

# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN VIET NAM A STUDY OF VINH LONG PROVINCE

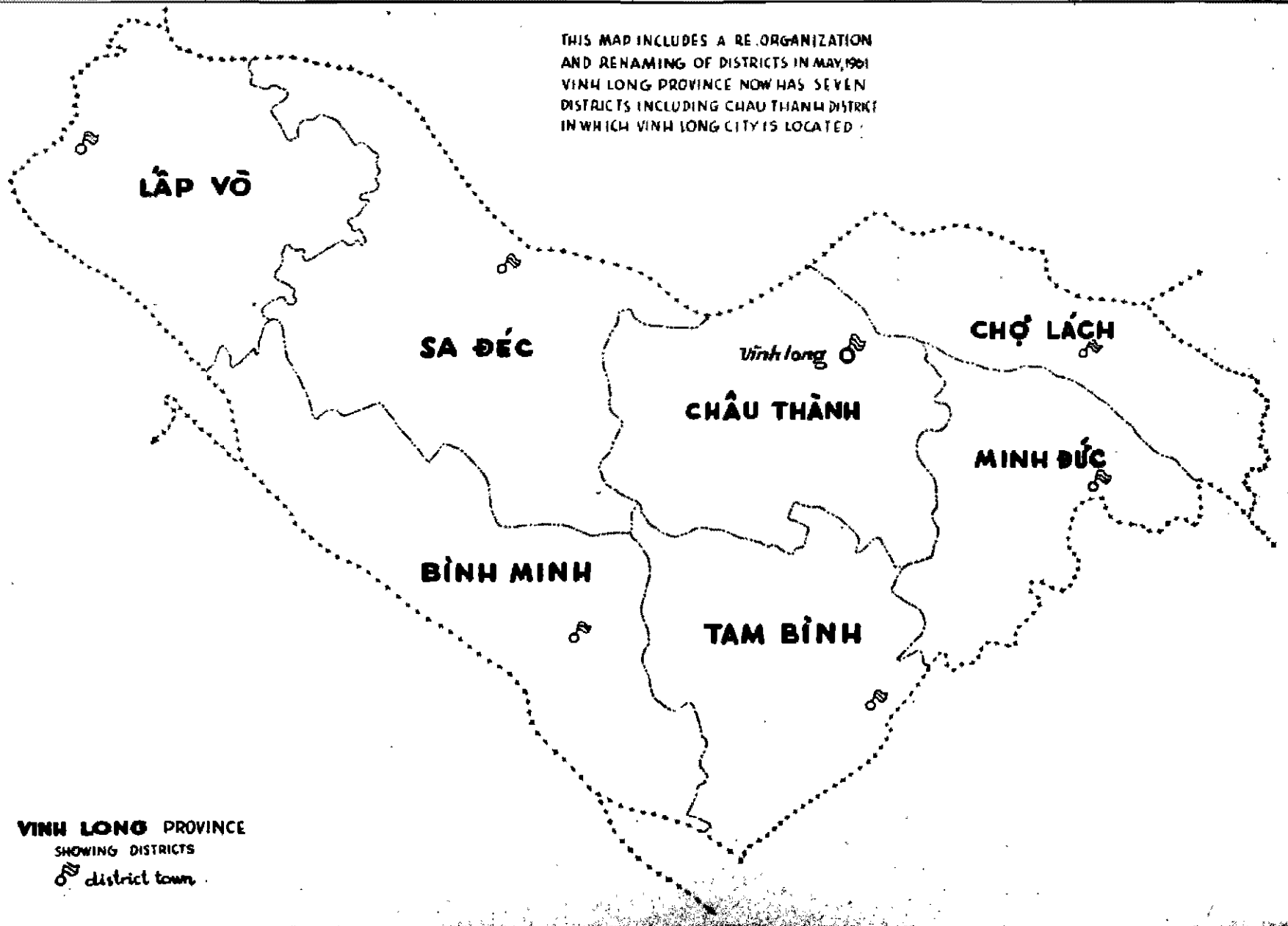
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SAIGON

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THIS MAP INCLUDES A RE-ORGANIZATION  
AND RENAMING OF DISTRICTS IN MAY, 1961  
VINH LONG PROVINCE NOW HAS SEVEN  
DISTRICTS INCLUDING CHAU THANH DISTRICT  
IN WHICH VINH LONG CITY IS LOCATED :



**VINH LONG PROVINCE**  
SHOWING DISTRICTS  
○ district town

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**SAIGON**

**August, 1961**

### DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of Khua Van Ba,  
the late Chief of Vinh Long province.

## PREFACE

The present study was undertaken in an effort to remedy, in part, the lack of empirical data and scholarly studies on the problems and conduct of provincial government administration in Viet Nam. The project was modest in its conception; it was not intended to be a definitive study of provincial government and it was limited to only one of the 38 provinces in Viet Nam. It was hoped that by concentrating on a single province for an extended period of time, it would be possible to develop a methodology and a body of experience which would facilitate a more comprehensive study at a later date.

The methods employed by our group were intentionally kept uncomplicated. Basically, they were as follows: A group of research professors from the National Institute of Administration and the Michigan State University Advisory Group spent a period of time in Vinh Long province observing the procedures of government and administration in operation there. We divided into four small teams, each comprising one Vietnamese and one American professor. Each team selected an important administrator in provincial government on whom to focus its attention. The natural division of labor dictated that one team would concentrate on the province chief, another on a district chief, the third on a village chief, and the fourth team on the head of the smallest administrative unit in Viet Nam, the hamlet.

In carrying out their research efforts, members of the joint NIA-MSUG team encountered one serious obstacle which should be related now since it reveals much about the problems of research as well as about

government and administration in the Republic of Viet Nam. In April, 1960, the research team made an advance trip to Vinh Long to inform provincial officials in detail of the purpose of the research project and to elicit their full cooperation. In May, the entire group spent seven full days with provincial officials. This time was devoted to observing the activities of the chiefs of province, district, village, and hamlet during every moment of their working day and sometimes into the evening. With the help of interpreters, countless interviews were conducted with other administrative officials in the province and with private individuals, ranging from those who might be considered among the power elite to the Vietnamese peasant working in his rice fields.

A third trip was made to Vinh Long province in June. By this time, a high level of rapport had been established among members of the NIA-MSUG research team and provincial officials. The province chief, the critical individual in the entire study, frankly and openly talked about the complexity of his job and the problems he faced on a day-to-day basis. One week after our latest discussion with him and his subordinates, and prior to the next visit by our group, the province chief made a routine inspection of an agrovillage under construction. On his return trip, within a few miles of the highway which led to the provincial capital of Vinh Long, his car encountered a road block mounted by Communist guerrillas. The province chief tried to elude the Viet Cong terrorists who had waited in ambush for him, but failed. He was killed by a single shot.

The purpose of relating the above episode is not to add a dramatic touch, but to explain why it was necessary to limit the scope of

this report to a single week in the life of some provincial officials. While we knew that a new province chief probably would introduce new techniques and procedures, we felt that this study, for which much valuable data already had been gathered, would still be relevant as a prototype of provincial administration.

No person is more instrumental in shaping provincial government character than the chief of province. While there are statutory guidelines and numerous restrictions and definitions which limit a province chief's power, there is at the same time tremendous latitude in which any chief can move to put his own stamp on the administration of his province. He may delegate much of his authority or retain all power within his own hands. He may select subordinates for their ability and competence or he may choose to rely upon those who are personally most loyal to him. To a large degree, he may even structure provincial administration to suit himself, notwithstanding the numerous precedents and established patterns already in existence. Inasmuch as he is not responsible to the people for his position, he may treat them autocratically or, if he is so inclined, he may deal with them as constituents upon whom his office depends and attempt to apply government policies in a way acceptable to them. There is room for the genius in the office of province chief and there is also room for the incompetent.

The chief of Vinh Long province, Khuu Van Ba, who was the focal point of this portion of the Vinh Long study, was exceptionally well trained for his position. Almost his entire life was spent as a public servant and he was scheduled to retire in 1961 at the age of

55.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ba was married and the father of four children. His religion was Catholic.

Mr. Ba was born in the southern part of Viet Nam and spent his entire career in that area. This is of importance as there are still strong regional ties in Viet Nam, and one of the ticklish problems faced by the government is the reluctance of Vietnamese from one region to be administered by Vietnamese from another. Mr. Ba was educated at the French-operated Chasseloup Laubat Lycee, one of the finest secondary schools in Viet Nam. He was graduated in 1925, the same year, he told us proudly, as the vice President of the Republic, Nguyen Ngoc Tho. Three years later he became a civil servant under the French. Mr. Ba's career was extremely variegated and involved diverse responsibilities. He began in Saigon as a Huyen 3rd grade, a rank he obtained in 1937 after taking a professional examination. Early in his career he served in Thu Dan Mot, now the province of Binh Duong, in a provincial government position of minor importance and later worked in administrative services in Gia Dinh province.

Eventually, under the French, he held a series of positions in the middle management level of provincial government in the southern provinces of Hon Quan (now Binh Long province), Rach Gia (now Kien Giang

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1 At 55, civil servants in Viet Nam are entitled to pension and other benefits. To many observers this seems far too young for retirement, especially in the light of actuarial tables. On the other hand, the practice has served a useful purpose in Viet Nam in recent years by permitting the government to graciously rid itself of excess civil servants and quietly drop those who reach 55 without demonstrating any special competence. When the government desires to retain a civil servant who has passed the retirement age, it may do so by hiring him on a contract basis or even extending his employable age.



province), and Con Son (formerly the French prison island of Poulo Condor). At this stage of his career, he also worked four years in the province of Vinh Long, then returned to Rach Gia for a second period of service.

Mr. Ba's first opportunity to become a province chief came in 1953 when he was appointed chief of the province of Cap St. Jacques (now the district of Vung Tau). These were years of turmoil and political chaos in Viet Nam. The French had not completely relinquished their hold on the country and frequently employed religious and political sects to perform services on their behalf. The armed gangster sect called the Binh Xuyen was powerful in Cap St. Jacques (Vung Tau) and Mr. Ba was suspected of either being associated with it in some way or sympathetic to it. Consequently, the government felt it prudent to remove him from the most important position in the province. Mr. Ba said the government was uncertain of his affiliation and demonstrated this by appointing him deputy chief of Soc-Trang (now Ba-Xuyen province). Although this was technically a demotion, Mr. Ba was the de facto province chief because the appointed chief was a military officer whose time was fully occupied with military operations relative to the security of the area.

Mr. Ba apparently exonerated himself completely, for in January 1957, he was appointed chief of Vinh Long province. One year later he was promoted to the administrative rank of Doc Phu Su in recognition of his excellent performance in Vinh Long. After his death, just one year short of his scheduled date of retirement, Mr. Ba was awarded the Bao-quoc Huan-chuong, a medal reserved for those who contribute significantly to the protection of the country.

The first sections of this study include a discussion of the province chief in the structure of Vietnamese government. There are detailed descriptions of his legal responsibilities and a consideration of the evolving character of the job within the context of reforms that have been made in Vietnamese government in recent years. We have tried to show the province chief's relationship with the Presidency, the Regional Delegate, the Ministry of Interior, the Directorate Generals and the various technical services. These descriptions are impersonal and deal with the statutory and ex-officio bases of these relationships that exist in Vinh Long and elsewhere.

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## REFERENCES

### Basic Documents Relating to Provincial Administration

#### Reorganization of Regional Administration

Ordinance No. 17, December 24, 1955  
Circular No. 34/TTP/VP of December 28, 1955  
Circular No. 17/TTP/VP of December 4, 1956

#### Administrative Decentralization on the Regional Level - 1949 to 1956

Ordinance No. 2, July 1, 1949  
Ordinance No. 21, August 4, 1954 (Abolition of the region  
as a legal entity)  
Ordinance No. 52, July 9, 1956

#### Transfer of Authority of Regional Delegates

Circular No. 46/PTT of April 22, 1957

#### Creating the Position of Deputy Province Chief for Security

Instruction No. JNV, March 30, 1959.

## PART I

### THE STRUCTURE OF FIELD RELATIONS IN VIET NAM

The Republic of Viet Nam is a unitary state whose constitution provides only for the existence of a central government. It is divided, for administrative purposes, into 38 provinces which, in turn, are made up of districts, cantons, villages, and hamlets.<sup>1</sup>

The only governmental units having the status of legal entities, other than the national government, are the 38 provinces and 2500 villages of Viet Nam.<sup>2</sup>

The chief of Vinh Long province occupies a pivotal position in the pattern of government in Viet Nam. Like his thirty-seven fellow province chiefs, he heads an important unit of government which straddles the gulf between the central authorities in Saigon and the isolated villages, hamlets, and clusters of thatched huts which mark the countryside from Quang Tri in the north to An Xuyen in the south. Under the supervision of the province chief, subordinate administrators build roads and schools, assist in rural development projects, maintain police and security forces. In short, the province is the embodiment of government in Viet Nam and its policies have a direct impact on the

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1 The only exceptions to this governmental pyramid are the municipalities of Hue, Da Nang, and Dalat, and the Prefecture of Saigon, all of which have corporate status comparable to that of a province.

2 In many districts, particularly those in central Viet Nam, the canton does not exist.

great majority of Vietnamese who reside outside the few urban centers of the country. To most Vietnamese, the quality of government in Viet Nam is measured by the successes and failures of provincial administration.

The importance of the province in present day Vietnamese government results from a pragmatic adjustment, supported by law, to Vietnam's geography, politics, and sociology. Notwithstanding the highly centralized formal structure of Vietnamese government, Viet Nam is a highly diversified country which defies excessive administration from the center. Not only are transportation and communication inadequate, but ethnic composition and cultural attitudes vary sharply among sections. The central government in Saigon, bowing to these conditions, has relied on provincial administrators to assume great responsibility in carrying out national policy at the local level.

Prior to 1956, Viet Nam was divided into four regions, each headed by a regional delegate. The province chief, instead of being directly responsible to the President, as he now is, was under the immediate supervision of the delegate for his region. In October 1956, two presidential decrees were issued abolishing this legal unit of government in Viet Nam and enhancing the powers of the province although the delegate was retained as an administrative entity with diminished power. The regions had been used by the French to promote sectional loyalty; their abolition was designed to encourage national unity. These decrees, Ordinance No. 57-A and Presidential Circular 115-A, designated the province chief as the representative of the central government in his province and spelled out in general terms his duties and authority. They

fall into six general categories:<sup>1</sup>

1. The province chief is responsible for the enforcement of national laws within his province. In carrying out this duty, he has available to him the entire machinery of provincial government and has access to field services of national ministries as well as to military units stationed in or near the province. In executing national laws, the province chief has the statutory power to adapt them to local conditions. Most laws and regulations issued by central authorities recognize provincial variations and are phrased in general terms allowing some latitude for local interpretation.
2. The province chief has supervisory responsibility for the activities of all services conducting programs within his province, including those directly under provincial administration as well as local branches of national departments. This is an especially complex assignment. The province chief has direct and immediate control over the services attached to provincial headquarters; however, his authority is less direct over the field services of national departments. He is charged with responsibility for coordinating both types of activity and insuring that conflict and overlapping are avoided. He is obliged to render assistance to the field services of central government agencies and control their activities, an important point inasmuch as they are not technically responsible to him but to their own departments. He relies upon his statutory authority to submit reports to the President and the central agencies in Saigon. He may also recommend the transfer of field service personnel not performing to his satisfaction.

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1 See Appendix B



3. The province chief is responsible for the maintenance of order and security. This has come to be his most time-consuming job. His effectiveness as a province chief is often measured in terms of how well he commands the police and security forces within the province, all of whom are under his jurisdiction. In emergency cases, he may request troops from the commander of the military region in which his province is located. If he does this, he is obliged to report the basis for the request immediately to the Presidency.

4. The province chief is responsible for presiding over public ceremonies, which include national and local holidays, celebrations at the completion of a new community project, and visits by dignitaries of the central government.

5. The province chief is responsible for controlling the provincial budget and authorizing expenditures. He also serves as assistant authorizing officer for expenditures of national departments within the province.

6. The province chief is responsible for village administration. He is expected to select and assign members of village councils, guide and control their activities and supervise the village budget to see that funds are properly utilized. Because it is closest to the rural populace, the village is a critical unit in Vietnamese social organization. Poor administration or misuse of village funds can influence the loyalty of people in an entire locality. For these reasons, the province chief gives much attention to village administration. More immediate supervision is provided by district chiefs and canton chiefs who head subordinate levels of local government and are, in all respects, assistants

to the province chief. Vinh Long province has 81 villages.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See "Local Administration in Viet Nam - The Number of Local Units" by Lloyd W. Woodruff, assisted by Nguyen Ngoc Yen, Michigan State University Advisory Group and National Institute of Administration, Saigon, November, 1960.

## PART II

### POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION

The National Revolutionary Movement is the dominant political party in the Republic of Viet Nam and the majority party in the National Assembly. Local branches are found in every province, district, and village throughout the country. In a nation torn apart by Communist subversion, the government relies on the NRM to carry its message to every level of Vietnamese society and to assure local compliance with government policy. From the government's standpoint, this use of the majority political party is justified on the grounds that NRM members are the staunchest supporters of the government, highly dedicated to its philosophy and purpose. The intimate relationship between government and party was both a help and hindrance to Province Chief Ba.

As a consequence of his position, he served as an advisor to the NRM in Vinh Long. He was also head of the Civil Servants League, which he considered an affiliate of the NRM. Mr. Ba was uncertain what his relationship with the party should be. For example, he said that the NRM took a keen interest in security matters but he was not sure whether he should work closely with the party in dealing with security or rely completely on official governmental machinery. He eventually concluded that it was necessary for him to work with the NRM in many of its activities or else face its opposition.

When Province Chief Ba arrived in Vinh Long, he learned through personal friends that the party in the province had complained because he had not energetically supported the local NRM and its activities.

He immediately went to Saigon to explain his actions to the president of the National Revolutionary Movement. After that, Mr. Ba's relationship with the party in Vinh Long improved and his behavior was no longer criticized.

The Civil Servants League, comprising the majority of civil servants in Vinh Long, cooperates closely with the NRM. Both organizations conduct political education programs in districts and villages and work harmoniously to generate loyalty to the government and a spirit of unity. Just before we began our study, a high ranking party official in Saigon suggested to the Civil Servants League in Vinh Long that it would be appropriate for government administrators to set an example for others by volunteering to construct a stretch of road in the province. The party official felt this would inspire local residents by demonstrating the willingness of civil servants to participate in national construction projects. Although only one kilometer of road was assigned to members of the League, the work was an addition to their regular duties as administrators and, in many cases, constituted an extremely difficult physical assignment. The construction was ultimately completed with many members of the League hiring local villagers to do the actual labor for them.

The province chief also had to contend with what he termed "interference by members of the National Assembly in provincial matters." Mr. Ba told us that deputies representing Vinh Long occasionally issued verbal instructions to him which he hesitated to follow. To protect himself, he reported these instructions to his "superiors" in Saigon to find out whether he should comply with them.

During our stay in the province, one of the Vinh Long assemblymen told Mr. Ba to convene a meeting of the NRM. He did so and at the beginning of the meeting, the deputy asked for a report on the security situation in the province. Mr. Ba demurred, saying he would answer specific questions about security but was not willing to give a general summary of the local situation. Subsequently, the group turned its attention to the main purpose of the meeting -- reorganization of the provincial executive committee of the party.

The relationship between Vietnamese provincial officials and members of the national legislative branch is a complex question and warrants further attention by students of government. If the National Assembly is to achieve maturity in the near future and play a more influential role in government, it is necessary for its members to become familiar with the problems of local administration. If provincial officials continue to view them as intruders, deputies will be denied the information necessary to their legislative function. Furthermore, National Assemblymen are elected and provincial officials are not. The future of representative government in Viet Nam is more closely tied to the destiny of the National Assembly than to provincial administration. Unless administrators in all echelons of government recognize the importance of the legislative branch and assist it in its infancy, a potentially vital institution may stagnate.

## PART III

### THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

No discussion of the province chief and provincial government is complete without a consideration of the role of the President of the Republic. The province chief derives his power directly from the Presidency and the only limits to his authority are those imposed by it. There are no elective bodies in the province, nor any clear statutory limitations on the province chief.

Article 3 of the Vietnamese Constitution designates the President as chief executive and specifically states that: "The President is vested with the leadership of the nation." Although Article 3 also states that there shall be separation of powers between the executive and legislative, nowhere in the Constitution is the "separation" defined or delineated. There are specific references to powers and responsibilities of the President, but references to the powers of the National Assembly are less clear and there is no mention of matters which are exclusively within the legislative domain.

The strong presidential system is a deliberate product of the Vietnamese Constitution. The province is only an administrative unit within the executive branch, created by the chief executive and operating under his jurisdiction.

The enormity of governing the activities of 38 province chiefs would challenge the resources of any executive, even if he had no other responsibilities. President Ngo Dinh Diem devotes much time to provincial affairs, yet he requires the active assistance of others and relies

on several agencies, all having limited authority in provincial matters. This pattern is by design rather than accident, enabling the President to receive information and reports from several perspectives and, at the same time, denying control of provincial administration to agencies other than the Presidency. It is only with the President's consent that any administrator or agency may issue instructions to the province chief. Consequently, the President, at least theoretically, is the recipient of vast amounts of data which enable him to issue policy directives to province chiefs based upon realistic knowledge of provincial conditions and problems. However, this also increases his executive burden immensely and makes him appear personally responsible for failures that occur in provincial government.

There are three main channels employed by the President in supervising the activities of province chiefs: (1) his own person and office; (2) the government delegates; and (3) the various executive departments and agencies, especially the Department of Interior.

#### A. The President

A glance at the President's monthly calendar reveals that hardly a week passes in which he doesn't make at least two inspection trips outside Saigon. Sometimes province chiefs are informed of these trips in advance and they make elaborate preparations. On other occasions, the President will arrive unannounced to examine and inspect rural development projects or investigate general conditions. During these trips, President Ngo Dinh Diem always discusses local issues with the province chiefs. Sometimes, on a trip to a provincial capital, he convenes chiefs of nearby provinces to talk with them and issue instructions

simultaneously. While the efficacy of these official trips as a means of learning about provincial problems may be questioned, there is no doubt that they fulfill the purpose of assuring province chiefs that the President is interested in activities within their purview. It may also give the rural population a sense of national identity to see the chief executive in its midst.

During our period of research in Vinh Long, we had little opportunity to observe directly the province chief's relationship with his superiors; therefore, we were compelled to rely on Mr. Ba's account of these relationships. He made it emphatically clear that he felt the presence of President Diem and estimated that in the preceding year the chief executive had been in Vinh Long approximately fifteen times.

When the President wishes to meet with province chiefs in the regions south of Saigon, he frequently selects Vinh Long as the gathering place. Generally, according to Mr. Ba, the President will use these occasions to issue instructions applicable to all provinces in the area. When the President wishes to issue specific instructions to a particular province chief, he will meet with him individually.

Province Chief Ba told us that there was an embarrassing aspect in this procedure of receiving instructions directly from the President. Inasmuch as the President is the highest ranking official in Viet Nam, no province chief is obliged to report or repeat presidential instructions to others. However, the province chief is, at the same time, responsible to other officials in the central government. There had been occasions, Mr. Ba pointed out, when the President gave directly to him detailed explanations on instructions issued by the Department of Interior, the regional delegate, or other high ranking officials.



Mr. Ba's reaction to these situations was to inform his superiors immediately of his discussions with the President in an effort to lessen the chance of serious administrative conflict.

The province chief said that he tried to anticipate presidential policy by closely following the President's public statements and writings. He cited the following example: In 1957, during the Tet holiday, the President made a public statement dealing with rural development in Viet Nam. Mr. Ba inferred from the statement that the President would soon initiate a broad program in this field and the province chief began to study and plan what could be done in Vinh Long province. A year later the President announced his rural development program. Mr. Ba felt that he was better prepared for it because of his conscientious attempts to anticipate the directions in which the President would move.

#### B. The Government Delegate

Prior to October 24, 1956, the government delegate governed one of the four regions of Viet Nam, each comprising a number of provinces. He was the direct superior of the province chief, responsible for the services, security, and all affairs within his region. The abolition of the region as a legal unit of government had the effect of elevating the province chief in the hierarchy of field administration. However, it also left a serious vacuum in the administrative network of local government. Consequently, Ordinance 57-A, while abolishing the regions as legal entities, provided for the appointment of government delegates to serve as administrative agents of the President to help him execute his responsibilities concerning the provinces.

Government delegates are appointed by presidential decree and are responsible for a number of provinces. They represent the central government -- more particularly the President -- and are expected to make periodic reports, including recommendations, to him. They may also make recommendations on the coordination of provincial services and may oppose promotions for province chiefs. The government delegate carries out inspections, assists the President in his administrative responsibilities, and, upon presidential order, undertakes special investigations or missions. More specifically:

1. The government delegate, as inspector, has the duty of insuring the smooth operation of all public offices in the province. He may also deal with the departments of the central government. The delegate is required to attend a monthly meeting bringing together administrative agencies of the Presidency as well as the administrative and financial inspectors attached to the Presidency. He further supplements his knowledge of provincial affairs by reading reports from the province chiefs in his region.
2. As assistant to the chief executive, the delegate assures the faithful implementation of regulations, instructions, and programs of the central government. To enable the delegate to fulfill this broad function, the President may empower him to issue instructions directly to province chiefs.
3. In addition to these duties, the President may assign the delegate to special missions in the latter's region.

Ordinarily, a delegate is not empowered to issue orders directly to a province chief without special authorization from the President. An exception is an "emergency" condition, during which a delegate may

issue certain instructions to province chiefs if he reports his action immediately to the President. According to Article 21 of Ordinance 57-A, the prior consent of the President is required before the government delegate may meet with province chiefs to exchange ideas. Similarly, presidential authorization is required for the delegate to meet with police, security, and other administrative authorities in his region for the purpose of studying security problems. Only in "emergency" cases is this restriction waived.

The stringent controls on the government delegate reflect the President's desire to prevent the re-emergence of regional challenges to his authority. While our investigation into provincial government does not reveal to what extent the delegate is inhibited by Circular 115-A, there are strong indications that informal arrangements have evolved which give him sufficient latitude to carry out his duties unencumbered by some of the restraints in the decree.

The government delegate for the southwest region has his headquarters in Can Tho, 32 kilometers southwest of Vinh Long city. At the time of our study, he was inspecting Vinh Long province two, three, or even four times a week. The delegate, according to the province chief, might look into the whole range of provincial affairs although he had given particular emphasis to security matters and taken the keenest interest in them.

Province Chief Ba described the delegate as a "coordinator" between the province chief and the Ministry of Interior, the Presidency, the Fifth Military Region<sup>1</sup> and various officials in Saigon. He admitted

1 According to Arrêté No. 98 Q.P. of April 13, 1961, the Military Regions were dissolved and Tactical Zones established. Vinh Long, formerly in the Fifth Military Region, now is under the 3rd Tactical Zone.

that the delegate issued instructions but said that they usually were from the President or the Secretary of Interior. At the same time, the delegate reported the activities of Vinh Long Province to the Presidency and, in the name of the President, urged the province chief to act. Mr. Ba said the delegate often prodded, urged, and pushed him to advance certain programs which the delegate felt were not moving satisfactorily. There were times when Mr. Ba did not know whether this pressure originated with the delegate or came from the President.

The moderate problems that Province Chief Ba had with the delegate were offset by the advantages gained. Because the delegate was well informed about security in the province, he was in an excellent position to act as intermediary between the province chief and the commander of the Fifth Military Region, a service of great importance. The military commander is ultimately responsible for military and security affairs within his region and military affairs have been given the highest priority in Viet Nam. Without the delegate as intermediary, civil affairs could be relegated to a distinctly secondary position and the influence of the military commander could pervade all the provinces of his region. Mr. Ba did not say that this was the case, although he acknowledged it as a possibility.

The kind of assistance which the delegate is sometimes able to render is illustrated by the following situation which we observed in Vinh Long. The deputy chief of province reported to the chief on the construction of a new stadium being built in the provincial capital. The deputy said that progress was satisfactory except that he needed more vehicles to carry earth. He pointed out that this was urgent if the stadium was to be finished before the rainy season set in. The

province chief then called the regional delegate in Can Tho to ask him to obtain military trucks from the Fifth Military Region. The delegate agreed to make the request of the Region commander.

The delegate is also asked to intervene in other matters, especially those involving departments in Saigon. Mr. Ba said he contacted the delegate when appropriations were not sufficient, when personnel needs arose, or when the province required other types of support. He felt that the support of the delegate made his case stronger as the delegate, in the eyes of Saigon, possessed higher status and therefore had a more equitable relationship with the departments in the capital. In addition, the small number of men holding the cadre rank of doc phu su -- which both the delegate of the Southwest region and Province Chief Ba did -- have a fraternal spirit or, in Mr. Ba's words, an esprit de corps. Mr. Ba said that his relationship with the delegate was further aided by the fact that the delegate had a slightly lower grade than he did within the same cadre rank. This, plus the fact that the province chief was older than the delegate, a point of some importance in Viet Nam, gave Mr. Ba an advantage and he felt that these factors were of more than little importance in his ability to elicit the assistance or intervention of the delegate.

### C. The Department of Interior and Other Central Agencies

Almost all executive agencies have programs under their supervision which reach into the provinces; consequently, it is essential that these ministries have some means of maintaining direct contact with the province chief. Although the province chief is responsible for the various technical services in his province, questions frequently arise which

require him to confer with the central office of a service.

Presidential Decree 115-A stipulates that the province chief is to be consulted and allowed to make suggestions on the planning or carrying out of projects in, or related to, his province. He may communicate with executive agencies through official reports or correspondence, making certain that a copy of each report is sent to the regional delegate's office. When necessary, the province chief may contact departmental officials on a direct basis; however, "for important affairs, he must receive directives first from the Presidency." (115-A)

In some cases, province chiefs may receive directives from various departments, but these must be signed by the Secretary of State with copies sent to the Presidency and the regional delegate's office (115-A).

It is apparent that the lines of authority established by the President are designed to prevent an executive department from exercising too much control over provincial administration. The President reserves the responsibility for supervising provincial administration and he has circumscribed the powers of executive department officials to the extent that they have little opportunity to interfere with any direct command.

For administrative purposes, province chiefs are members of the Department of Interior. Even military officers serving as province chiefs are considered Interior employees as are other personnel at provincial headquarters. Consequently, this Department is involved in provincial affairs to a greater extent than other ministries and provincial officials look to it for guidance. Even this modest statement must be qualified by two facts: (1) Interior plays an active role only to the extent that the President permits; and (2) research elsewhere in the country indicates that the Department of Interior plays a greater

role in the provinces south of Saigon than those in central Viet Nam.

Appointed by the President and subject to all directives emanating from him, the province chief still views himself as an important public servant within the Department of Interior. The reasons for his identification with the Department are not hard to discern. Aside from the fact that it has a great degree of legal authority over him, the province chief finds the Department a convenient "buffer" between him and the Presidency. By keeping the Department constantly informed and looking to it for detailed directives, the province chief aligns himself with the one organization which is mainly concerned with provincial affairs. Without the Department, the province chief would stand alone in dealings with the Presidency. From the perspective of a single province chief, the Presidency is an awesome institution dedicated to initiating vast programs. Interior, seen from the same perspective, puts these programs into an order of priorities and gives the province chief guidance on the extent and rapidity of implementation.

Province Chief Ba informed us that there was an extremely active two-way correspondence between Interior and himself. Not only did he keep the Department fully and currently informed of all of his activities and problems, but he received about twenty items of correspondence from it daily, many of which contained personal instructions. Mr. Ba frequently met, formally and informally, with personnel from the Department of Interior. He told us that whenever he went to Saigon (where his children attend school), he visited the Department. Sometimes he confined himself to discussions with various bureau chiefs and occasionally he conferred with the Secretary.

Once a month Mr. Ba and other province chiefs in the area met with the Secretary of Interior on a more formal basis. These meetings were not rigidly set in advance as to time or location, sometimes being held in the Department in Saigon and sometimes in one of the southwest region provincial capitals. There are 12 provinces in the southwest and an informal system of rotating meetings among them is in effect. Mr. Ba never met with all of the 38 province chiefs in Viet Nam.

The meetings provide an important opportunity for province chiefs to discuss with the Secretary of Interior general problems and needs that are often common to all provinces of a particular region. The Secretary often uses these meetings to issue instructions to province chiefs and, on occasion, makes decisions about matters that have arisen during the discussion. When he does make such a decision affecting a province, he follows it up with written orders.

The Department of Interior is better informed than other agencies about the complexity of provincial government. In spite of this and Mr. Ba's close contact with it, he attributed to the Department of Interior many of the bureaucratic syndromes that he felt were present in all agencies in the capital. He said that the Department in Saigon had a great many employees who were well organized and had much time to conceive of programs and immerse themselves in the details of them. He complained that they issued far too many instructions to him, most of them in writing, and that he did not have sufficient personnel in his province to do justice to these instructions. Mr. Ba's implication was clear: he maintained that provincial government in Vinh Long was overburdened by paper work and required to carry out a multitude of instructions which had originated with people in Saigon who were not



sufficiently sympathetic to the limited resources in Vinh Long.

We asked the province chief how this situation could arise if he had such frequent contact with the Department of Interior. Mr. Ba acknowledged that there were abundant avenues of communication but that he mainly reported to the Department and communicated with it on details of programs that had already been decided upon. He asserted that he did not feel the Department consulted him sufficiently when making important decisions relative to his province. He explained that he felt that the basic decisions were made by the Presidency and not the Department; therefore, it would be of little use for the Department to attempt to bring him into this decision-making process. The Presidency did not confer with him about these decisions and there was little opportunity to affect their substance before they were concluded and sent to Interior. The job of the Secretary of Interior, as Mr. Ba saw it, was to fill in the details of fundamental presidential decisions. There was no opportunity for the Secretary to bring the province chiefs in because the Secretary was not a participant -- or only a peripheral participant -- in the decision-making process. Whereas Mr. Ba may have influenced actions taken by Interior, he had not been given a sense of participation in the formulation of big programs at the provincial level which would have enabled him to share in their modification or express his opinion of them.

#### D. Relations With The Central Administration

The province chief, his subordinates, and local officials in other provinces in Viet Nam have consistently maintained that there is a need

for a reappraisal and reorganization of central-local government relations. This is a common attitude among local government officials throughout the world. They tend to feel that the problems of a particular community are not properly appreciated by higher level administrators in the central government. Beyond this inherent sentiment though, there was a factual basis to the argument of the province chief of Vinh Long. Through observation and interviews, we learned that many of his administrative difficulties resulted as much from deficiencies in central-local relations as from the substance of the problems themselves. Mr. Ba felt that provincial administration was over burdened by paper work and instructions emanating from Saigon; he felt too many programs were conceived by departments of the central government without consideration of the ability of the province to absorb these programs. He stated that central agencies failed to establish reasonable priorities in the programs they wanted him to implement; that the central government initiated too many "crash programs" which had to be completed in an unreasonable short period of time. His gravest complaint was that central government agencies failed to consult provincial officials on a continuing, regular basis so that the latter could affect policy before, and not after, decisions were made.

The province chief related that there had been occasions when he had received three different sets of instructions from three different agencies on the same subject. In the month prior to our visit, he said, divergent instructions had been conveyed to him by the regional delegate and the Department of Interior concerning a training program to be instituted in Vinh Long. (See Appendix I) Although the province chief was under no obligation to reveal instructions he received from the

President, he felt it was necessary to report them to those concerned in order to avoid embarrassment.

Mr. Ba insisted that sounder policies could be developed if they were formulated in close cooperation with province chiefs. He readily admitted that central direction was necessary to maintain common standards and encourage uniform development. He said that maintenance of these standards was entirely consistent with the participation of province chiefs in decision-making councils, a practice which would contribute to the level of information of Saigon administrators and also permit them to take into account unique conditions in various regions and provinces. As an example, Mr. Ba cited the recent instructions he had received from the Directorate General of Youth asking him to recruit young men from Vinh Long to contribute their labor to the construction of agrovilles in neighboring Kien Hoa province. "These are dangerous instructions," Mr. Ba said. "A recruitment of voluntary labor is a very sensitive issue which can explode to our detriment if we send young men from Vinh Long to another province." He was firmly committed to the idea that carrying out these orders would be detrimental to the morale of youth in his province. When asked if he would protest or make his objections known to his superiors, Mr. Ba answered affirmatively, but added that he believed the Directorate General of Youth in Saigon would feel that he, as province chief, did not fully appreciate the larger aspects of Viet Nam's problems.

Mr. Ba added that he was not certain that even the Secretary of Interior had a great voice in the creation of policy. He felt that decision making was so highly centralized that secretaries of state could not shape new policy but only make minor modifications in that which already existed.

## PART IV

### THE PROVINCE CHIEF AND THE TECHNICAL SERVICES

The relationship between the province chiefs in Viet Nam and technical representatives of the various departments of state in Saigon is an area where further investigation is needed with a view to possible reorganization. Discussions with numerous field representatives of the Saigon ministries indicate that many of them feel they are better qualified to perform and understand the operations of their respective services than are the province chiefs. They said that province chiefs have frequently issued substantive instructions to field representatives rather than confining themselves to overall coordination and assistance. Although these remarks did not necessarily pertain to Vinh Long and Province Chief Ba, several field representatives made the general complaint that their entire programs were handicapped by actions of province chiefs who did not appreciate the technical problems involved in the work of the Department of Health, the Department of Public Works and others.

In defense of the province chiefs, it must be said that no provincial administrator can be expected to have a firm grasp of the technicalities of projects under way in his province. Actually, the province chief is not supposed to involve himself in the detailed activities of central government departments. His responsibility is limited to broad surveillance, assistance, coordination, and the kind of cooperation that will facilitate the work of the technical services. However, it is easy to see how, in practice, a province chief can overstep these vague limits on his authority and directly intervene in the provincial

activities of a technical service. This is especially true when a province chief feels, as did Mr. Ba, that the quality of work of some representatives of central government departments is questionable. Although machinery exists to deal with such problems through the regional government delegate, or even through the central departments in Saigon, the procedures appear to a province chief to be time consuming and often difficult. Consequently, rather than bring the issue to a higher level, a province chief often will respond to this situation by assuming greater control over the activities of the technical services in his province.

Mr. Ba said that he had more contact with representatives of the Department of Public Works than those of any other technical service. The difficulties he had with Public Works illustrate those that existed on occasion in his relationship with other departments. The province chief explained that construction and maintenance of inter-provincial highways is the responsibility of the Public Works Department and is paid for out of its budget. However, minor roads (intra-provincial roads) are the province chief's responsibility. When Mr. Ba wanted a road built within Vinh Long, he would submit his recommendation to the Public Works Department and its technicians would design the project. Costs were paid out of the provincial budget. Province Chief Ba complained about the difficulties resulting from the fact that two different budgets were involved in the procedure of contracting and maintaining roads and bridges in the province.

On another occasion we observed the province chief discussing road and bridge construction with a Department engineer. Mr. Ba spoke with expert knowledge and made specific recommendations to the engineer --

recommendations based on recent inspection trips within the province. In addition to several technical suggestions, Mr. Ba issued certain administrative instructions which revealed the sort of problems and conflicts existing within and between government organizations. He made it clear that he would be the one to make the final decision on the priority of virgin road construction in each of the six districts of Vinh Long. He told the engineer that unless he, the province chief, made this decision, each district chief would attempt to induce the technical service to construct bridges and roads in his particular district. Mr. Ba also felt he was better qualified than the engineer to decide priority in road building because he was familiar with all of the districts and roads in the province.

## PART V

### THE PROVINCE CHIEF AND HIS STAFF

Government, even in highly developed states, rarely follows in practice the precise word and letter of its written constitution, statutes, and codes. In a newly independent and underdeveloped country such as Viet Nam, the disparity is more apparent than usual. Deviation from formal procedures exists at all levels of Vietnamese government. In Vinh Long province we found that the neat lines of administrative structure and authority were evident mainly on wall charts; in practice, the province chief employed his staff and subordinates to "put out fires." The distinction between line and staff agencies became blurred as the province chief assigned administrators to whatever tasks he felt they could perform, often ignoring the fact that such moves created new administrative problems.

It is not difficult to discern the reasons which impelled Mr. Ba to act in this way. He preferred administrative conflict and confusion to endangering the achievement of policy goals. He did not have an adequate number of qualified personnel and many civil servants were occupying positions demanding abilities which they did not possess. In Mr. Ba's own words, "It is easier to reassign tasks informally than reform the entire civil service system or wait for qualified administrators to be sent to Vinh Long." Much of the administrative difficulty one might have expected as a result of these procedures was smoothed over by the quality of Mr. Ba's leadership. He knew his job well and he displayed intimate familiarity with the administrative and substantive problems of most officials. Moreover, almost all provincial officials told us that

they were free to speak with him on an informal basis about their work and that he would listen to their suggestions. The willingness of the province chief to consult his subordinates prior to a decision exacted from them a loyalty to the decision, even when they were not in full accord with it.

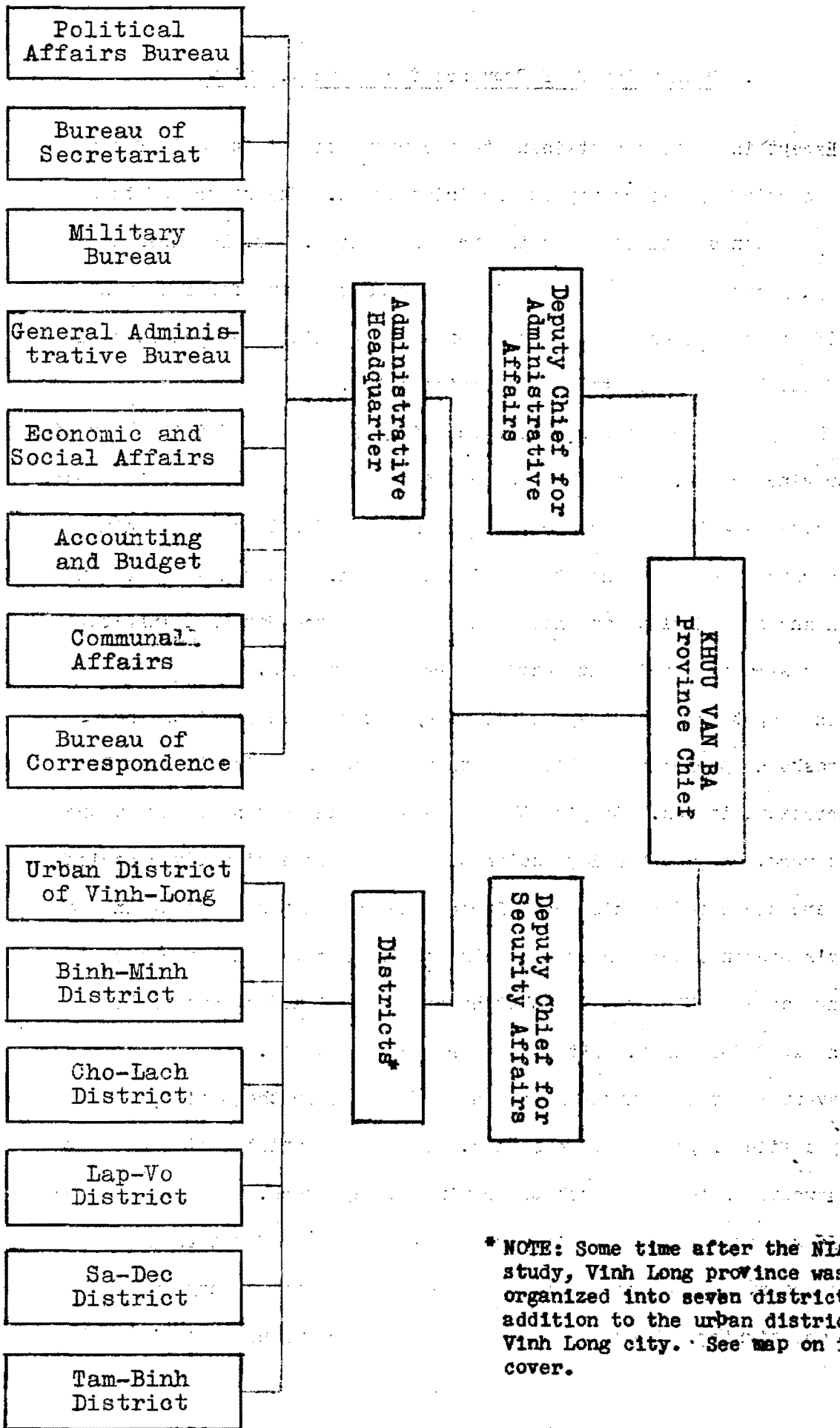
Formal organizational structure placed three administrative networks under the province chief. First, he was completely responsible for local government and all officials employed by the province and by the districts, cantons, villages, and hamlets in it. Second, he was accountable for security in the province and was, in effect, commanding officer of the various military, police, and village organizations engaged in security activities. Third, he had limited responsibility for all technical service programs and personnel in Vinh Long, insuring that when the field office of a central government department undertook a project, it was supported with all the provincial administrative resources available.

The exact number of deputy chiefs and bureaus varies from province to province, but the functions, lines of authority, and problems encountered in Vinh Long are common to most provinces, especially those in the Mekong Delta. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an examination of the work performed by the two deputies for administration and security; the four official bureaus: (1) economic and social affairs, (2) budget and accounting, (3) general administration, and (4) the secretariat; and the four unofficial bureaus: (1) correspondence, (2) political affairs, (3) communal affairs, and (4) military affairs.



VINH-LONG PROVINCE

ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE PROVINCE  
CHIEF'S HEADQUARTERS AND DISTRICTS



\* NOTE: Some time after the NIA/MSUD study, Vinh Long province was re-organized into seven districts in addition to the urban district of Vinh Long city. See map on inside cover.

A. Deputy Chief of Province for Administration

Except in matters pertaining to security, the right hand of the province chief is his deputy for administration. The nature of this position depends entirely upon the province chief. Mr. Ba chose to use his deputy extensively, both for important matters and for relieving himself of the tremendous amount of paper work which seems characteristic of all levels of Vietnamese administration.

The deputy for administration occupied an office adjoining that of the province chief. A typist was occasionally at work there. The most impressive aspect of the office was the number of folders containing papers which the deputy had to examine and sign. The man spoke fluent French and some English and had been trained at the National Institute of Administration during its early years of operation.

The deputy seemed to appreciate the fact that the tedious and routine tasks he performed enabled the province chief to devote himself to more critical issues. Despite the burdensome, and often boring nature of his work, he gave the impression that he was exceptionally conscientious and dedicated to his job. During the many hours we spent in the deputy's presence throughout the week in Vinh Long, he never ceased signing papers. He estimated that he read and signed somewhere between 500 and 1000 documents, letters, and reports each day.

Every 20 or 30 minutes a messenger would enter the office, hand the deputy a file of papers to be signed, pick up a completed file and take it elsewhere in the labyrinth of provincial paperwork.

It was impossible, and it would be presumptuous for a team of research observers, to attempt to read the material the deputy was pursuing and signing. Therefore, we adopted the technique of periodically

asking him to tell us the precise nature of the document he had before him. In this way, we obtained a fair sample of the types of issues and documents that required the deputy's attention and signature. Several of these spot checks produced examples which illustrate the kind of paper work involved in provincial government, as well as the types of activities in which the government has a hand.

During one morning visit, when asked about a document before him, the deputy answered that it was an application for the transfer of a tomb from one location to another. This application had first arrived in the Bureau of Correspondence which referred it to the deputy chief for administration. The deputy reviewed the application, then sent it to a doctor in the Health Service. When asked what would happen, the deputy replied that the doctor would review the request from the standpoint of health and send it back to him. If the doctor approved the transfer, the deputy would return it to the Correspondence Bureau which would, in turn, forward the approval to the individual concerned. The deputy indicated that the applicant would have his final response in about three days.

During another morning visit, the deputy was studying an order from the Department of Interior. It related to the establishment of training courses in the provinces of the Southwestern region designed for future village council members and hamlet chiefs. The deputy said the training course had been previously discussed, that the Department of Interior had adopted the idea and now had issued the detailed instructions. He said that it eventually would involve a great deal of work for him and had a high priority in provincial headquarters. On several other occasions we found him reading material relative to this training

course. (The course will be discussed at greater length in a case study which is attached to this report as Appendix A.)

One afternoon, the deputy was reviewing the contents of a thick folder containing applications from teachers who desired to leave the province for their summer vacations. For example, one teacher requested permission to go to Nha Trang to visit his family between April 4 and June 1. Generally, the deputy said, these applications are approved. An exception, he explained, would be a teacher who had not behaved "correctly" and, as a disciplinary measure, is refused permission to leave the province on vacation. We learned from other sources in the province that this type of permit is not confined to teachers. When any citizen or government official in Vinh Long wishes to leave the province on an extended trip or to move from the province permanently, he must apply to provincial headquarters for a permit. Further, if a villager desires to leave his village for more than one or two days, he must receive permission from the village council.

Despite the enormous amount of paper work handled by the deputy, it would be erroneous to assume that his job was confined to this tedious task. In many respects, it would not be inaccurate to define him as the province chief's alter ego. No man in the entire province had as much access to the chief as this deputy. Further, our observations indicated that the deputy's relationship with the province chief was extremely informal, friendly, and cooperative. Whenever he desired to discuss any issue with the chief, he was free to do so. For example, one morning we noted that the deputy saw the chief five times before 11:00 a.m. This was not always the case because the latter spent a great deal of his time traveling throughout the province on inspection trips.

Among the reports delivered to the province chief by the deputy on a Monday morning was one containing a summary of events which occurred in the province on the previous day. It may be difficult to appreciate the reason for reporting matters of this sort to the province chief, but it must be remembered that Vinh Long, in the heart of the delta, was and is under intense pressure from the Viet Cong. The reports also reflected the province chief's concern for all levels of activity within his jurisdiction. The deputy also informed the chief of the progress in construction of a sports stadium, the site of which the deputy had visited earlier in the day.

#### B. Deputy Chief of Province for Internal Security

The position of deputy for internal security was created by presidential order on March 30, 1959.<sup>1</sup> Although all provinces in Viet Nam do not yet have a deputy chief for security affairs, the legal basis for the position exists and indications are that it will be filled according to the needs in each province. It is likely that where the province chief is a military officer, the deputy for security will merely act as a military adjutant to the chief. However, in provinces such as Vinh Long, one of the few provinces in the south that had a civilian chief as late as June, 1960, it is more likely that the deputy will assume all of the security functions, but work in close collaboration with the province chief.

Despite the importance of security throughout Viet Nam, the presidential order makes clear, in the very first paragraph, that the

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1 No. 3/NV of March 30, 1959.

military man occupying the position of deputy for internal security is not to usurp the functions of the province chief. He is merely to be the chief's subordinate, albeit a subordinate with extensive powers in the area of security. Presidential order No. 3/NV reads in full:

INSTRUCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
of  
VIET NAM

In provinces where the security situation requires, there will be a deputy chief of province for internal security affairs to assist the chief of province in the field of security matters.

The deputy chief of province for internal security affairs will carry out his duties according to the instructions of the province chief and under the responsibility of the province chief.

**I. Responsibilities of the deputy chief of province for security**

**A. With regard to political matters:**

The deputy chief of province for internal security affairs has to follow up and study the political situation in order to suggest possible means to the province chief. He has to conduct the political education program in the province, and is responsible for matters within the political field, except the matters the province chief would like to reserve for himself.

**B. With regard to security matters:**

The deputy chief of province for internal security affairs has to elaborate the pacification plan and program within the security limit, to concentrate reports and develop information. He has at his disposal the use of police, sureté, civil guard, and the village self-defense forces.

**C. With regard to military matters:**

He is in charge of the preparation and the command of police operations within the province. As commander of the military agency, the deputy chief of province for internal security affairs is responsible to the military district chief for military matters relative to the military agency.

**D. With regard to special functions:**

The deputy chief of province for internal security affairs may receive orders and delegation from the

chief of province to assume some special missions. He has to receive advice from the province chief with respect to administrative affairs.

II. Relationship between the deputy chief of province and the military district:

He is authorized to have contact with the military district to coordinate operations, to work out the plan and the program of pacification. He has to report to the province chief the instructions he receives from the military chief and the province chief will discuss these instructions again with the military district chief.

Signed by the President.

The instructions issued by the President were not designed to downgrade the province chief; rather, they were clearly intended to provide him with an able subordinate to help him deal with the most critical problem in Viet Nam -- security. Aside from his specified responsibility for military matters, the deputy chief for security is subordinate to, and under the direction of, the province chief.

Under ideal circumstances, the deputy chief for security fills a void in the structure of Vietnamese government. Generally, it has been contended that the various defense, police, and security agencies, especially those in the provinces, lack coordination and the efficiency that accompanies it. It has been pointed out that the military, the police, the sureté, the civil guard, and the village self-defense forces overlap in their functions and, at the same time, leave important problems unattended to because of this lack of overall coordination. The appointment of a deputy chief for internal security may remedy this serious administrative deficiency. Certainly the President's instructions seemed designed to do so, especially the provision that says the

military officer who serves as security deputy chief must coordinate his activities with the military district in which the province is located.

One may question the advisability of delegating to the deputy for security the responsibility for a "political education program in the province." The assignment of this function to the deputy signifies a failure to distinguish between military matters and political education. There is no assurance that a capable military man, who might be the most suitable appointee as deputy, will also have the political sophistication and awareness of psychological techniques to conduct "political education." However, in the President's instructions there appears to be an escape clause: by stating that the province chief may reserve to himself those matters in the political field that he chooses, the President allows for the fact that the province chief may wish to utilize his deputy solely in the area of military security and not in political affairs. Similarly, under Paragraph B, the instructions say the deputy is to be advised by the province chief as to his functions in the area of administrative affairs.

There was good evidence that the arrangement in Vinh Long between the province chief and his deputy for security had worked out well. Although the new deputy had served in Vinh Long for only 1 1/2 months prior to this study, he and the province chief had established a congenial relationship, but one in which the chief was unquestionably in control of provincial affairs. The deputy had willingly accepted a secondary role and all indications were that his activities were coordinated with those of the province chief in such a way that he looked to the chief for instructions. The only evidence of dissatisfaction



came from the head of the political bureau who subtly let it be known that he did not favor an arrangement in which he no longer reported directly to the province chief but was placed immediately under the new deputy. In fact, he said that he had continued to report directly to the province chief. This, however, seems to be a normal reaction in any situation where a new individual is placed between the head of an administrative organization and a high ranking subordinate.

The deputy for security had been in the army for eight years, the last four as a major. A graduate of the Dalat Military Academy, he served in the Infantry during the Indochina war and prior to his appointment as security deputy, he was an inspector for the 5th Military Region. He said that before the creation of the new deputy position in Vinh Long, security matters were primarily the responsibility of the chief of the Military Affairs Bureau and the Civil Guard (Bao An). The new position necessitated a reorganization of provincial headquarters to allow the deputy to manage all security problems within the province. The major said that in some provinces, deputy chiefs had been appointed and at work for as long as a year.

Another effect of the reorganization of security affairs within the province was to make the commander of the civil guard responsible to the deputy chief for security. Under this arrangement, the deputy was actually in charge of security, tactics, and operations of the civil guard. The commander became, in effect, the deputy chief's administrative officer for civil guard matters. Thus, the deputy chief for security had under his supervision the military bureau in the provincial headquarters, the military organization in the province, the Sureté, the police, and the village self-defense corps. One civil guard company is

assigned to each of the six districts in the province.

In addition to closely coordinating security affairs in the province, the deputy chief also acted as a liaison officer with other agencies in the Vietnamese government, reporting to them and serving as an important source of information. (As provided in the President's instructions, the deputy reported directly to the chief of the 5th Military Region which includes Vinh Long province.) To do this, the deputy chief prepared a detailed report on security matters in the province and sent copies to the chief of the 5th Military Region and the Department of Interior. The latter forwarded one copy to the Presidency.

These reports were also used by the deputy chief to keep his own subordinates in the province informed. For example, he reported relevant contents to the head of the Bureau of Political Affairs, keeping that agency informed of problems as he viewed them and steps he had taken to meet them.

The Department of Interior is responsible for the civil guard as well as for the self-defense corps and the deputy chief reported the activities of these two distinct units to appropriate sections within the Department.

At the time of this study, the reports were actually written by the deputy chief's assistant and reviewed by the deputy. He then submitted them to the chief of province for signature. However, when the chief was not available, the deputy signed and sent them out himself.

There are many possible areas, according to my own observation, where conflict could exist between the chief and his security deputy. For example, it is not at all uncommon for military officers to be district chiefs. The deputy for security, also an officer, might be

inclined to view them as his own subordinates and issue instructions to them as is normal in a military chain of command. However, the Vinh Long deputy stated that he did not issue either military or civilian orders directly to district chiefs without first discussing the matter with the province chief and getting his approval. He openly acknowledged that he worked under the supervision of the province chief and said that no sharp issues of any sort divided them.

If a district chief is a military man, he assumes leadership of the civil guard company in his district. If he is a civilian, the unit is led by its company commander, usually a lieutenant. He asked the deputy about Binh Minh district, which had a new chief. He explained that the previous chief was a civilian and that the security problem in the district had become serious enough to require the services of a military man. A captain in the army had been appointed.

The deputy for security told us that he conferred with the province chief three, four, and sometimes five times a day. He believed it important to keep the chief fully informed of Viet Cong activities. Sometimes reports indicating a serious security situation would come in during the night and, when that happened, the deputy said, he awakened the province chief to apprise him of the problem. One day, shortly before our visit, a Viet Cong attack occurred at 2:00 a.m. and the deputy's first act was to wake the chief and report it to him.

### C. Provincial Government Bureaus

Eight bureaus are attached to the provincial headquarters; four authorized by the Department of Interior and four informally created

by the province chief. Each official bureau chief gets a supplementary VN\$800 per month in addition to his normal salary as a civil servant.

Although much of the work performed by the various bureaus is routine, there is value in examining their precise activities which help chart the range of the province chief's responsibilities. It is also significant to note that four of the bureaus deal with substantive matters and the other four with staff work. The fact that four staff bureaus are necessary in a province signifies that the heavy paper work, so common to the bureaucracy in Saigon, is also prevalent at the provincial level. Our investigations into provincial government in Vinh Long did not afford us an opportunity to judge with confidence whether any of the staff agencies -- the secretariat, correspondence, general administration and budget and accounting -- could be merged.

#### 1. Bureau of the Secretariat

The Bureau of the Secretariat is the smallest of the eight bureaus in provincial headquarters. It employs three people including the bureau chief. Although the table of organization for the province indicates that the Secretariat deals with a variety of problems, from information and propaganda to the conduct of ceremonies, its main activities may be divided into three general categories. First, the Secretariat is responsible for personnel management, handling the recruitment, nomination, promotion, transfer, leave, and retirement of all provincial employees. A second major activity is protocol. Vinh Long is centrally located in the delta region, and, until early this year, the President's brother was bishop of the province. Thus, it was, and still is, often visited by dignitaries from Saigon. It is the

responsibility of the Secretariat to arrange receptions and handle all ceremonial functions relative to these visits. Other ceremonies, of which there are many in Viet Nam, are also under Secretariat supervision. The third major responsibility of this bureau is to prepare the agenda for the monthly meetings of the province chief and his subordinates.

Once each month, the province chief held an official meeting attended by heads of all eight bureaus and the chiefs of the six districts in Vinh Long. Although items to be discussed may have emerged through channels from the district level or from provincial headquarters, it was the responsibility of the head of the Secretariat, under the guidance of the province chief, to formalize the agenda. Due to his position, the head of the Secretariat maintained a close relationship with the province chief. He said he could see the chief any time he desired and conferred with him almost daily.

## 2. Bureau of Administrative Services

Although public administration in Viet Nam has been characterized by excessive compartmentalization and an almost rigid separation of functions, administrative practices at the provincial level often belie this description. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Bureau of Administrative Services in Vinh Long province. In addition to providing administrative services and support for the provincial government, this Bureau seems to be a "catch-all" for the multiple activities and services performed by the provincial government which do not fit into the other bureaus.

It is obvious from its table of organization that the Bureau of Administrative Services reaches into areas that would not normally be

considered part of the functions of such an agency. This is a result of the nature of government in Viet Nam; more specifically, government in Viet Nam has assumed responsibility for the management of activities which are not by nature governmental. For example, in its efforts to combat subversion, the government has attempted control over individual, family, and village activities and consequently has had to find an arm somewhere in its administrative structure to exercise this control. The growth of governmental responsibility, especially at the provincial level, has clearly outstripped the growth of the administrative structure in the provinces. As a result, an administrator may be found performing functions and being held responsible for programs which are not covered by the title of his Bureau.

It should also be noted that the Bureau for Administrative Services is not confined in its activities to provincial headquarters or the provincial level. Since the six district chiefs and their respective organizations are merely adjuncts of the province chief, the Bureau is expected to render them support.

At the time of this study, the Bureau, comprising seven men, was located in a cramped and crowded office adjoining provincial headquarters. The bureau chief, as did most administrators and individuals in Vinh Long, indicated that he had easy and frequent access to the province chief. However, despite the fact that he saw the province chief many times a week, he generally took his problems to the deputy chief for administration.

The bureau chief informed us that he also was in frequent contact with the chiefs of the various technical services in Vinh Long as well as with the six district chiefs. He said that the chiefs of technical

services and districts rank above a bureau chief in the administrative hierarchy. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to him that he visit them at their headquarters.

No newspapers are published in Vinh Long, but Saigon papers come in regularly. (Hue is the only city in Viet Nam, besides Saigon, which publishes a newspaper.) The Bureau chief said all items relating to Vinh Long were clipped and placed in a folder which he examined daily. The comments or criticisms in these clippings, we believe, were brought to the attention of the province chief and other interested persons in provincial headquarters.

The Administrative services chief informed us that he then had before him an item from a Saigon newspaper stating that "cowboys" were active in Vinh Long. He said that the chief of province had reacted to this item by issuing instructions to parents to supervise more closely the activities of their children. The bureau chief drafted the instructions, submitted them to the province chief for review and signature, and sent them to the Association of Students' Parents.

He indicated that Saigon papers were read very carefully with great attention paid to what was said about the administration of Vinh Long province. When an article was critical of something in Vinh Long, the province chief contacted the appropriate district chief and had him investigate the situation. Sometimes critical items appeared in the form of articles by correspondents, and at other times they were contained in letters of complaint to the newspaper. If the complaint involved a district chief, the province chief directed his security people to investigate the official and determine the validity of the complaint.

The Administrative services chief contended that provincial

administrators were often defenseless against accusations or complaints contained in Saigon newspapers. He said that a common thief has recourse to trial by jury, but a dedicated civil servant is helpless before the criticism of the press. He cited the example of a district chief who was professionally injured by a series of unfair newspaper articles. While he was annoyed at some of the excesses of the Saigon press, he acknowledged that it did serve as an effective check on possible abuses of authority by provincial officials.

### 3. Bureau of Correspondence

The Bureau of Correspondence is responsible for providing mail service, telephone operators for provincial headquarters, and messenger service. Although limited to these routine services, it nevertheless has the status of an unofficial bureau headed by a chief of unofficial standing. The bureau chief informed us that the province chief had, on several occasions, recommended that he be given the full status of an official bureau chief, but the Department of Interior had not yet approved the recommendation.

The Bureau of Correspondence is also in charge of the provincial archives and is the repository for all letters, documents, and correspondence relative to official provincial business. This is no mean responsibility as all administration in Viet Nam is plagued by an overabundance of paper work. The files of the Vinh Long archives were filled to the top with folders, seemingly in a state of chaos, but the bureau chief said they were arranged in an orderly fashion for the use of those familiar with them. He also said, with great satisfaction, that his office would soon move to larger quarters with more space for the archives.



#### 4. Bureau of Political Affairs

The Bureau of Political Affairs consists of the bureau chief and two clerical assistants. The chief had a 30-year career in government service, part of which was spent in the Sureté. Reflecting the purpose of the bureau, a sign condemning the Viet Cong hung above his desk.

The small staff assigned to this Bureau appeared to be a result of the fact that the functions which it performs are also within the purview of other agencies of provincial government. Not only do the various military and security forces keep a tight rein on political affairs, but the then newly appointed deputy chief for security had assumed the position of coordinating officer for several agencies previously concerned with political and security matters. Despite the overlapping of functions, the Bureau of Political Affairs is responsible for keeping abreast of the political situation throughout Vinh Long. The bureau chief receives reports on the security situation from all districts and villages in the province and then summarizes them for the province chief.

The bureau chief indicated that he also was responsible for maintaining contact with political groups, labor groups, and religious organizations in the province. In attempting to explain his activities in this respect, he said that it was not quite liaison, but rather an effort to follow up and evaluate the effect of these organizations on the people in the province. For example, he said, the Hoa Hao religious sect might have a meeting of its members. He would exercise surveillance over it and judge whether its effect was favorable or unfavorable to the government. This is not intelligence work in the sense that it constitutes spying because no official gathering in the province

may take place legally without permission from a responsible provincial official. The bureau chief was specifically asked about a ceremony, attended by the NIA/MSU research team that morning, in which members of the Hoa Hao had assembled at a cemetery to honor their dead. The bureau chief said that the sect had received permission for the ceremony from the district chief of Binh Minh. The bureau chief had seen the application submitted by the Hoa Hao and said he soon would receive a report from the Binh Minh district chief on the activities and effects of the meeting. This was a normal procedure as the Bureau of Political Affairs regularly receives reports from district chiefs on security matters.

The appointment of a deputy chief for internal security seemed to have created a number of organizational and administrative problems for the Bureau of Political Affairs. Previously, the bureau chief reported and received instructions directly from the province chief. The lines of control and authority were uncluttered and clear, at least to the bureau chief. With the appointment of the new deputy, the bureau chief was less certain where he stood in the administrative hierarchy of the headquarters. He indicated that the functions of his bureau are very similar to those of the deputy for security. He acknowledged that organizationally and "formally" his bureau is under this deputy but, in actuality, the deputy had been issuing instructions to him through the province chief. The bureau chief said that he received routine instructions from the deputy but on matters of significance, his orders came from the province chief. The confusion that accompanies this type of transition and structure was reflected in the fact that even the organizational chart above the bureau chief's desk did not show the new

position of deputy for security. One might conclude from our discussion with the bureau chief that the confusion was not a result of inadequate definition of responsibility, but rather a reflection of the bureau chief's reluctance to acknowledge his own downgrading.

While all officials in Vinh Long are in some way responsible for, or concerned with, security affairs, only those who have these problems as their primary responsibility attended the bi-weekly meetings on security presided over by the province chief. According to the chief of the Political Affairs Bureau, those attending, besides himself, were the security deputy, the head of the civil guard, the chief of the Bureau of Military Affairs, and the officer in charge of the regular army in the area.

During our interview with the chief of the Political Bureau, he was handed a report from the district chief of Sadec on Viet Cong activities there. The report said three dugouts of Viet Cong terrorists had been surrounded by government forces and the rebels captured along with incriminating documents. The names of the captured Viet Cong were mentioned. The report had first gone to the security deputy for examination and possible action and he, in turn, sent it to the chief of the Political Bureau.

When asked about the general security situation in the province, the bureau chief expressed the belief that the security forces in Vinh Long were sufficiently strong to control the Viet Cong. However, he stated that security was not as good in Phong Dinh and Kien Phong, the two adjoining provinces. He suggested that inadequate security provisions in those two provinces permitted terrorists to infiltrate into Vinh Long, making the job of the Vinh Long forces more difficult.

These observations by the bureau chief may be interpreted to mean that dealing with Viet Cong terrorists on a province by province basis is ineffectual. Since the completion of our study in Vinh Long, the Vietnamese government has recognized this situation and has instituted reforms in security procedures to prevent the Viet Cong from profiting by lack of administrative coordination among provincial security forces.

#### 5. Bureau of Economic and Social Affairs

The Bureau of Economic and Social Affairs has limited responsibility for farmer cooperatives and associations, agricultural and commercial credit, the rice economy, commerce, and agrarian reform. It employs a bureau chief and two clerical assistants. With such a small staff, it is obvious that the Bureau does not have primary responsibility for the management or supervision of the economic areas mentioned above.

The Bureau's primary function is reporting and liaison. The subject matter with which it is concerned is often more directly under the control of the numerous technical services which exist within the province, and, in some cases, under other bureaus in provincial headquarters. The Bureau of Economic and Social Affairs acts mainly as a liaison office between the province chief and the technical services as well as with some of the departments in Saigon. The bureau chief spends little time in the field and is generally tied to his desk by paper work.

Much of this work consists of writing reports on the status of programs which are the responsibility of other people. The chief supplies information on these programs to the province chief and to agencies in Saigon which require up-to-date statistics on economic and agricultural

activities in Vinh Long. For example, while talking with the bureau chief, a questionnaire from the National Bank came to his attention. One of the questions required that a census be taken of the various types of cattle in Vinh Long. The bureau chief said he would follow up this request by submitting a similar one to each district chief. He anticipated that it would take about 15 or 20 days to complete the count.

The bureau chief said that at least ten items which originate in the central government are referred to him daily. In most cases, he is expected to provide information as requested. Much of his work involves responding to inquiries and instructions from the Department of National Economy in Saigon.

The bureau chief expressed the opinion that although the central government in Saigon makes policy, the chief of province has ample latitude to interpret this policy to suit the needs of Vinh Long. The bureau chief felt that the province chief often heeded his advice and communicated his suggestions to the central government, as well as incorporating many of these suggestions in the implementation of government policy in Vinh Long. As with almost all individuals to whom we spoke, the bureau chief felt his relationship to the province chief was a good one. He appreciated the latter's open mind and policy of easy communication. His only complaint -- one that could easily have been made by any civil servant in Vinh Long -- was that he was burdened with excessive paper work and bureaucratic red tape.

During our conversation with the bureau chief, he constantly referred to a problem he then had under study -- establishing and extending farmer cooperatives and farmers associations in the area. He was

engaged in an analysis of the problems involved in these programs and what could be done to make the farmer organizations more successful. As we subsequently learned from several sources, the success of these programs was doubtful or at least not up to expectations.

## 6. Bureau of Communal Affairs

With the exception of the family, the village and hamlet are the most important units in Vietnamese society. It may be said that the importance of the village has been fully recognized by the government of the Republic and the Viet Cong, both of whom have been making strenuous efforts to capture the loyalty of villagers and exercise effective control over them. In response to fears that the Viet Cong would successfully undermine village life, the government has assumed much authority and power over village affairs.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the village once managed its own affairs and even had an elected council, it is today closely controlled by the provincial government.

The most important means by which the province chief controls a village is the chain of command which runs from his office to those of the various district chiefs and village officials. At the same time, the province chief utilizes other channels to regulate village activities and implement programs. In large measure, his reliance on alternative channels is necessitated by the fact that inadequate technical skills exist at the village level to implement all the programs intended for the villages in Vinh Long or any other Vietnamese province.

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1 The success of this program or policy is open to question; however, it is not our purpose to evaluate the program at this time.

The Bureau of Communal Affairs is vested with general responsibility for almost all phases of village government and administration. It oversees expenditures and accounts, administration, construction projects, appointments to the village council, evaluations of council members and hamlet chiefs, and many other important and unimportant activities. There is no reason to assume that the Bureau of Communal Affairs has exclusive responsibility for supervision of this wide range of activities; the province chief, as in all areas within his jurisdiction, may assign any bureau or technical service the responsibility for supervising or carrying out a program in a village. The fact that the Bureau of Communal Affairs employs only five individuals, in addition to its chief, suggests that its supervision of village activities cannot be as tight as the table of organization implies.

Much of the bureau chief's time is devoted to trips into villages where construction projects are under way. His interest is not exclusively a supervisory one; he acts as a purchasing agent to obtain materials for the construction of schools, markets, and other projects. According to his assistant, the bureau chief has had much experience in construction and prefers to act as his own contractor rather than rely on an outside firm. He feels that by doing the work himself, he can obtain greater efficiency and economy in construction. The province chief encouraged him in this activity. It is quite possible that both men were motivated or induced to follow this procedure by the lack of competent, reliable building contractors who might normally operate out of a city like Saigon.

Construction projects have a high priority in Viet Nam today because they represent a visible weapon in the government's fight to gain

the loyalty of village people. During our period of observation in Vinh Long, the province chief, next to his interest in security, evidenced the greatest concern about village and community construction. As a result, he and the chief of the Bureau of Communal Affairs found themselves working together closely to advance their common interest. The province chief was often accompanied by the bureau chief on trips to inspect construction sites.

#### 7. Bureau of Military Affairs

Until recently before our study, the Military Affairs Bureau performed many of the functions presently carried out by the deputy chief for security. The appointment of this deputy did, in fact, make an anomaly of the Bureau. He located his office on the Bureau's premises and proceeded to exercise authority over all areas previously under its jurisdiction and to utilize its personnel as he deemed fit. In fact, its employees made up his whole staff, since he had no other, and the bureau chief became his adjutant or assistant.

While there may be inherent administrative problems in this situation, the NIA/MSU Research Team did not perceive any. The bureau chief acknowledged that he had been downgraded but he accepted this as a necessary consequence of the dangerous security situation in Vinh Long. None of the personnel in the Bureau was a member of the army and, considering the security challenge, there was much to support the contention that a military man should be in charge of military operations, at least, in the province

The fact that a civilian bureau chief, until six weeks prior to our study, had been in charge of military affairs, gives credence to



the idea that the Vietnamese government had not made a clear distinction between military and political activities. Furthermore, when the civilian was succeeded in authority by a military man, the latter not only became, in effect, the commanding officer of all military forces in Vinh Long, but also was assigned responsibility for political education of the citizens in the province.<sup>1</sup>

The chief of the Military Affairs Bureau felt that the province chief often heeded his advice and followed up on his suggestions. Like most of his colleagues, he spoke of good relations with the province chief and easy access to him. The bureau chief's only complaint was the familiar one in Vinh Dong -- too much paper work and red tape.

#### 8. Bureau of Budget and Accounting

Provincial government in Viet Nam is limited in its activities and effectiveness by the size of its budget. However, the size of a provincial budget does not reflect the totality of government services performed in a province. Funds are spent directly by agencies of the central government; funds derived from the central government are spent by provincial officials; other funds derive from the province itself; budgetary responsibilities are imposed at the village level under the Bureau of Communal Affairs, and investments are made in the form of local labor and materials which are not included in any provincial budget but serve as an informal substitute for taxes. (The government has never officially equated local labor contributions with substitute taxes, although high officials have often recognized the parallel.)

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<sup>1</sup> See the President's instructions, page 33.

Therefore, the Bureau of Budget and Accounting does not reflect all provincial budgetary problems and activities. The major source of funds for the province is the central government where the budget, prepared by the Budget Bureau chief and submitted by the province chief, is reviewed. The responsibility for preparing village and district budgets is largely left to the chief of the Bureau of Communal Affairs. After reviewing the provincial budget, the central government makes its allocation based on its own resources and expected revenues. To supplement these funds, a province has limited authority to tax and procure revenue within its borders. The word "limited" is used because the central government has established a maximum level of taxation designed to prevent provincial officials from taxing too heavily and alienating the people.

The chief of the Bureau of Budget and Accounting informed us that his bureau is mainly responsible for all funds coming from the national budget which are spent in Vinh Long province, the province's internal budget, and American aid projects within Vinh Long. He spends one month a year preparing the provincial budget and budget requests. It is essential, during this period of preparation, that he remain in close contact with the numerous technical services in the province, especially those which require supplementary funds from the provincial budget. During this period the bureau chief also consults daily with the province chief on budgetary issues. The bureau chief said that he started his formal preparation in September, inasmuch as the budget had to be submitted to the central government by November. He told us that during November and December, the budget was studied by the director general of Budget and Foreign Aid in Saigon.

The Bureau, which employs seven people besides the chief, also serves as a central information office for the technical services and district chiefs in all matters relating to budget and expenditures. The chief pointed out that close liaison is necessary because the provincial budget provides funds for some personnel employed by the technical services and the districts. The Department of Public Works, for example, employs a number of people in Vinh Long who are paid from the provincial budget. Similarly, certain personnel at the district level, although technically on the payroll of the district, are paid by the province. This means that the head of the Budget Bureau must maintain close contact with district chiefs to learn their needs and anticipate expenditures for the coming year.

## PART VI

### THE PROVINCE CHIEF AT WORK

Despite the complex network of administration extending from the President of the Republic down to the village chief, the quality of government in the province depends on the daily decisions, many of a critical nature, made by the province chief. During our period of observation in Vinh Long, it became evident to us that while the province chief may depend upon the central government for guidance and upon his headquarters staff and subordinate levels of administration within the province for assistance, he cannot escape personal responsibility for the multiplicity of issues demanding the attention of government at the provincial level. Rather than describe the complexities of the job in the abstract, we have included in the following pages a consideration of some of the actual matters dealt with by the chief of Vinh Long province. In many instances, we personally observed him working toward the solution of specific problems. In others, we relied upon discussions with him, others in his administration, and residents of the province.

#### A. The Province Chief as Security Commander

Undoubtedly the most time-consuming and important problem faced by the province chief of Vinh Long is security. Like most other Delta provinces, Vinh Long is a rich rice producing area. Its broad expanses of paddy land are dotted with isolated thatched huts and many hamlets. The province is lined and criss-crossed by natural waterways and canals.

Although Vinh Long is neither a border nor coastal province, movement in and out is a simple matter and concealment within the province is not too difficult.

Nevertheless, provincial officials felt that the security problem was less severe in Vinh Long than in other provinces in the Mekong Delta. Roads in Vinh Long are relatively better and the terrain is slightly less suitable for establishing concealed guerrilla retreats. The greatest strength of the Viet Cong, as seen by provincial officials, is their ability to terrorize the people and compel their cooperation. The deputy chief for security affairs estimated that only about 100 hard core Viet Cong cadre were then in Vinh Long, but these forces were augmented by rebels from adjoining provinces. It is impossible to effectively patrol the borders between provinces and security officials gave no indication that inter-provincial cooperation existed in efforts to cope with terrorist activities on a regional rather than provincial basis. Since our study, however, some moves have been made in this direction.

The Viet Cong never were completely eradicated from Vinh Long. We were told that although many of the Viet Minh went north after the signing of the Geneva Agreements in 1954, other remained in the south and have since been rejoined by a number of those who originally went north over the 17th parallel. It is not difficult for the Viet Cong to re-enter South Viet Nam. They have easy access by land across Cambodia, or by sea along Viet Nam's long coastline. Typical of the Delta region, the Viet Cong retain cadres and caches of arms at convenient places in the province. The abundance of rice in the area helps solve the problem most familiar to guerrillas -- food supply.

Rice also offers an additional means of harrassment to the Viet Cong. They can disrupt the supply to Saigon and the provinces of central Viet Nam, thereby making their power felt both by local residents who are deprived of an income and by Saigon and central province residents who are deprived of food.

The task of the Viet Cong has been facilitated in Vinh Long by an ecological pattern which differs from that of the provinces in the central lowlands and highlands. Instead of populous villages, each with its own traditional consciousness, Vinh Long is made up of villages embracing many sparsely settled hamlets. A typical hamlet consists of a series of peasant huts on either side of a small trail which winds over an irrigation canal and on through the rice fields. The population may vary from 50 to 5,000 people and the closest adjoining hamlet will sometimes be as far away as 20 kilometers, a trip which may take eight hours by boat from the village center.

It is obviously more difficult to provide protection for a population dispersed in this fashion over a large area than for one concentrated in villages.

At the time of our study in Vinh Long, the pattern of Viet Cong attack was that of small bands of guerrillas striking at poorly protected villages and hamlets. There had been only a few occasions when the Viet Cong had mounted a major attack on a protected installation.

Security in Vinh Long was the responsibility of the province chief. Mr. Ba contended that although he had never been in the army, he was not inexperienced in military matters. He said that he had worked closely with the military during the uprisings of the Hoa Hao sect and the Binh Xuyen river pirates, adding that this experience had given

him an understanding of military matters and had facilitated the job of maintaining a favorable relationship with the colonel who commanded the military district in which Vinh Long was situated. Before the appointment of the deputy chief for security, the province chief himself developed plans and was in direct command of security matters and military operations. He often accompanied the civil guard on combat missions. Mr. Ba could utilize at his discretion the regular army detachment assigned to him or call for the support of the Fifth Military Region, headquartered at Can Tho.

The number of personnel available to the province chief for security work was, in some respects, deceptive. Vinh Long has a population of 532,705 people on an area of 1,800 square kilometers. It has six districts<sup>1</sup>, 19 cantons, and 81 villages. At the time of our study, there was no effective provincial telephone service and transportation was not easily available to all sectors of the province. Seen in this context, the number of personnel assigned to the task of combatting guerrilla terrorist activity seems minute.

The only way by which provincial security forces can effectively counter the highly mobile Viet Cong is the development of an efficient intelligence system. Our discussions with the chief and other provincial officials did not indicate that such a system existed in Vinh Long. The province chief informed us that he had three regular sources of information on security matters: (1) the provincial police service, (2) the Sureté in his province, and (3) private informants. Mr. Ba also acknowledged that he received information occasionally from the Sureté in Saigon.

He consulted regularly with the army major who was his deputy

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on organizational chart, page 28, and map.

chief for security. The major told us he hoped to improve the security situation in Vinh Long in the near future, primarily by more effective utilization of the civil guard and the village self-defense corps (Dan Ve). He made it clear that he would prefer using regular army troops because he felt they could eliminate the Viet Cong more expeditiously, but he expressed slight hope that a sufficient number of such troops would be made available to him on a regular basis.

Even with the appointment of a deputy chief who devoted his time exclusively to security problems, the province chief still dealt with many internal security matters. Often, his involvement was the inevitable consequence of his position as administrative head of provincial government. For example, on April 4, 1960, he received a local village leader of the National Revolutionary Movement. The two men spoke about security problems in the village and the party leader expressed concern over a menacing letter which had been received by a village landowner. The letter had a Viet Cong seal attached to it and was designed to make the landowner flee from his property. The province chief examined the letter and quickly concluded that it was not an authentic Viet Cong threat. He pointed out to his visitor that the seal obviously had been transferred, and clumsily at that, from another letter to this one. The chief's suspicions were aroused because he had learned previously that the landowner in question had alienated his tenants by refusing to extend credit to them. The chief concluded that the tenants had drawn up a fraudulent Viet Cong threat as an act of revenge against the landowner.

The following day, the province chief held a prolonged discussion on security with the chief of Lap Vo district. The district chief



reported that on the previous evening there had been an exchange of rifle fire between government forces and Viet Cong in the village of Hoi An Dong. The village police chief and a member of the self-defense corps were killed. The district chief said he thought a small band of Viet Cong had been involved and that the encounter was an accidental skirmish rather than a planned attack on Hoi An Dong. The real attack, he believed, was intended for the village of Hoa Dinh where a local theatrical festival was scheduled. Many people were to congregate in a single auditorium -- an attractive target for the Viet Cong. The latter could demonstrate their power either by terrifying or by lecturing to the assembled villagers. However, en route to Hoa Dinh, the rebels met the Hoi An Dong police chief and a group of Dan Ve on their way to a neighboring village to break up an organized gambling group. A fight ensued in which the police chief and one Dan Ve died. No Viet Cong were killed.

The district chief felt that if it had not been for the gambling operation in the neighboring village, his two men would not have been killed. He said that the army lieutenant who commanded the civil guard in the village where the gambling was going on was not only aware of the operation but had participated in it to his profit. The district chief pointed out that the lieutenant was a good professional soldier but his involvement in organized gambling made it impossible for the local police chief to properly perform his duties because he did not want to risk antagonizing the commander. Province Chief Ba instructed the district chief to firmly inform the lieutenant that if he did not put an end to his gambling activities, the province chief was prepared to remove him from his command.

Next, the Lap Vo district chief was told to widen the road leading into Hoi An Dong to make the village more easily accessible to provincial security forces in case of future trouble. The two men then turned their attention to finding a replacement for the chief of the village police force who had been killed. Mr. Ba told the district chief that he would have full freedom in selecting a replacement but pointed out that, in his judgement, it would be advantageous to select someone from outside the village. The province chief said that a resident of the village would know everyone there intimately and would be inhibited in enforcing the law by friendship and family ties. Someone from another village, he said, would feel no restraint in exercising his authority over the people of Hoi An Dong.

After concluding this discussion, Mr. Ba was visited by the Cho Lach district chief. The province chief considers Cho Lach the district with the most serious security problems in Vinh Long. He emphasized to the district chief that he must not rely on any single individual or group of individuals to maintain security in Cho Lach. Mr. Ba said it was necessary for the district chief himself to keep abreast of all security problems in the area and urged him to organize his own intelligence service, keep himself informed of all developments affecting security, and report to the province chief any district official who was not qualified to do his assigned job. Recently, Mr. Ba had transferred a district police official from Cho Lach to a district where security was less precarious.

On numerous other occasions, we observed the province chief discussing security matters with his deputy for security and other officials. He participated in planning military operations with his deputy

and left no doubt in our minds that internal security was his greatest problem. Although he told us that his relations with the military command in the region were good, we saw no instances of regular army troops working in cooperation with provincial security forces. Troops were often seen riding in trucks through the province in daylight hours, but the heavy burden of security -- especially during the night -- fell to the more poorly trained and equipped forces of the province.

The constant pressure of security was illustrated by events at a dinner our research group attended at the province chief's home. Although a place had been set for the deputy chief of security, he was not present when we sat down at the table. While we were eating, the major arrived dressed in a field uniform. He explained that he had just returned from a military operation which had taken place at the border between Binh Minh and Sadec districts. He had learned of the presence of a small band of Viet Cong in the area and, accompanied by a contingent of civil guard, attacked the suspects in their living quarters. As the deputy and his men approached, they were fired upon by the Viet Cong who then fled. The result of the night's work was one captured terrorist and a few weapons.

Province Chief Ba and the major went on to discuss other security matters with us. They expressed anxiety that the Viet Cong might single out as targets the agrovilles under construction in Vinh Long. That afternoon, the major had visited an agrovillage in An Xuyen province. According to people there, the Viet Cong had already attacked the place, caused much damage and killed several people. Both Mr. Ba and the deputy were intent on taking precautions to ward off Viet Cong attacks on agrovilles being built in Vinh Long and on making preparations to

defend them if necessary.

While the Viet Cong were not sufficiently strong to assume permanent control over any section of provincial territory, their activities had the effect of impeding almost every government program in Vinh Long. In fact, the government had been forced to establish programs to counter the Viet Cong that contributed little to economic and social development. Large numbers of men had been diverted into military and security organizations.

A discussion with a provincial official from the Bureau of Economic and Social Affairs graphically demonstrated the havoc the Viet Cong had been able to play with even the best government programs. He told us that when the Viet Minh ruled the area, prior to the establishment of the Republic of Viet Nam, landholdings were broken up and distributed to the peasants free of charge. The recipients have been farming this land ever since without title and without assuming the responsibility of paying taxes on it. Under the government's agrarian reform program, the former landlords have gone to court and asked for either the restoration of their property or some form of compensation. Many of these holdings are in the most insecure portions of the province and the landlords are afraid to enter the area to collect rents or take possession of their property. The tenants have let it be known that the landlords are free to come back if they choose. There is little doubt that the tenants have been encouraged in this situation by the Viet Cong who want to appear as benefactors of the peasant. Thus, while the peasant continues to benefit from the land without fulfilling any of the legal obligations of ownership, the government is not able to effectively implement the terms of its

own agrarian reform program. Ironically, the provincial official pointed out, the Viet Cong has been able to make the agrarian reform program, designed to make the peasant the legal owner of the land, seem like government oppression of the peasant.

#### B. The Province Chief as Engineer

Province chiefs in present-day Viet Nam are selected for their abilities as administrators or military leaders. Yet, observing a province chief at work, one could reasonably suggest that engineering talents would be as valid a basis for selection as either administrative or military competence. Throughout almost every day of our stay in Vinh Long, we watched Province Chief Ba make decisions pertaining to some construction project under way within the province. At one moment he would be selecting a construction site, and the next conferring with someone about the purchase of materials. He conveyed the impression that, next to security, his effectiveness as a province chief was measured by his ability to construct roads and public buildings and undertake other community projects which would ultimately benefit the people.

It is hard to disagree with Mr. Ba's appraisal of the importance of development projects in his province. There is scarcely a village in Viet Nam where the government is not continually pushing some kind of community construction project. At times the pattern seems chaotic; however, and this point is important, government officials contend that despite appearances, these projects represent the basis for a new social, economic, and political infra-structure for Viet Nam. If the shortrange answer to the Viet Cong is military, the long range

answer is development, and the essence of development is construction. At the same time, there is a calculated risk in undertaking countless construction projects at breakneck speed in village after village. Each project requires capital, labor, and materials. In varying degrees, the rural population is compelled to contribute these, directly or indirectly. Because the level of community consciousness is not always sufficiently high for the peasant to appreciate the activities he is forced to support, he is often alienated from the government in the process. The Vietnamese peasant demonstrates a profound aversion to being taxed and when he is forced to contribute free labor to government projects, his reaction is often hostile. It may be argued that the government can ill afford to sacrifice popular support for the rapid construction of roads and buildings. Nevertheless, the government has chosen to take this risk and it is the responsibility of the province chief to advance its programs.

Province Chief Ba spent much of his time traveling throughout Vinh Long inspecting projects, talking to provincial officials and discussing problems with village residents. At some time during each day that we observed Mr. Ba, he inspected a project or a village outside of the provincial capital of Vinh Long. His intense concern with community construction is apparent in the following description of a typical inspection trip.

On April 6, accompanied by his deputy chief for administration, his secretary, an engineer attached to the Department of Public Works, and our research team, Mr. Ba drove from his headquarters to Lap Vo district. His first stop was My An Hung, a large village of about 12,000 inhabitants, where he wanted to observe progress on the

construction of a market place. The new market was being financed by the province but the land on which it stood "had been donated by individual residents of the village." As the province chief walked through the village, he spoke to several residents and encouraged them to build shops and commercial establishments in the area surrounding the market. There already were about 25 stores in the vicinity but Mr. Ba hoped that, as more were built, the market would become the commercial center of the village and the adjoining areas would be full of supplementary business activities. Mr. Ba was favorably impressed with what he saw in My An Hung and attributed the successful growth of the market area to the village chief. He told us the village chief was a man of genuine ability who got along well with his people. Because they respected him for his competence and integrity, he was able to convince them that they should participate in village projects. The province chief explained that the success of many programs initiated at higher levels in Saigon depended upon the ability of village chiefs and the lowest ranking officials.

After leaving the village in Lap Vo district, the province chief and his small entourage drove to Sadec district. In the course of the trip, he stopped at three villages to inspect market places under construction. Mr. Ba let it be known that he was not satisfied with the progress being made; he found construction slow and fewer stores being built than he had hoped. He attributed this lack of progress (as he had attributed the success in My An Hung) to the local village chiefs who had failed to inspire the villagers to cooperate in carrying out the general plan of the market place. He informed all three chiefs that construction at My An Hung was proceeding much more rapidly

than in their own villages.

Mr. Ba's secretary took notes on the discussions with the village chiefs and upon his return to provincial headquarters late in the day, the province chief dictated a detailed memorandum to the district chief of Sadec where the three villages were located. The memorandum was intended to encourage the village chiefs to move faster in completing the market place and other projects. In another village, Mr. Ba was approached by the village chief and one of his predecessors. The latter was an old man who wanted to bring a complaint to the attention of the province chief. He told Mr. Ba that the man in charge of constructing the market place had made extremely difficult requests of the villagers. For example, he said that people had been required to contribute a certain amount of topsoil for the foundation of the new market place. The old man explained that this was a hardship for the villagers and that it would have been much more reasonable if they had been asked to bring a boat load or two of ordinary soil to fill the holes in the road surrounding the market place. Province Chief Ba was sympathetic to the complaint and promised to do something about it. He told the man that the present village chief could not issue instructions to a representative of a technical service, but that he, the province chief, would instruct the person in charge of the project to modify his requirements. Later, Mr. Ba explained to us that the technical service employee in this village was in need of proper training and experience. Mr. Ba said the man had two faults: he did not know enough about the technical aspects of construction and he did not know how to deal with people.

If the representative of the technical service needed further training, it is unfortunate that he could not have had Province Chief



Ba as his teacher. Mr. Ba was not only conversant in a wide range of technical subjects but his treatment of people -- officials as well as villagers -- was masterful. He maintained few of the outer trappings of officialdom and in dealing with the residents of the province he used persuasion, not force. When discussing issues with subordinate officials, he found little need to assert his authority and attempted instead to apply reason. In each village the province chief moved among the residents casually and the people did not hesitate to come up to him and talk over their problems. There was no bowing and scraping before the chief and he had a subtle way of making it clear that he wanted neither tribute nor special attention.

Mr. Ba's easy manner could have been deceptive; there was no doubt in our minds that he had authority over all that happened in Vinh Long province. We learned from other officials at the province, district, and village level that Mr. Ba frequently made unannounced checks of district and village headquarters. Whenever he went into a village, he examined the village register which contains the date and hour of each inspection trip made by the district chief and lists his recommendations for the improvement of village affairs. By checking this register, the province chief immediately knew how closely the district chief was keeping abreast of matters in the village.

When we returned to provincial headquarters, Mr. Ba invited us into his office and led us to a map of the province which had various colored flags designating past, present, and future construction projects. He proudly pointed to the schools, market places, and other structures which had been completed under his leadership. He took great pride in these accomplishments and informed us that the costs of the construction projects

in Vinh Long were less than for similar projects in other provinces. He explained that he held expenses down by not using contractors or calling for construction bids; instead he had his own staff buy building materials and he frequently used village "volunteers" to do the actual work.

### C. The Province Chief and Agriculture

The most important product of the agricultural nation of Viet Nam is rice. Although rubber is the largest source of foreign credit, the rich paddy lands of the Mekong Delta yield more than enough rice to permit Viet Nam to feed itself and export a surplus. Of all 38 provinces in the country, USOM agricultural experts say only five or six rate higher than Vinh Long in terms of potential agricultural development. Rich soil, sufficient water, a large labor force, and a favorable ratio of land to population make Vinh Long an important farming area.

Notwithstanding its favorable natural assets, the economic potential of Vinh Long, or all of Viet Nam for that matter, cannot be realized if the government takes a laissez aller attitude. To use a term favored by government officials, there must be a "rationalization" of agricultural production and peasant life before the nation can enjoy the benefits of its bountiful soil. The first requirement in fulfilling this objective, of course, is to protect the farmer from the harassment and terrorism of Viet Cong guerrillas. Beyond this, government objectives include better roads in rural areas, more equitable land distribution, the introduction of improved farming methods, crop diversification, low interest loans to farmers, the establishment of cooperatives

and farmers associations, and a variety of other programs designed to improve peasant life and contribute to the nation's overall economic development.

Much of the work involved in implementing these programs is performed by field representatives of central government agencies. However, as we have observed in other areas, the presence of technicians does not relieve a province chief of responsibility for government programs. As technical field representatives in Vinh Long made clear to us, without the active support of the province chief it would be impossible to achieve the goals of the central government in the field of agriculture.

While our research period in Vinh Long was too brief to permit us to come to definite conclusions, we received several distinct impressions through observation and interviews. Most important, we felt that even the support of the province chief could not assure the success of a program. Enthusiastic officials are no substitute for well trained agricultural economists, rural sociologists, and technical experts. The absence of such specialists destines a program to failure. It is unreasonable to expect a province chief and his staff to possess the many kinds of specialized knowledge needed for a large-scale rural development program.

Provincial officials in Vinh Long discussed the kinds of mistakes that can be made when inexperienced personnel are responsible for important programs. We were told that the government was interested in the development of rural cooperatives but, unfortunately, their functions and purposes were never clearly explained to farmers. Furthermore, according to one informant, the government did not make sufficient money

available to properly launch the cooperative movement in Vinh Long. The Long Chau cooperative, for example, had been in existence since 1956, had about 1500 members, but was not considered a success. Long Chau had rice storage facilities but little rice was kept there because farmers considered the storage rates too high. Eventually, rates were lowered but farmers still felt they were better off financially selling their rice immediately rather than storing it for several months and assuming risks. One official told us that he personally had stored 10,000 piasters worth of rice which, after four months, was sold for 11,000 piasters. He had to pay 400 piasters in storage fees to the cooperative. He told us that he would not store his rice there in the future because he did not consider the 600 piasters gained in the transaction a good enough yield on his investment.

More recently, the government has emphasized farmer's associations rather than cooperatives. To the confusion of the peasants in Vinh Long, the man responsible for explaining the farmers associations to them was the same man who had been manager of the rice cooperative. Immediately there was suspicion of the farmers associations. "They thought it was the same organization with a new title," one person told us.

This seemed to be the kind of issue which warranted the intervention of the province chief, but we found no evidence that Mr. Ba was deeply involved in the farmers association movement. His apparent detachment can be justified by the tremendous demands made upon him in other areas of agricultural development. At the time of our investigation in Vinh Long, the province chief and many other officials were preoccupied with the building and settling of two agrovilles. They

were high-priority projects and required constant supervision by Mr. Ba. The agrovilles involved the relocation of large numbers of people scattered over the countryside. They were intended to enable the peasant to enjoy more of the benefits of communal life, particularly security, and ultimately to improve his economic status.

The government desired to establish these agrovilles as rapidly as possible, a goal which placed a heavy burden on the province chief. Although others supervised the actual construction, the importance attached to the agrovilles made it necessary that he participate in all phases of the program. Neither the construction timetable nor the budget allowed the Province chief a choice of methods in recruiting labor to build the agrovilles. He was compelled to conscript free labor from villages throughout the province. There was neither time nor personnel to explain the attractions of the agrovilles; consequently, those selected to live in the new communities had no choice in the matter.

Mr. Ba held the opinion that, while the agrovilles would eventually have social and economic value, their primary purpose at the time was to improve security in Vinh Long. Both agrovilles, Cai Son and Tan Luoc, were located in areas where the people were most sympathetic to the Viet Cong. To offset Viet Cong strength, the province chief planned to resettle many Catholics at Cai Son and populate the Tan Luoc agrovillage with members of the Hoa Hao sect. The province chief believed that these religious groups were anti-communist and that their presence would weaken the influence of the Viet Cong in the area.

We were interrupted in our discussion by the visit of an engineer who was involved in construction of the agrovilles. He complained to the province chief that many owners of land on which the agrovilles

were being built did not have the necessary maps and deeds to prove ownership and that without these proofs they could not be compensated. Province Chief Ba was more moderate in his response to this problem than the young engineer. He instructed the engineer to announce to the dispossessed landowners that they must have a title to their land before they could be compensated; however, if they did not have one, they would be given three months in which to file a claim for compensation and produce some other evidence of ownership. The engineer then gave the province chief a general rundown of developments at the Tan Luoc agrovillage. The latter was clearly dissatisfied with the rate of progress and informed the engineer that with 6000 people working on the project, he expected it to move ahead much more rapidly.

#### D. The Monthly Meetings

Each month the province chief convened a meeting of district chiefs and agency heads at his headquarters. There are two reasons for including a discussion of this meeting here: (1) its agenda presents a capsule description of the scope, complexity, and importance of problems confronting provincial officials; and, (2) it is administratively significant that the province chief regularly called certain of these officials together to discuss general issues. It demonstrates a means by which a province chief can consult regularly with administrative subordinates and keep himself informed of ideas prior to formulating decisions. It is often contended by informed observers in Viet Nam that too many province chiefs deny themselves access to the knowledge and ideas of their subordinates. The notes presented here have been gathered from several officials who regularly attended these

meetings. The province chief did not feel it would be proper for our research group to attend one of the sessions; he thought our presence would destroy the atmosphere of intimacy which he sought to create.

The meeting was held at an appointed time each month in the office of the province chief. He acted as chairman and those attending included the six district chiefs, the two deputy chiefs of province, the chief of the civil guard, the eight bureau chiefs in provincial headquarters, a leader of the Republican Youth, two army officers overseeing construction work on the agrovilles, the chief of police, and the head of the Sureté. An agenda, for which anyone entitled to attend the meeting could suggest items, was prepared and distributed in advance of the monthly meeting.

We learned that the first part of the session was devoted to a discussion of security problems and the remainder dealt with general administrative matters in the province. The security questions discussed by the group at the time of our study were as follows: the need to train additional personnel to handle Viet Cong threats against security; defense of provincial villages and military installations; ways of improving the information program at each level of provincial government; aid to families of members of the civil guard and self-defense corps killed by the Viet Cong; and the inadequacy of arms and ammunition available to the civil guard and self-defense corps. On the last point, the group decided that the only way to solve the problem would be to distribute the weapons and ammunition captured from the Viet Cong.

The first matter discussed during the second part of the meeting dealt with training the Republican Youth (Thanh Nien Cong Hoa). The

government has placed great stress on the desirability of recruiting youth into the Cong Hoa movement, yet those responsible for administering and leading the program feel that its purposes and activities have not been clearly defined. The second item was a progress report on the agrovilles under construction. Next, there was a discussion of the progress of farmers associations in the province and the effort to increase membership. As with the Cong Hoa Youth, officials professed confusion as to the specific objectives of the associations.

The fourth item concerned ways and means to assure repayment of loans extended to individual farmers by the National Agricultural Credit Organization (NACO). The rates of repayment in the different districts of the province were compared. Next on the agenda was the problem of tax collection, a vital issue in provincial government since many local activities as well as allowances for village officials are financed by revenues from provincial taxes on land. Furthermore, the ability of a province to collect taxes is a reflection of the security situation in the area. During the 1959 fiscal year, the highest percentage of taxes collected -- 88 per cent -- was in the district of Vinh Long where the provincial capital is located. Figures for the remaining five districts were: Cho Lach, 65 per cent; Sadec, 55 per cent; Lap Vo, 49 per cent; Tan Binh, 49 per cent; and Binh Minh, 44 per cent.

The group next took up the matter of village budgets. It was pointed out that many villages had not presented or drawn up their budgets and it was felt that each should be urged to do so without delay. The last item discussed was the utilization of public lands owned by each village. Suggestions were advanced on how the villages



could rent these lands more easily and obtain funds to augment the local budget. At the time of our study, 4,352 hectares of public land in the province were owned by the villages. Of the total, 3,300 hectares had been rented and it was decided to appoint a committee to determine why the remaining land had not been leased.

Minutes of the monthly meeting were sent to the Department of Interior, the regional delegate, and the commander of the 5th Military Region. Province Chief Ba established the custom of having a luncheon for all those attending the meeting and, according to our informants, the monthly session, followed by the luncheon, contributed to the quality of administration in Vinh Long. It made isolated administrators aware of the types of problems faced throughout the province and provided an opportunity for officials at different levels of provincial government to get together informally to discuss matters of mutual interest. Our informants said that when these matters are brought up through regular channels, decisions are slower and there is not the give and take found in face-to-face discussions. Although they did not attend the meetings themselves, the chiefs of the technical services were invited to the luncheons. We were told by one official that the opportunity to visit with provincial leaders in a relaxed atmosphere saved writing several dozen letters each month. He expressed a marked preference for informal procedures in dealings with his colleagues.

## APPENDIX A

### TRAINING PROGRAM FOR VILLAGE AND HAMLET OFFICIALS:

#### A CASE STUDY

The following case study illustrates many of the administrative difficulties confronting Viet Nam's 38 province chiefs. The case we have chosen deals with the planning and creation of a training program for future village and hamlet officials. It is not a dramatic issue but perhaps for this reason it better illustrates an aspect of provincial government that is often overlooked by those who concentrate on big and critical questions. It demonstrates the degree to which provincial officials, while engaged in security operations, construction of agrovilles, and other vast programs, are obliged to concern themselves simultaneously with the routine administrative duties common to all bureaucracies.

Provincial officials looked on the training program as being of eventual value, yet they felt it imposed a burden on them which they were not fully prepared to assume at the time.

Moreover, this case depicts the dilemma of the province chief in his relationships with departments of the central government and with his subordinates at the district and village level.

#### Background

The village in Viet Nam is more than a political unit; it is a social, economic, and, in many respects, a spiritual entity which commands loyalty from its members. While Viet Nam is no longer a "federation of villages," no government can afford to ignore the deep

attachment of the individual Vietnamese to his traditional village. In many respects, the village is the key to the future of Viet Nam. If the government is successful in gaining the allegiance of the villager, the Viet Cong stand small chance of subverting the government; if, on the other hand, the government cannot get the active support of the villager, soldiers and weapons will be of little use in the struggle against guerrillas. Thus, the village has become a battleground between the government and the Viet Cong, each vying for the loyalty and support of its peasant inhabitants.

The problem is not a simple one, even for the wisest government. The autonomous tendency of the village -- which gave rise to the proverb, "Royal decrees cannot pass over village rules" -- anchors the village to the past and works against change. It is change, however, that is necessary if Viet Nam is going to experience the social, economic, and political development that its educated citizens demand and its less educated ones soon will demand.

In recent years, the government has issued numerous decrees affecting village government. Perhaps the most significant was the government's replacement of the elected village council by an appointed council. Through this move, the government sought to minimize the possibility of the Viet Cong infiltrating village government and, at the same time, hoped to link village administration more closely with national policy. A drawback to the new arrangement was that government-appointed village councillors were not necessarily the leaders to whom the village looked for guidance. Realizing this, the government attempted to set forth principles for the selection of village council members and initiated training programs for those already on the

councils.<sup>1</sup>

Provincial officials throughout Viet Nam felt that these moves were not sufficient to assure a qualified village council. Many province chiefs felt that it would be wiser to select promising local residents and train them in the duties and responsibilities of a village council member or a hamlet chief. Thus, when village or hamlet officials died or left office, a group of trained young men would readily be available to replace them. The idea was brought to the attention of the Secretary of State for Interior during a meeting with Southwest area province chiefs in 1959. Nothing more was heard of it by the province chiefs until March 22, 1960, when the regional delegate convened a meeting in Can Tho attended by all deputy province chiefs in the area and announced that the President had decided to initiate a training program for future village and hamlet officials.

The delegate instructed the deputy chiefs to organize two training courses in each of their provinces, one for village council members and one for hamlet chiefs. Each council course would be attended by five young men from each village and the hamlet chief program would train three young men from each hamlet. Trainees were to be selected from among "bright, alert, and loyal members of the community who are in good health, anti-communist, and under forty years of age." Present village council members or hamlet chiefs were not to be selected because the program was designed to find eventual replacements for these men. The deputies were further instructed by the delegate to limit the size of the

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1 For an extensive treatment of village administration, see "The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community - Administrative Activity", Lloyd W. Woodruff, MSUG, May, 1960.

classes to 200 students and give priority to areas which had the poorest security. The village council training course, lasting ten days, was to take place in the provincial capital and the hamlet chiefs' course, lasting five days, would be held at the various district capitals in each province. The delegate said that lesson plans for the courses would be sent to the province chiefs by the Department of Interior. Classes were to commence on April 15, just three weeks from the date of the meeting.

When Province Chief Ba learned of these instructions, he was distressed. Vinh Long, with 81 villages and 741 hamlets, would have to train 405 future village council members and 2223 hamlet chiefs. Mr. Ba felt three weeks was insufficient time in which to select instructors, arrange for classroom space, procure housing for the students, and obtain funds to finance the training program. Without written instructions, he lacked the specific details he considered necessary to arrange the courses.

In the absence of adequate information, the province chief asked one of his subordinates to telephone a close friend who worked in the Department of Interior in Saigon to try to learn more about the program. After talking with his friend, the administrator traveled to Saigon to examine whatever written material was available. Finally, on March 29, the province chief received a letter, dated the previous day, containing detailed instructions about the program.

According to this letter, the curriculum would consist of political instruction, public administration and military and intelligence training. Teachers were to be selected from among chiefs of bureaus and technical services in Vinh Long. The province was to provide

food and lodging for which 20 piasters per day per student was being allotted. In contrast to the verbal instructions given by the delegate, the letter directed that the training programs for both village and hamlet officials be held in the provincial capital. In addition to instructors and food and lodging, the province chief was required to provide training materials and furnish transportation.

Mr. Ba confided to us that, while he considered the training program highly desirable, he disapproved of its timing and procedures. He stated that his staff was already overburdened and the April 15 deadline left little time to make proper arrangements. He also felt that the entire course could have been improved if he and other province officials, most familiar with village and hamlet problems, had been consulted in the planning of it. Nevertheless, he did not feel it would be prudent to convey his reservations to his superiors. His job, he said, "was to carry out orders."

The day following the meeting at which the regional delegate first announced the training program and before receiving any written instructions from the Department of Interior, the province chief sent letters to each of his six district chiefs requesting them to submit lists of proposed trainees to provincial headquarters before March 30. He specifically informed them that he wanted to forward these lists to the Department of Interior for approval before the first class opened. He told the district chiefs to select trainees from among members of the Republican Youth, members of the NRM, or outstanding young villagers. Even if the district chiefs received the letter on March 23, the day it was sent, they had but one week to make their selections and submit them to the province chief.

The process seemed simple but it involved more difficulties for the district chiefs than appeared on the surface. The average district in Vinh Long has about 14 villages comprising approximately 100 hamlets. Inadequate transportation and communication undermine the most efficient administrative procedures. For example, the district chief of Binh Minh received the province chief's instructions on March 24. Two days later he sent each village chief in his district a memorandum instructing them to submit the names of proposed trainees as soon as possible. The memorandum stated:

"We are happy to inform you that, according to information received from our superior, each village must choose several young men who belong to the youth of the Republic of Viet Nam or to the NRM. These young men must be capable, active, have a substantial background, and be of a very anti-communist spirit. You must be assured of the loyalty of each man selected as well as the loyalty of his family. Two training courses will be held, one to which each village must send five candidates to be trained as village council members. The training will take place in the provincial town of Vinh Long and last for 10 days. A second class for future hamlet chiefs will be held in the district town of My Thuan and will last for a period of five days. Each hamlet will send three candidates to this program. Upon graduation from these training courses, these candidates will eventually become members of the village council or hamlet chiefs in the event of vacancies. Each candidate will supply three pictures of himself."

The district chief set a deadline of March 29 for the submission of names, leaving himself one day to forward the names of all candidates in the district to the province chief. A careful reading of the Binh Minh district chief's memorandum to the village chiefs reveals that the wheels of confusion were already in motion. Because the memorandum was on the inaccurate oral instructions of the regional delegate and not the more precise written orders the province chief subsequently received, it contained several inaccuracies. Village chiefs were told that courses for future hamlet chiefs would be held in each district's principal town, whereas they actually would be

conducted in the provincial capital. The district chief failed to mention that the maximum age for a trainee was 40 years. The three days allowed village chiefs to select candidates for the two training courses was unrealistic. In some cases it would take almost a day for the memorandum to be carried from district headquarters to the village chief and another day to deliver the reply, leaving the village chief only one day to select five candidates for the village council course and three from each of his hamlets for the hamlet chief course. Even if all of these conditions could have been satisfied in one day, it was impossible to provide three photographs of each candidate as few villages and even fewer hamlets have photography shops.

It is no wonder that of the nine villages in Binh Minh district only My Thuan, the chief town, submitted the required list by March 29. When the district chief examined the My Thuan list, he found two mistakes and returned it to village headquarters for correction. All other villages failed to meet the deadline and the district chief received no more lists until April 3, when one other village delivered the names of candidates to district headquarters. To the dismay of the district chief, this list also failed to comply with instructions. It contained only the names of candidates recommended for the village council course. The problems in Binh Minh were typical of those encountered in the five other districts of Vinh Long. The March 30 deadline passed without any response to his instructions and the province chief, on April 2, sent a telegram to each district chief urging him to submit the names of candidates in the shortest time possible. This produced results from several districts, but upon studying them, Mr. Ba found that they did not satisfy the requirements he had established. He felt that either the



district chiefs had misunderstood his instructions or that his first memorandum had not been sufficiently clear.

On April 4, Mr. Ba dispatched another telegram to the district chiefs telling each of them to send one of their assistants to provincial headquarters where the deputy province chief for administration would brief them on the requirements and procedure of the training courses. That same day, each district complied and sent a representative to provincial headquarters. After extensive briefing, the district chiefs immediately wrote again to their village chiefs, supplying them with the correct information and fixing April 6 as the new deadline. By now, deadlines began to loom as imaginary goals not to be taken seriously. No district submitted its list by April 6. At last, two days later, Sadec district, a fairly urban and well-to-do area on the western fringe of the province, produced a full and correct list of candidates for the province chief. After receiving it, the province chief sent another telegram to the five remaining district chiefs telling them in strong terms to carry out his orders within 24 hours.

In the meantime, Chief Ba and his staff wrestled with the problems of procuring instructors, locating facilities, and making the countless arrangements necessary to conduct training courses for 200 students. Reluctantly, the province chief decided to hold the first session of the training course in a primary school, recessed for vacation, in the city of Vinh Long. He hoped that by the time the second class got under way, the provincial Youth Center of An Duc would be completed and could be used for the program. Then, he would turn the primary school back to the field representatives of the Department of Education so they

could maintain their own activities there. The big drawback to the arrangement was that the primary school lacked facilities to house the 200 trainees. Some construction work would be necessary before they could be accommodated, additional water and shower facilities had to be installed, water pressure had to be increased, and an infinite number of minor details attended to. The province chief asked the engineer who headed the Department of Public Works service in Vinh Long to assist him in the task.

The province chief still did not know where he would obtain money to support the training program. The provincial budget had no funds to pay the anticipated expenditures. Construction, housing, training facilities, food, minor expenses, all added up to an estimated 500,000 piasters. The province chief learned to his dismay that the Department of Interior had made no provision to support the program when it ordered the courses established. In a letter dated April 6, Mr. Ba informed the Department that he could organize the courses but that he did not know where he would get the money to pay expenses. He requested the Secretary of Interior to intervene on behalf of Vinh Long province and request the Bureau of the Budget to make sufficient funds available for the training program. Mr. Ba said he let it be known that, if necessary, he personally would go to Saigon to ask the Secretary to intervene with the Bureau of the Budget. He felt that this was a way of conveying his urgent need for money to carry out a successful program. He also informed the Department that if the money did not come soon, he would not begin the course on April 15 as instructed.

The next day, April 7, the province chief, hoping to initiate the course on the appointed date, designated certain provincial officials

as instructors, allowing them time to prepare their lectures. Here was another matter which dissatisfied the province chief -- the demand that he release civil servants to conduct the training program. Just one day earlier, he had inaugurated two other training courses instituted by agencies of the central government but placed under his responsibility. One was a training course for commissioners in charge of youth in the villages and the second was for young men in the village self-defense corps. Each detail of these programs and all provisions for housing the trainees, required the attention of the province chief. He even took an interest in the menus planned for the students because he was aware that the director of the programs was from the north and the students were from the south. He suggested to the director that he modify the menus to satisfy southern palates.

By April 9, Mr. Ba had received no word from Saigon on where he was to obtain funds to support the new training courses. The uncertainty attached to this program, which he was committed to begin on April 15, added to the weight of responsibility which was starting to appear excessive for any single administrator. The province chief did not attempt to explain away his pessimism about the training program, he merely pointed out that Vinh Long did not have the human resources to satisfy the simultaneous demands placed upon it by agencies of the central government. The Directorate General of Reconstruction had ordered the province to build two agrovilles; the Department of Interior had instituted the training program for future village council members and hamlet chiefs; the Directorate General of Youth had assigned a youth training program to the province. The next month, Mr. Ba said, the Department of Agriculture was likely to insist that

he establish a program to train young men in new agricultural techniques. He told us that each training program and project required not only a teaching staff, but additional personnel such as staff organizers and soldiers to protect it from possible Viet Cong attacks. He felt that competent administrators had to "sell" a program before it was of any value. If the people were not convinced of the benefit of a program, it would be of doubtful psychological advantage to the government. The province chief acknowledged the value of each of the individual programs but he emphasized that none of them could be really successful unless officials of central government agencies consulted him and other province chiefs more frequently and intimately when the programs were being planned. He argued convincingly that Vinh Long province could not do all of the things expected of it with its present personnel. "Sometimes," he mused, "the distance between Saigon and Vinh Long is much, much greater than 175 kilometers."

The NIA/MSU team left Vinh Long before the training courses outlined in this case study began. It is believed, however, that the obstacles encountered in endeavoring to set up these courses provide typical examples of a certain set of problems facing provincial administrators in Viet Nam.

APPENDIX B

Ordinance No. 57-a  
October 24, 1956  
(JO156-p.2708)

Regarding the Administrative Reorganization in Viet Nam.

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM,

In view of the Provisional Constitutional Act No. 1 of October 26, 1955.

In view of Decree No. 4-TTP of October 29, 1955 establishing the composition of the Government.

In view of Ordinance No. 17 of December 24, 1955 reorganizing the administrative system in Viet Nam.

In view of existing laws concerning all administrative organizations.

ENACTS:

Art. 1 - Viet Nam is composed of provinces, cities, and communes.

I. PROVINCES

Art. 2 - Provinces are legal entities possessing autonomous budgets and public property.

Each province shall be governed by a Province Chief assisted by one or several deputy chiefs.

Art. 3 - Province Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs shall be appointed by the President.

Art. 4 - Province Chiefs shall be under the direct jurisdiction of the President and shall represent the Central Authority in Town.

Art. 5 - A Province Chief is charged with the enforcement of laws:

- a. He is responsible for the general management of all provincial services, and for making reports to the Presidency and other Departments on the activities of services under his jurisdiction or that of other departments.

He may propose transfers of technical officials assigned to his locality.

- b. He is responsible for order and security. For such responsibility, he shall have to coordinate all local security and police forces. In emergency cases, he may requisition the armed forces and (if he does so) has to make an immediate report to the Presidency.

Art. 6 - In the quality of representation of the Government, he presides over all public ceremonies in his locality.

Art. 7 - He controls and authorizes the provincial budget.

Art. 8 - He supervises village administration.

The organization of the provincial administration and finance shall be established by subsequent decrees.

## II. CITIES

Art. 9 - Cities are legal entities possessing autonomous budget and public property.

Each city shall be governed by an appointed Prefect ("Đô-truong" - Am. "Mayor") and a City Council.

Art.10 - The city administrative and financial organization shall be established by subsequent decrees.

## III. COMMUNES (or VILLAGES)

Art.11 - A Province includes many communes which are legal entities possessing autonomous budget and property.

Art.12 - The communal administrative and financial organization shall be established by subsequent decrees.

## IV. CANTONS AND DISTRICTS

Art.13 - Several communes (many) form a Canton which is governed by a Canton Chief assisted by one or several deputy-chiefs.

The appointment procedure and the duties of Canton Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs shall be established by subsequent Arretes.

Art.14 - Several cantons form a district which is governed by a District Chief.

Art.15 - District Chiefs shall be appointed by the President on the

proposal of the Province Chief.

#### V. DELEGATES OF THE GOVERNMENT

Art.16 - Government Delegates shall be appointed by Presidential Decree, and in charge of a number of Provinces.

Art.17 - As administrative inspectors, Government Delegates survey the activities of services in the provinces placed under their jurisdictions. They may also intervene with the various Departments to promote the efficiency and progress of services dependent on such Departments.

Art.18 - Government Delegates represent the central executive administration.

They shall make periodic reports on the general situation in (their) provinces and make useful recommendations to the Presidency.

They may make recommendations as to the coordination of provincial services and propose promotions for Province Chiefs.

Art.19 - The President may assign to Government Delegates special missions in one or several provinces, and have them transmit Presidential orders to province chiefs.

Art.20 - In emergency cases such as: calamities, special events, etc...Government Delegates may order Province Chiefs to mobilize all public services, and (in such case shall) make immediate reports to the Presidency.

Art.21 - Government Delegates are charged with the survey of all problems concerning provinces under their jurisdictions, and with prior consent of the President, they may organize meetings with Province Chiefs to exchange ideas.

Art.22 - Government Delegates may also, with Presidential authorization, organize meetings with the Police and Security and other administrative authorities in their own regions to study security problems. In emergency cases, they need not obtain prior consent from the President, but (in such cases shall) make immediate reports to the Presidency on the purpose of those meetings.

Art.23 - Government Delegates represent the Government in all official ceremonies in Provinces under their jurisdiction.

They also represent the Government in receiving diplomatic delegations or personages visiting their concerned regions.

For the latter duty, they shall receive prior instructions from the Government in each case.

## VI. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Art.24 - All former provisions contradictory to this ordinance shall be hereby cancelled.

Art.25 - All Secretaries of State, and the Secretary-General, and the Presidency are charged, each as to that which concerns him, with the execution of this ordinance. It shall be published in the Official Journal and be effective from the date of its signature.

Saigon, October 24, 1956

Signed: NGO DINH DIEM



**REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM**  
**THE PRESIDENCY**

No. 115-a/TTP/VP

October 24, 1956 - Saigon

From: The President of the Republic of Viet Nam

To: The Secretaries of State  
 The Delegates of the Government  
 The Saigon Mayor  
 The Province Chiefs

The Ordinance No. 17 dated 24 December, 1955 abolished the legal status, and the regime of financial autonomy of the Regions ("Phan"). Consequently, the administrative structure of Viet Nam has been reorganized.

Today, I have the honor to inform you that with Ordinance 57-a dated 24 October 1956, I have just completed these reforms with the following purposes:

1. To increase the power and responsibilities of Province Chiefs;
2. To define new missions of delegates.

Thus, the reforms are completed as the Government has planned in order that the administrative machine be made more efficient.

A Province Chief is a representative of the central government and not a special representative of a department. He will assume more important responsibilities than before, but at the same time will have more facilities than before.

**PROVINCE CHIEFS**

A province chief is assigned by the President and put under the direct command of the President. He is the representative of the central government in the province.

Besides the mission of carrying out orders, he has the responsibility of the functioning of different services in his province.

He submits reports to the President or to the Secretaries of State about the activities of bureaus and services under the command of the Province Chief or under the command of different Departments.

The Province Chief coordinates different bureaus and services so that the activities become more effective and reports to the President about progress or discrepancies.

The Province Chief must help representatives of different departments working in his province.

The Province Chief must be consulted and have the right to present his opinions on the planning and carrying out of governmental projects concerning his province.

In addition, the Province Chief is responsible for security and public order. In this matter, he coordinates the activities of police and security forces in his province (civil guard, military police on temporary duty for the civilian authorities, etc.)

In an emergency case, he can mobilize the military force, but he must report it immediately to the President.

From now to the day when the financial structure of the province is reformed, the authority of the Province Chief on finance and taxation is defined by currently valid documents not in contradiction with the above-mentioned ordinance.

The power and responsibilities of the Province Chief as defined in current regulations will not be changed if those regulations are not in contradiction with this ordinance.

The Province Chief directly controls village administration. He has the responsibility of selecting and assigning members of village councils, guiding them, controlling their work, checking the village budgets so that resources be used rationally.

The Province Chief exchanges mail directly with the Presidency and different Departments. One copy of each mail must be sent to the Delegate.

The Province Chief can have direct contact with different general directorates and chiefs of services of every Department, when necessary. As for important affairs, he must receive directives first from the Presidency.

The Province Chief can receive directives from different Departments, but these directives must be signed by the Secretary of State himself. In this case, a copy of the directive is sent to the Presidency and to the Delegate's office.

Directives and advises having general character sent by different bureaus and services to provincial representatives must be sent through the Province Chief. One copy must be sent to the organization under the command of the concerned Department. These organizations, when sending mail to their Departments, must send them through the Province Chief.

The Province Chief sends periodical reports to the Presidency or the Department on the activities of the provincial public offices and may recommend the transfer of civil servants working in the province who fail to fulfill their duties.

A copy of the report should be sent to the Government Regional Delegation.

Copies of the reports prepared by technical personnel should also be sent to the Regional Delegate and the Province Chief.

The Regional Delegate and the Province Chief should immediately present their opinions to the President.

The Province Chief may discuss with the chiefs of services located within the area under his jurisdiction on matters concerning the province.

Responsible for the operation of the public offices in the province, the Province Chief must report on illegal acts of the administrative personnel after the preliminary investigation.

With regards to the activities of judiciary or military agencies, the Province Chief may not bring his direct intervention but may report to the Presidency on matters which are not legal or which are untimely.

Concerning the Treasury, the Province Chief has the right to directly intervene only when there exists a case of stealing, embezzlement or misappropriation, and to take necessary measures, but should report to the Presidency and the Finance Secretary without delay.

If a certain Department does not have representatives in the province, its work is to be undertaken by the Province Chief.

Generally speaking, Ordinance 57-a of October 24, 1956 and the aforementioned instructions shall be applied to the municipalities if there is nothing contrary to the special statute of the municipalities.

#### THE VILLAGES

The village is directly administered by the Province Chief. At the villages, the Province Chief carries out his duties with

the assistance of the Canton Chief, the Deputy Chief of Canton and the District Chief. The District Chief carries out his duties in the name of the Province Chief.

The Districts do not have a legal personality. The present district boundaries are maintained until new modifications are made.

The Canton Chief performs the liaison between the villages and the district and provincial administrative agencies. The Canton Chief assists the District Chief in the implementation of measures decided upon by the superiors. The Canton Chief shall, whenever possible, settle the disputes to reconcile the interests of the villages or the interests of private persons.

The Canton Chief and the Deputy Chief of Canton are appointed by the Province Chief in light of recommendations made by the Village Chiefs (village representatives - Dai dien Xa).

#### GOVERNMENT DELEGATES

The Government Regional Delegate no longer retains the position of local administrative leader as before. The Government Delegate has the following three types of duties:

1. As an inspector, the Government Delegate has the duty of following up and ensuring the smooth operations of all public offices in the province and may intervene with the the Departments in matters relating to the activities of the Departments in the province.

The Regional Delegate should attend the monthly meetings with the executive agency of the Presidency and meetings with the administrative and financial inspectors.

The Regional Delegate keeps himself informed of the situation in the provinces through reports submitted by the Province Chiefs. The Delegate examines these reports and presents his opinions or recommendations to the President.

2. In the capacity of executive assistant, the Regional Delegate follows up the implementation of regulations, instructions, and programs of the Government. The Regional Delegate may therefore be delegated by the President to give instructions to the Province Chief.

3. The Regional Delegate may be assigned by the President to conduct investigation or to carry out assignments apart from his regular duties.

The Regional Delegate sends correspondence to the President, to the Secretaries of State, and the Province Chiefs. Copies

of important correspondence exchanged between the Delegate and the Province Chiefs and Secretaries of State shall be sent to the Presidency.

The Delegate must, at least twice a month, report to the President on the situation of the Provinces. Copies of these reports should be sent to the executive agency of the Presidency, and, if necessary to the Departments concerned.

In order to carry out his inspection mission, the Government Delegate may examine the documents and files of the Provincial Office or of the agencies dependent upon the Departments in the Province.

Signed: NGO DINH DIEM