

VIETNAM (REPUBLIC OF)

Date of Elections: September 3, 1967 (Senate)
October 22, 1967 (House of Representatives)

Characteristics of Parliament:

In accordance with the new Constitution adopted by a Constituent Assembly on March 18, 1967, and proclaimed on April 1, 1967, elections were held in September and October of the same year for a National Assembly comprising two Houses:

- the Senate, whose 60 members, elected by all the citizens for 6 years, are renewed by halves every 3 years;
- the 137-strong House of Representatives, elected for 4 years, in which 16 seats are set aside for representatives of Vietnamese citizens of Kmer origin (10) or from other minority ethnic groups (Cham, Meo).

Senatorial elections were held on September 3, 1967, and elections to the House of Representatives on October 22.

Electoral System:

All citizens of Vietnamese nationality of both sexes, who are at least 18 years old, are permitted to vote. They must also appear on the electoral register, be in possession of the required voter's card, be mentally sane and not have lost their civic rights. Members of the armed forces likewise participate in the poll wherever they happen to be on election day.

Candidates to the Lower House must be at least 25 years old and must have kept their Vietnamese nationality since birth or acquired it at least 7 years before the date of the elections or recovered it 5 years before. They must also have full rights as citizens, be in

order as regards military service and resident in Vietnam for at least 3 years, except in the case of persons on missions abroad and political exiles. Apart from the classic causes of ineligibility, there is also the fact of having given direct or indirect aid to Communists, pro-Communist neutrals or to activities profitable to Communists.

Furthermore, the electoral law entitles citizens who have been sentenced for political reasons and have thus been barred from standing as candidates to request the re-examination of their case by a Special Committee which must give its verdict within a week.

All these provisions apply equally to senatorial candidates who must, moreover, be at least 30 years of age.

Deputies are elected in 53 constituencies in a single round by majority uninominal ballot. As for the election of the 60 Senators, the entire country constitutes a single electoral college. Lists bearing a maximum of 10 names are submitted to the voters. Each of these expresses his choice by placing from one to 6 lists in the ballot-box without altering their composition. Vote splitting is not allowed.

Following the count, the 60 Senate seats are attributed to those candidates whose names figure on the 6 lists which win the most votes.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections:

On March, 18, 1967, at the end of a series of lengthy and difficult debates, a Constituent Assembly adopted a new Constitution which was proclaimed on April 1, 1967.

This Constitution instituted a presidential regime in the Republic of Vietnam, with a Head of State elected by universal suffrage and a bicameral Parliament whose membership and election procedure are outlined above.

The elections designed to set up the constitutional organs were organized a few months later despite the difficulties caused by the situation reigning in the country. The President and Vice-President

of the Republic were elected on September 3 in the persons of the two heads of the military Directory which had been in power in Saigon since June 1965: Lieutenant-General Nguyen Van Thieu and Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Kao Ky.

Elections to the Senate took place on the same day. Sixty-four lists, each containing the names of 10 candidates were originally submitted. However, 16 of these, including two put forward by Buddhist circles, were excluded from the ballot by the Central Election Committee — a decision which brought many protests. Consequently, voters had a choice of 48 different lists on polling day.

The largest political and religious groups were each represented by several lists; these, however, were not always homogeneous and were sometimes cleverly made up so as to attract the greatest possible number of voters.

While there can be no doubt that the Viet Cong increased its pressure and military activities right up to polling day, it is less easy to establish to what extent the National Liberation Front set out to hinder or prevent the holding of the elections.

The results, which show a participation of 88 per cent of registered voters, and especially the figures for the votes obtained by the six winning lists, seem to indicate that voters often simply deposited in the ballot-box the list or lists of the most familiar candidates without making full use of their right to vote for six of them.

The majority of senators elected were Catholic and many had held public office in the Government of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Furthermore, the winning list consisted of people who, although considered pro-governmental, represented a fairly wide range of opinions. Some of them had even recently had sanctions imposed on them by the military Directory. Finally, the list formed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tran Van Do, and some of his friends was defeated.

In the elections to the House of Representatives, which were held on October 22, 1,172 candidates contested the 137 vacant seats.

On the day of elections, there were less terrorist and military incidents than during the presidential and senatorial elections.

Participation for the entire country was close to 73 per cent of the registered electors, though in Saigon it was only 57.8 per cent.

All candidates contested the elections as individuals, so that it is extremely difficult to estimate the strength of the various groups in the House of Representatives. Commentators' views varied widely on the subject, though for the most part they agreed that legally voiced opinions and the various religious communities were more widely represented than in the Upper House.

Statistics:

1. *Results of Elections to the Senate*

Number of registered electors	5,853,384
Voters	4,902,748 (83 %)
Blank or void ballot papers	212,060
Valid votes	Not applicable (Each voter was entitled to deposit up to six ballot papers in the ballot-box: 21,884,602 of these were recorded.)

Political Group	Votes obtained	Series of Voters	Rate in the Senate
Nong-Cong-Binh List	980,474	19.99	10
Cong-Ich va Cong-Binh Xa-Hoi List	631,616	12.88	10
Dai-Doan-Ket List	600,720	12.25	10
Troi-Viet List	569,975	11.62	10
Doan-Ket de tien-bo List	553,720	11.29	lit
Bong-Lua List	553,632	11.29	10
			60

2. *Distribution of Senators according to Profession*

Ex-deputies in the Constituent Assembly.	8
Active and Retired Members of the Armed Forces	8
Professors.	8
Tradesmen and Industrialists.	7
Lawyers.	7
Engineers.	6
Doctors.	5
Active and Retired Officials.	4
Pharmacists.	2
Notables.	1
Architects.	1
Magistrates.	1
Landowners.	1
Cadres of the Confederation of Workers of Vietnam	1

60

3. *Results of Elections to the House of Representatives*

Number of registered electors	5,853,384
Voters.	4,274,303 (73 %)

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Profession*

Active and Retired Members of the Armed Forces	30
Active and Retired Officials	29
Teachers (public and private)	26
Former Deputies in the Constituent Assembly	19
Members elected by Municipal, Provincial and Communal Councils	9
Liberal Professions	10
Workers, Tradesmen and Industrialists	6
Farmers	4
Journalists	2
Employees from Private Sectors	1
Students	1
	137 (including 2 women)

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of Comparative Constitutional Law at Geneva University; Mr. A. F. Gorkine (USSR), Member of the Soviet of the Union; Mr. A. F. Schepel (Netherlands), Clerk of the Second Chamber of the States-General; Mr. J. Vilfan (Yugoslavia), Deputy, Member of the Executive Committee of the Union.

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Present-Day Problems of Parliament. International Symposium held in Geneva from November 4 to 6, 1965, by the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation (CIDP), under the auspices of the Union.

1. Verbatim Report. Introductory reports and debates *in extenso*, in the original language (French or English). Pp. 250 (out of print).
2. Official Report. Special issue of the Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin. Introductory reports; synthesis and conclusions of the debates, by Mr. C. Dominice. (English and French). Pp. 84 » 3.—

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Mimeographed brochure, Pp. 50 » 5.—

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