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SUBJECT: Central Vietnam

SOURCE : CAS Officers resident in Danang and Hue

1. In Quang Tri and Thua Thien the Strategic Hamlet program is going well. There is little Viet Cong activity and the trains run night and day.
2. With respect to the family, it is clear that Brother Can is very substantially withdrawing from active political affairs. This succeeded a difference of opinions he had with President Diem and Archbishop Thuc after May 8 over the way the Buddhists should be handled. He is being neutralized by Nhu and the President and it is expected that many of his candidates for the National Assembly will be replaced by Nhu men.
3. The situation in Hue cannot properly be described as an atmosphere of "fear and terror" but the iron fist of control is indeed obvious. This control is aimed very directly at the Buddhists and Buddhist activities, but in terms of actual repression it is limited. General Do Cao Tri is a very hard commander and will brook no nonsense as to his authority over the city. The military will follow his commands. The police are somewhat weak at the top level but have shown that they know how to handle a demonstration to prevent an explosion. Neither police nor army are consciously and provocatively brutal although the latter are apt to be rougher than the former.
4. There are approximately 2,300 students in the university and about 2,000 each in two main high schools. The leading organization was the Buddhist Student Organization but the leaders of this have been arrested and the students as a result are leaderless. Their efforts have been more an amorphous expression of protest and frustration and they have no clear idea of what they are seeking. The professors and even certain foreign professors were quite influential in pressing the students to take action.
5. The Republican Youth movement is quite active and is serving as the vehicle by which new blood is brought into the leadership of the villages. The Women's Solidarity Movement, it is also proving to be an extremely active group. These are replacing the Popular Force which is going into an eclipse as a result of the withdrawal of Brother Can from activity.

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