

Saigon Sets Civilian Rule Plan

By Nayan Chanda
Reuter

SAIGON, Aug. 1—South Vietnam will move from military to civilian rule through "people's revolutionary committees" and eventually merge with the North, according to the chairman of the National Liberation Front's Central Committee, Nguyen Huu Tho.

Tho, who is also chairman of the council of advisers of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, declined to set dates for these developments, but said that discussions are now going on to remove the obstacles to reunification.

On the domestic front, the PRG is tackling major economic problems inherited from the former government, which include "a contingent of 1 million unemployed . . . now reinforced by another million from the disintegrated puppet army," he said.

In written answers to questions submitted by Reuter, the French-educated lawyer said the objectives of the civilian administration would continue to be "a progressive democracy, a rapid healing of the wounds of war, development of industry and agriculture, restoration and expansion of land transport and communication, of internal as well as international marine and air transport and communication, and elimination of decadent culture."

The chairman would not say whether elections for a national assembly would be held in the near future.

He also declined to fix a timetable for reunification. He would only say that it was "an earnest, deep aspiration of the people of both zones — North and South."

In discussing reunification, Tho said representatives of the two zones are considering solutions to problems arising from the differing characteristics of North and South.

A major economic problem facing South Vietnam, for example, is that the previous government was "85 per cent dependent on foreign countries for raw materials."

"Regarding the exploitation of the oil on the continental shelf, our policy is that we are prepared to accept cooperation from foreign countries . . . that respect South Vietnam's sovereignty and independence," Tho said.

To overcome the South's economic problems, particularly unemployment, the government is trying to mobilize the people, Tho said.

"In Saigon alone more than 400 enterprises, big and small, have resumed operation," he said. Peasants who left their fields during the war are being helped to return and reclaim wasteland, he said, adding: "Land has recently been given to tens of thousands of people who have either no or little land."