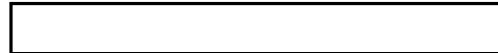


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OCI No. 1246/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
5 April 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

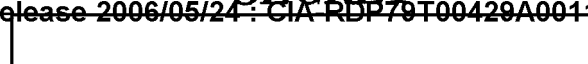
SUBJECT: Political Opposition to the Diem Government

1. The Viet Cong military and political apparatus comprises the only significantly organized mass opposition to the Diem government. Although Saigon has not formally outlawed opposition parties--even including the Communist Party, restrictions are imposed on the holding of meetings and there exists ample legal authority to deal harshly with "individuals" deemed dangerous to national security. There are laws against subversion, and the propagation of communism is stipulated as being contrary to South Vietnam's constitutional principles.

2. A large segment of educated Vietnamese are actively or passively critical of the Diem government. Most prominent opposition leaders have been unwilling to cooperate with the Viet Cong, but the alienation of these leaders and their supporters benefits the Communists and contributes to political instability. The most active non-Communist opposition activity is now carried on outside South Vietnam. These opposition movements have been reduced to small factions centering around prominent figures in South Vietnam or living in exile. Such groups engage in clandestine meetings, occasional open protests, shifting alliances, maneuvers for foreign support, and sporadic coup plotting.

3. So far, a combination of governmental repression and rival ambitions has prevented the non-Communist opposition from developing a common leadership,

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an agreed platform, or a unified following. Currently no group is capable of challenging the government, but a number are capable of providing political support for a military coup plot or possibly of carrying out a successful assassination attempt on Diem.

4. At annex are:

Annex A - Opposition Parties and Movements

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Annex C - Alphabetical Listing of Parties

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Annex A

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OPPOSITION PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS

A. POLITICAL PARTIES1. Vietnamese Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang--VNQDD)

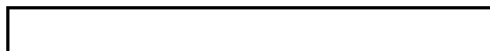
Old, pro independence party, founded in 1927, influenced by and patterned after the Chinese Kuomintang, with its main strength in northern Vietnam. At present, the party has little strength in Saigon, where a wing is led by Nguyen Hien Ty. Some branches are reported active in central Vietnam. The VNQDD apparently had some influence in instigating the air force bombing of Diem's palace in Saigon in February 1962 through Nguyen Van Luc, party member and father of one of the two pilots involved.

2. Dai Viet Party (Dang Dai Viet or Dang Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang: Greater Vietnam Party)

Old, proindependence party, formed about 1938 as an offshoot of the VNQDD. Soon divided into northern and southern wings, and has split into several factions since Diem came into office in South Vietnam. Although Dai Viet leaders claim these divisions are more apparent than real, the party seems to have little organized national importance. Dai Viet or Dai Viet-offshoot groups include:

(a) Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, (the Greater Vietnam Nationalist Party) a southern faction led by Nguyen Ton Hoan, an exile in Paris. Hoan, who visited the US in early 1963, has been represented in South Vietnam by Nguyen Dinh Luyen, and has a representative in the US, Huynh Sanh Thong. Hoan currently claims support from several Dai Viet factions and religious leaders in South Vietnam, but he is not known to have a well-organized following inside the country.

(b) Dai Viet Duy Dan (Greater Vietnam Association for the Advancement of the People), reported to be a northern faction once led by Phan Huy Quat and now by Le Quang Luat. Quat most recently was active in starting a "Front for National

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Unity." The party may also be an offshoot of the Dang Duy Dan (or Duy Dan), the "People's Party."

(c) Other reported Dai Viet factions include the Dai Viet Dan Chinh (Dai Viet People's Association) under Dang Van Sung (see Front for Democratization) and the Dai Viet Quoc Xa (Dai Viet Socialist Party), recently alleged by Nguyen Ton Hoan to be among his South Vietnamese following. Another leader, Nguyen Xuan Chu, formerly a Viet Minh front leader, is still active in Saigon.

3. Free Democratic Party (Dang Dan Chu Tu Do)

Founded by Dr. Pham Quang Dan in 1958 after his disaffection with the opposition "Democratic Bloc" (1957-58). The Free Democratic Party was first known as the "Republican Party" (Dang Cong Hoa). Dan, a Saigon physician, probably acquired a personal following as public leader of the "Democratic Bloc," he was one of two oppositionists elected to the National Assembly in 1959, but denied the right to take his seat because of alleged "irregularities." Dan has been under detention since endorsing the attempted coup d'etat of November 1960.

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[REDACTED] Nguyen The Truyen remains a leader in South Vietnam, but Dan's cousin, Pham Huy Co, largely carried on the Free Democratic Party's activities from Paris, until he launched his own "National Council for the Vietnamese Revolution" in August 1962 from Tokyo.

4. Democratic Party of Vietnam (Dang Dan Chu Viet Nam)

Party not known to have any organization inside South Vietnam. Consists almost entirely of the activities of Tran Van Tung, a Paris exile, and Nguyen Thai Binh (also known as Nguyen Khac Thuong), the nominal party leader and its financial backer, also in Paris. Tung, who was in the US in the spring of 1962, is the party brains and propagandist, who has published a pamphlet, "Sword of Free Vietnam" and a White Paper against the Diem government.

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5. Duy Dan Dang (Peoples Party)

Nationalist party founded in northern Vietnam, under leadership in the south of Le Vinh and Tran Van Kim.

B. POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SECTS

1. Cao Dai

The Cao Dai movement has an estimated following of from 1-4 million, held together more by religious than political loyalty. The religion was founded in 1925 by a Vietnamese civil servant, as a synthesis of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism and Taoism; its center is in Tay Ninh north of Saigon near Cambodia, but some followers inhabit the Mekong delta area. The Cao Dai maintained private armies, numbering thousands, during the Indochina War, and variously fought the French, the Viet Minh, or both. Cao Dai military and political strength was crushed by Diem in 1955-56 when an alliance of sects and some armed forces leaders attempted to gain control of the government. The Cao Dai movement has split into factions, ranging from supporters of the Viet Cong, to neutralists to pro-Diemists, but none appears to have national significance. They include:

(a) Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Hoi (Vietnamese Restoration Association), led by former General Nguyen Thanh Phong and Nguyen Thanh Dang.

(b) Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnamese Restoration League), led by Le Van Sau.

(c) The faction of Ly Khai, reported variously to be pro-Viet Cong and to be followers of exiled General Le Thanh Tat in Phnom Penh.

2. Hoa Hao

A sect formed in 1939 by a Buddhist, Huynh Phu So, in the southwestern provinces adjacent to Cambodia. With private armies claimed at 15,000, the Hoa Hao fought both the French and Viet Minh, but alternately cooperated with both. After Diem came

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to power, the Hoa Hao was militarily crushed and politically divided. It currently has almost no political or religious unity or organization, although some remnant Hoa Hao bands still exist.

(a) The Social Democratic Party (Dang Dan Chu Xa Hoi) has been the major remaining Hoa Hao political entity. It is dominated by a wealthy opposition politician, Nguyen Bao Toan, who has been in and out of exile [REDACTED]

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3. Binh Xuyen

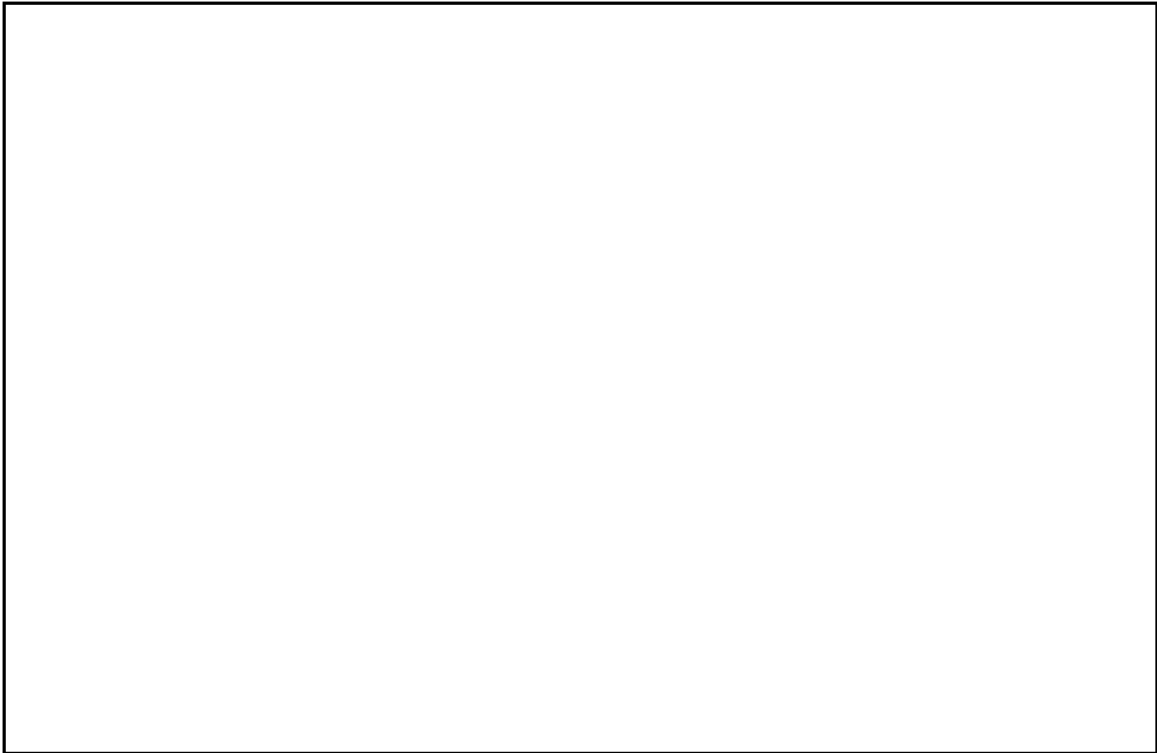
Originally a gangster band operating in the 1920's, the Binh Xuyen during World War II developed significant political and police power in the Saigon-Cholon area. After temporary cooperation with the Viet Minh, Binh Xuyen leader Le Van Vien rallied to the French and subsequently, under Bao Dai, gained control of Saigon's administration and underworld, imposing its own "taxes" on legal and illegal traffic. During 1955 Diem succeeded in wresting police power from the Binh Xuyen and in crushing its organization, except for a few scattered groups which reverted to rural banditry. Le Van Vien is now a wealthy exile in Paris. He is alleged to have provided funds for Nguyen Ton Hoan's recent trip to the US.

4. Catholics

Catholic opposition to the government appears to be nebulous and unorganized, centering around prominent clergymen identified with the 600,000-700,000 Catholic refugees who fled from North Vietnam. There have been sporadic attempts to create some party or front of Catholic oppositionists and other religious sects. The major Catholic opposition figures are Le Huu Tu and Pham Ngoc Chi, former bishops in northern Vietnam, and their supporters including Father Phan Ngoc Quynh, Father Mai Ngoc Khue and Father Oanh, but minor Catholic party organizations have been reported.

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C. FRONTS OR MOVEMENTS

1. Popular Revolutionary Committee (1955-56)
(Hoi Dong Nhan Dan Cach Mang)

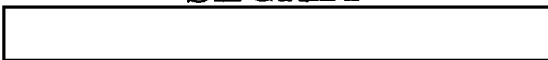
Group of about 50 leaders who were convened by Diem in April 1955 and sponsored a revolution, proposed by Hoang Co Thuy, that the Bao Dai government be dissolved and a new government formed under Ngo Dinh Diem. Group served temporarily, under Nguyen Bao Toan and later Pham Quang Dan, as a vehicle of support for the Diem government but was short-lived.

2. Movement of the Struggle for Liberty (1955-56)
(Phong Trao Tranh Thu Tu Do--PTTTD)

Group founded largely by Bui Van Thinh and Hoang Co Thuy, originally supported Diem toward strong, non-Communist government, but many members soon became disaffected with Diem and group disbanded.

3. United Front of Nationalist Forces (1955)
(Mat Tran Thong Nhat Toan Luc Quoc Gia)

Political movement which was in effect a temporary alliance of politico-religious sects with



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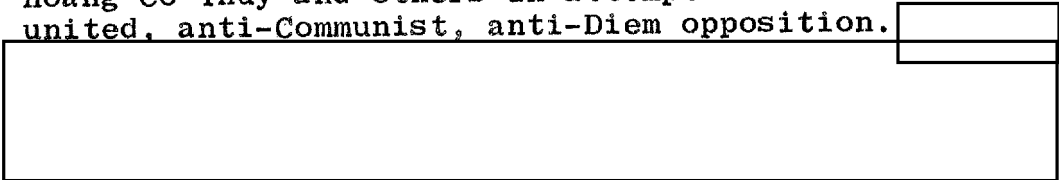
the object of fighting and overthrowing Diem. Crushed by Diem.

4. Democratic Bloc (1957-58) (Khoi Dan Chu)

A short-lived movement to develop a legal, united political opposition to Diem. Formed by Dr. Pham Quang Dan, and Hoang Co Thuy in Saigon, with support from a Catholic National Assembly member Nguyen Van Can and the adherence of several party and religious factions. Diem cracked down on the Bloc's activities, and in 1958 Dan withdrew after internal conflict with other leaders. The Bloc survived for a time with weakened membership and is now defunct.

5. Democratic Alliance (Lien Minh Dan Chu) (1960)

Movement, never formally announced, started by Hoang Co Thuy and others in attempt to establish united, anti-Communist, anti-Diem opposition.



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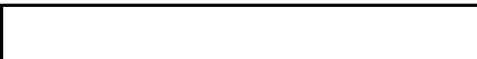
6. Caravellists

Refers to a group of 18 nationalist politicians, many of them former Bao Dai or Diem cabinet members, who presented a petition in April 1960 from Saigon's Hotel Caravelle, demanding democratic reforms in the Diem government. The group briefly attempted to organize a party, the Khoi Tu Do va Tien Bo (Bloc for Freedom and Progress), chiefly led by Pham Khac Suu and Tran Van Van. The organization made little headway. After the 1960 coup attempt, Suu was imprisoned by the government, other members of the group have suffered harassment and remain largely ineffective.

7. Front for National Unity (Mat Tran Doan Ket)

Organization formed in early 1961 by Pham Huy Quat, a Dai Viet leader and Caravelle-petition signer. Despite Quat's record of political opposition, his front apparently had covert official sanction, presumably as an outlet for controlled

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opposition activity after the 1960 coup attempt. The Front has shown little activity since early 1961 and appears to have developed no real effectiveness.

8. Front for Democratization (Mat Tran Dan Chu Hoa)

Another movement launched early in 1961 in the wake of the abortive coup. Founded by a Dai Viet leader, Dang Van Sung, possibly with tacit government backing. It gained the adherence of several moderate Vietnamese liberals seeking democratic reforms, but had developed no mass following or significance.

9. National Council of the Vietnames Revolution

Launched in August 1962 by Dr. Pham Huy Co, Paris exile and active leader of the Free Democratic Party, during the course of a trip to Asia where he visited Phnom Penh, Tokyo, and "Vietnamese territorial waters." Co apparently gained the backing of the military leaders of the 1960 coup effort, former paratroop officers now in asylum in Cambodia. This group has remained strongly Western-oriented, seeking American backing. The Council claims to have organized Territorial Councils in South Vietnam and some support among field-grade military officers. This claim has not been substantiated, but Co's group probably has the sympathy of Dr. Dan's former supporters, and on 27 January 1963, one firecracker-type grenade exploded in Saigon, strewing anti-Diem leaflets in the name of Co's Revolutionary Council. The Council has boasted that more such explosions will occur daily, as the second phase of a three-phased campaign to bring about Diem's ouster.

10. United National Front (Mat Tran Quoc Gia Lien Hiep)

This appears to be no more than the personal vehicle of Vu Tam Anh, a strongly anti-Communist nationalist from north Vietnam. Anh has been described as an "indefatigable oppositionist" and a "dedicated crackpot" chiefly given to letter writing. In mid-1962, however, he was reportedly toying with neutralism and was sought

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for arrest by the government. [redacted]
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11. Democratic Bloc (1961) (Khoi Dan Chu)

A group formed by the defeated presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the April 1961 elections: Nguyen Dinh Quat and Ho Nhat Tan; Nguyen Thanh Phong and Nguyen The Truyen. By June 1961, Tan, the Bloc's original president, announced his disaffiliation, claiming that Quat and Phong were in disagreement with his policy of "opposing Communists." There is no evidence that the Bloc has gained adherents beyond its current leadership.

12. United Democratic Front

This front was launched by defeated 1961 presidential candidate Ho Nhat Tan in late 1961 after his break with the newly-formed Democratic Bloc. It presumably has no organized following.

13. Committee for Peace and Renovation of South Vietnam

Group in Paris, headed by Tran Van Huu, currently issuing appeals for an international conference to create a coalition government in South Vietnam and to guarantee the country's independence and neutrality.

14. Progressive Nationalist Movement (Phong Trao Quoc Gia Cap Tien)

Group in Saigon led by Pham Huu Chuong, a doctor, and recently reported to be still in existence. Not known to be of significance.

15. Progressive Liberty Movement (Phong Trao Tu Do Cap Tien)

Group in Saigon under leadership of Nguyen Luu Vien. Not considered of national importance.

D. COMMUNIST

1. Vietnamese Workers' Party (Dang Lao Dong)

The official Communist Party of North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, the Revolutionary Workers' Party

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(Dang Cach Manh Nhan Dan Viet Nam), created in December 1961, apparently is designed to be its counterpart and is an affiliate of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV). Viet Cong military and political leaders are hard-core Lao Dong party members.

The Lao Dong party is a continuation of the Communist leadership of the Viet Minh (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, Vietnamese Independence League), the front resistance movement against the French. The Viet Minh was officially dissolved in 1951 and replaced by a new front, the Lien Viet, under the Lao Dong Party's domination.

2. National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Mat Tran Don Toc Giai Phong Mien Nam)

The political front for the Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam, created in December 1960, ostensibly to embrace all shades of opposition to Diem. Operates clandestinely under leadership not openly Communist, but long associated with the Viet Minh resistance. The NFLSV allegedly is organized on the national and local level, paralleling South Vietnam's administrative structure. It is composed of affiliated parties, liberation associations, and other organizations such as a Red Cross and an Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. The Front has a flag, radio and press services, allegedly controls a "liberation army" (the Viet Cong), engages in semi-governmental activities locally and abroad, where it seeks international support. Its actual membership cannot be estimated; it probably commands considerable rural allegiance--forced or voluntary, but has attracted no known supporters from the non-Communist opposition.

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