protocol is important in civilised society-be it democratic each man should have the public behaviour which conforms to his station, or stay away. Even in a democratic society like the American society, senators stopped calling President Kennedy «Jack» the moment he became the President of the United States, only addressed him as «Mr the President», and had for him the consideration due to the first dignitary of the state.

Some people would perhaps say that I am fussy, and that I pay too much attention to insignificant details. But these details tell long stories about the men who forget them. Either they are childish (in which case they should not be entrusted with the important positions they hold), or they are sloppy (in which case they should be dismissed, especially when they are supposed to belong to the most disciplined corps of the state : the army), or they have no respect at all for their chiefs (in which case we may say that Vietnam is in a very bad way.)

I am not accusing anyone in particular (I don't even know the names of those officers), but I am pointing out something important, especially as the Vietnamese society is traditionally one which has great respect for good manners.

Perhaps it would be useful to remind those who have forgotten it that when the chief of state, or the prime minister is present somewhere, then HE ALONE exists, and all the rest should keep in the background. In particular, the ministers, the interpreters, the ADCs. are supposed not to exist, however much they may be present. When the chief of state is present, then the prime minister should not be seen on the same level, of course, just as when he is present (without the chief of state) the others must stay in the background. There is only one smile : his ; one frown ; his ; one speaker : he.

So much is natural, and yet it is sad that the observance of these protocol details has not been respected, or enforced They give the impression of sloppiness all round.

The matter is made complicated by rather odd appointments ; junior officers and officials are given positions which rank above their seniors I know of many cases where B, or even C grade offficials (clerical) are made chiefs of service, or chiefs of cabinet which gives them the power to give orders to A grade officials (executive) Or of cases where a major is made chief of department which gives him the power of giving orders to lieutenant colonels or colonels. Naturally, in those services and departments there can be no discipline, because the subordinates have only contempt for their superiors. Why this fundamental rule is forgotten, I really admit that I do not know.

All I can say is that our civil service and our army have been badly affected by such appointments, as well as the disregard for protocol.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir :

I send you the following letter and should be obliged to you to have it published.

This is