payments began to come in. By this time, "many of the original (leadership) group came to despair that the government really would cooperate, and the attrition within their ranks was marked; sixteen of the (original) twenty-one leaders had left and did not return."¹² In addition to doubts about the GVN's following through, the start of the new school year and the need for an essential minimum of financial remuneration had drawn off the majority of cadre into other pursuits.¹³ Later, the administrative budget was cut to 300,000 $VN per year.

A second area involving financial troubles was related to salaries. Cadre who held official positions within the GVN received their salaries directly, and had to cope with all the usual problems of civil servants on fixed incomes in an inflationary economy. Non-GVN cadre were provided with subsistence allowances through a special budget allotment, amounting to roughly $25 per month each. Two of the five founder leaders received a special allowance, but this amounted to less than $60 per month. Thus, those who did not hold official GVN positions were required to live most frugally, and while this had the advantage of keeping them "close to the people" whom they sought to serve, it also prevented many otherwise willing
volunteers from enlisting. In particular, those who were married with families and who lacked independent means of support were excluded. Unfortunately, this barred many of the older, more highly skilled students from participating. For, while part-time workers were welcomed, the leaders insisted that cadre must be full-time, since

...each team of three to five cadres is responsible for up to 10,000 local residents and any outside employment a cadre may attempt may demand not only his energy but perhaps also his social and political support, thereby undercutting the effort he could contribute to these program assignments.15

Cadre who found the financial pressure too great were forced to leave the program to take regular jobs until they had saved up enough to re-enter. And this represented another cause of attrition, since some of the cadre never returned.

A final problem involving money was potentially the most dangerous. Since the funds allocated to the project were obviously inadequate, additional aid was provided by certain sympathetic members of the Movement for the Renaissance of the South (MRS), a political grouping within the Ky government. Although their intentions may have been entirely noble, it was inevitable that the political bonds thus generated would eventually involve District 8 cadre in political maneuverings, to the detriment of their social welfare interests. GVN political ties were always a liability, and often had proved fatal to youth activities in the past. The District 8 project was to suffer for these political ties as a result of subsequent power shifts within the GVN, as will be detailed later.

The difficulties of coping with the GVN bureaucracy and its officialdom constituted yet another source of problems. On the local level, there was
the question of the existing civil servants and their role in the project. The District 8 leaders intended to run the district as an arm of--or more accurately, in place of--the GVN. This entailed displacing the existing District Chief, who was "promoted" to the figurehead position of District High Advisor. Additionally, no less than 125 civil servants retained occupational classifications which prevented their reassignment, demotion or firing. To reassign any of the District Office's 25 white-collar workers to cadre positions, as the District 8 leaders would have liked to do, required special dispensation from the Ministry of Interior; and the Ministry could not be persuaded to do this within any reasonable period of time. Moreover, as one would expect, the lower-level GVN functionaries were unenthusiastic about the Program itself, and resented the intrusion of what they initially regarded as pretentious young intellectuals; the "cooperation" of such officials, then, was perfunctory at best.

Adding to these difficulties was the problem of dealing with the 600 man District Police force, ostensibly responsible for local security. The "people to people" approach of the New Life Movement was often at odds with the more traditional methods of the police. The police commander, moreover, was responsible only to the Central Police Headquarters of Saigon, and was thus in a chain of command which entirely by-passed the District Chief and local civilian officials. This separate but powerful authority made it harder for the District 8 cadre to implement a consistent approach in the area. And, given the fact that security was the Number One problem in the district, the differences between police methods and those of the New Life Movement amounted to a major stumbling block.

The government then reassigned a large group of Revolutionary Development
cadre to "help" in District 8. However,

...so many were assigned here as to suggest to the leadership that the newcomers had been assigned the mission of submerging them. The majority of these men, too, proved unsatisfactory, not only because some of them tried to take over the direction of the enterprise, but also because of what was described as their bureaucratic cast of mind -- their unwillingness to work on evenings and weekends and their excessive emphasis on heavy-handed propaganda messages. 17

This unworkable situation was finally remedied by the removal of nearly all of these unwanted "helpers."

At the municipal government level, Saigon City Council members tried at various times to block the distribution of GVN funds allocated to the District programs. Council members charged corruption and misuse of funds as reasons for withholding money. But District leaders pointed out the more likely motive behind Council members' actions: three of the District 8 leaders were running in the Lower House elections, and the increasing popularity and organizational base of these leaders was becoming a political threat to old-guard politicians.

Finally, at the national government level, the problems were at once more intangible and more complex. The MRS members of the Ky government had been among the principal supporters of the New Life Movement, and foremost among these was Vo Long Trieu, Minister of Youth and himself a former leader of the 1965 Summer Youth Program. Trieu resigned after a November, 1965 dispute between Ky and the MRS members of his cabinet. The loss of this important ally within the GVN undoubtedly weakened the effectiveness of the District 8 Project and increased its political difficulties.

Trieu's feuds within the GVN and their relationship to the New Life Movement were also manifest in his dispute with Minister of Education,
Nguyen Van Tho. Although he was noted for his progressive and courageous reforms in the area of educational policy, Dr. Tho was completely opposed to the notion of letting youth groups take over, at the expense of the GVN, while giving the GVN no credit for its part in the endeavor. On the contrary, youth leaders made a point of emphasizing their own achievement in contrast to the poor performance of the government. Tho would have no part in condoning this tendency. Trieu, on the other hand, was predisposed by his own Summer Youth Program experience, to encourage independent youth projects.

To complicate matters between the Ministries of Youth and of Education, there was the fact of a separate feud between Trieu and Tho's wife. Mrs. Tho was engaged in a fight to retain her leadership of the Vietnamese Girl Scouts. Separate and almost simultaneous election meetings were called by the rival factions, one of which extended Mrs. Tho's Presidency, and the other electing a rival as President. As Minister of Youth, Trieu was called upon to validate the elections, and decided in favor of Mrs. Tho's rival. Further, both Trieu and Mrs. Tho ran in the September, 1967 Senate elections. Mrs. Tho won, while Trieu did not. Thus, when Trieu resigned in 1966 after a personal confrontation with Ky, the New Life Movement not only lost a valuable supporter in the Ministry of Youth; it was now vulnerable to the full impact of accumulated hostility emanating from the Ministry of Education, which although not directly responsible for the Project, was nonetheless able to undermine it in various smaller ways.

In becoming full-time cadre, District 8 volunteers also forfeited their student draft deferments. Although Project leaders repeatedly sought deferments for their cadre, they were never notably successful in obtaining such special dispensation, and the Program suffered accordingly from this loss of manpower.
The final external problem confronting the New Life Movement was the attempt by various political groupings to exploit the program for their own advantage. Presenting themselves as volunteer workers, members of political parties infiltrated the project, and before long, residents of the area "complained about such propagandizing by members of a political party trying to mix recruitment of new party members with the community development work at hand. Dr. Minh and his colleagues remonstrated with them about this and they departed soon afterward."19

But the problem of external political ties remained. When the National Assembly elections were held in the fall of 1967, the NLM leaders seemed a natural choice to represent the District; and indeed, two out of the three who ran were elected. While their local popularity is not be be doubted, it required more than community support to run an election campaign. Inevitably, friendships with MRS members deepened into political ties; and perhaps more dangerously, well-meaning American friends from both Embassy and USAID contributed funds out of their own pockets and "unofficially," although at least one of those involved was a member of C.I.A. General Lansdale's group.20 With several of their leading members now holding elective office, the position of the NLM changed subtly: no longer helpless supplicants, dependent on the goodwill of the GVN, the District 8 leaders were now representatives of the people, and policy makers and shapers in their own right.

The potential of using community development work to organize a political base became an established fact -- a fact moreover, which was all too apparent to the GVN. This development of grass-roots democracy which
American supporters had encouraged all along was, predictably, seen as a political threat by the GVN. Although the NLM leaders intended their new powers to provide them with greater leverage within the government for the benefit of the Project, this result was only very partially realized; and hereafter, the GVN endeavored gradually to take over direct control of the program.

Shortly after the election of the two key NLF members to the National Assembly, the government moved to resume control of the experimental urban districts. The program had achieved notable successes, so much so that the Project had been expanded to include both Districts 6 and 7. The popularity of the Project leaders, and their election to public office to represent the people of their districts were viewed as threatening by the government, and as a violation of the understanding that Project members would not engage in political activities.

Project members were defensive and bitter. They had refrained from participation in oppositional politics and demonstrations; they had worked strenuously to prevent political parties from using the Project as a propaganda base; and they had risked their status in the student movement by not only being associated with the GVN, but by becoming part of it. When elections were scheduled, District 8 leaders seemed a natural choice as candidates; and the Project cadre did not feel that representing the people of their districts was "political activity" in the same sense as propagandizing or participating in demonstrations.

As District 8 cadre were replaced by regular GVN civil servants, the government candidly admitted that the experiment had been successful, but
that it had been, after all, an experiment; it was always intended that the government would resume control at some point, and that point had been reached.21

The examples of the SYP and District 8 Project served to increase the frustration and bitterness of students. They believed that their efforts had been motivated by a patriotic desire to serve the nation—if not the government—and that they had genuinely tried to work with the government insofar as they had been led to believe that this was the condition on which they would be permitted to contribute. To what extent their own mistakes and miscalculations might have been responsible for the withdrawal of governmental sanction was not apparent to the students. In their perception, the failure of the social welfare movement demonstrated clearly and finally the impossibility of working with the GVN, and hardened the mutual distrust between students and government. From the students' point of view, the GVN appeared at least as threatening to them as they did to the government.

Elements of the GVN Threat

There were three basic areas of chronic student complaint against the GVN: opposition to educational institutions and the results of GVN educational policy and/or the lack thereof; opposition to and fear of the GVN's draft policy, and particularly to the use of the military draft to punish dissident students; and opposition to the use of police and the military courts to punish and intimidate student activists.

Educational Policy

In the area of educational institutions and policy, students have felt victimized by the rapid expansion of the school populations without parallel
attention to increasing job opportunities. Additionally, they have objected to the total centralization of educational authority in the GVN; and their demands for university autonomy stemmed partly from a desire for intellectual freedom, and partly from frustration at their inability to communicate with those in control.

As noted previously, the GVN really had no long-range educational policy until the very late 1960s. Instead, it had a program of expansion, urged upon it by American advisors, and accepted out of an understandable desire to develop and modernize rapidly. The consequences of huge increases in quantity were apparently not considered. Prior to the early 1960s, the Vietnamese student body constituted a small elite whose graduates could count on attaining the highest positions in government and the professions, and achieving the highest status in their society. With the precipitous growth of the student population, this situation changed drastically. University graduates could no longer automatically expect job opportunities in the administration, or even a guaranteed income in many professional areas.

In the late 1960s, a deliberate policy of emphasizing mass, practical and vocational education was formulated, paralleled by a shift away from centralized control towards local, community orientation. In his 1968 State of the Nation address, President Thieu articulated the new trend in education for the first time as an explicit national policy:

In the field of education, the policy of Viet Nam is to realize practical education for the mass. This educational system does not privilege any class of citizens; instead, it aims at the majority of people. In this spirit, the Government will try to create equal opportunities for every citizen to have at least a basic education. Besides, in order to meet the requirements of the country on the road
of progress, national education should be practical. To achieve this goal, the Government will promote community-oriented schools to enable students to adapt themselves better to the community and to better serve their region later. Our next objective is to opt for vocational rather than academic education.  

In so stating, President Thieu stated explicitly what the students had suspected all along: namely, that the government was no longer willing to consider students as an elite of any sort, nor to treat them as such. In the same speech, Thieu also served notice that the government intended to act positively to end what it felt was the disproportionate political influence of students: "The 1968 program of the Ministry of Education also consists in transferring a great number of universities out of the Capital."  

Implementation of the new policy was delayed in the aftermath of the 1968 Tet offensive, however; and the results of this policy change are therefore outside the scope of this study. The important point nevertheless is that the GVN was moving towards this position all along, without ever stating it or justifying it to the increasing numbers of graduates, who still retained traditional elitist expectations despite a dwindling job market.  

Members of the GVN, and particularly the military men among them, were put in a defensive position of having to guard their jobs and their power against the onslaught of increasing numbers of graduates. The entry of military officers into government since 1963 had aggravated the students' problems in finding jobs after graduation. Not only did they reduce the number of places available; but the students shared the belief of the traditional political culture that intellectuals, not soldiers, should run the government.
As the war escalated and the manpower needs of the military increased, more and more students were drafted, until eventually military service became mandatory for almost every graduating male. Thus, military power combined with other vested interests in blocking students' entry into government after graduation.

At the same time that the student population was growing at an unparalleled rate, the educational system was being changed piece by piece, from an antiquated but unified French system into a melange of French, American and Vietnamese practices. This too was a destabilizing factor as far as students were concerned, as the certainties of the old system were replaced by doubts. Not only were students unsure of what was expected of them academically; they also began to question the "relevance" of various elements of the system itself.

Uncertainty and disagreement about the educational system was matched by lack of agreement concerning the purposes of education. In sharp distinction to both the traditional and Communist patterns, the GVN did not seek to inculcate moral virtue or to develop ideological commitment as part of its educational effort. In fact, it was not until 1966 that courses in "civic education" were even included in the highschool curriculum.24

It is not surprising then, that almost all of the students interviewed, as well as most student publications, cite the lack of a "just cause" as a major element in their lack of commitment to the GVN. It is not enough to be against Communism in order to work and fight for the government, many students felt. This probably explains why the overwhelming majority of students seem preoccupied with personal rather than national well-being.25
Whether proposing ways for the national government to become more involved in promoting a "just cause" among students, or demanding university autonomy from government control, there do not appear to have been any adequate mechanisms developed for the expression of student opinion. No intermediaries existed between students and government, since university officials lacked the power to deal with substantive issues, even on matters of university policy. Thus the only recourse for students seeking reforms or action on even the most limited complaints was to deal directly with the central government. Channels for input and feedback between student protesters and government were inadequate or nonexistent, however.

The ability to gain access to the Ministry of Education, usually the most relevant to the issues raised by students, was extremely inconsistent. The willingness of the Ministry of Education and its various bureaus to talk with students depended on the decision of the current Minister, and also on the security of his political position at any given time. Since the Ministry was reorganized so often, and Ministers changed so frequently, lines of authority and communication were always shifting. Procedures for redress of grievances worked out with one Minister were almost never carried on by a successor. Finally, even given that channels for the expression of student opinion were sometimes worked out, Ministers varied considerably in their ability and willingness to undertake reforms.

A Minister's ability to formulate and implement policy was seriously inhibited by the instability of the government. Insecure in their appointments, few Ministers dared to risk change, and few stayed in office long enough to be able to do so even if they dared.

Draft policy

A second major area of student-government friction has been the articulation
and implementation of the GVN's military draft policy.

Laws regarding the draft were revised several times during the period of study, always in the direction of increasing quotas and further limiting exemptions.²⁶

Throughout the period of the Diem administration, the draft posed no real problem to students. With fewer than 2,000 university students in 1954, and just over 10,000 in 1960, the military did not miss the exempted male students. By 1965, however, there were over 25,000 students; five years later, there were well over 50,000, and by the time of the signing of the Paris Agreements, the university student population exceeded 75,000. Not only did the numbers become too large to be ignored; but the escalation of the war made it necessary to tap this reservoir of manpower.

The massive build-up of American troops in 1965 also put pressure on the GVN to restrict exemptions of students, as Americans resented and protested the continued exemptions of Vietnamese at a time when American youths were increasingly liable to be drafted.

Until the early 1960s, students had been exempted as long as they merely enrolled at the University. Passing exams or completing course work were not required for re-enrollment, nor was attending classes. Subsequent tightening of the draft laws eliminated this loophole by allowing students to fail only once: if they failed a given year's work a second time they would be drafted. Those who were enrolled at the university primarily to avoid the draft soon found a partial dodge, however. If they failed in one Faculty, they could enroll in another and be eligible for an additional two years instead of one. Undoubtedly, however, the additional constraints were primarily an incentive to study harder and pass the exams.
It should also be noted that implementation of the new draft laws also led to the development of a certain amount of class friction within the university. Until the late 1960s, elite families were still able to use money or influence to obtain favorable assignments for their sons. This practice was common knowledge among older students, and was obviously resented by the new majority of students from non-elite backgrounds.

Implementation of the revised draft laws created as much opposition among students as the fact that their exemptions were being limited. When Prime Minister Ky announced in the summer of 1965 that students were to be mobilized, the news was abruptly shocking to students. The outcry of protest forced the GVN to retreat from its original position, and it was later announced that students would be "mobilized in place;" that is, they would undergo military training during school vacations. Initial relief at the softening of the government's mobilization policy was soon replaced by opposition. The government had decided that the school grounds themselves were the most suitable place for the training to take place. This gave activists a relatively potent issue, since it was quite easy to convince many students that this "militarization of the universities" was an ominous and threatening development.

The next major change in the draft laws was announced in April, 1967, and became effective on January 1, 1968. The "Vietnamization" program which paralleled the reduction of American troop strength necessitated an increase in Vietnamese call ups, and a further limiting of exemptions. While promising that the increased draft calls would be carried out gradually, President Thieu explicitly served notice on the students that their exemptions were temporary, and enforcement would be strict. Only "students
who have been successful in their work will be deferred," Thieu said in his
State of the Nation address on January 25, 1968. They will be allowed
to study until graduation. However, to prepare for a resistance force to
be committed in an emergency, all students will receive their basic
preparatory military training while they are still in school.  

The Communist Tet offensive occurred before students had had a chance
to react to President Thieu's announcement. In his February 9 post-Tet
address to the National Assembly, President Thieu called for the fulfillment
of draft quotas ahead of schedule and ordered that the military training
of students still in school be started immediately.  

Finally, on June 19, 1968, the GVN issued a General Mobilization Law
which was still in effect when the Paris Agreements were signed. Its provisions
confirmed the students' fears that the GVN would eventually come to a position
of using the draft to limit both university enrollment and the development
of independent student organizations:

Article 6: All male and female citizens not serving in
RVNAF (Republic of Viet Nam Armed Forces) and PSDF (Peoples'
Self Defense Forces) must join the ranks of local peoples' groups.

Article 7: Deferral for a limited period may only be approved
for...students and pupils who are outstanding, in accordance
with limiting criteria prescribed by the Executive.  

Article 7 in particular was viewed by many students as a move to
legalize the government's long-standing practice of using the draft to
punish or remove student activists. As noted in Chapter VIII, this practice
was used since 1963; but vigorous student objections had no effect whatsoever.
Students who were arrested and imprisoned thereby lost their status as
students and their eligibility for continued deferment. In cases where
official charges were not brought, many students nevertheless found themselves instant recruits.

Thus, students regarded the military draft as a double threat. First, many of them were opposed to fighting in the war at all, and therefore objected to any moves in the direction of increasing their own liability to be drafted. Second, they strongly objected to the use of the draft to punish and intimidate student activists.

The National Police and the Military Courts

In dealing with such direct expressions of opposition as protest marches and demonstrations, government policy has frequently appeared to be led by police policy; and police policy has consistently aimed at maintaining or restoring public order. The police, of course, do not have the authority to deal with the issues raised by student demonstrators. Judging from interviews, the police have viewed their function to be that of obtaining as much information as possible and punishing those arrested, frequently employing torture to further these dual ends.

The reasons for the increased involvement of the police and the military courts are several. First, the Ministry of Education has failed to take the initiative in assuming responsibility for the issues raised by students. Not only has the Ministry lacked the strength and continuity to do so; it has also been reluctant to become involved with student activists, fearing to be dragged down by political squabbles at a time when the need for educational expansion and reform appeared both obvious and urgent.

The second major reason for the increasing police and military court involvement with student activists has been the police view that student
opposition constitutes a real and dangerous threat to internal security, and that all student activists are secret Communist agents or dupes. By arresting students, obtaining information or "confessions" from them and putting them in jail, the police believe they are carrying out their assigned mission of attempting to halt Communist subversion.

The police view is mirrored and reinforced by that of the military. Despite a ruling of the Vietnamese Supreme Court that the military courts were operating illegally and lacked jurisdiction in cases involving civilian student activists, the military continued to try students in military courts.

Given the absence of supervisory and review procedures for either police or military operations, and the unwillingness of the executive branch to respect the ruling of the Supreme Court, the students have felt frustrated and angered by the continued perpetration of injustices against them.

Finally, the role of the police and military courts in dealing with student activists was consistent with President Thieu's struggle to consolidate control. He was in a beleaguered and difficult position vis a vis students and other opponents: It was simply impossible to distinguish the "loyal" opposition from insurgents, and because Communists were clearly trying to topple the government, it was easy to assume that everyone who opposed the government was an enemy.

Further bolstering the government's resolve to crush student activism was the difficulty of introducing reforms without first establishing public order. The GVN maintained all along that many changes in the direction of liberalization were being contemplated, and would be implemented
as soon as the security situation permitted. Paradoxically, then, its actions against students were considered necessary in order to hasten the day when controls could be loosened.

Thus, the GVN was in a situational bind as far as its relations with students were concerned. There was a certain logic and rationale for its attempts to neutralize and control any student movement. De facto responsibility for dealing with students came to rest with the police and military courts, however, since the legislative branch was impotent and the executive branch was unable to deal at the cabinet level with the policy issues raised by students; and lower level decision-making authority did not exist.

The failure to incorporate or tolerate even legal student political activities unless controlled by the GVN was due to instability, inconsistency and fear. The result was that "anti-war and anti-Thieu [student] movements have been driven underground, fragmented, intimidated, and -- the most candid concede -- rendered virtually impotent." 32

As this situation was evolving, it provided increasingly fertile ground for NLF efforts to infiltrate student movements and recruit student agents. To a certain extent, the government's insistence on labeling all opponents as Communists acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and some students crossed over to the Communist side "out of fear of arrest or rearrest," and out of hatred generated by police injustices. 33

The specific ways in which the NLF has attempted to exploit the student opposition to the GVN will be elaborated in the next chapters.
CHAPTER X
STUDENTS AND THE NLF
INTRODUCTION

From the 1954 Geneva Accords to the 1972 Paris Agreements, NLF policy towards students underwent several important changes. These revisions were the result of changes in the needs of the NLF, stemming from an alteration of "objective conditions" with the input of massive American military aid beginning in 1965. The implementation of the new policy of more direct involvement was made easier by the instability of the GVN, whose inconsistency in dealing with student politics gave more freedom of action to the NLF. The NLF policy changes were justified in ideological terms by changes in the composition of the student population itself in the direction of lessening the elitist character of the university student bodies.

As with all NLF political activities, policies regarding students always originate with the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP); and it is the Party, in conjunction with its youth branch, the People's Revolutionary Party Youth League (PRPYL) that decides which issues to focus on, when to launch "struggle movements" and when to concentrate on quietly building up organizational strength.

Party directives flow through the PRPYL to the Students' Liberation Association (SLA), the NFL's covert, mass organization for high school and university students. SLA members in turn usually work through overt, existing student associations to distribute the Party's message. 34

At times, in response to a specific call from the Party, SLA members work to incite other students to protest on a given issue. At other times,
SLA members attempt to manipulate the on-going protest, either by escalating the intensity of demonstrations or by enlarging the scope of issues being protested.

The PRP, however, does not like to claim responsibility for originating student policy; nor does it claim that student political activism is furthering the cause of Communism or of the NLF. Rather, the SLA has its own organizational hierarchy, with headquarters in "R", the location of the COSVN (Central Office for South Viet Nam) headquarters. The SLA leadership, composed of well-known, prestigious intellectuals, always claims support of and responsibility for SLA actions, although in fact it operates primarily as a collective public relations spokesman for the Party, which alone has decision-making power.\textsuperscript{35}

In addition to their activities within existing student and youth groups, SLA members also function directly in propaganda teams. This propaganda work will be described in full later in this chapter. Its main function is to develop Marxist-Leninist beliefs among the general student population. Thus, for example, the idea that American neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism are responsible for continuing war in Viet Nam is widespread among university students in Viet Nam, as is the idea that the GVN leaders are on the U.S. payroll, and profiting enormously by their participation in government.\textsuperscript{36}

Finally, Party direction of student policy is further obscured by the intense efforts of Liberation Radio to appeal to its student audience. According to a 1966 survey of Saigonese students, 11% admit to listening to Radio Hanoi, and 13% admit to monitoring Radio Peking.\textsuperscript{37} One can only guess at the size of the student audience of the NLF's Radio Liberation; but even
if only 15% of the students listen, its impact could be considerable. By continually extolling such activities as hunger strikes by non-Communist students to protest GVN policy, and by repeating the specific themes of student demands, Liberation Radio helps blur the lines between Communist and non-Communist issues.

Thus, when a specific demonstration develops over, say, a demand for university autonomy, it is impossible to pinpoint the origins of protest; for indeed, the origins are multiple. First, there are always legitimate student grievances related to the topic; second, SLA propaganda helps to "heighten consciousness" of these grievances; third, SLA members work within existing student organizations, influencing their members to protest over the issue in question; and finally, Liberation Radio propaganda is absorbed by ordinary students, making the selection of issues appear to be generated from within the general student population. The Party's role in directing student policy, then, is buried completely within the multiple and complex origins of protest.

NLF Policy and Student Political Activism 1954-1972

The Period 1954-1960

In the beginning, there was but one, newly-formed university in South Viet Nam, with only 2,000 students. Almost all of these students came from elite family backgrounds, and the vast majority had grown up in Saigon, Hue, or in the case of refugees, Hanoi.

Viet Minh cadres still in place did participate in several student political actions both before and shortly after Independence. On March 19, 1950, for example, Saigonese students organized a protest against the presence of U.S. warships in Saigon harbor, intended to register a show of
strength in support of the French. Profiting from a school holiday, the students marched on the waterfront, shouting "U.S. Imperialists go home."38

Among those who participated in these early demonstrations were such notable anti-Communists as Mme. Pauline Tho, a Northern Catholic who later became a leader of the South Vietnamese Girl Scouts, and a Senator; and Nguyen Viet Thanh, who became a general in the ARVN and Commander of the IV Corps military region in the delta. Significantly, however, these protests dwindled after the withdrawal of a number of other participants following Independence, including Nguyen Huu Tho, who became President of the NLF, and Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, later head of the Women's Liberation Association and member of the NLF Central Committee.

As the Viet Minh withdrew to regroup and as the control of the Diem regime tightened, Communist involvement in student affairs dwindled. Communist interest in students did not decrease, however, and continued recognition was given to the fact that students were in a uniquely strategic position.39 Not only was it easier for them to travel without suspicion during school vacations, and thus act as liaison between urban and rural Communists; but recruitment of potential leaders was easier than recruitment at a later stage once students had graduated and established themselves in government or in the professions.

Until 1966, and to a lesser extent afterwards, students presented a special dilemma for Communist policy-makers, however. On the one hand, students tended to be more politically aware, more ideologically motivated, more idealistic and more capable than the masses of uneducated Vietnamese. Further, their highly elitist status, plus their advanced training assured university students of eventually attaining positions which could prove extremely
valuable to the Communist cause. In addition, there is a well-established tradition among Communist parties for intellectuals to serve as the "vanguard of the proletariat."

On the other hand, their very eliteness made students suspect. The Viet Minh were primarily guerrillas, and Vietnamese Communism had followed the Chinese example to a large extent in focusing on peasants. Marxist-Leninist theory required the exclusion of the urban university students on the basis of their class backgrounds, and their general bourgeois "softness." This combined with a pronounced anti-intellectual bias of a movement which claimed strong ties to the peasant majority.

Until the early 1960s, the discrepancy between the need to use students and the inherent hesitation to recruit them resulted in a deliberate failure to create a specifically student movement. Rather, a unified front strategy was employed in urban areas, in which students could join as members of a covert youth organization which included young workers. No conspicuous movement existed among students per se as far as the Communists were concerned:

For the most part, during the period from 1954 to 1960, the struggle waged by the college youth was not under the leadership of a regular political organization, or even under its direct influence.

As the student population grew, and as the underground Communist organization deepened, a decision was made to organize students as part of a full-scale attack on the GVN. A clandestine, Communist front student organization, the Students Liberation Association (SLA) was formed on January 9, 1961 as a branch of the newly established National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam (NLF). The mission of SLA members was to
...struggle for the specific aspirations of their group while joining with other sections of the population in patriotic struggle for the liberation of South Viet Nam.\textsuperscript{41}

These struggles were to be in line with the NLF's general policy at that time, which was:

...to overthrow the disguised colonial regime of U.S. imperialists and dictatorial Ngo Dinh Diem administration, and to form a national democratic coalition government.\textsuperscript{42}

On orders from NLF headquarters, SLA members were able to organize a number of protests during the summer of 1961, despite continuing arrests by GVN police:

In response to the call of the Central Committee of the NLF on the occasion of July 20 (anniversary of the signing of the 1954 Geneva Agreements), in almost all South Vietnamese cities, the students and pupils took part, between July 10 and 20, in rallies and demonstrations under the slogan 'For a national, democratic, peaceful and neutral coalition government.' Banners, flags and leaflets appeared right in the heart of Saigon, Cholon, Hue and Cantho. On the actual anniversary of the signing of the Geneva agreements, July 20, 5,000 students and pupils held a rally at the Botanic Gardens in Saigon. A petition was adopted, demanding an end to terrorism, the realization of democratic liberties, the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the formation of a national, democratic coalition government.\textsuperscript{43}

The Buddhist-student alliance in opposition to the Diem regime which developed in May, 1963 set the scene for the coup d'etat in November of that year. According to the accurate forecast of Liberation Press on May 9, 1963, the protests which had begun in Hue marked:

...the commencement of a movement which will soon spread to other cities and on which all South Vietnamese pin high hopes to bury the regime of those brigands and traitors, the U.S. Diemists. \textsuperscript{44}
Although very few of the thousands of high school and university students who joined in the demonstrations were members of the SLA, the small group of SLA students "had played quite well the role of a detonating fuse, exploding all contradictions which undermined the regime," according to an official Communist analysis. 45

However, until 1966, the role of the NLF in student politics remained limited to the infiltration and manipulation of existing student groups. During this time, NLF members always stayed in the background, working behind the scene to manipulate and exploit targets of opportunity whenever and wherever they presented themselves.

The Period 1966-1972

After 1966, the NLF began to allow its student members to become more directly and actively involved in the student movement, assuming positions of leadership and responsibility, and finally taking the initiative to assist in the formation of student front groups.

These policy changes were necessitated by the drastic changes in the "objective conditions" resulting from the massive American build-up which began in 1965. The NLF strove to offset the increased GVN-U.S. strength with intensified recruiting efforts of its own; and this implied more direct involvement with high school and university students as well.

The enormous changes in the character and composition of the student population detailed in a previous Chapter, made possible both the implementation of the new policies and its justification in ideological terms. The huge student bodies in Saigon, and to a lesser extent Hue, made covert operations somewhat easier; and the increase in the number of students from
poor and rural backgrounds gave the NLF a greater pool of acceptable recruiting possibilities.

In the beginning, the policy was to recruit urban cadre in place; but this led to an unacceptably high number of exposures and betrayals. By 1967, the NLF decided to place its major emphasis on recruiting high school students, particularly in rural, contested areas. Once recruited and trained, these already-committed students were sent to urban university centers where they blended easily with the thousands of other entering freshmen.

This trend continued and increased, apparently in hopes of building a momentum and organization which could carry through the anticipated "General Uprising" during the Tet offensive of 1968. Despite simultaneous attacks by the NLF on all major cities during Tet of that year, the "General Uprising" of the people did not materialize. The actions of NLF students during Tet did, however, compromise them completely; those who managed to escape being killed or arrested by the GVN were forced to "cross over" to the NLF zone.

The NLF policy of recruiting and training highschool students from outlying areas paid off in the aftermath of Tet. Although seriously weakened by the heavy losses sustained during and after Tet, the NLF-SLA student movement continued to function; and a year after Tet, enough new agents were added to the universities to again exert significant influence on the student movement.

There is a substantial amount of circumstantial evidence to indicate that by 1970, the SLA organization was finally strong enough to be able to
establish its hierarchy on a nation-wide basis; and once the top-down structure was completed, it apparently had an important influence on the National Student Union (NSU), the University Autonomy Movement (UAM) and the Saigon Student Union (SSU), all of which had great overlaps in leadership.

Miscalculations and tactical errors partially discredited these organizations in 1971, however, especially the University Autonomy Movement, but to a lesser extent the National Student Union as well. Also in 1971, the diminution of American influence gave the GVN a freer hand in controlling dissident students; and this in turn forced the NLF to resort to more desperate tactics in an attempt to retain its position within the student movement. Although the NLF continued to be an important force in student politics, the attempt to mobilize students in support of the NLF cause had evidently been abandoned for the time being. The failure of the general uprising, and the subsequent exposure of direct NLF involvement in student politics had recreated an aura of mistrust between students and the NLF. By the time of the signing of the Paris agreements in January, 1973, the NLF may have returned once again to its original policy of attempting to exploit and manipulate existing student associations on the basis of opportunity and expedience.

**Structure**

In this section, we will attempt to clarify the distinctions between the various organizational structures which exist for the purpose of coordinating the NLF's students operations, and the range of activities undertaken by different types of cells, which will be discussed in the following section. The primary point of these sections is to underline the critical
importance of distinguishing between structures and functions. A very fundamental distinction is made between structure and function by the NLF: regardless of the function he performs, there is great concern to place each student member of the NLF in some organization; but this organizational affiliation must not be confused with the functional activities assigned.48

There are two basic types of organizations with which a student may be affiliated: mass organizations and the Party organization. Students who are members of the Party may in addition belong to a mass organization; but it is in their capacity as Party members that they are responsible for contributing to policy decisions. Those who belong to mass organizations are involved only in decision-making at the tactical level. Members of both types of organizations may participate in a wide range of functional activities, from propaganda to sabotage. There is a slight constraint on the activities of Party members, however, in that they are not ordinarily supposed to partake in actions where there is a high risk of exposure. Exceptions are sometimes made in the case of operations of high priority or importance which are more safely entrusted to Party members.49

Both Party and non-Party organizations are based on the principle of the three-person cell. Party cells are at the top of the organizational pyramid. Authority and communications radiate downward to the upper echelons of the mass organizations, whose leadership cells consist of at least one Party member in each leadership cell. Lower ranking cells of mass organizations do not ordinarily contain Party members.

The most important mass organization of the NLF with respect to students is the Students' Liberation Association (SLA). It cannot be
emphasized too strongly that only a minority of student activists are members of the Front's mass organization, the SLA. The function of most SLA cell members is to infiltrate the various existing student associations and manipulate them insofar as possible to conform to the NLF's policy guidelines for students. The majority of student activists are unaware of the identities of SLA cell members within their organizations, and of the influence of these people on the student movement itself.

According to a former high-ranking NLF professor:

The majority of students in the demonstrations are non-Communist, and not Communist sympathizers, but who object to the government or to the government policy. That's what the Communists like, because then the Party members can stay behind—they always stay behind. But they agitate the other, non-Communist students to do something. And if the government crushes them, that sets up the hatred, the anger-ness of the innocent people. And that's what makes the Communists happy.

(What percent are cadre?)

Not many. Very few! For example, at this (Chieu Hoi defectors) Center, there are just about 600 or 700 men; but if there are just two cadre, that will be plenty to stir up trouble!50

Party Organization

On the Party side, the People's Revolutionary Party Youth League, PRPYL (Doan Thanh Nien Nhan Dan Cach Mang), is the junior affiliate of the Party for youths between sixteen and twenty-five years of age.51 The PRPYL was founded in 1962, and was to exist as an entity separate from the Party itself.52 Party organization per se was not developed within the universities, but functioned through the Youth League, and through the Youth League's control of the mass fronts. The PRPYL was supposed to be an intermediate layer between the Party and the Students' Liberation Association. The most able and dedicated elements from the SLA should, theoretically, be chosen
for the PRPYL; then, the best of the PRPYL members would be selected for Party membership. However, since students at this level tended to be among the more competent urban cadre, and since skilled urban cadre were scarce in any case, the pattern in the first years of the PRPYL was to incorporate members within the ranks of the Party proper:

Quy chanh (defectors) stated that a Communist youth group existed but that the more effective and competent young people were utilized in the ranks of the Party itself, although not as official members. The PRPYL during the 1962-1964 period remained a rudimentary organization; however, fragmentary evidence indicated that it was well disciplined, highly dedicated, and well camouflaged. Apparently the line between the Party and its youthful arm was blurred.53

In its first few years of operation "one had the feeling that the Party was more interested in creating a strong youth apparatus than in using it."54

As time went on, the role of the Youth League became clarified in practice, acting as a sort of shadow government behind the SLA. Youth League members within the SLA were the ones selected for liaison and leadership at supra-cell levels. The most elite among them became members of the local Party committee itself.55

Authority flows from the top down. The Party committee, and specifically its youth branch, is responsible for issuing guidelines for action in accordance with current policy directives from COSVN. Details of implementation are then worked out with increasing specificity at branch, subbranch and cell levels. Thus, it is the Party which controls and is responsible for decision-making at the policy level; the SLA operates primarily as a communications net; and the various echelons of cell
organizations are the functional, working part of the apparatus.

The role of the PRPYL changed somewhat between 1962 and 1972. Until the early 1970s, both the SLA and the PRPYL apparently lacked a nationally organized hierarchy. Issues were most often selected locally on the basis of opportunity and convenience. The reasons for this were explained in a 1964 indoctrination booklet:

Under the present circumstances, Youth League activities in South Vietnam are very difficult: liaison between units is often blocked and usually slow; the League organization is not yet large and strong. Therefore, the Party has not yet organized it top to bottom. At the present, the organization is being built from the bottom upwards, according to our requirements and according to the abilities of the cadres. At the correct moment, the League will be organized vertically up to the top central level, as stipulated in the League regulation.56

There is some evidence to suggest that the stipulated organization was accomplished by 1970.57 The establishment of the overt, anti-GVN National Student Union at that time may in fact have reflected the parallel but secret development of the PRPYL.

Prior to this time, anti-government or anti-foreign agitation by students invariably began in one university first, focusing on a particular issue; the protest would then spread gradually to other universities, often accompanied by changes in focus or broadening of the original issue. Specific tactics always varied from one location to another. Since 1970, student protests frequently have begun simultaneously in the major universities, and have focused on the same issues, although specific tactics have continued to vary among local groups. Given everything we know about the operating methods of the PRPYL and SLA, these developments would seem to
imply that the PRPYL had finally achieved a nation-wide organization.

**Mass Organizations**

A student may be placed in any one of several mass organizations. Which one depends primarily upon the category or "class" with which he is thought to be associated, but it also depends upon factors of convenience. Thus, a student may be enrolled in a workers' organization, a veterans' front, a women's group and so forth as appropriate. It is not uncommon for an individual student to belong to several organizations either; most commonly, this situation arises when a student belongs to a university-related organization, and to a different front where he works. For the vast majority of students, however, the mass organization in which they are enlisted is the student organization already referred to, the SLA.

This most important mass organization, which groups together the Front's student sympathizers and supporters in GVN-controlled areas is known officially as the Associated League of Students and Schoolchildren for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Hoi Lien Hiep Hoc Sinh Siny Vien Giai Phong Mien Nam Viet Nam), and is most commonly referred to in English language propaganda as the Students' Liberation Association (SLA). Formally, the SLA is considered as one, specialized element of another Front organization, the Youth Liberation Association (YLA), which is the umbrella organization for both student and non-student mass fronts. In practice, however, the two groups may operate independently, or alternatively, may have combined leadership at the local, city, or district level, depending on the objective conditions.
The Students' Liberation Association is organized and operated according to the classic Communist formula of democratic centralism. That is, in structure it is hierarchical and pyramidal, with ultimate authority flowing from the top down; at least, this is the form. The central executive committee of the Association is located in "R," the code name for the COSVN (Central Office for South Viet Nam) location; and the SLA is itself, in fact, a branch of COSVN. The Central Executive Committee—the nominal leadership of the SLA—is composed insofar as possible of well-known students and professors who have "crossed over" to the NLF zone. Their function, however, is to serve as window-dressing, to lend prestige and status to the League. As we shall see, they have little authority or responsibility for directing the SLA:

Among the leaders, some are (former) legal elements, and their names are well-publicized to attract people. The special thing about them is that they do not have an office for themselves for the purpose. They work without specific offices. They are all Party cadres, and their names serve as lures.

The other, more important function of the leaders is that of serving as the Association's official representatives and spokesmen when called upon to do so—particularly in dealings with students or with youth organizations in foreign countries.

Actual policy control of the SLA is maintained by the Party, as described above, through the PRPYL. Decisions regarding implementation of Party policies are the responsibility of the Association leadership at the local level; and it is the local leadership which is entirely responsible for directing the activities of the local organization. Aside from setting
very general guidelines, in other words, the central level does not provide directives to the locals. Rather, initiative comes from the bottom, and is developed in accordance with Party policies; the Central Executive Committee it must be stressed again, does not have independent policy-setting authority.

Policy directives come from the Party to the PRPYL, to the SLA, which develops its own tactics at a local branch and subbranch level. A hypothetical example to illustrate the operation of this organizational network was given by a former Party member:

Suppose the Party sends out a certain directive saying that we must have trouble to demand that the U.S. must withdraw all its troops in order to defeat this plan of Vietnamization; because Vietnamization just means that we change the color of the bodies, that's all. And the directive comes to every university, and each university, depending on their condition, develops their own technique in order to carry out their struggle. So for example, the Medical Faculty has one policy, and the Faculty of Letters has its own, and so forth. Each Faculty has its own leadership in order to exploit the directives and guidance.63

The illustration was continued to describe the implementation of tactical decisions:

Suppose I'm a Communist Party member, and we have a three-member cell. And you go to the Faculty of Law, I go to the Faculty to Medicine, and the third member attends the Faculty of Letters. So I just tell you that at noon today, we'll have a big demonstration, and I tell the other person the same thing, and then even though we all attend different faculties, we all know there will be a demonstration. Then we contact the people in our faculty cell by cell, and then to the (Legal) student organizations.64

If there are only a very few cells, the need for coordination is slight; but as the number of cells multiplies, a sub-chapter will be formed.
According to captured documents, a chapter should contain only nine members. As a minimum requirement, the chapter chief should be a PRPYL member. All members adopt secret aliases, and real names are never used in communications among SLA members. 65

The typical pattern of expansion is that a three-member cell increases to a four or five-member cell; then a new cell is begun when one or two members of an existing, over-sized cell split off to form a new one. Most often, the other members of the new cell are students recruited by the "senior" member, or perhaps recommended to him by a relative or by other members of his original cell. By this means, one cell "spawns" another, which in turn spawns yet another and so on. The members themselves usually know at most only three other members of the organization: the other two cellmates, plus one additional contact person outside the cell. Each cell designates its own "leader" who is generally responsible for carrying out the liaison function with higher echelons; usually, the leader is the most experienced, senior member among the cell-mates. 66

Chapters usually have specialized functional assignments in addition to their ordinary membership requirements, and are specifically designed as armed propaganda, sapper or infiltration units according to function. 67 The activities of the various chapters are coordinated at the sub-branch level. Each Faculty of the universities constitutes a separate sub-branch, and will have varying numbers of chapters depending on the degree of penetration in that Faculty. 68 The leadership of the sub-branch consists of a specially-designated, small group, composed of the most promising among that Faculty's cell leaders. In addition, one or more experienced young Party
members may be appointed to join the sub-branch leadership. If so, they too will be assigned to cells, usually completing the complement of a temporarily under-powered cell. Obviously, it is possible to belong to more than one cell. For example, a simple cell leader may become a member of a sub-branch coordinating cell.

Sub-branches at the Faculty level are joined together to form branches at the university-wide level. Additionally, sub-branches in youth and student organizations may be joined together to form a coordinating branch. Branches may be further developed into expanded units of coordination called doan ("Parts"), which supervise inter-university and combined university and non-university actions. The relationships between the various levels are apparently not fixed, however; and there seems to be considerable flexibility depending on the size and degree of infiltration of the unit: "For instance, at large universities, there can be several branches. Usually, a branch comprises two or three sub-branches." Various youth or student organizations, depending on their degree of infiltration, would have appropriate branch or sub-branch representation; or if there are only a few cells in an organization, it would have a special liaison arrangement connecting it to higher levels as necessary.

Douglas Pike has outlined this organizational hierarchy for the SLA:

The SLA geared its organizational structure directly to the educational institution attended by its members; the individual school was the basic unit of the association. The three to five-man cell combined to form a subbranch by yearly class; the subbranches combined to form a branch, which included the entire school and was headed by an executive committee. The SLA had no cadre system but followed the usual liberation association policies concerning discipline, dues, and so on. If a number of schools existed in an area, the next higher level would be the interschool committee;
if not, the branch committee reported directly to the SLA provincial committee. It appeared that at the national central committee level the Youth and Student Liberation Associations were treated as one and the same.\textsuperscript{71}

This description is slightly misleading in several respects, however. At the time Pike was writing (1966) operational leadership was centered at the local level, and only the most general policy guidelines issued from the top down. Branch committees could rarely, if ever, "report directly" to a provincial committee, as communications were not sufficiently developed to permit this until at least 1970.\textsuperscript{72} Second, since recruitment generally depended on factors of opportunity, and was not limited by considerations of yearly class or of Faculty, the composition of cells and sub-branches often crossed Faculty lines.\textsuperscript{73}

It is also important to clarify the nature of the mass organization to which students were recruited; for although the collection of cells comprised the "membership" of the organization, the association was primarily an emotional or psychological attachment rather than physical. Pike's description erroneously suggested that the SLA was able to hold large, relatively open (albeit in liberated zones) meetings, attended by the regular membership:

The bylaws of the SLA called for elections at all levels, and indeed congresses and meetings were held frequently. A congress of SLA delegates from Eastern Nambo was held February 14-18, 1962 in the Zone D area. It was attended by Saigon University students and others and was convened for the purpose of drafting a program of action for 1962. The following September, representatives of the Western Nambo SLA gathered for a meeting in the Mekong delta.\textsuperscript{74}
This impression of freely-attended meetings is incorrect. Pike neglects to underline the significance of the word "representative" in reference to attendance at these meetings. A moment's commonsensical reflection should be enough to dispel the false image of hundreds or thousands of Saigon University students trooping back and forth between Saigon and various liberated areas to attend "frequently held congresses and meetings" of the SLA! In fact, the Party in its wisdom is responsible for designating the representatives (usually Party cadre within the SLA ranks); the rank and file membership cannot possibly select its own representation, let alone attend such meetings en masse.

The reasons for this impossibility are immediately clear when we reconsider the security precautions inherent in the structure of the SLA. It has already been noted that the members are generally unknown to each other. A cell member knows at most only his other cell mates, the cadre who recruited him (usually one of the other cell members), and his liaison contact, if any. As for those members who belong to additional decision-making committees at the sub-branch level or higher, security precautions are exceedingly stringent. This is all the more true of the SLA in particular, since its cadre must perform operate in the major urban centers such as Saigon and Hue, where they are more open to exposure than they would be in the countryside. Thus, the student cadre, like most urban agents have been driven to extremes in order to preserve their covers. When meeting together, such higher-level organizational representatives usually wear masks, or meet in specially-partitioned rooms which preclude their recognizing the identities of the others present. 35
It is true that "mass" meetings are frequently reported by Liberation Radio to preserve the facade of a mass organization. However, as we have seen, rank and file members do not and cannot attend such conferences. Rather, they are gatherings of SLA "representatives", who, being Party members as well as SLA members, are specially designated to perform this function. Prestige and status are lent to such gatherings by the almost invariable attendance of Central Committee leadership sent down from COSVN headquarters, and by a few well-known non-Communist sympathizers. The ordinary members "participate" in such conferences only to the extent that they monitor Liberation Radio coverage of the event, and discuss within their cells any policy statements issued.

The SLA is to some extent a huge public relations endeavor in its claims to be functioning as a mass organization. Its real usefulness lies in the fact that it provides a compartmentalized organization of secret cells. Its fictitious "mass" characterization helps its members attract sympathetic but as yet uncommitted friends; and as one US official noted, it is a means of eliciting a commitment and forging a bond between the new recruit and the NLF's cause, insofar as the mere act of "joining" means that the individual has made himself an outlaw in the eyes of the government.

In sum, the SLA is important in that it provides an organizational umbrella for students working for the NLF; it facilitates communications from the top down as well as among the students themselves while maintaining the secrecy necessary to avoid exposure and arrest. Its characterization as a "mass" organization is largely facade, although even nominal membership in a "mass front" undoubtedly has significant psychological importance for the members.
It seems appropriate at this point, then, to turn to the actual operational workings of the system for illustrations which will clarify the structural picture just outlined.

Functions

The NLF requires that students, like all members of the Front, carry out specific functional assignments clearly related to the promotion of the Front's "just cause." This insistence on functional activity stems from the Party's analysis of the "function of functions." First, the Party believes that the very act of performing some concrete task on behalf of the Front elicits stronger commitment.76 The opportunity to "do something" provides a channel for the release of frustrations and anger at currently unsatisfactory conditions; and the satisfaction of work well done is in itself a reward. Finally, the performance of tasks helps the Front to identify both leaders and shirkers. The incentive for hard work is the lure of promotion and the possibility of eventual acceptance into the Party.

Propaganda

A primary activity of nearly all cell members is propaganda work, in accordance with the NLF slogan, "Each Party member a propagandist."77 A PRP cadre directive of 1961 is still relevant in this regard:

.... It is the present policy of the Party that after completing the indoctrination work in the Party, Youth League, and other mass-based revolutionary organizations, we begin to reach the masses by propaganda in depth... In this, the first action is agit-prop work... which serves two purposes: a means of persuading the masses to participate in the political struggle movement against the enemy and, second it is a (propaganda) weapon we place in the hands of the masses in their political attack on the enemy.78
A subsequent directive, issued by the PRPYL, continued the theme by stating the goal of such efforts:

Our prime role is in the mobilization of the masses... (In the achievement of this aim) the Party is the brain and the League (PRPYL) is the great right hand holding the hammer ready to strike after the brain gives the order.79

We will discuss the nature of this proselytizing work in some detail when describing the recruitment process. However, it is important to stress here that the basic propaganda pattern is carried out continuously among the general student population, as well as among those who are being actively recruited. While only a very few students are selected as targets for a full-scale recruitment effort, a vast number of students are exposed to the basic propaganda themes through the diligent efforts of SLA members and sympathizers. The themes change from time to time, but generally seek to undermine the GVN and to arouse opposition to the U.S. presence.

Such face-to-face propaganda is further augmented by the written word; and this provides a large range of task assignments--from writing to running printing machines to distribution. Artists and musicians are also given the opportunity to contribute according to their talents, and exhibitions and concerts are arranged to present the Party's message in these various media forms.

**Struggle Movements**

The second main duty of the cadre is organizational work. This can involve many things, of which two are of paramount importance: first, the cadre is expected to work actively to recruit and organize new cells, and to contribute daily towards building and strengthening the infrastructure--
which forms the functional basis for the implementation of NLF policies and programs; second, the cadre must participate in the political "organization" (read utilization) of "the people" or "the Masses." It is this activity which is responsible for the creation of the notorious "Struggle Movements." It is here that the legal and illegal merge and blend; and it is here, too, that the NLF exerts its most significant and consequential influence on the students of South Viet Nam. According to intelligence estimates, the VC generally have been quite successful in penetrating legal student organizations; and if there is a struggle movement not initiated or influenced by the NLF, they will attempt to join the movement and eventually try to take control to directly promote their own cause. Thus, most struggle movements are thought to be penetrated to varying degrees, especially those organized by university students.

A Party handbook on the conduct of struggle movements is highly illustrative in its detailed discussion of how cadre should operate in general; it also certainly characterizes the operational methods of the Party in the areas of student activism in particular:

1. Begin by investigating and studying the enemy situation, as well as our own. Evaluate the power balance between ourselves and the enemy. Bear in mind that the enemy will flatter the people and employ demagogic appeals. Search for contradictions in the enemy camp that may be exploited. Consider the various issues most likely to arouse public interest and cause the people to become militant. At all times evaluate realistically the capacity of the Revolution and the political strength of the people.

2. In preparing for the struggle: Seek to know the target (Who are they? What position do they hold? Whom are they in conflict with? Whom must we isolate?). Set clear purposes and realistic goals for the struggle in terms of the people's interests. Use realistic slogans that reflect the people's demands. Choose the form of struggle most suitable to the degree of enlightenment of
the people. Use the correct forces from among the people, that is, those most directly involved. Choose individuals carefully, picking those who have the courage to deal with the enemy or who have the ability to win the sympathy of enemy officials and troops. Build up determination for the struggle (do not use them [to participate in the actual demonstration]), such as comforting the families of those engaged in the struggle or supplying food to those elements who are actually struggling. Set up a lead group that will be in the midst of the actual struggle (if absolutely necessary, include a covert Party member) to lead the struggle. Set up a guide group, which should be stationed a few hundred metres away from the struggle scene (this may include a Party member), to act as an adviser and to send messages to the lead group leader. Set up a third unit, the front group, made up of local sympathizers with high fighting morale, to meet and negotiate with the enemy... Make plans to have other social groups support the struggle; one class supports the struggle of another class... Try to foresee the enemy's response and plan to counter the repressive measures taken by him. In large-scale and protracted struggles make plans to supply food to those who are struggling.

3. Agit-prop work preparing for the struggle... Educate the people to understand the struggle; teach struggle techniques, how to reason with the enemy; also stress discipline, the importance of following the leaders and avoiding imprudent violence or actions that may provoke the enemy. Make clear-cut assignments of responsibilities (who subverts whom, who does what, who is on the three committees, etc.).

4. When an incident or issue arises, cell leaders and cadres should meet and make plans, which include (a) arousing the people so they realize the necessity of a struggle; (b) gathering all social groups whose interests and aspirations are involved; (c) deciding the date and time of the struggle; (d) coining slogans and determining the forms of struggle (mass meeting, demonstration, petition, etc.); and (3) determining the struggle target... In preparing for a struggle keep in mind that it will be successful when it brings material benefits to the people and at the same time (a) achieves for the Party a deeper influence of the Party with the people; (b) increases faith by the people in the struggle method by demonstrating their strength and making them confident in the struggle methods; (c) causes the enemy difficulties; (d) exposes the true face of the country-selling U.S. Diemists; and (e) generally promotes the struggle movement.

The above deals with the struggle where there is time and when conditions are proper for a relatively large-scale struggle. Daily there are opportunities for smaller struggles that may be staged without complete preparations. Party members should be prepared to take advantage of all opportunities to conduct struggles, large and small.
Although cadre are repeatedly warned not to participate directly in struggle activities, their control of the situation is to be maintained by means of the "front group, lead group, guide group" strategy:

...The lead group should maintain full control over the struggle force at all times. It should maintain contact with the guide group. And the guide group must maintain close contact with the front group in the event enemy officials were willing to meet with them and negotiate. Party members should not be members of the front group, and if possible not members of the lead group.82

Following any protest campaign, a post-struggle evaluation was considered imperative; for in addition to criticizing and evaluating the experience, plans were to be formulated for "preserving the benefits and maintaining the offensive by launching a series of continuous small-scale struggles."83

This document, written in the early 1960s, was intended as a guide for village-oriented actions, and was not originally meant to be applied to the urban "intellectual class." The change in the nature of the war over the decade, however, along with massive population shifts from rural to urban areas, and the recognized and acknowledged development of the student movement as a political force led the Front to place new emphasis on urban agitation, and to elevate the status of the student movement in particular. The nature of these changes and some of the reasons for them have been suggested in the Introduction to the section. Here, we would stress only the fact of this change, and the consequences thereof.

While it is difficult and dangerous to discuss specific cases, it seems generally safe to assume that the majority of students' political actions which incorporate the term "struggle" or "struggle movement" have been infiltrated or influenced according to some variation of the pattern
outlined above. Thus, "In terms of organization and operation, the Student Struggle Committee (Uy Ban Tranh Dau Cua Luc Luong Thanh Nien Sinh Vien Hue) formed in Hue and Da Nang in April, 1966, was pure NLF. And the same may be said for the more important and more contemporary University Autonomy Movement.

But there are several special points to be stressed in this regard: 1) it is cell leaders and cadre who meet and plan most struggle movements, using 2) existing groups, leaders and grievances as a basis for launching the struggle, 3) using or creating front and lead groups, while cadre remain hidden in the guide groups. There is strict adherence to this principle of non-exposure of cadre, moreover. Cadre are simply too valuable to risk their employment in any public political capacity where repeated exposure can lead to recognition and arrest.

The beauty of this system as far as the NLF is concerned lies in the marriage between NLF know-how and technical expertise in organizational work, with existing grievance and leadership potentials. For the students who are politically active in struggle movements are not SLA members for the most part, nor are they simply dupes. They are working in their own interests, using means which they genuinely and sincerely believe are the best possible under the circumstances. The NLF simply helps them to be more effective in their efforts, while subtly suggesting further ends and means. The students themselves are non-Communist, and may even be strongly anti-Communist. But to the question, "Don't you realize you are helping the enemy?", the student's reply is that they cannot justify abandoning their own legitimate interests simply because their struggle on behalf of those interests may be temporarily advantageous to the NLF.
Terrorism and Direct Action

Students have been and continue to be employed in terrorist squads and other forms of direct action, such as illegal leafleting or overt NLF propaganda. In such cases, great care is exercised to keep such students entirely separated and isolated from the student movement proper. 85

This strict separation is less true, however, for students assigned to intelligence work. These students, along with those who have received VC military training but are being held inactive and in reserve—both of these groups may be ordered to swell the ranks of ordinary demonstrators during various political actions. 86

The one exception to this pattern appears to have developed in the period of the 1968 Tet offensive. At that time, most probably in the expectation of a general uprising, many regular proselyting cells were turned into armed propaganda cells, and the lines between legal and illegal cadre were blurred as all available forces were thrown into the fray. Sympathetic students and student leaders who had proved responsive to general propaganda were openly solicited at that time; and many crossed over to the other side in the confused heat of the moment. Cadre also broke taboos by openly proclaiming their allegiance to the NLF, thereby hopelessly compromising their future potential as legal agents.

The convulsive upheavals of the "Tet Mau Tan" were short-lived however; afterwards each side picked up its pieces as best it could, and returned insofar as possible to more orthodox methods of operation. For the Front, it meant hard work and lost ground, as the painstakingly-constructed urban infrastructure had to be built up again, exposed cadre reassigned, and new agents recruited and trained.
Recruiting and Training

The duties of recruiting and training are themselves important functions for cell members, extending the range of activities in which cell members can participate. The processes of recruitment and training will be discussed in full detail in the next chapter.

To recapitulate, the members' participation in several activity areas is functional in two senses. First, the active contribution of the members furthers the objectives of the Front. Second, the wide range of functions offers psychological rewards to a variety of personality needs. Involvement strengthens the student's attachment to the cause, while providing the satisfaction of feeling that one is making a concrete contribution. The Front's ability to offer students a chance to "do something" constitutes one of its primary appeals to frustrated, would-be activists, and is a major factor in the relative success of the Front's recruiting program for students.
CHAPTER XI
THE NLF PATTERN OF RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING
INTRODUCTION

In dealing with university student recruitment into the NLF and/or any of its several front organizations, we can distinguish two basic paths.

The first path we may call the "liberated zone" path. In this mode, a student becomes a Communist primarily because he has grown up in a liberated zone and has been brought up through the various echelons of the NLF youth and student organizations. A certain number of these students are sent out to GVN-controlled areas, either to enter highschool or at the university level. These students are the true undercover or secret cadre, whose mission is to infiltrate and influence the direction of legal, existing student organizations. These students are already members of the NLF at the time of their entrance into the world of the Vietnamese student movement in the GVN areas. We will not attempt to deal with the development and training of such individuals in the liberated zones, nor with the structure of NLF youth organizations in such areas. Instead, we will confine our discussion of these cadre to a description of their methods and techniques after they have entered the domain of the GVN.

The second major pattern of recruitment into the NLF is the one which is our major concern here: the process by which a student living in a GVN area becomes a member of the NLF. There appear to be systematic differences between the NLF and the GVN on almost every dimension in the matter of recruitment. The NLF's strategy in recruiting students differs from that of all other groups in two respects: first, it is systematic in every respect--there are deliberate, consistent and reasoned preferences for certain types
and categories of individuals, with respect to sex, age, class origins, current socio-economic status, religion, region of birth and so forth; the techniques and program of recruitment proceed in each case according to carefully planned, obligatory stages; the vehicles of recruitment (i.e., the recruiters, or contact points) are chosen with close attention to suitability. Second, the NLF recruitment strategy is systematic in that it is related at every point to considerations of ideology. It is a guided strategy, everywhere relevant to and consistent with general ideological considerations.

The Five Stages of Recruitment

According to a former Party member who served the NLF as a propaganda and education cadre:

There are norms, and this does not concern only the students' organizations. Whenever they are looking for new memberships, and this does apply to all people's organizations, they have principles to stick to. There are inquiries to be conducted, propaganda works to be done, there are training courses, there are trials before they accept new members. Inquiries, propaganda, training, trials, organization. These are the five phases, all of them mandatory, which lead to memberships. They have called them the five steps of the process of recruitment. 87

Phase I: Inquiries: Who Is Recruited?

As noted above, the NLF has definite and regular preferences with regard to the type of person deemed suitable as a target for recruitment. In general, it is the Party which selects the student, and not vice versa: "The Front has a political network with experienced cadre, and they have the responsibility for selecting, for contacting the students. The students don't need to look for them, but they will look for the students." 88 As a general rule, particular attention is paid to the potential target's mental attitude;
but the doctrine also requires that the inquiry focus on certain additional variables, especially class origins and current class affiliations.

Class - Predictably, class origins and current class affiliations constitute an important criterion in determining political eligibility for the NLF. Professor Tai, a former professor of Marxism-Leninism at the University of Hanoi stated this categorically in an interview. Professor Tai was sent to the South after partition to establish a university in the liberated zone. When this proved impossible, he was assigned to the post of chief of education and propaganda.

Q. I'd like to ask you more about the students themselves. Were there any special characteristics that they looked for when selecting a student as a target for recruitment?

A. The priority is the student of the workers' families.

Q. Were they priority because of their class, or because they are easier to recruit?

A. Because according to Marxism-Leninism, because this class, they really hate--they are the most miserable class of the society, and for this reason they're very displeased with this present government. And [as a contrast] take me, for example. Even though I know very well Marxism-Leninism, because I don't come from this class, it's very difficult to motivate people like me! For that reason, in North Viet Nam, it's usually the children from the poorer, the peasant class who are selected to be sent to Russia for training; and the children of the rich people are not allowed to go abroad, they must stay in the country. And the Party tries to apply this same philosophy in the South.

Q. What about non-Party member students?

A. If they are the children of the poor farmer class--if they come from the basic class--even if he is not a Party member, if he comes from the basic class, he can be allowed to go. But I also have to tell you this. What Marx said in his written work is that when the ideology penetrates the public, it will convert into the materialistic force, into a material force. And in the present circumstances, because of this, the intellectual class can be considered as a basic class too.
For that reason, the Communist cadre carry out their propaganda with the intellectual class, and that's something very important.

In other words, the designation of "basic class" may be stretched, or even redefined when practical considerations warrant it. "Such is the Communists' angle, even though a student comes from the rich class of society, if he has changed his mind already, sure he will be accepted to be a Party member--but with all the precautions." This point was subsequently confirmed in other interviews:

I have to stress on this point. The objectives are to take students and school children into the organization. Then, the basic elements here are those with good political inclinations--the intellectual people they have called the progressive intellectuals, the intellectual people who have not cooperated with the national government. These elements make up the basic elements here. You see, such elements have realized the slogan, "Unite farmers, workers and small capitalists." Basic elements in students' organizations do not need to come from the basic social classes. The Communists are very flexible with tactics! [Emphasis added.]

The conclusion, then, is that the NLF, for ideological reasons, prefers when possible to recruit new members from the "Basic classes"--the workers' class and the poor peasants' class. In practice, however, the true working class is small, the poor farmers unsophisticated, and the students eager, willing and capable. The result is that--for students at least--"Basic class" means students who have an appropriate mental attitude: "Love of country," "patriotism," and general youthful idealism. In other words, ideology here amounts to little more than rationalizing in ideological terms the very rational practice of selecting those who are already predisposed towards the Front and/or its aims. Nevertheless, Professor Tai's point that they are
taken "with all the precautions" indicates the Party's reluctance to give full trust to students of non-peasant, non-proletarian origins.

**Age and sex** - Although there are no fixed rules with regard to the age and sex of a target subject, there is a decided preference for teenagers and females.

Theoretically, the age limit for the PRPYL, as well as the SLA is 16 to 25; but as with most NLF organizations, age limits are not taken too seriously, and once recruited, individuals can remain members until they are 30 if circumstances so warrant. 91

Youths who are much younger than their teens are considered politically immature and incapable of developing true ideological understanding and commitment. Their motivations are likely to be those of youthful adventurism, and are thus unreliable. While it is perfectly true that even very young children are sometimes used for important and even dangerous missions—especially children of the liberated zones—they are not deliberately cultivated for inclusion. Those much beyond their teen years, in contrast, are felt to be too "formed" already. They are probably already too tainted by bourgeois cultural influences, and by "incorrect" thoughts.

If they have a chance to recruit students from highschool, they'll do it; they prefer to do that. And then these students keep on going up from highschool to university. And the age that they like the best is from 17 or 18; because it's at this age that the young people start to know about political activity, and the young man or woman starts to develop some idea about social life and so forth. 92

The reasons for the tendency to prefer females as targets are slightly more complex. The most obvious reason, of course, is that females are not subject to the draft. This makes it possible for them to carry on their
activities uninterrupted; additionally, this also means that they are less subject to governmental surveillance and interest, and are therefore less likely to be exposed:

In the present situation, I think there are more girls--more students from the female class, because the boys have to go into the Army. And it's much easier for the female Party members, because they can carry out their activities easier. They are suspected less.93

Another reason, also related to their draft-exempt status, is that females are less cross-pressured, and therefore tend to be more reliable. Male students, once recruited into the Front, are often heavily cross-pressured when they are drafted to fight for the "other" (GVN) side after graduation. Because of this, and because of the Front's policy of recruiting students from the "basic" most unsophisticated classes wherever possible, some Front cadres switch allegiance after being drafted. Perhaps their commitment to the NLF was weak to begin with, or perhaps they simply stop carrying out their mission of infiltrating and proselytizing within their capacity as ARVN soldiers; whatever the case, their effectiveness is often reduced or lost altogether. Apparently, however, few NLF student recruits have ever switched allegiance in this way.

Thus, we see that females in their late teens are the targets of preference. However, for cultural reasons, which have traditionally assigned roles of political activism to males, an almost equal number of males and females continue to be recruited. The important point, nevertheless, is that probably slightly more than half of the recruits at the present time are female,94 and the Front's policy of utilizing this previously untapped reservoir of "manpower" is in striking contrast to the policies of all other
groups--and indeed, to the cultural tradition as well.

Region and religion - Concerning region of origin, the Front's preference is for Central Vietnamese (Annamites), Southerners (Cochinchinese) and Northerners (Tonkinese) in that order. The reasons for avoiding Northerners are obvious. This group is composed almost entirely of first and second generation refugees, and is known to be the most hostile to Communism.

The preference for Annamites although difficult to document statistically, appears to be very real, and is most interesting. Evidently, the Front is simply no different from all other ordinary Vietnamese in believing that people from this region are inherently more "revolutionary" than all other Vietnamese. This is considered to be a straightforward matter of fact; and the Front is therefore merely utilizing the best natural breeding ground for revolutionaries as the most fruitful source of desirable new recruits.

In the previous chapter, for example, we noted the apparent coincidence of a majority of U.A.M. leaders coming from Kinh Hoa and Quang Nam provinces in Annam, and a number of them coming from a single highschool. Some of these same students joined the NLF as they exfiltrated Saigon after the 1968 Tet offensive. This would appear to offer strong circumstantial evidence that the NLF had concentrated its recruiting efforts in the Central region, following the 1967 decision to recruit student agents from non-urban areas while the students were still in highschool, then later send them to urban university centers. Saigon and Van Hanh Universities appear to have been particularly targeted, not only because the huge and expanding student population in Saigon provided the best cover, but also because the GVN had clamped down on student political activism in Hue as of 1966.
As far as religion is concerned, it is necessary merely to point out that the Communists naturally prefer candidates with no strong religious commitments. Catholics are deliberately avoided on this account as being generally poor risks; however, if there is evidence of strong anti-government sentiment among particular groups of Catholic students, these individuals will naturally be cultivated most assiduously.

In most cases, in fact, where particular religious groups take an active, strong anti-government stand, their members almost automatically become targets of choice for the Front. This has been specifically cited with reference to certain of the activist, or militant Buddhist groups. In such cases, the Front goes so far as to designate such elements as "basic elements" -- i.e., they are to be treated with the same priority as members of the "basic classes." 96

Perhaps a word of caution is in order at this point, however, concerning religious affiliations and moral rectitude. It is certainly true, as stated, that the Communists avoid recruiting those with strong, formal religious commitments. This should not be taken to imply, however, that morality and virtue are overlooked. Quite the contrary! For the Vietnamese Communists are nothing if not strictly Puritanical in their insistence on moral standards. A potential member must have had nothing but good "cultural" influences; those who have adopted any of the "degrading" cultural influences of the West are definitely excluded as unfit for membership. 92 Mini-skirts, long hair, rock music, dancing--these are all signs of delinquency and moral degeneracy to the Front, and would automatically eliminate any student from consideration by the Front. Delinquents and trouble-makers are also non-candidates, even though their trouble-making
takes the form of anti-government activities. These people are thought to be just too unreliable and too undisciplined to make worthwhile recruits. A good candidate is a good person: virtuous, serious, intensely moral and pure in mind and body. Most important, the target must be deeply concerned about his country's situation (rather than his own) and idealistic to a fault:

They look for ardent students, the students who love their country—but they look for these people...But it's the country--it's some ideology, their ideal of life is the country, some ideology. What they're pursuing is some beautiful ideals. 98

Having ascertained that the target is suitable from the point of view of class origins, or is at least currently a "basic element" if not a member of a basic class, that he is moral, but not religious, is of a proper age to be capable of understanding and responding, the inquiry phase is complete. Up to this point, no approach has been made to the target. The first contact is made when the cadre assigned to recruit the subject begins the second step of the process: the propaganda effort.

Phase 2: The Propaganda Effort

As is the case with the inquiry phase, the propaganda phase is anything but haphazard. As we shall see, it is conducted in a strikingly systematic and orderly fashion: "With propaganda, once again they do not work without method. There are well-defined propaganda principles." 99

Within the propaganda phase, there are two distinct sub-divisions, the "legal" stage, and the "illegal" stage. And the progression from the former to the latter constitutes probably the single most important and delicate step in the entire recruitment operation.
The Legal Phase - The major thrust of the "legal" phase is the identification and exploitation of existing grievances. "Cadres are to determine the youth's aspirations, and then mold their approach accordingly so as to associate the youth's grievances with the aims of the VC,"¹⁰⁰ according to information provided by prisoners and defectors.

First, there is the legal propaganda system which calls for the exploitation of dissatisfactions, of antagonisms. They have to exploit the situations of people dissatisfied with the national government, dissatisfied with the Americans. With that legal propaganda system, they try to incite hatred. For instance, in talking with students or school boys, they can ask questions on the education programs and then try to implant opposition seeds in their minds. They try to make them oppose the Saigon government. That is what they have called 'to sow the struggle thoughts in the people's minds.'¹⁰¹

In the beginning stages of recruitment, the cadre places high importance to practicing the "three togethers":

"Eat together, live together, and work--go to school--together. At first, he's got to conquer the sentiment of his prey. And after that, he may talk to his target about some--discuss about some revolutionary opinion or idea, such as Montesquieu, Rousseau and Marx. And later they make an evaluation, and help the other one to find out that Marx is the best one! That is the only way that they should follow. And so they just give the student the idea that for several countries only the Marxist pattern is the best.¹⁰²

A concrete example of how the initial pitch is delivered in practice was described by another informant, who was himself recently engaged in just such a legal propaganda task:
For example, in studying the situation, I have come upon the fundamental causes of dissatisfaction. There has been the draft and the military training for students. Well, in talking with students, I can speak of the draft, of the military training, and I can incite hatred with these topics. There are also cultural topics we can exploit to incite hatred. For instance, in Saigon, there have been cultural excesses. These excesses can be exploited if we present them as harmful to the people's spirit. We can for instance incite the Saigon students to rebel against Jean Paul Sartre's theories, against all these modern conceptions...We can for instance incite the students to boycott soul music, music for dancing--the twist for instance. These can lead to struggle movements, and all we need to create them is to find out men active enough to work on the students. We can also use concrete cases, such as Tran Van On or Quach Thi Trang (students killed in anti-GVN demonstrations) and transform them into idols for the students.103

The effort is considered successful when the target's sympathies are enlisted on the issues raised, his hatred aroused against the situation--and specifically against the government's alleged responsibility for creating it--and when he has come to trust his recruiter and consider him a friend. For many--indeed for most--students, the process ends here. The target will henceforth be enlisted to support various "struggle" movements. He will be regarded as a progressive element; but he will not be informed of the Front's connection, nor will any further attempt be made to draw him into the organization. For most students, then, participation in struggle movements, anti-foreign or anti-GVN demonstrations is motivated primarily by students' genuine feelings, without membership in the SLA or even awareness of any NLF connection.

In a few cases, however, a decision is undertaken to proceed with the full recruitment program. If so, when the recruiting cadre judges that a sufficient degree of mutual confidence has been attained, he will embark
upon the second, decisive--and potentially hazardous stage: illegal propa-
ganda.

The Illegal Stage - "The second step is propaganda, an illegal activity here. We tell them bluntly that we belong to a revolutionary organization. In this instance, the revolutionary organization is a student movement. We tell each one that."\textsuperscript{104}

In some cases, where the cadre deems it prudent to employ a more cautious approach, there may be an initial feeling out of the target before the blunt announcement:

There are many forms we can use in such an event. We can use anonymous letters. We can show people an appeal from the Associated Students League for the Liberation of South Viet Nam (SLA). We can put that appeal on their desks. We can show it to them to read. We can show it to friends, to our "new friends." We can use any useful form.\textsuperscript{105}

Obviously, once the cadre refers to his membership in a "revolutionary organization," there is an ever-present danger of exposure by the target--despite the fact that the cadre still scrupulously avoids mentioning the Front by name. For note that the cadre admits only to membership in "a revolutionary organization," without further specification. In any case, instances of exposure are evidently rare, and are not generally feared:

Only in the exceptional case does the student betray his friend; because it takes a very long period of time until the certain moment when the cadre makes sure the student is a good man and will not betray him, and he agrees with everything he says; and it's only at that time that the cadre reveals himself to the student; he does not tell him before he makes sure that the student agrees with him completely! But sometimes there is also some very exceptional case where the student doesn't like it and reports it to the authorities, and there will be trouble. Then the cadre is exposed. Then the GVN can arrest
him and put him in jail. But sometimes, even though he's arrested, if the cadre's smart and there's no proof he's a Party member, then they still can't put him in jail--if the cadre's smart enough! 106

Interestingly, as alluded to above, even after having admitted to "revolutionary" connections, the cadre are still at pains to avoid direct reference to Communism or the Front. The reason for this, of course, is suggested in the above quotation: the intelligent cadre covers himself; in the unlikely event of exposure, there is no evidence of a direct link to the Front, only the target's unsubstantiated suspicions. The prohibition against naming the Front, furthermore, is quite explicit:

The essential thing with that [illegal] propaganda is to never speak of Communism. We can't speak of the doctrine. On the contrary, we have to praise the people's doctrine, speak of patriotism. Talking of international questions, we have to avoid praising the students from socialist countries. We have to avoid that. On the contrary, we have to speak well of students from Western countries, from the Free World. We have to praise for instance American students, or the American government.

Could you repeat that? Did I understand you correctly?!

When we have to speak of students from other countries we have to praise those from countries in the Free World, and not those from socialist countries. We have to show that students in imperialist countries do oppose imperialism, do hate it. We must never at all costs risk praising socialism, or mention about the Front. We must never say anything at all about that directly. 107

At this time, if the target continues to agree with the cadre on all points, the Propaganda phase is brought to a quiet and imperceptible close, and the Training phase is begun. From here on out, the candidate at least suspects Front involvement, and may confront the cadre with his suspicion. But by now, the subject has been drawn in so gently that the perception comes
naturally and easily. "We are working for the Front, aren't we?" he may ask, quite spontaneously including himself in the by-now rhetorical question. After a long silence, the cadre will smile and reply, "We are working for the people." They both smile with quiet understanding, and the bond is sealed.

**Phase 3: The Training Phase**

Training, within the recruitment phase, is of a most elementary sort. And it is important at the outset to distinguish sharply between this type of "training" and the more formal, true ideological training which is given at a much later stage to only a select few. This latter type of training is primarily designed for the most promising and advanced "leadership" elements, who potentially could be considered for Party membership.

The type of training which concerns us here amounts to little more than an elaborated discussion by NLF cadre of topics introduced during the propaganda phase--the most important difference being that the topics are now presented in a more didactic, lesson format, and are treated on the whole in a more ordered fashion. There is, in addition, a subtle alteration in the relationship between the cadre and recruit at this point: the cadre now assumes the role of teacher, while the target's role most nearly resembles that of a follower--that is, he is something more than a student in Western terms, though not quite a disciple in the Eastern sense.

As noted previously, the progression from the propaganda to the training stage is so gradual as to be imperceptible; and certainly the recruit himself
could hardly be expected to notice such a subtle escalation of involvement:

Training here is very simple. We start very slowly, and can never startle our target! At first, our propaganda themes do not concern elevated topics. We do not indoctrinate our subjects. We do not speak of Marxism. In our talks, we have to take notice of the subject's level of education and social appurtenances. We have to discuss the actual situation in South Viet Nam, we have to point out the weak points of the South Vietnamese government. Our training can rely on such talks. We have to mention all the time the people's traditions. We have to convince students and schoolboys that the Americans have been invading South Viet Nam. We tell them that there is now a new form of colonialism with the Americans. We have to prove that any patriotic students have to join the movement. 108

The training phase ends almost as imperceptibly as it was begun: "We have completed the training when our subjects admit that they are patriotic elements. Then, there must be the question of struggle." 109 The cadre is now ready to embark upon the next stage.

Phase 4: The Struggle Phase

The struggle phase is in reality a period of testing of the recruit; and in fact, it is sometimes referred to as the "Trials Period." Once again, there is an orderly sequence to be followed, starting small and moving slowly toward larger demands. Cadres take note of this progression by referring to the two ends of the continuum: the "low forms" of struggle, and the "high forms."

The primary characteristic of a low form of struggle is that it requires participation in some activity which directly concerns the students' own interests. At first, the issue selected is one with which the particular target is personally concerned. Later, he is asked to join in struggles concerning ever-larger numbers of students:
Now let me tell you what are the low forms of struggle. We are practicing a low form of struggle when we oppose or boycott a teacher, claiming that he is an agent. Then, we can go up to a higher form of struggle by boycotting or opposing student organizations set up by the national government. Then, we can go higher by inciting the students to leave classes for a short period of time. We can take anything as a pretext: examinations too difficult; not much time for studies before examinations; too many students have not graduated.110

If the student performs all his struggle tasks enthusiastically, the cadre will subsequently invite or encourage him to engage in a higher form of struggle, which is, in effect, the last phase of the recruiting effort.

Phase 5: High Forms

The distinguishing characteristic of a high form of struggle is that the issue at stake is one which does not concern students directly--either the individual recruit or students in general:

Next, we can go higher, and up to a truly high form of struggle, by asking the students to leave classes for something that is not directly connected with them. For instance, when we can ask them to leave classes in support of a struggle led by some workers. We can also ask them to leave classes in support of the disabled veterans. Or in support of the American Negroes who fight in the US for their own progress. Then, we can have our students fight for the withdrawal of all American forces from Viet Nam. Going farther, we can have them fight for the overthrow of the South Vietnamese government.111

The purpose of the Struggle Phase is two-fold: first, it tests the candidate by requiring him to prove in deed that his conviction is genuine; it allows him to demonstrate his belief in those things he has for some time been agreeing to in principle. Second, it allows the Front to weed out unenthusiastic or incompetent subjects; more importantly, "With these struggle movements, we can find out outstanding elements, and then we will
accept these elements in our organization."112

The Recruiters

We can both conclude and conveniently summarize our survey of the NLF pattern of recruitment by looking at the process from the point of view of the recruiters themselves.

The original order to undertake an Inquiry of a particular target must be given by a cadre, who need not be a student himself; he may be a recent graduate, or a member of a Peoples' Revolutionary organization. In any case, he almost always is an agent operating in the city or town where the inquiry is ordered. The cadre may know the prospect personally, or the candidate may be nominated by a lower-ranking recruit or a sympathizer who has not yet completed his own "Trials Period." Having picked up a good prospect, the cadre will either conduct the inquiry himself, or assign another individual to undertake the task. But whatever choice is made in the matter, the cadre who is assigned to initiate the inquiry will stick with the case until the process is fully completed, or until a decision is reached to end the program at some intermediate stage.

Great care is taken to insure the selection of an appropriate agent, most suited to the selected target: usually the agent chosen for the job is a peer--most frequently a classmate of the candidate, "but there are instances when parents conduct them, or when teachers or professors conduct them, if these parents and teachers have already belonged to the organization.113 Cadres do not have to be students or teachers, or even parents, however:
Anyone can be cadre to perform the five activity steps—even a Party member! If I belonged to some disabled veterans' association, if I worked for such an organization, and if I saw that there were students who seemed to support the association's struggle movements, I could very well introduce these students to the organization.114

The whole process, from Inquiry through Trials, takes roughly six months on the average, according to the limited sample interviewed. The process will certainly be lengthened, though, depending on the target, and on the "objective conditions." If the target is from a rich family, or is connected with the GVN in any way, the process will surely take longer. Such "unreliable elements" must generally prove themselves with greater zeal and efficiency over a longer period; and the "Trials Period" in particular may be extended even up to a year.

Not surprisingly, there are also spurts and lulls in student activism; and these too affect the length of the recruitment period. In a time of great turmoil, a recruit may demonstrate the sincerity of his hatred for the GVN by participating in many demonstrations over only a few weeks' span. In a quiescent period, the cadre may be hard put to find suitable tasks to suggest for months at a time.

In other words, although the average recruitment period is roughly six months, the general answer to our question is, "It all depends":

It can take much time or no time at all. In some cases, we needed one year to complete the five steps. In other cases, one month was enough. You see, there are students who have known nothing about Communism, nothing about the National Liberation Front, especially students who have only lived in Saigon. If a student comes from a liberated area, he has some knowledge and he learns more easily. I can bring such a student to my home, tell him the entire truth, and I can achieve the five steps in a single move.115
Training

If a student proves himself reliable to the Front, if he excels in capability and enthusiasm throughout his "trials period," and if he has satisfactorily completed his probationary period of membership in the SLA, he may be selected as a promising potential cadre or Party member. In this case, he will be sent to a training course in one of the secret zones.

Strict security precautions are observed en route to the secret zone. The student is often blindfolded, and led to the camp by devious and circuitous routes—often including boat rides and forced marches. Generally, each student is led in separately by a different guide, and all arrive at separate intervals. One guide will almost never lead in more than a very few students at one time. 116

On arrival, students may be blindfolded in some manner if they have not been already. Towels are sometimes draped over the students' heads, or the meeting rooms may be partitioned by screen into separate cubicles. It goes without saying that the students are quartered separately, and are forbidden to communicate with one another. Meals are served to the trainees in their cubicles, and they are blindfolded each time they are led to and from class. If a student needs to leave his cubicle, he must shout, whereupon a cadre would appear to blindfold him and lead him out. 117

The size of a training class varies with the situation. There may be five students, ten, thirty, or even just one. There is apparently no segregation of the sexes, and boys and girls will attend the same class. The length of the course also varies, but depends primarily on the group of students. It may last one week, half a month or one month.
The instructor or instructors are known only by anonymous pseudonyms, such as "second older brother," "third older sister," and so forth. The trainees are not permitted to see the instructor, moreover, hearing only his voice. The object of all this elaborate security, of course, is to prevent recognition, identification and possible exposure at a later date. Also, "if they come back to live in the city, if the government authorities arrest one of them, they can't identify any of the others!" Thus, the one-man contact system is preserved, even in group sessions. And the system itself is secured; for no amount of desire to repent, and no form of torture can force a man to tell what he simply does not know.

The course itself is usually broken down into three general areas: "...first, the student will be taught to know about in general the policy of the Front--to liberate the country, to be free of the Americans; and the second thing is he will be taught about the policy of the Southern government (GVN) at the present time, and how to exploit this; and the third thing is the techniques to carry out his activities."

More specifically, the students are taught to understand the justifications for current NLFSVN policies, while learning how best to exploit those of the GVN. They are given detailed outlines for anti-American propaganda; and they are lectured on the role and mission of students and youth in the making of the Revolution. Finally they are trained in making false statements in the event of capture. They are warned that anyone telling the truth will be placed on a "death list" and will be killed by
the V.C. Other subjects may be given special emphasis, as courses are adapted and tailored to the needs of particular trainees. Thus, political indoctrination in Communist ideology may be given to advanced students with leadership potential; those with special assignments will be instructed in the techniques necessary to carry out their missions, and so forth.121

At the completion of this training, students are secretly reinfiltrated to their operational areas to continue their previous activities at a higher level; or, more often, the newly instructed trainees are reassigned to more difficult and important tasks, while their previous functions are taken over by greener recruits.

A captured NLF student agent described his own training for admittance into the PRPYL as including political courses, lessons on the ideology and purpose of the Party, PRPYL internal rules and regulations, and other PRPYL "group criteria."

After the basic course was completed and the student was reinfiltrated to Saigon, monthly training sessions continued, to maintain and reinforce the students' "level of consciousness." The monthly sessions included six basic topics: 1) Youth Proselytizing policy of the Party, 2) Revolutionary Policy for the Liberation of South Viet Nam, 3) education on Party member ideology, 4) lessons on how to organize groups and associations, 5) operating methods of the PRPYG, and 6) lessons on behavior improvement.122

Again, the main exception to the general training pattern just outlined appears to have occurred during the 1968 Tet offensive, and the period immediately prior to and following it. Most of the students trained at this time seem to have received a heavier than usual dose of purely military training. And—apparently to increase belief in the inevitability
of a popular and spontaneous General Uprising--many of the normal security precautions were temporarily abandoned. Thus, there were reports of large "convoys" of students marching together to training camps in Cambodian sanctuaries and elsewhere. And even the most basic cautions seem to have been cast to the winds, as great groups of students from the same schools--and all known to one another--were gathered together openly for training.

Such shocking breaches of security, however, taught harsh and bloody lessons. And again, the methods practiced during the general insanity that prevailed during the Tet Mau Tan have not been repeated.

Graduates and Post-Graduates

Before concluding, a brief word should be said about the fate and fortune of the NLF student activists after leaving the universities. What becomes of them after they graduate? Where do they go? And what do they do then? And do they maintain any interests, any involvement in the world of student politics?

To answer the last question first, there appears to be an invariable rule that NLF students maintain their activism qua students only until graduation. Once having graduated, they are not permitted to cling to their past involvement with the student movement. What's more, the NLF's student agents appear to complete their university careers in the minimum standard number of years--despite the fact that the system itself allows for extension of one's student status through a variety of devices. In other words, the NLF does not employ the practice of leaving effective student cadre in situ to continue operations, although it would be perfectly possible
to do so. This is in marked contrast to the GVN's methods of dealing with its student sympathizers; and indeed, it is also somewhat contrary to the general practice of ordinary students--or at least the males among them--for whom there are often certain advantages to be gained by retaining official student status as long as possible.

The reasons for this are quite simple and straightforward. As we have noted, the NLF prefers to recruit students while they are still at the high-school level. Thus, the university stage is but one phase in the life of a cadre. And, for the NLF at least, this person's life is viewed as a whole. From a systematic viewpoint then, there is no need to hang on to cadre at the university level. For there are fresh replacements entering the universities each year; and these students, too, must have the opportunity to play their parts so that undesirable lags and gaps do not develop.

Furthermore, the longer a particular student remains involved in the turbulence of student politics, the more likely it is that he will be identified and his effectiveness jeopardized--not only for future student work, but for all missions requiring legal status. A corollary to this is the fact that the longer a student remains at the university, the older he gets; and students who are older than the norm naturally attract more attention and notice. Thus, the normally rapid turnover afforded by the university structure itself is inherently desirable. It provides a convenient and unquestionable excuse for transferring cadre whose continued involvement in one area would prove increasingly insecure.

Finally, and most important, the Front's system is an integrated one. And since a cadre is a cadre for life, provision is made to provide each member with tasks appropriate to his station in life. When a student
graduates, his usefulness does not end. Quite the contrary. He is simply reassigned and given a new mission.

"I have this to add. A student can have joined our [student] organization. If he thinks he has to withdraw from the organization, well, we can allow him to leave it. That happens when a student has to go to out there to join the troops, the Liberation troops, he can withdraw from the organization. Or if the member is to be drafted here, we allow him to leave us. He can serve us as an agent in the South Vietnamese Army. Or, if he has learned some special profession at the university, we can put him where we can best use this skill. If he is a doctor, for instance. Or an engineer to do some communications work. Or a graduate from [the Faculty of] Letters, to write poems or songs, or even newspapers. These are only a few examples I can give you."

To recapitulate, then, the Front's student cadre may go many places and do many different things upon graduation. But the important point is that they by no means lose their raison d'être as political activists by leaving the university. Rather, there is a continuity of activity which meshes appropriately with the natural development of the life cycle. The student leaves the university to enter a career of service to a cause.

Limitations

It is especially important at this point to emphasize the weaknesses and limitations of the NLF. For despite its relative effectiveness in enlisting and organizing political activists among the students, it is still most decidedly in the minority in its influence on the general student population. And there are many good reasons for this.
In the first place, as is apparent from the preceding discussion, the NLF makes sharp distinctions between recruiting full-fledged members, and influencing or directing student movements. For the most part, the NLF has been content to influence the direction of opinion and organizational activity, and has not undertaken large-scale mobilization efforts of university students. This is, of course, consistent with the Leninist notion of an elite Party, and should not be at all surprising. The fact is that many are called, through the mass-oriented propaganda manipulations; but few are chosen.

Having duly noted the extreme selectivity of the Front, however, the fact still remains that even if we count all the non-member sympathizers and those who unwittingly lend their efforts to activities which benefit the NLF—even so, these activists remain in a minority with respect to the total student population. Furthermore, the Front is by no means entirely successful even in its deliberately attempted recruitment efforts.

Perhaps the single most significant explanation for these limitations on the NLF is the simplest: just plain fear for physical safety. Few students believe that it is a matter of their own life or death which side wins; and anonymous inactivity is often the most rational course in such a situation. Voluntary involvement—on either side—is a risky business, and most students prefer to wait until they, personally, are forced to take sides. And even then many do so only with utmost reluctance and lack of determination.

Since university students invariably live in non- liberated areas, voluntary association with the Front is obviously all the more dangerous;
for despite V.C. security precautions, GVN counter-efforts have continued to disrupt V.C. activities among students and youths. Arrests are far from unusual, and the penalties are often severe--even, in some cases, for those who are merely sympathizers and not actual members at all.

Then too, there is ambivalence on the part of most students. They are pragmatists, and they are simply unsure of which side to place their bets on. Also, because they tend to come from major urban areas, their lives have been relatively comfortable and secure, which makes their attitude of neo-attentism all the more understandable. If they live in these areas, moreover, they are likely to have relatives or friends closely connected with the GVN--in addition to being generally more exposed to GVN appeals.

Finally, there is a general feeling of disillusionment and disappointment which has been referred to repeatedly. Most of these students are still too close to the events of the past decade--events which have tended to sour them on the efficacy of political activity, and of involvement in questions of national policy in particular. Many have already given their best and have failed to achieve the slightest impact. Under the circumstances, further involvement can only seem to mean further futility and frustration.
Part IV


2. An example was USAID support for the Summer Youth Program described later in this chapter.

3. The Minister of Education at the time of the signing of the Paris Accords was still in office as of September, 1974, making him the longest-serving person to hold that office since 1963.

4. Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is taken from D. Jane Pratt, "The Role of University Students in South Viet Nam."

5. Marr dissertation, 42.


7. Funds were channelled by USAID through the IVS to the SYP. This arrangement was worked out to avoid student objections to receiving money directly from the American government. It also gave AID the appearance of by-passing the GVN chain of command. Ultimately, this arrangement may have increased GVN opposition to the program.

8. Conversation with Dr. and Mrs. Nguyen Van Tho, April, 1970, Saigon.

9. Unless otherwise noted background material for this section was drawn primarily from John Donnell, "Political Cohesion and Emergent Leadership in South Vietnam."


11. Donnell, 43.

12. Ibid.

13. "Cadre" was the word used by District 8 leaders to refer to the project's team leaders, mostly young students and GVN civil servants working in three to five man teams. They were responsible for initiating specific tasks. Cadre were also responsible for recruiting volunteer workers from among the residents.
15. Ho Ngoc Nhuan, District 8 leader, quoted in Donnell, 44-45.
17. Donnell, 44.
18. Conversation with Dr. and Mrs. Nguyen Van Tho.
20. Two of these Americans volunteered this information in the course of a casual conversation which centered on their enthusiasm for District 8 and its leaders, Saigon, September, 1967.
26. Specific changes in draft laws were published in the Public Administration Bulletins.
27. President Thieu, "State of the Nation Address."
28. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.

35. Ibid.

36. In 1965, I tutored several hundred students in English classes at the University of Saigon, Faculty of Law, and at the women's dormitories. In one exercise, I asked students to write two anonymous essays on "What is the U.S. Interest in Viet Nam?" and "What are the Reasons for Seeking Public Office in Viet Nam?" The responses were uniform in analyzing the American presence in terms of Lenin's doctrine of neocolonialism and neo-colonialism. They were equally uniform in attributing motives of personal gain to GVN officials. I am convinced that almost none of these students, if asked, could have identified their ideas as Marxist-Leninist in origin.

37. Saigon Student Survey.

38. This incident was described in detail in Chapter VII.

39. Duncanson, 147.


41. Ibid, 58.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid, 58-59.


46. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.

47. "Students's Struggle in South Viet Nam," 64.

48. Interview with Prof. Tai.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.
The age limits, however, are quite flexible according to Douglas Pike (Viet Cong, 151); and students may retain their PRPYL membership until age 30. It will be noted that this age bracket encompasses the prime recruiting age for students, and coincides with the last years of high-school through university graduation in the vast majority of cases.

Pike, 150.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Interview with Prof. Tai. Whether they are official or de facto members is unclear.

PRPYL Indoctrination Booklet, circa 1963, quoted by Pike, 151.

"Students' Struggle in South Viet Nam," 46.

According to interview material reported in a U.S. Embassy document, Saigon, February, 1968.

Pike, 186.

Ibid, 189.

Interview with Prof. Tai.

Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.

Interview with Prof. Tai.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Interview with Prof. Tai.

Ibid.

Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
71. Pike, 151.
73. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
74. Pike, 189.
76. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
77. NFLSVN slogan cited in Pike, 123.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid, 98.
84. Ibid, 190.
85. Thus, whenever the NLF has found it necessary to eliminate "dangerous" elements within the student movement, the tendency has been for the task to be assigned to youths who could mix easily among the students, without attracting attention. A pair of assassins is most commonly employed; but in no case will these youths be involved in or connected with the student political movement per se; according to a U.S. intelligence report on interrogations of captured youth squad members.
86. Interview with Prof. Tai.
87. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
88. Interview with Prof. Tai.
89. Ibid.
90. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
91. Pike, 151.
92. Interview with Prof. Tai.
93. Ibid.
94. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
95. Interview with National Police official.
96. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
97. Ibid.
98. Interview with Prof. Tai.
99. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
100. U.S. Intelligence report on interrogations of students and youth prisoners and defectors.
101. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
102. Interview with Prof. Tai.
103. Ibid.
104. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
105. Interview with Prof. Tai.
106. Ibid.
107. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Interview with NLF medical student defector, April, 1971.
114. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
115. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Interview with Prof. Tai.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. U.S. Intelligence interrogation report.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. This was commonly cited by leaders of the Saigon Student Union and others as a primary reason for their inability to distinguish NLF elements in their midst. GVN agents, in contrast, were easy to spot according to student leaders, since they tended to remain active in student organizations over long periods.
125. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong.
PART V

CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSIONS

Vietnamese student activism as it evolved in the scant two decades between 1954 and 1972 had a jiggly, shaky quality about it. This jaggedness was a result of the complex interaction between the conflict of three coexisting, mutually incompatible cultures, the changes in the student body itself, and the uneven and unsupportive responses of the GVN and NLF. There was a constant, almost desperate exploration of alternative possibilities throughout the period—a exploration which yielded no culturally reinforced behavioral forms acceptable to students.

The university student in contemporary South Viet Nam is in an extremely difficult position. Current educational practice stresses the scientific method, and encourages experimentation and pragmatic applications; yet, persisting cultural patterns of Mandarin and French colonial origin have made ritual forms of behavior a way of life.

The scientific method begins with the premise that knowledge is not a known and fixed quantity to be memorized, but rather is an expanding and changing quantity to be discovered. This is in direct contrast to the Mandarin tradition that knowledge consists of memorizing the Confucian classics—a tradition which was perpetuated until the mid-1960s by the emphasis on rote learning under the old French educational system.

These clearly delineated rules and guidelines, externally sanctioned and judged by objective criteria, have not been replaced; rather, they have
been imperfectly superimposed by the subjective, internalized value system demanded by an educational system based on the scientific method.

University students, then, were already operating under important cross-pressures; and these pressures became more salient when students became involved in political activity. Cultural changes in authority relations from strictly hierarchical to egalitarian in principle, if not in practice, have exacerbated the difficulties faced by the would-be activist. The contradictory behavioral cues and sanctions of simultaneously existing, but incompatible political cultures have produced a situation in which the political behavior of students is understandably inconsistent.

The fact that the student population has itself undergone a radical transformation in the two decades since Geneva has also produced changes in the forms and focus of student participation in political life. Originally a small, highly privileged elite, university graduates gained easy entry into high status professions and government administration. No longer small, and no longer exclusively or even predominantly of elite backgrounds, the student population has assumed the elite expectations of earlier generations of students; yet, elite rewards are fewer than ever before. The military, moreover, appeared doubly responsible for this state of affairs. Military obligations have forced indefinite postponements of non-military careers for the majority of young men. And, while the military continues to dominate the upper echelons of government, the status of military men remains in low esteem, particularly among students, who consider themselves intellectuals.
The resulting frustrations and discontent of Vietnamese students, combined with the inherent idealism peculiar to their age and station, have produced a definite predisposition toward political activism. The initial flush of enthusiasm and hope which followed the successful overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem gave students an awareness of their own collective power for the first time. Thereafter, political activity was seen as a means for attempting social change, and for redressing the many real and imagined grievances felt by students.

Faced with continuing attempts by students to contribute in various ways to the formulation and implementation of national policy, the GVN responded with a notable absence of enthusiasm. Lacking a positive program of its own, the GVN was unwilling to mobilize students for anything other than military purposes. Since there was nothing to mobilize them for, the organization of any kind of student movement was viewed as threatening and dangerous—and rightly so. In the absence of a coherent, articulated student policy, and on the evidence of past behavior, the de facto policy of the GVN aimed at neutralization and constraint. The government sought to control student activism insofar as possible, and appeared most content when students were apathetic and uninvolved.

The GVN attempted to neutralize students while maintaining the democratic facade which was required by its allies, namely the United States, in order to justify continued support. Within large segments of the government bureaucracy, moreover, as well as within important segments of public opinion, there was sincere belief in and support for the democratic intent. The reiteration of promises of liberalization in the face of the continuing necessity of wartime controls only served to increase the
frustration of students, who remained unconvinc ed as to the democratic intent of successive governments.

In this context, the erratic, inconsistent and confused nature of Vietnamese student politics was not only understandable, but almost inevitable. In the development of student activism, described in detail in Part III, there was clearly an experimenting for appropriate forms. One senses that once restrictions were removed—as they were in the anarchic period surrounding the fall of the Diem regime—anything and everything could be tried out. Authority had lost its legitimacy, and opposition was expressed in all ways, from violent radicalism, clandestine revolutionary activism and anarchy, to quiet contempt, to populist, crusading reformism.

The total lack of consistent reinforcement for any of these behavioral options gave the student "movement" a disjointed, spastic quality. There was a feeling of purposeless thrashing, which burns itself out amid meaningless destruction.

That a significant number of students eventually turned to the NLF is not surprising under the circumstances. The NLF did offer clear purposes, as well as an organizational vehicle which could channel the restless energies of angry students. Those who were able to believe the Party line were intellectually appeased, blaming the Americans and the GVN for all wrongdoing.
Yet, even those who "crossed-over" could not be satisfied entirely. Life on the Communist side was as difficult and dangerous as life in the underground. And ultimately, the ideological premises of the Vietnamese Communist movement precluded giving full trust to students, for reasons of class origins and affiliations. Students who sacrificed everything to give total commitment to the NLF discovered that they were used and manipulated, but only rarely were admitted to the inner circle of the Party.

In a non-integrated society, however, the majority of activist students rejected both the NLF and the government, and were unable to find a scapegoat. There simply was no one group, and no single reason which could be identified as being responsible for the continuing tragedy. Every effort on the part of students to "do something" had been blocked, repressed, undermined or abused. There were no remaining alternatives; political participants merely repeated the same, useless activities which had been tried unsuccessfully by previous student leaders.

One day in Saigon, in March, 1971, a young American joined two Vietnamese friends in a sidewalk cafe frequented mainly by student activists from the nearby university. As usual, the talk was of the current political and military crisis. "If only the Americans would just get out and leave us alone!" one said. Deciding to play Devil's Advocate, the American insisted the student follow the thought to its logical conclusion:
"Well, suppose the Americans did leave, and stopped all military and economic support, what would happen?"

"The Thieu government would fall."

"And then would the 'third force nationalists' rally to form a new and effective government?"

"No. The Communists would probably make a strong move to take over."

"And if they did, would there be peace soon after?"

"No, there would only be more bloodshed. There would be vengeance and terrorism by both sides."

"And if the Americans stay? And if the Thieu government remains in power?"

Suddenly, the students were silent. Then very softly, in contrast to the animated discussion preceding, one friend admitted that they had been painted into a logical corner. There were no answers, no acceptable alternatives.

In September, 1973, I visited Saigon very briefly, stopping only long enough to say hello to old friends. The Paris Peace Accords had been signed in January, 1973, and the bulk of American troops and support were gone.

I went to the same cafe, and by coincidence, saw the same two friends, no longer students, but wearing the uniforms of Vietnamese Army officers. After exchanging pleasantries and family news, I asked what they thought of the political situation since the Paris Peace Accords.
My friends laughed, and explained that no one in Viet Nam called them "Peace Accords," just "Paris Accords."

Then seriously, they said they had thought many times about our last conversation:

"No matter how hard we tried, we could not find anything to be done. We had to join the Army after graduation, and so we just accept that. We do not like the Communists. We do not like the Government. We do not like to fight, but we don't want to go to jail, either."

"But what about the political situation?" I reminded them.

"Oh, we just don't talk about politics anymore. We have talked and talked, and demonstrated and been arrested, and written articles, and worked in the social welfare movement; and not one bit of it did any good. So now we don't talk about it anymore. There is nothing more to say."
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BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Born in 1943, Jane Pratt attended public schools in Michigan prior to entering Pembroke College in Brown University. She graduated from The University of Michigan in 1964 with a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology.

She accompanied her parents (both medical doctors) to Viet Nam in 1963, attending The University of Saigon as special auditor. Following university graduation in 1964, she attended Yale University's Summer Program in Vietnamese, and was awarded a University of Michigan Viet Nam Fellowship for independent study in Viet Nam. While in Viet Nam, she became special press liaison for the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office; she also edited Vietnamese Realities, a book on Vietnamese history and culture.

She entered MIT in 1966; she worked for The Simulmatics Corporation in Viet Nam in 1967, directing research on the political role of university students.

She lived in Morocco from 1971-1973; while there, she did extensive informal research on Berber tribal politics.

Currently living in Washington, D.C., Jane began working for The MITRE Corporation in March, 1975. At MITRE, she has focused on the areas relating to risk assessment, and the social and political impacts of nuclear energy.

She is married to John David Shilling (MIT, 1972), an economist at the World Bank. They have one daughter, Kaile Lawrene Shilling.