

# U. S. Policy In Viet Nam — An Appraisal

By WILLIAM ARSENAULT

In 1954, when our present college generation were in about the fourth grade, France was fighting to maintain her control in Viet Nam. The French had enjoyed control for over four decades in this area of Indo-China, but after the Second World War, French power began to wane.

Resistance began in 1945, when a revolutionary movement called Viet Minh dethroned the pro-French Emperor, Bao Dai, and installed its own leader, Ho Chi Minh, as president of an independent republic to be known as Viet Nam. Ho Chi Minh, espousing Communism as well as an extreme nationalism, took the field against the French, who then disowned him and restored Bao Dai. Bitter fighting ensued between the rival regimes in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh's regime, aided by the Chinese Communists, was recognized by the Soviet Union in 1950. Bao Dai's regime was recognized by the U.S. and Great Britain.

## VIETNAM SPLIT

Despite aid from the U.S., the Communists continued to win victories. In May of 1954, they captured the strategic and stubbornly defended fortress of Dienbienphu. This was the "last straw" as far as the French were concerned. They considered the fight too costly and too fruitless. They decided to withdraw, and in 1954, they obtained an armistice. By its terms, Viet Nam, like Korea, was split in two. Ho Chi Minh and his Communists secured the Northern half, and the Southern half was left to the French, but, the next year it deposed again the pro-French Emperor Bao Dai and became a free republic with its nationalist and anti-Communist leader, Ngo Diem, as its first president.

The U.S. has continued annually to give to South Viet Nam considerable economic aid in an effort to halt the advance of Communist control in Indo-China. The policy of the U.S. towards Viet Nam is simply the peace and stability of Southeast Asia and its retention as a free area of the world. As specifically applied to South Viet Nam, the policy resolves that South Viet Nam shall have self-determination of deciding what kind of a country it wants to be, and what kind of government it wants to have. The U.S. even though it does not want to see the Communist take over Southeast Asia, recognizes the fact that the independence of South Viet Nam rests with the people and the government of that country. The U.S., today, is engaged in a desperate struggle to root out the Viet Cong, to establish good government, and to win the hearts of the people.

## RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

The principal difficulties fall into two general areas. The first has been the great difficulty in obtaining an effective national government. Also, national unity has never existed. Division has been encouraged by outside influences which have dominated the country in times past. We have

religious problems, the Buddhist vs. the Catholic for example, perhaps hardly a religious problem per se, but nevertheless, a line of division which has caused internal difficulty and is now still besetting the formation of a stable government.

The other capital factor which has made the U.S. progress difficult has been the inability to restrain the continued reinforcement of the Viet Cong. They have drawn resources from within and outside the country, and in spite of the heavy losses which the Vietnamese have imposed upon them, they have actually grown in strength.

At present, the U.S. policy in Viet Nam towards aggression was stated this summer by President Johnson, after the Communist attacked U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. The President



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stated: "Repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met, not only with alert defence, but with positive reply."

The alternatives which now confront the U.S. in South Viet Nam illustrate the difficulties most clearly. It is generally conceded that the deterioration in the home government and in the war against the Vietcong have definitely narrowed the choices open to the U.S. It is easy to assert now that the U.S. cannot succeed in their objectives unless a Vietnamese government can win the confidence of the people, and that this can only be done when the Vietnamese Army, with American help, can establish security for those who have been harried and attacked by the Viet Cong.

## INTERNAL CONFLICT

It must be conceded, however, that long years of conflict and the nature of the gorilla war have eroded the will of the people, and in Saigon have resulted in an alarming increase of political infighting in which a growing number of factions, military, political,

Buddhist, Catholic, and young people, are struggling for power with unhesitating use of demonstrations, mass protests, and violence.

It is unthinkable that the U.S. would move into the country directly, take over the conduct of the warfare against the Vietcong, and attempt to build and manage a government for Saigon and the country-side. Apart from other difficulties, this would offer convincing proof of the Communist charge of "Imperialism", daily levied against the West.

For the U.S. to carry on the war in the North on any large scale would have the same result.

It seems generally agreed in Washington that the U.S. should avoid either horn of this dilemma, not just because of the grave difficulties involved, but because the U.S. cannot accurately anticipate the reactions of Peking and Moscow. To choose a course that might bring Peking and possibly Moscow into active armed intervention against the U.S. would be to risk an escalation of the conflict into nuclear war.

Democracy and freedom, the principles of the West, are at stake in Viet Nam. Viet Nam is the symbol of freedom in Southeast Asia. If Viet Nam falls to the Communists, there is the dreadful possibility that the whole of Southeast Asia will also fall.

Ed's. Note: The above are excerpts from an address delivered to the campus Modern History Club. We felt that the seriousness and relevance of the Viet Nam situation justified their presentation for your appraisal.

## 9,500 Foreign Students In Can.

OTTAWA (CUP) — Some 9,490 foreign students, an increase of 11.4 per cent over the 1962-63 figure of 8,518, were attending Canadian universities and colleges in 1963-64, according to an advance Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS) release.

As in past years, the largest number of foreign students in 1963-64 came from the United States: 3,191, 248 more than the previous year. Other large groups came from Hong Kong (761) Trin-

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idad and Tobago (709) the United Kingdom (687) India (508) Jamaica (321) Formosa and China (320) Malaysia (153) Pakistan (148) France (143) Germany (135) Vietnam (110) and Nigeria (110). Over 100 other countries and territories were also represented.

Of the total number of foreign students, 4,212 were from the British Commonwealth and territories and 5,272 from other countries. By continent or region the students were distributed as follows: Africa 493, Asia 2,489, Europe 1,472, North America 3,285, Central America and Mexico 80, South America 240, West Indies 1,309, Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand 97.

## A PRECEDENT

On Monday evening, March 15, the eleven candidates for the major Students' Union offices met in the Alumni Auditorium to air their views before the student body. Approximately two hundred students were in attendance and the event, the first of its kind at St. Dunstan's, was a great success. Chairman Michael LeBlanc limited the opening speeches to five minutes per candidate and directed the question and answer periods which followed each set of addresses. It was felt that the affair contributed much to the unprecedented interest taken in this year's elections and many expressed a desire to make "Candidate Night" an annual event.

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