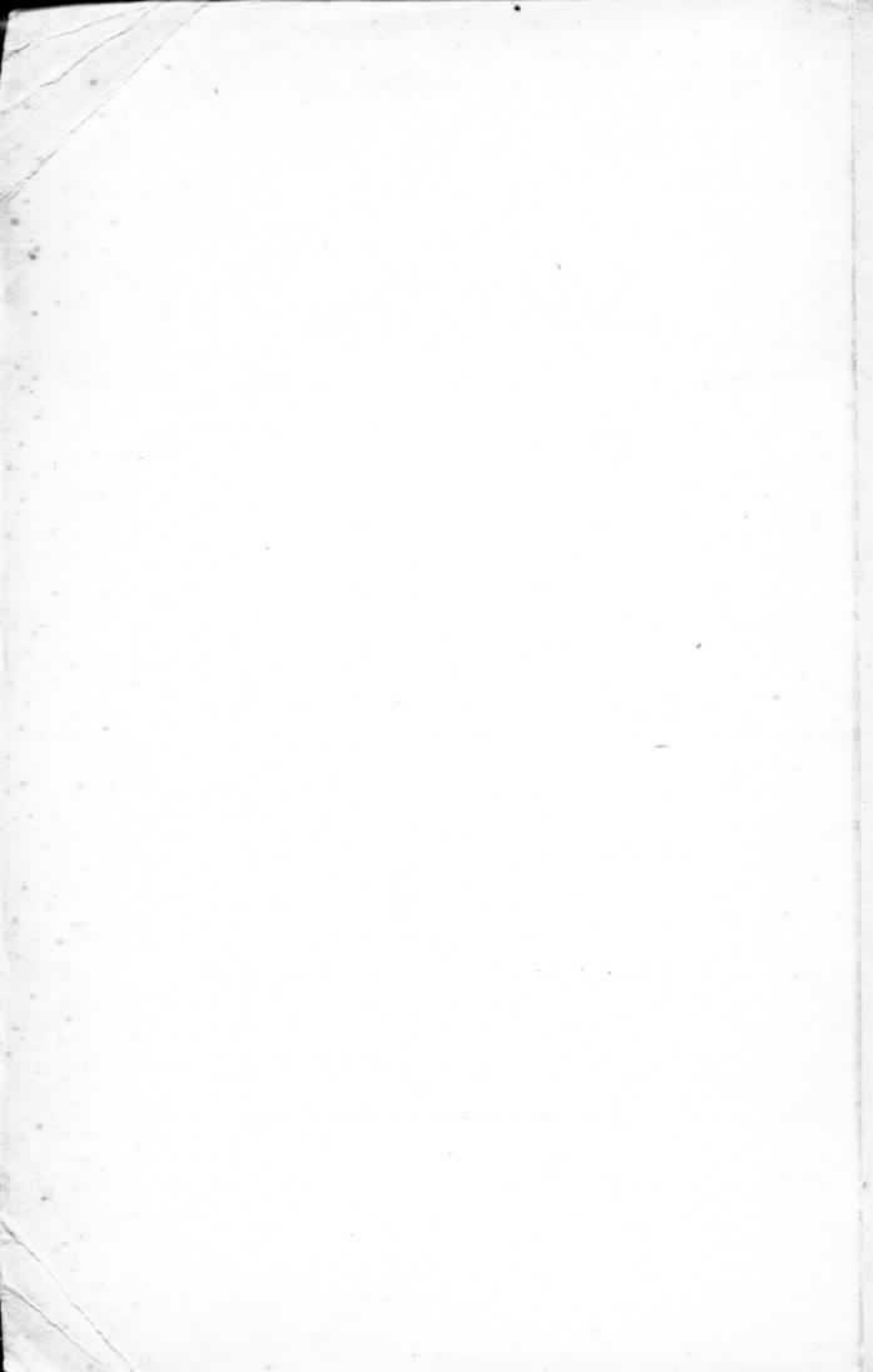


9

**Vietnamese
Studies**

WITH THE
FIGHTERS
OF
QUANGBINH-
VINHLINH



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QUANG BINH — VINH LINH

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

1966

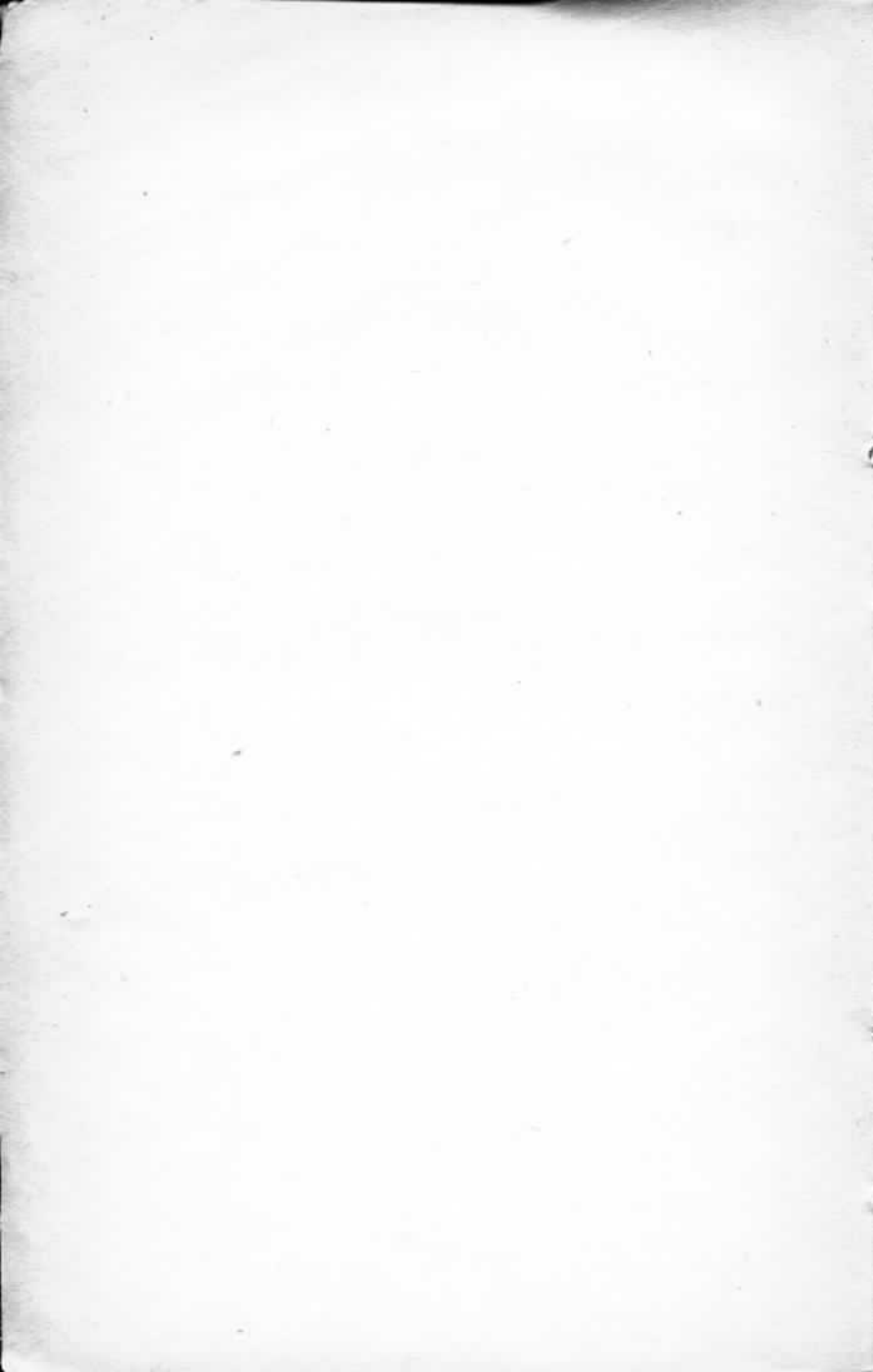
FOREWORD

For more than a year now, the United States air force has launched massive attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It has been unanimously admitted, even by the American rulers, that war escalation has not brought its promoters the expected results. What are the reasons behind such failures? How does it come about that such a small country as the D.R.V. has been able, with only scanty means at its disposal, to keep at bay the world's first imperialist power, and especially its air fleet, reputed so terrifyingly powerful?

To help the reader understand how the D.R.V. has organized its defence and broken American aggression, we shall take him to one of the regions that have been particularly attacked by the U.S. air pirates: Quangbinh—Vinhlinh. The American air force has run into, not classical anti-aircraft defence, but the mobilisation of an entire people who have risen up to defend their freedom and the first fruits of socialism. Not only has North Vietnam hit back vigorously, it has also organized itself in order to promote production work. Trial by fire has been conclusive: the regime is solidly installed, socialism in North Vietnam being no longer a hope, but a reality. On the contrary, myths have been exploded, in particular that concerning the omnipotence of the American air force, which has revealed itself to be both vulnerable and incapable of carrying the day, at least when facing a resolute people.

After a brief balance-sheet of a year of escalation and a geographical note on Quangbinh—Vinhlinh, the reader will find reports and stories which will give him an idea of the struggle waged by the people of North Vietnam. The fight is still going on, and the events are too recent for one to draw definite conclusions, but perhaps our articles will help our foreign friends grasp certain concrete aspects of this struggle.

March 1966



The D.R.V. in Face of U.S. AGGRESSION

by **VU CAN** and **NGUYEN KHAC VIEN**

WHY HAS THE U.S. AIR FORCE MET WITH FAILURE IN NORTH VIETNAM ?

HOW IS THE D.R.V. ORGANIZED IN ALL FIELDS TO RESIST AGGRESSION ?

For over a year now, U.S. aircraft have attacked the D.R.V. Twenty thousand sorties, American newspapers specified, have been carried out by most up-to-date airplanes such as *Thunderchiefs* and *Phantoms*, and tens of thousands of tons of bombs dropped. What have been the results ?

One might have thought that with a few staggering blows, the powerful U.S. Air Force would have knocked down the North Vietnam regime, newly founded, and possessed of but scanty technical means and material resources. U.S. general Thomas Power has stated that the use of air power would make it possible to wage a comfortable, economical and short war. The allegation seemed plausible in view of the fact that Hitler had needed only to threaten Czechoslovakia in 1938 with air attacks to force her to surrender. A cartoon in the *Chicago Sun Times* gave an idea of the mood of Pentagon responsible officials at the time when escalation was launched: a North Vietnamese peasant in tattered clothes, carrying a catapult, is shown fleeing under a shower of bombs from an ultra-modern plane. Now even observers who are the best-disposed towards Washington

have to recognize that U.S. escalation has been a **complete failure**. Fred Hoffman, an AP correspondent, wrote on November 30, 1965 that as compared with the objectives made public by the Pentagon, the air warfare waged by the U.S. air force had reaped no success whatsoever. To win, he added, the enemy's determination and potential had to be broken, but these objectives had not been attained at all.

As the *New York Times* put it in its December 3, 1965 issue, escalation has been a failure and the further it increases the more serious the failure becomes.

For James Cameron, a British journalist, who spent a few weeks in the D.R.V. in January this year, "*this reality makes itself felt evidently at every moment: the bombings, far from terrorizing the Vietnamese, have stimulated them and cemented their solidarity... From the day when the United States dropped its first bomb on North Vietnam, it has in fact succeeded in indestructibly welding the nation into a single block*" (retranslated from the French in the *Figaro*, January, 1966.)

The American failure is first a **military** one. Up to March 7, 1966, **900** planes of all types were shot down in North Vietnam, including A.3D-2s, AD-4s, AD-6s, F-105Ds, F-100Ds, F.4s, T.28s, F.102s, F.104s, L-19s, B.57s, H.43s and CH.3 helicopters, pilotless planes... Not a single type has escaped destruction. Naturally the U.S. command admits a much lower figure — one fourth — but the *U.S. News and World Report* revealed in its Jan. 17, 1966 issue that the cost of the airplanes lost over North Vietnam was as high as **one billion dollars**. For many years U.S. propaganda has carefully cultivated the myth of the terrific effectiveness of the U.S. air force, according to which the latter is capable of deciding the outcome of the war without the U.S.A. being compelled to resort to other costly weapons. If the U.S. Air Force has proved incapable of forcing a small country like the D.R.V. to capitulate, what part could it play in a larger conflict? The Pentagon will have to make an agonizing revision of certain of its strategic conceptions.

The bombings of North Vietnam were also aimed at influencing the course of operations in the South Vietnam theatre. The point was to dishearten the Liberation Armed Forces and raise the morale of the Saigon puppet troops, thereby retrieving a situation which had become catastrophic. But nothing of the kind has been achieved. The South Vietnamese people's forces are fighting more ardently than ever while the puppet army continues to disintegrate, with **113,000 deserters in 1965** against 84,000 in 1964. Eventually, the bombings of North Vietnam have not saved the United

States the obligation of sending G.I.'s to South Vietnam to take a direct part in the war.

On the **political plane**, both at home and abroad, the consequences are disastrous. U.S. aggression has been unanimously condemned. American public opinion, already anxious over the Vietnam problem, has been stirred up by this air aggression against a sovereign state which is not at war with the U.S.A. This constitutes an act of international gangsterism. The attack on a country of the socialist camp has aroused strong reactions from the U.S.S.R., China and other socialist countries, and all of them are resolved to give the D.R.V. all necessary moral and material assistance to secure victory. A wave of indignation has shaken world opinion and never has Washington been so isolated on the international scene.

In the **economic field**, the U.S. rulers had hoped rapidly to disrupt a regime that they had deemed weak. In this, too, they have been disappointed. One of the most glaring proofs of the **solidity of the North Vietnam regime** is the fact that one year after the war started, the price of rice remains unchanged. Economic and cultural construction in the D.R.V. is forging ahead. Not only has the Democratic Republic of Vietnam held its own, it is making headway.

What are the reasons for U.S. failure ?

The following brief analysis is made with the belief that the test which the D.R.V. has victoriously stood assumes a great significance not only for the Vietnamese people but also for the struggle for liberation of other peoples.

PEOPLE'S WAR

U.S. General Roy Johnson has declared that, as far as efficiency is concerned, the North Vietnamese anti-aircraft network excels anything seen in World War II and the Korean war (AP. October 26, 1965).

One of the characteristics of the D.R.V. anti-aircraft defence is its **tried and tested vigilance**. At any hour of day or night artillerymen stand ready at their posts. It is indispensable to ensure such round-the-clock combat-readiness since one minute's inadvertence is enough for an ultra-rapid jet to slip through the defence system. Many planes carrying out surprise attacks were downed by the first volley.

The North Vietnamese anti-aircraft defence system is also *very mobile* as the fighters make it a rule not to remain at the same place for any long time. It often occurs that, seeing through the enemy's plans, they concentrate firepower around a given place, thereby setting a *real trap* for the planes. Thus, around the Ham Rong bridge, which is still standing, about sixty planes have been shot down and a small bridge like that of My Duc in Quang Binh province has cost the U.S. Air Force no less than 19 planes.

But the most original characteristic of this defence system against U.S. air warfare resides in the *combination of all weapons and all categories of fighters* — regular troops and people's militiamen — which creates a firepower effective at any altitude. In particular, those planes that dive or fly very low to escape radar detection and artillery fire, are caught in the thick fire of the light weapons of millions of peasants and factory and office workers. A great number of girls and young women take part in anti-aircraft defence, which provides a very dense fire network around each village, each factory and enterprise. Traces of rifle bullets are often seen on the planes shot down. The targets in the D.R.V. (bridges, factories and others) being of modest size, the planes have to dive on them, which makes the attackers highly vulnerable. Realizing this through bitter experiences, U.S. pilots choose to drop their bombs from very high altitudes to the detriment of precision. Hundreds of craters are thus often found round an undamaged bridge.

When a jet flies low, its terrific roar which tears the air and shakes the thatched houses, is expected to cause widespread panic. The daily repetition of such raids is also expected to shake the morale of the population and force them to capitulate even before having suffered considerable losses. In North Vietnam however, it is not the population who are afraid but the U.S. pilots themselves who, from their own experiences, have come to dread low-altitude flights; very daring at the beginning, they have now become extremely cautious; at any moment there is the possibility of a hail of bullets coming from behind a bush or a mound of earth and hitting the petrol-tank of the plane, or some other important part, or the pilot himself. Self-defence groups in villages and factories are trained to concentrate their fire on an aeroplane at the very moment it comes within the range of their rifles.

This is *people's war* in all its true sense. Regular forces with modern equipment are surrounded, assisted and protected by millions of men and women, while heavy weapons are

completed by millions of light ones which might make you laugh at first sight. Whenever an A.A. battery reaches a locality, in no time hundreds of people come to haul and if need be clean it, dig trenches and emplacements to protect it and do everything necessary for its camouflage. The population, especially old men, who too want to take part in the defence of their country, bring food and delicacies. Around these heavy guns, there is a whole network of positions and trenches from which hundreds of light weapons will fire at enemy aeroplanes if they fly at low altitude.

The regular troops also train peasants, men and women alike, belonging to the people's militia in the handling of heavy weapons. One can frequently see simple country women taking the place of gunners wounded or killed as the fight goes on. The people trust their army and the army put confidence in the people. The military don't look down upon the common people. Patrol boats operating on the rivers enjoy similar assistance from the population: civilian volunteers come on board to man guns, replace and evacuate the wounded, participating in the fight as heroically as seasoned soldiers. Thus loved and trusted by the entire people, the regular forces fight with all the courage and vigilance required.

The capture of pilots downed would often be impossible if left only to the regular forces. Here is an example among many others: on September 20, 1965, a pilot was downed at Huong Khe, Ha Tinh province, a woody region hardly accessible. The nearest military post was tens of kilometres away and it would have taken several hours and even several days to hunt him down. He had a radio transmitter and used it to call for help. Within a short time a helicopter from the Seventh Fleet which had been prowling off the coast, about one hundred kilometers from the place, came to his rescue. But local self-defence forces had already located the pilot and were lying in wait for the helicopter. The latter was downed and all the crew captured, together with the first pilot.

Enemy sabotage commandos have met with the same fate everywhere, and most of them upon reaching the ground have been seized by the population. And this is another example showing how effective people's war is: After an enemy agent had been parachuted into a wooded region, the local authorities thought it should ban civilian traffic throughout so that the regular security forces might scour the area. For several days on end, careful searches proved fruitless. The provincial party secretary intervened to correct the mistake,

lifted the ban and called on the people to hunt down the spy. A few hours later, the agent was captured.

Millions of men and women are also mobilized to carry out anti-air raid protection measures. In every village, in every town district, trenches, shelters and foxholes provide effectual protection to the population, thus restricting material and human losses. Look-out services are established everywhere. Even in the most exposed places the losses were never high. Long communication-trenches in the vicinity of manufactories and across the fields help evacuate the workers, harvesters and rice-transplanters in case of attack. First-aid groups stand by to cope with eventual fires, give care to the wounded and help to the children and old persons. Everywhere everybody knows what to do, where to go when the alarm is given. Nobody is panic-stricken, as the population have plenty of experience, knowing the various types of enemy planes, the way they attack and the tricks they usually resort to.

Foreign observers who have travelled over North Vietnam are surprised to see how calm the population keep before American aeroplanes. An entire people are rising up in arms against the aggressors. By attacking the D.R.V. the U.S. Air Force has lost hundreds of planes and its prestige. Should a U.S. expeditionary force venture to invade the D.R.V., it would meet not only a seasoned army but also a no less combative population. Washington sometimes forgets that the Vietnamese people have the experience of twenty years of armed struggle.

TRAFFIC GOES ON

Paralysing communication lines all over the country is one of the main objectives of the U.S. Air Force. Bridges and roads are submitted to incessant raids, truck convoys and trains, boats and ferry-boats are mercilessly strafed. How to keep the traffic going when there are neither bulldozers nor giant cranes? Here too the people provide the key to the problem. If a bridge is destroyed it is quickly replaced by a ferry or a pontoon bridge, and a damaged road is rapidly repaired by hundreds of people coming from neighbouring villages within an hour or even a quarter of an hour to fill the bomb craters. Hundreds of thousands of youth have volunteered to join shock-brigades operating in the most exposed places to repair destroyed communication

lines or ease traffic hold-ups. A great many new roads have been built, forming an effective extra network. To destroy them enemy aeroplanes use heavy and delayed-action bombs which can explode a quarter of an hour or several hours or even one week after they have been dropped. Country men and women who have never been in any engineering unit have learned at the risk of their lives how to defuse those death engines. Countless innovations have made it possible to solve complicated problems. In this field as in many others, U.S. aggression has brought to the fore two great virtues of the masses of the people: courage and resourcefulness.

Under American bombings, ferrymen and truck-drivers carry on their jobs while tens of thousands of carriers use rudimentary means to make up for the lack of trains and lorries. The famous hand-pushed *transport bike*, able to carry up to 600 pounds and widely used in the first resistance war, is again put to use. The socialist countries are helping to promote motor transport.

In spite of repeated raids, communications between the various zones, goods transportation and passenger traffic are ensured. In this field U.S. failure is evident.

RICE GROWS BETTER THAN EVER

One of the objectives aimed at by the aggressors is to undermine the economy and hamper the cultural development of the D.R.V., since the successful building of socialism in North Vietnam sets a "bad example" to South Vietnam and other so-called "under-developed" countries. The North Vietnam example is all the more striking as in this region there is every unfavourable condition to make economic construction an uphill task: scantiness of arable land (one-tenth of a hectare per capita), high rate of demographic increase, ruins accumulated by a long war. However, after ten years of efforts, it is beyond question that *socialism has been set on solid foundations* and the economy has established indispensable bases to forge ahead. *The construction of a national, independent and socialist economy based on an ever expanding agriculture and industry* has recorded every day increasing successes, which have been recognized even by the enemy of the regime. Famine and illiteracy are now things of the past, in contrast with what has happened in certain countries which have embarked upon the capitalist path

once national independence was reconquered. American imperialism cannot tolerate such a development and has sought to nip in the bud the North Vietnamese experience.

One year after the starting of U.S. raids, foreign observers in the D.R.V. were surprised at seeing that the economic bases, far from being disorganized, had grown steadier and steadier. Anyone who travelled through the North Vietnamese countryside at the beginning of 1966 realized that the landscape had undergone a radical change during the past year. The **levelling** of rice-fields with a view to regulating water evacuation had made remarkable progress. Formerly, the differences in ground level, excessive parcelling, and the delimitation of plots subject to the chances of inheritance had made impossible any rational hydraulic planning. On large areas, co-op members were mobilized to level the ground, raze down embankments, build adequate new dykes and embankments and delimit plots in a more rational way. The **2-year hydraulic plan (1964-1965)** was uninterruptedly carried on despite U.S. bombings and manpower shortage brought about by mobilization and the repairing of bombed roads. *During these two years, North Vietnam built 1,330 water conservancy works, 2,500 electric or mechanical pumping stations. The total volume of earth moved reached 449 million cubic metres. 15,000 water conservancy teams including 300,000 members were set up by the co-ops.*

The campaign for the **intensive cultivation** of rice, subsidiary food crops and industrial crops marked considerable progress. The *new hydraulic network* made it possible to supply rice plants, at each stage of their growth, with an adequate quantity of water. The *use of green manure* (azolla, crotalaria, etc.) was popularized while animal husbandry, particularly pig raising, provided more manure. *Transplanting the seedlings in straight rows* was largely applied, which permitted wider use of improved weeding rakes. *Seeds were more carefully selected.*

In 1965, 680 co-operatives, 162 villages and 7 districts achieved, with two crops, the paddy yield of 5 tons per hectare. Thousands of co ops pledged themselves to attain this target of 5 tons per hectare. *The value of agricultural output increased by 4.2% in comparison with 1964.* (It is worthy of note that weather conditions in 1965 were rather unfavourable). *Compared with 1960, the increase was 21.2%. The area devoted to industrial crops in 1965 was 9.2 per cent larger than in 1964. The number of pigs increased by 310,000.*

These agricultural achievements were the results of the peasants' courage and resourcefulness. Everywhere the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, harvesting were done in the face of U.S. bombings. Trenches and air-raid shelters were dug right in the fields and rifles propped against their embankments. What was important, labour force shortage due to mobilization, repairing of bombed roads and accelerated harvesting and transplanting to avoid bombings, gave rise to a large-scale movement for the improvement of farm implements, management methods and organization of work.

On an average, the 1965 Summer crop and Autumn crop were harvested 15 days ahead of schedule. Many co-ops began to use Diesel motors thanks to which rice threshing, winnowing and husking is much less hard and more efficient than by hand. Co-ops in the neighbourhood of electric pumping stations relied on electric motors to do these jobs. In countries like Vietnam, there is a surplus of labour force in pre-harvest periods and manpower shortage at harvest time because labour productivity is low and farm tools are rudimentary. Better equipment and a more rational management have released part of the manpower for national defence while improving production. It has never occurred to the American strategists that by attacking the D.R.V., they would give a stimulus to its agriculture.

On the other hand, industry was re-organized and kept expanding. Certain big plants were decentralized and many new small-scale factories were born. Local industry which had got off to a good start was strengthened with every passing day, each locality seeking to produce itself many commodities to cope with the difficulties of transport. *Industry and handicrafts made every effort to serve agriculture* by producing mechanical pumps, weeders, hand carts, threshing-machines, winnowing-machines etc. Industry also supplied more machine-tools, electric motors and means of fluvial transport.

The daily life of the population goes on as usual. The prices of necessities such as : rice, salt, fabrics, kerosene, have remained stable. So has the cost of living in general.

State trade and supply and marketing co-ops have succeeded in maintaining a stable home market, safe from any serious troubles, which might seem inevitable in a poor country at war. As previously, there exists a free market subject to fluctuations, but its domain has been reduced; *black market, hoarding and speculation are virtually unknown.*

Retail trade, which is partially indicative of the people's purchasing power, increased by 11.4% in 1965 compared with 1964. Savings deposited in the banks were 50% higher than in 1964, which bore remarkable testimony to the entire people's confidence.

UNINTERRUPTED SCIENTIFIC AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES

The U.S. Air Force has destroyed a number of hospitals and schools, with a view to undermining two great achievements of the socialist regime in North Vietnam: education and medicine*. We had to evacuate hospitals, colleges, district schools, with their personnel, furniture, patients and students, to the countryside. Even rural schools with their red-tiled roofs standing out against green vegetation attracted U.S. bombs. Consequently their classes had to be dispersed. All this represented a colossal job, for total school attendance amounted to nearly *three million*.

Teachers and pupils, physicians and patients were housed in villages and agricultural co-operatives. Together with the population, professors, teachers, doctors and students built new bamboo or brick schools, houses and infirmaries. Many professors, teachers and physicians had gone through the former war of resistance, leaving the towns to join the "maquis". Continuing their heroic tradition, they started again organizing their activities with of course far better technical and material means than before.

In 1965, 95% of the villages in the delta and 77% of those in mountain areas already had their own infirmary maternity homes, 60% of the districts had hospitals: This large network enabled the spreading of hospitals and public health centres from the towns into the villages. Even the most out-of-the-way villages were able to provide the wounded with first aid.

Enrolment at all levels of education was higher than in 1964. The syllabuses and duration of classes were readjusted to fit the circumstances. Material conditions were harder, but the necessity of overcoming the new difficulties and the renewed and closer contact with the countryside encouraged fruitful efforts to readjust and to invent, which proved favourable to a truly national education and science.

* See *Vietnamese Studies* No. 5 and No. 6 on education and medicine in the D.R.V.

Even under the trying circumstances of war, the Department for Higher and Vocational Education was promoted to be a Ministry to step up the development of university education. The State Scientific Committee itself was split into two organs, one for natural sciences and the other for social sciences, due to the rapid development of research work. In 1965, the number of students and trainees sent to other socialist countries was much higher than in any of the previous years.

Adult complementary education created in the interest of the workers, peasants, army men and state employees achieved the norms set for the 5-year plan ended 1965.

Cultural life continues its normal course. Film projection teams operate and amateur troupes perform in the remotest villages. Daily occurrences in national life have given birth to a genuine efflorescence of songs, poems, stories, novels, plays and films extolling the patriotic fight.

MEN AND WEAPONS..

Right in the first days of U.S. aggression, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party already defined the oncoming tasks in one of its directives: *"To continue the building of the material and technical basis for socialism, carry out socialist industrialization in a way adapted to the conditions of war, give a strong impulse to economic development while fighting and standing ready to fight, closely combine the requirements of the present with those of the future building and development of the economy"*.

To carry out the fight along with boosting production, to fight when the enemy come and produce after they have been driven away, such is *the present way of life* of the whole North Vietnamese population. Between two fights, life resumes its normal course and continues its advance. The U.S. Air Force has been unable either to sow panic or disorganize life or disrupt the course of historical evolution. There lies its biggest failure.

Unfortunately for it, the U.S. Air Force has attacked a people standing upon their guard and ready for self-defence. In 1945, with practically only sticks in their hands and one million piastres in the treasury, they did not hesitate to resist the French colonialist aggression. Nine years later, they succeeded in setting up a political

and military organization strong enough to win at Dien Bien Phu and force the French imperialists to recognize their national independence. Since the restoration of peace in 1954, they have worked hard for the building of a new society in North Vietnam. If they had nurtured illusions they would have devoted themselves only to this peaceful work. But the Vietnamese people and their Party were well aware of the nature and designs of the imperialists, the U.S. imperialists in particular. Defense efforts had not in the least been neglected and the first raids of U.S. planes surprised nobody: *the riposte was immediate.*

While modernizing her army, the D.R.V. has never deviated from the political and military line of people's war. Her leaders have not let themselves be intoxicated by the up-to-date weapons in hand. The nation has remained organized as it was during the resistance—to a higher degree of course—with the participation of every citizen in the defence efforts. *The regular army is only the spearhead of the broad mass movement supporting it.*

Ten years of economic and cultural building and the fraternal aid of the socialist countries have made this national defence much more effective than it was at the time of Dien Bien Phu. The material means are far more up-to-date and the young recruits who have had many years of schooling can quickly learn to handle technical equipment formerly unknown in the D.R.V.

The socialist organization of the economy has made possible a more active mobilization of material resources and manpower. Take for instance a peasant who spends hours and days watching enemy aircraft and fighting them, repairing roads and bridges or helping in the construction of schools, infirmaries etc. Formerly, he could only rely upon the kindness of his neighbours to feed his family and till his land. Today jobs are distributed by the co-operative, and he who devotes his time to defence work is remunerated accordingly. By reorganizing itself, increasing its potential, the co-operative has succeeded in maintaining or even developing production.

Prices are another case in point. In capitalist countries, war would bring about an immediate and sharp rise in prices, especially when food and commodities are not yet produced in abundance. The handling of trade by the state has made impossible all hoarding, speculation or black marketeering. The part reserved for free trade is reduced to such an extent as to greatly restrict its influence on market prices.

Thus, the socialist structures have considerably reinforced the defence potential of the country.

The tradition of patriotic struggle coupled with the love for the socialist regime have instilled an unshakable determination into the people as a whole. Peasants and workers, as masters of their land and factories, and intellectuals, who can give full scope to their abilities in a renovated country, are more eager than ever to defend national independence.

The role played by **women** should be particularly stressed. Liberated from the bondage of the feudal and colonial regimes, they have seen their abilities decuple under the new regime. More than anyone else, they are determined to defend the fruits of the revolution. Young girls opening fire at U.S. piratical planes with their rifles or machine-guns have become familiar sights. The Women's Union has launched a vast movement in which the Vietnamese women undertake to:

— Assume production work in lieu of the men enrolled in the army;

— Run efficiently their houses during the absence of the men;

— Take part, when necessary, in the fight against the aggressors.

This "Three Responsibilities" movement is drawing in millions of women in North Vietnam. In the co-operatives, tens of thousands of women have become managers, heads of work brigades or book-keepers... In the factories, a whole generation of young skilled women workers, technicians and engineers are taking the place of the men who have joined the army.

A most remarkable thing is that in the past year, the **young generation**, trained in socialist schools, have brilliantly continued the heroic tradition of their elders. Either in fighting or when ensuring communications, the young army recruits and volunteers in the shock youth brigades have shown unusual valour.

*

In conclusion, what has enabled the Vietnamese people to victoriously confront an enemy much more powerful materially and technically, is their iron-like courage, the revolutionary heroism not only of a few elite individuals

but of the broad masses. It has enabled them to surmount difficulties, and fight the most redoubtable airplanes with mere rifles. When an aircraft dives with an infernal roar, spitting bombs and rockets, it is not easy to stay where you are, with eyes wide open to take accurate aim at the enemy. Most often, when caught under such a fire, one is seized with panic. But today, millions of North Vietnamese of all ages confront U.S. planes without the quiver of an eyelid. They have overcome fear, and there lies their greatest victory. U.S. Lieutenant-Commander Shumaker, captured on February 11, 1965, admitted he had been struck with great fear when hundreds of bullets came up and shells of all calibres exploded around his plane. This well-trained pilot, who had once been chosen as a cosmonaut, was struck with panic at the moment of encounter. Whereas shy Vietnamese countrywomen, some of whom would not go out at night for fear of ghosts, were seen waiting till U.S. aircraft dived upon them to shoot at these engines they saw for the first time.

The Vietnam Workers' Party takes pride in having educated the whole nation in that spirit of revolutionary heroism. The Vietnamese people understand that they have throughout the world numerous friends who are ready to help them, morally and materially. However, while seeking to secure more and more such aid, they first of all rely on their own efforts. The Vietnam Workers' Party also deserves all credit for having led the entire people in this way.

After a year of attacks against the Vietnamese people united in a steel-like bloc, the U.S. Air Force has proved impotent and the U.S. strategists find themselves in an impasse. To continue raids does not bring any change to the course of events. To expand the aggressive war means to invite new risks. Escalation has proved a complete failure in the military, political and economic fields. This lesson is highly significant in our epoch.

HEAVENS

and

EARTH

We give below an extract from an article by Joris Ivens, the noted documentary film director, who made a short stay in the D.R.V. in 1965. The article was published in the magazine Evénement, Feb. 1966 issue.

I was in Thanh Hoa, between Hanoi and the 17th parallel, near an oft-bombed strategic bridge. I met there a young woman who seemed to me the very image of Vietnam. I was in a school turned into a kind of lodging, and there suddenly I saw this girl with long hair and was told: "She is our heroine. She lives in the village". She talked to me about her work and her fight against U.S. aircraft. She was a member of a mobile brigade, and the planes had come and attacked the bridge. She had learnt to shoot at the planes with paper dummies. She knew that to carry out an effective bombing, a plane could not remain at high altitude, that it would have to dive. Aim at the plane's nose and belly, she had been told, just when it is about to flatten out, for at that moment it is most vulnerable and can be shot down with a mere infantry rifle.

And she just did that. It was not easy to stay calm when the plane swooped down on you who were at that moment within the firing range of all its machineguns. Then she saw from the corner of her eyes that one of the planes was ablaze and soon crashed on the ground. She did not think that it was she who did that. But she had done it. She had vanquished the heavens.

This is Vietnam : the war between Heavens and Earth.

She was the Earth. She lived there, in the village, with her parents and grand-parents. Her brother was in college. And an unknown American came from 6,000 kilometres away to try and hurl death on her family from the blue, without even wanting her land. He only wanted to kill. This, she couldn't understand.

Her name was " Moon ". In Europe, " Moon " sounds very romantic. For the first time, I saw a militant, fighting moon.

Yes, this country is at war, but not in the way people think. Life is apparently normal. One feels that the people have two tasks: the factory, the office, the field; and then the war, or preparation for the war. Everywhere, there are mobile brigades of volunteers. Everyday, one sees Vietnamese learning discipline and efficacy. When the alert sounds, men and women calmly stay at their combat posts, waiting for the planes to come. When they come, the people fight them, and when the fight is over, they go back to their fields. One feels in them a terrible habit of the war.

When one is there, one sees the absurdity of the Americans. This idiotic refusal to see where true strength lies. The people can't be robbed of their land, for they are there, it's their home. Even if the Americans came, they would not be able to stay. They have nothing to do here. They would need to plant an American behind every Vietnamese, and that would mean 30 million Americans. But even that wouldn't do, eventually. Each tree, each house, each stone would be turned into a trap for the Americans...

NOTE ON QUANG BINH - VINH LINH

The provisional demarcation line along the 17th parallel, stipulated by the Geneva Agreements, coincides with the river Benhai; north of this river, Vinhlinh district (capital: Hoxa) spreads over fifteen kilometres and is inhabited by about 70,000 people. The demilitarized zone runs three kilometres north and south of the river; Hienluong bridge on National Highway n.61 joins the Northern to the Southern zone.

Quangbinh province lies north of Vinhlinh up to the 18th parallel, with an area of about 9,000 square kilometres and a population of nearly 500,000. A mountain ridge, Hoanhson, separates Quangbinh from provinces more to the north. South of Hoanhson, the territory of Vietnam narrows down and looks wasp-waisted on a map, the distance between the Lao border and the sea being not more than fifty kilometres on an average. Mountain spurs reach almost the seashore, and the small coastal plains, hemmed in between dunes and forest, are often but a few kilometres wide. The geographical situation of Quangbinh - Vinhlinh explains why the enemy has concentrated his attacks on this region; besides, the length of the coast (about 150 kilometres) facilitates naval attacks and commando raids from the sea. The narrow width of the plains, where the villages are concentrated, renders them more vulnerable to air bombing.

The coastal plains are not very fertile and are constantly under the threat of both the sand and the sudden swellings of the rivers which flow down the slopes of the Truongson range. Thus agriculture in Quangbinh - Vinhlinh is less productive than in other provinces. Nearly 30,000 people make a living from sea-fishing, and their boats have often been attacked by enemy planes and ships.

Off the mouth of the river Benhai is Conco, a small island of about four square kilometres. Enemy planes and ships crossing the 17th parallel to conduct hostile action against North Vietnam have to pass before this island.

which becomes a real lookout post of the D.R.V. And so Conco has been repeatedly attacked.

One can say that Quangbinh - Vinhlinh contains every geographical and economic disadvantage, which exposes it to daily air and naval attacks. But it has also a major trump: for seven years, from 1947 to 1954, its population victoriously fought against the French expeditionary corps, and many battles were waged on its territory. Many of those who now lead the anti-American resistance, especially Party cadres, were already active at the time of the anti-French resistance.

The setting up of socialist structures (agricultural and fishing co-operatives) has been carried out swiftly and involves over 95% of the population. Thus, it is a battle-hardened population, led by an experienced party and working in socialist structures, which has faced enemy attacks. This human and social factor is the decisive element which has offset all geographical and economic disadvantages.

In Quangbinh

*(Excerpts from travel notes by
Khac Vien, Hac Hai and Duc Moc)*

February 1965.

The 7th of February was a Sunday, and it was the first Sunday after Têt (the Lunar New Year). A festive mood was still prevailing. At Dong Hoi, a large crowd attended the football match, and in the surrounding villages, groups of old men availed themselves of the fine weather to plant trees along the paths. Suddenly the alarm was given. In no time Yankee planes came overhead, for we were near the sea. It was 1.55 p.m.

I expected to see the town stricken with panic, and people, especially children, run about in disorder. Great was my surprise: No cries, no stampede. People calmly made for the shelters, channelled by an invisible order-maintaining body. All at once the town became silent, and from the first minutes one could see everywhere rifles and machine-guns pointed at the sky. In the trenches, behind stamped-mud works covered with boughs, groups of regular troops or armed civilians were posted here and there. Young women workers and employees or shop-girls had swiftly put on their cartridge belts and helmets and, guns in hands, had rushed into the trenches to join the other fighters.

From the top of the old city wall, where we were standing, we could overlook the town and the surrounding villages. The planes came in successive waves, and every

now and then, a small flight or a plane swooped, filling the air with a deafening roar. But everywhere from the ground came practically uninterrupted volleys of fire-arms. Few heavy guns, but a ceaseless crackle of light arms. Within five minutes, one could see a plane ablaze and diving straight into the sea. The news was announced through loudspeakers: one could see thousands of heads emerging from the shelters, people cheering, clapping their hands, and the responsible officials had to intervene energetically to persuade them to go back to the shelters. At the headquarters, it was learnt that the plane had fallen at Nhan Trach, northeast of the town (the body of the pilot Dickson was to be picked up on Feb. 12).

Wave upon wave of enemy planes kept coming; the Dong Hoi hospital, the pride of the town, with its brand-new buildings, red tiles and white walls, was their particular target. Six waves of planes tried to hit it, and tens of rockets mutilated its buildings. It was fortunate that the men on duty were ready. Hardly had the last patient been evacuated when the general medicine ward had its roof blown away. As it was a Sunday, a large part of the staff was supposed to be off duty but right from the start everybody was present. There were not only explosive bombs and rockets. The U.S. planes also showered hundreds of shrapnel bombs on this hospital. The size of an orange, fitted with wings and yellow painted, a shrapnel bomb looks like a toy. But it is filled with explosive and its walls are loaded with small metal balls, exactly two hundred of these: let someone stumble on it or shake it, and it will explode and send out those balls in all directions, like bullets fired point-blank. How many children, mistaking those little bombs for playthings, were to be killed by those devilish devices!

That first battle lasted half an hour. Result: four planes shot down.

On the 8th, a new attack on Dong Hoi and its vicinity. Numerous dwelling houses were hit. The seat of the mobile team of the International Control Commission at Dong Hoi was machine gunned. During the day, people of Nhan Trach village picked up the remains of the first plane brought down on Feb. 7. In the evening, many thousand people held a meeting at Dong Hoi expressing their hatred and anger at the enemy.

On Feb. 11, toward 3 a. m., U. S. naval units shelled a village south of Quang Binh; our coastal guard fought back. At five to one in the afternoon, the alarm was given.

Many waves of planes came and bombed and strafed the town, and Bao Ninh and Ly Ninh villages. At the eighth minute, an aircraft, the first, was hit and fell into the sea. At the 20th minute, another crashed on a hill northwest of Dong Hoi. A white thing broke free from the plane and came down slowly: it was the pilot. A few minutes later, the militiamen of Ly Ninh were already on the spot and quickly found an American crouching in a bush, pale with fear. He was captured without difficulty. His name was Robert Shumaker, and he was on the list of future astronauts. His eyes wide opened, bewildered, he was quite astonished to see, in front of him, men and women peasants armed with rifles, knives and sticks. When he took off from his aircraft-carrier, he had believed that those people, miserable and poorly armed, would all be burrowing in their shelters, paralysed by fear; and now he saw them come and capture him as if they were going to a party. He bent his head when passing by a burning house, and was even more astonished when those people, whose glaring eyes were filled with hatred, did not even touch him. He had expected at least a slap in the face or a blow with a stick, for he had come here as a pirate to kill and burn, and not as a warrior. As his government had never declared war to the D.R.V., he was not a prisoner, but caught as a war criminal. In the same evening, in Dong Hoi, he appeared before some one hundred Vietnamese and foreign journalists.

On Feb. 12, we came to look at the remains of the downed planes, that of Shumaker and that salvaged by the Nhan Trach people. We were shown a fragment of metal: it was not larger than a plate, and yet we could see three holes in it, the traces of bullets. I asked an officer: "Who brought the plane down?" He answered with a broad smile: "How could I know? When the plane swooped down, everybody fired at it, regular troops as well as people's militiamen. We are in a quandary as to how to distribute congratulations and rewards. Just look round." In fact, near an anti-aircraft battery, everywhere in the village one could see carefully camouflaged trenches and combat positions which would bristle with rifles as soon as one heard the alarm. When a plane swooped down on a village, hundreds of arms of all calibres fired on it at once. The faster the planes fly, the more easily they can be pierced by bullets, even

small-calibre ones. Some jet planes have fuel containers everywhere in their fuselage, and a hit by a bullet can provoke a catastrophe. At Nhan Trach when the body of the pilot Dickson (brought down on Feb. 7) was recovered, they found that he had been shot through the neck by a bullet.

"I was very much surprised, and very much afraid", said Shumaker, "when I saw the firing from all parts around my plane." He had thought he could escape radar and anti aircraft fire by flying very low — by skimming the villages, he also hoped to sow panic among the population — and now his craft was encircled by a shower of bullets. A foreign journalist confided to us: "I understand now what 'people's war' means." And for a long while he gazed at a group of young girl peasants who were planting rice seedlings, their rifles laid on the edge of the ricefield.

During the following days, the seat of the provincial Party committee was packed with people. From all parts arrived officials who came to report on the three days of fighting, and fighters who had to recount their experiences; cadres and fighters were drawing the lessons of those first battles. I was somewhat surprised to see the mood prevailing there. There had been casualties and damage done to houses, schools and hospitals, yet faces were beaming and voices ringing with ill-concealed joy. Doubtlessly those were the faces and voices of victors.

"What helped gain victory was that we were ready," stated the Party secretary. "When peace was restored in 1954, we were inclined, in spite of the Central Committee's recommendations, to neglect the problems of defence, and to concentrate only on the problems of economic and cultural development. The 3rd National Congress of the Party having insisted on the necessity of carrying out abreast economic construction and National defence build-up, the provincial conference of the Party in 1961, in its resolution, insisted on the necessity of

"strengthening defence, ensuring security, protecting the peaceful construction work of the population of our province, thus contributing to the defence of the whole North."

"The enemy himself has reminded the combatants and population of Quang Binh of the task of keeping their vigilance. From 1961 to Feb. 1965, not including the August 5, 1964 raid, U.S. planes violated 374 times the air space, and enemy naval units, 390 times the territorial waters of

the province. On five occasions, the enemy parachuted groups of sabotage agents, and on eight occasions, landed small groups of commandos on our coast; on five occasions, his naval units shelled coastal localities; and on five others, they stopped and seized fishermen's boats off the shore of Quang Binh."

The August 5, 1964 raid was a clear proof of the aggressive will of the U.S.A. against North Vietnam; the Quang Binh - Vinh Linh area, situated near the 17th parallel, was a particular target. The Feb. 1965 raids therefore did not surprise anybody. Counter-blows were immediately dealt to the enemy, and the protection of the people's lives and properties was well ensured right from the beginning. "However, some complacency", say the responsible officials, "has appeared after those first three days of fighting. The cadres and population are inclined to underestimate the enemy, magnify victories, and forget that we are facing a ferocious enemy with high technical and economic potential. The point now is to strive to strengthen active and passive defence, and above all to well co-ordinate the work of defence and production in each village, in each locality. One must be prepared for even fiercer attacks and consequently take all necessary measures; Party officials of the province must go to every commune and see to it that measures of defence and protection are stepped up."

But first of all — such was the opinion of everyone — ideological work should be intensified, that is to say, we must instil deeper into the people's minds the significance of the struggle, expose the enemy's designs and explain the necessity for all the population to participate in the fight and not to rely solely on the regular forces. The people's war and revolutionary heroism are our best weapons against the enemy's ultra-modern aircraft.

Indeed, there were many examples of revolutionary heroism during those first three days of fighting. Here is old Mrs. Suot who, despite her age, continued to row her boat across the river Nhat Le several times under aerial bombing, to ensure communication between groups of fighters on both banks. Le Ngoc Le, a poor peasant, now president of a co-operative, did not hesitate, during a fight, to rest the bipod of his comrade's automatic rifle on his shoulders, so as to provide the arm with a mobile stand and enable it to be aimed at the circling planes. Nguyen Tien Dung, of the security forces, did the same. A sailor on furlough jumped into the river Nhat Le, as soon as

he heard the alarm, swam to his vessel to take part in the fighting. Nguyen The Chuc and Truong Cong Hoanh, both war invalids and school masters at Ly Ninh, came to the rescue of a house on fire under the bombing.

In all the combat groups, regular troops and people's militia, a common feature has been observed: all, when a plane dived on their positions, kept their eyes wide open to shoot at the right time. The ideological work conducted during the last months has yielded its fruits. A jet plane which swoops down on a target to release bombs and rockets, usually gives rise to an irresistible panic. The Quang Binh fighters have overcome their fear since their first battle, and this was their greatest victory.

July 1965

Our car travelled by night, all lights out. In the day one runs the risk of being machine-gunned at any moment, and at night, when a light is on, U.S. planes immediately shoot at it. Our driver tried to follow in the obscurity the dark trail which marked the roadside so as not to run his car into the rice paddies. From time to time, we brushed past, not without a shudder, the shadow of a truck coming from the opposite direction. We crossed small rivers on floating bridges which were set up at nightfall to be taken away at dawn. In the dark, I could see collapsed bridges, with ends showing above the water like the stumps of amputated limbs. My throat was dry, and an unspeakable hatred was rising within myself. We have so little cement, so little steel, almost no machines, even less technicians. How much toil we have spent building those bridges, putting into order the communications devastated by nine years of war (anti-French resistance war, 1945-1954).

At both ends of those bridges, in the neighbouring ricefields, one could see hundreds of bomb craters; often in order to hit a small bridge, U.S. aircraft had to conduct tens of raids, the U.S. pilots being reluctant to dive down low enough, fearing the groundfire from guns of all calibres. When they did dive, many lost their lives. The fast-flying jets strike with little precision when they aim at small targets, and run a great risk in diving too low, when hundreds of guns are ready to fire at them.

Our car often tumbled along sections of highway under repair, where the bombs had cut into the road. Interruption

of the traffic was never very long; as soon as a bomb was dropped, teams of workers rushed in to fill up the crater, and a few minutes later, the vehicles could go on. At a place, we were warned: "Time bombs have been dropped there; they have been covered with earth; they will explode in about a quarter of an hour, you can either wait or go at once." The truck drivers who were there chose to go on, for they had no time to lose, and we followed them. Those navvies came from villages bordering the roads; as soon as the planes turned tail, hundreds of people, with spades, picks and planks came to restore the road to good repair. A heavily-loaded truck was bogged down in the mud; we stopped to help. It was not needed, because tens of people were already there, coming from the neighbouring village and with the sheer strength of their arms soon took the vehicle out of the quag.

We crossed the river Gianh on a ferry towed by a motor launch. We were not far away from the river mouth, and the crossing was 700 to 800 metres wide. U.S. piratical planes often roam the sky overhead, but our A.A. artillery here is very vigilant. We were in the middle of the river when a flare lit up in the sky above our heads. The vultures were there. "Keep calm," shouted the man in charge of the ferry, "lie down, all of you, we'll take care of everything". Everyone did as he was told without a noise, without a false movement. The launch quickened its speed; one could hear our guns boom, and the humming of planes soon vanished in the distance, the pirates having probably found it too dangerous to hover over a ferry when the A.A. guns on the river banks were already warned.

Our driver confided to us: "They are wonderful, those fellows of the ferry; every day, they risk their lives at each crossing; many of them have fallen, but as you could see, they were as calm during the alarm as if they had been of stone." A few minutes before, just before the alarm, I had heard a ferryman tell me: "They are great, those truck drivers, spending night after night driving without lights, running the risk of being machine-gunned at every turn of the road." In the depth of myself, I thought: "They too are great, those peasants, men and women, of the villages along our roads who day and night come to mend the road without any pay." Many of them had learnt how to defuse time bombs, which was considered to be the specialty of the engineers.

We were told some names, and the image of such or such a ferryman, a truckdriver or a navvy was evoked. On

our way, in the night, I could not see any face, I did not know any name, but I felt surrounded by a host of men, perfectly calm, determined to do their duty, whatever might happen, heroes without a name, without a face. The most powerful air force in the world has been trying to cut off our communications, and yet our vehicles keep going in a steady stream. Without bulldozers, scrapers, giant cranes, we have won the battle of communications.

We visited Badon in the early morning; nothing was left of this little township which had been rebuilt after the French had left. Heaps of bricks, charred beams, broken pieces of earthenware. Those razed houses had been built hardly three or four years ago. The Badon of February came back to my mind, with its ten-class school, its new houses, and above all its sanatorium. Sick people with chronic diseases came from all corners of the country to be cured while learning again to work. Small pavilions scattered among the fields, gardens looked after by the patients themselves, nothing of these was left. Where is he now, that asthmatic who confided to me how after long months he had managed to overcome his illness, to reeducate his respiration, and told me about his plans for the future? I dared not inquire after him; sick people had been killed by the bombings, and I feared that he might be among them. Why had they attacked Badon, that quiet little town, where there was not a factory, not a battery of guns? The ruins of the Badon sanatorium remind one of those of the T.B. hospital of Thanhhoa, those of the big leper sanatorium of Quynhlap. In the great silence which prevailed over the annihilated little town, I understood the reason for this ferocity. It was aimed at terrorizing, intimidating an entire people, so as to bring them to their knees. But it was the contrary that happened. In the neighbouring villages where they had taken refuge, we met the inhabitants of Badon, with weapons in their hands, determined to avenge their destroyed town.

That night, we went past Quangphuc, a Catholic village on the shore of the river Gianh. Burnt houses could be seen along the road. Suddenly, we heard prayers in the complete darkness. We had gone past the church without noticing it, for service was held at night, without any lights on, so as not to attract enemy bombs. In this village,

not long ago, some still lent ears to the lies of the Voice of America; today everybody asks for arms to fire at the U.S. planes. The village has been cited by the government for its combativeness.

Our car was running on when all of a sudden I thought I was dreaming: electric lights, lit up there like a challenge in the middle of this province entirely plunged into darkness. We were at Donghoi, capital of the province. Could it be an inviolated "sanctuary"? Not at all. It had undergone practically uninterrupted attacks since February, and especially since April after the Baltimore speech of Johnson offering to negotiate. Inside the old city wall, not a house was left standing. Outside it, numerous quarters had been hit. But Donghoi is full of life, and shows it. Every night, its inhabitants come back, and the streets become busy; lights are lit up, and the shops open. Donghoi is too well spotted by the enemy to take the trouble of hiding itself in darkness, like the villages scattered in the plain. I mingled with the crowd that moved along the streets, amidst the ruins. A gay crowd, extraordinarily calm. They went shopping in the market, in the state department store as if nothing had happened. No one seemed to hurry, they talked, laughed; young people humming tunes in fashion or taking a walk under the double row of coco-nut palms quivering in the wind, on the banks of the river Nhatle. The people's bookshop attracted a lot of customers; I entered it together with a stream of curious on-lookers and buyers. A young soldier asked for a textbook of physics, a middle-aged man looked for the collection of stories by Nam Cao (1), young women ran over a booklet on birth control with stifled chuckles. Some one hundred metres away from there, I saw people queueing in front of a photographer's shop: mostly young people, in particular young girls who wanted to have their photographs taken, with a rifle on the shoulder.

Alarm! The lights were put out, all this crowd disappeared, as if by magic, in the numerous shelters and dug-outs built almost everywhere; the trenches bristled with rifles. One would say a well-conducted ballet. The alarm over, the lights were switched on again, the crowd reappeared in the streets, life went on, talks resumed and laughter burst out again. The war seemed far away. On

(1) Well-known novelist, who died at the front during the first Resistance.

the Nhat Le which reflected a clear moonlight, junks were drifting silently, from which melodious songs could be heard.

*

At dawn, we passed the river Nhatle, on the boat of old Mrs Suot, the now well known heroine of the country, who for innumerable times had made this crossing in all weather and under intense bombing. Someone asked her the reason for so much courage. She replied: "Look at those tiled roofs; many have been built these last few years, one must defend them, mustn't one?" Opposite Donghoi, on the other bank of the Nhatle, Baoninh village to which Mrs. Suot pointed her finger showed off its red-tiled roofs amidst filaos and stretched along several kilometres on a band of sand squeezed between the river and the sea: 4,000 inhabitants, most of them living on fishing. In the days of the anti-French resistance, it was a safe refuge for the Donghoi militants, whom Mrs Suot ferried on her boat from one bank to the other. Today, Baoninh continues to play the role of a protecting wall for Donghoi. The planes which come to bomb the town fly over the village first, the commandos who land from enemy vessels have to pass Bao-Ninh before reaching the town. That is why Baoninh has organized a double line of watch and defence, against the ships and the planes. The trenches dug in the sand collapse easily, so the people had to cross the river to fetch earth to reinforce them. The seaside is crisscrossed with trenches, firing positions and protecting works. With its own self-defence force, the village can withstand large units of invaders. Almost all coastal villages in the country are organized in the same way; American troops trying to land on North Vietnam are liable to suffer important losses even before encountering regular troops. For the time being, U.S. ships are roaming in the offing. Once, a fishing boat was seized by those pirates, its eleven-man crew captured. They were put to torture, because the enemy wanted information on the situation in the province, on the defence works. Not one of them spoke. They only referred to the provisions of the Geneva Agreements and demanded firmly that they should be set free. Finally, the enemy had to release them.

We visited the net-weaving workshop of the village. A score young girls were handling threads of golden silk

Quảng - bình quê ta ơi !

Moderato

HOÀNG VÂN

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Quảng - bình quê ta ơi !' by Hoàng Vân. The score is written in a single system with 14 staves. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first staff contains the first measure, which starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The score continues with various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several dynamic markings, such as 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte), and articulation marks like accents and slurs. A 'Refrain' section is indicated by the word 'Refrain' written below the staff. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Quang Binh, our native land

Why is it that on our native land so many new tiled roofs
have blossomed?

Friend, gone are the days of hardships, sweet happiness
has come.

Why is it that on our native land rice is so fresh and
green?

Friend, remember the time of hunger and darkness.

Quangbinh — khoankhoan ho khoan — beloved Quangbinh—
khoankhoan ho khoan,

In ten years how you have changed — khoankhoan ho
khoan

From the blue ocean — khoankhoan ho khoan —

To the green forests — khoankhoan ho khoan

All through the four seasons songs are ringing,

The river Kien which flows through Le Thuy brims over
with love.

Greeting to you, young militiawoman keeping watch on
the coast!

Greeting to you, young gunner scanning the sky!

Every day that passes sees our land grow and mature

The seeds of the Revolution sprout and bud.

O Quangbinh, our beloved native land! Let's defend our
land and our sky

Let's defend all the things that we love so much!

O Quangbinh, our beloved native land! Let all of us send
to Tri'hien (1)

The pledge that on the day of victory

We shall unite under the same roof!

(1) Tri'hien: provinces south of the 17th parallel, sister provinces of Quangbinh.



The Hientuong bridge joins the two banks of the River Benhai on the 17th parallel.

A team of the International Control Commission inspecting the bridge after a U. S. air raid.



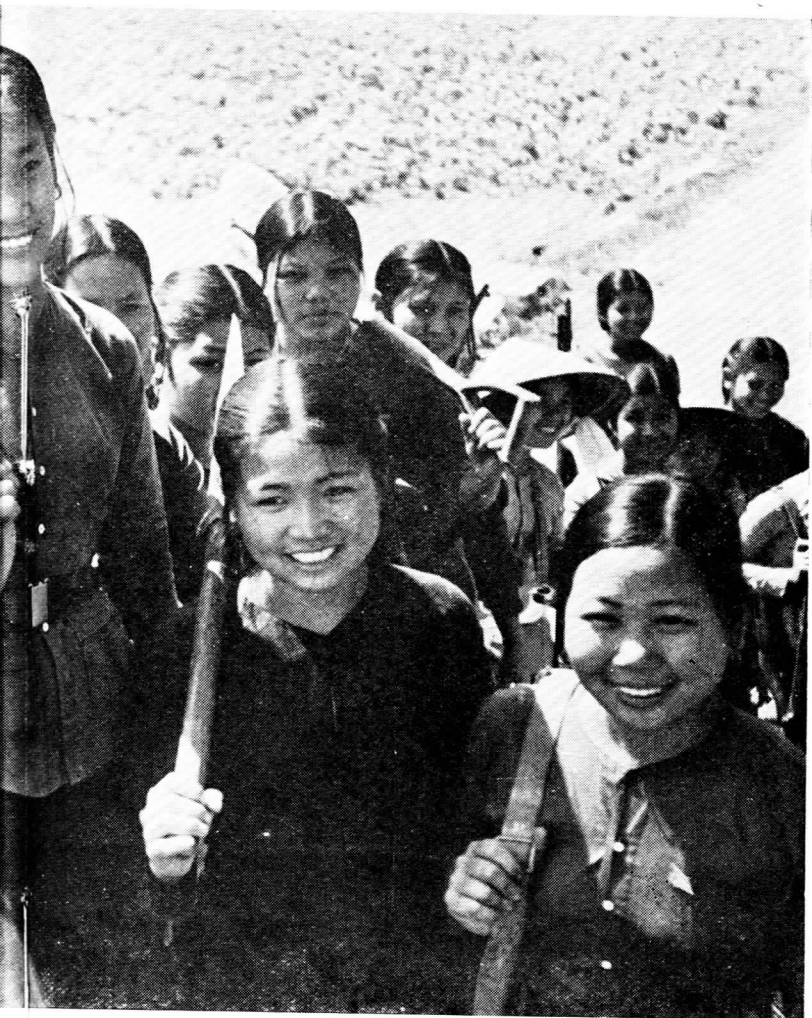


Fishing continues in defiance of enemy attacks.



Repairing bombed roads.

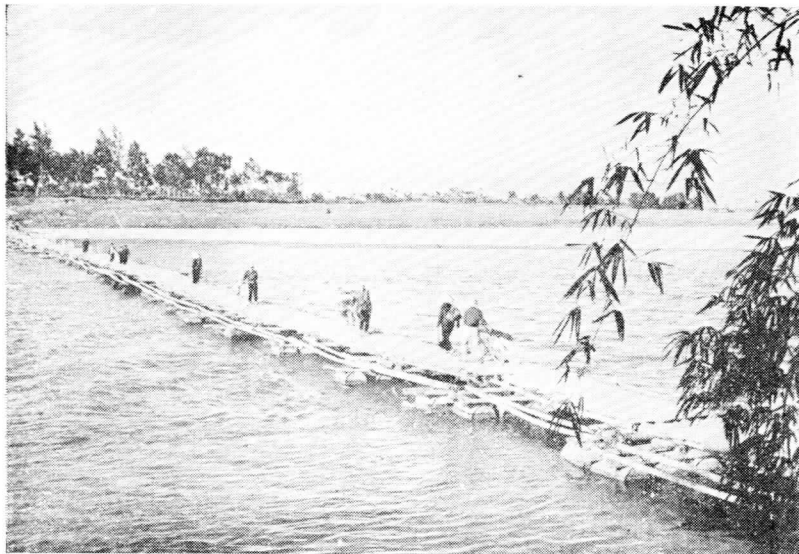




These young girls, who would hesitate to go out alone at night, are ready to stand up to U.S. air attacks guns in hands.



*Peasants work under the
protection of self-defence units.*

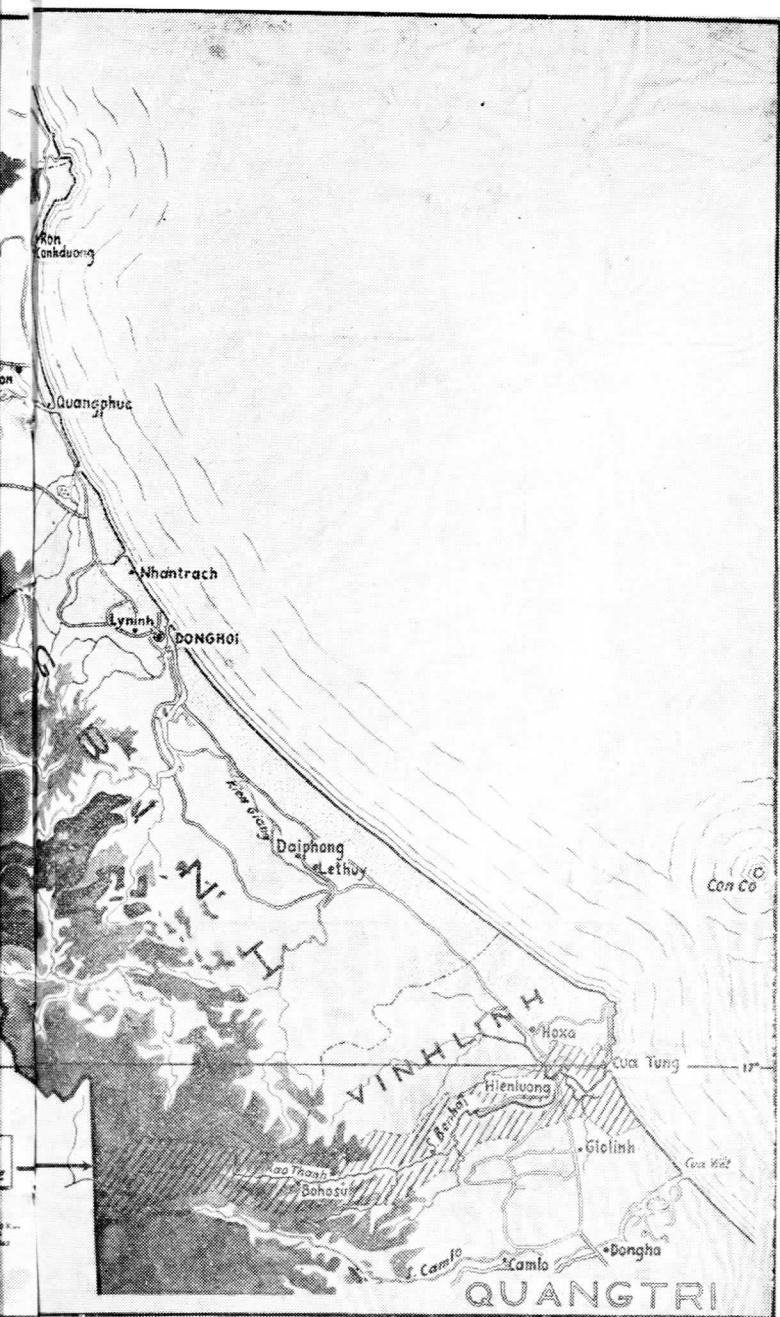


There is no lack of bamboo for quick repair of damaged bridges.

HATINH



Zone délimitarisée
Demilitarized zone





*Under enemy bombing,
Mrs Suot ferries soldiers and
civilians across the river Nhatle
on her rowboat many times a
day.*



while talking cheerfully. Rifles were hung on the wall. We were introduced to a blushing young girl: she was the leader of the women's section of self-defence, and equally good, so they said, at handling a rifle and a loom. Just at that moment some enemy planes flew over, and we could see our young women workers take their guns and get to the neighbouring trenches in the twinkling of an eye. At night, they patrol along the coast. Yet only a few months before, many of them would not have dared to go out at night for fear of... ghosts.

At nightfall we left Baoninh. Hardly had we reached the shore of the Nhatle when a whizzing sound tore the air and a flare lit up in the sky. The lights of Donghoi were still on. A violent explosion raised a geyser in the middle of the river. A quarter of an hour later, Mrs Suot ferried us across the Nhatle, and she was calm and lively as usual. We got into her boat with some ten women of the region, each with her usual load: two baskets and a shoulder pole. No sooner had we got in than the ten shoulder poles began to strike the water at a quick tempo and the boat shot forward like an arrow. We had not expected such a boat race. Mrs Suot, smiling, only steered the boat, like a coxswain at the helm.



It is nearly twenty years since I left Nhantrach village where I had worked during the first years of the anti-French resistance. A village bordering on the sea, like Baoninh. How many new houses with brand-new tiled roofs! It had been a resistance base for years, and given the French troops a lot of trouble. I counted 39 gravestones at the Cemetery of martyrs who had died for the Fatherland. Today Nhantrach is engaged in a resistance of a new type. I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the village Party committee, at which the balance-sheet of the first half-year of 1965 was assessed. Tu, the Party secretary, a man with greying hair, expressed himself with ease, without pointless details:

"We have had difficulties concerning production work," he said. "During the first quarter, the sea was rough. The enemy chased our fishermen, harassed our coasts, even at night. Ten people were killed, four of whom were children. But all stood firm, oar in one hand, and rifle in the other. And these are the results of fishing in the first half year:

" 445,400 kilos of fish, i.e. 122 per cent of the target set by the plan.

" To make a correct assessment of this result, one must keep in mind the conditions in which fishing has been carried on. We have continued to increase our capital and built 75 new fishing boats. The women have greatly contributed to our success. They have, for instance, taken full charge of the distillation of eucalyptus oil, which constitutes one of our most important sideline occupations.

" The entire population have taken part in defence work. Thousands of work-days have been devoted to digging trenches, building combat positions; the coast is carefully guarded. Our militiamen have fought against enemy planes. Once one of our comrades held on his shoulders the bipod of an automatic rifle for another to fire at fast-moving planes. We have dived underwater to fish out the body of a plane and the corpse of the pilot Dickson.

" Many foreign journalists have visited our village. "

After the meeting a comrade put me up at his home; sometime during the night, I heard a mother singing in a soft voice, to lull her child:

In bygone days we lived in gloomy darkness...

That long-drawn voice in the night rent my heart, for I knew how the Nhantrach people had lived, and besides, at the village club, pictures and figures reminded everyone of that quite recent past. Let me cite a few figures:

Dead from starvation in 1945:	74
Dead from cholera in 1945 :	52
Beggars :	71
Children sold to clear debts :	154
People forced to seek a living elsewhere :	133
Illiterates :	864

Today, Nhantrach is not rich yet, but no one dies from hunger, cholera has disappeared, I have not seen any beggar, everybody—except a few old people—can read, and no one can imagine that he could be forced to sell his children for some trifling sums. I understand why the old folk are among the most resolute to fight. They know that behind the Yankee planes, it is not only death and ruin that loom, but a whole dark past that the enemy is

trying to revive: the daily vexations, ignorance, famine, cholera, children sold. Old Duc lost one of his sons, killed at sea by the piratical planes on June 6; he did not weep but simply asked for a pike and a couple of grenades, saying: "If ever the Yankees land here, I will have the pleasure of killing at least some before dying." And to his two other sons who were weeping for their brother, he said: "Don't cry! You have a rifle each, wait day and night patiently in your trenches, you will surely have an opportunity to avenge him." It was also the old folk who told us: "They come, drop some bombs, machine-gun then get away. There is no comparison with the days when the French post was only a few kilometres away, when patrols were likely to turn up at any moment, when a surveillance network choked us. Now the earth is ours, the sky is ours, except for a few minutes each day. At that rate, we can go on fighting for centuries. Whatever may happen, we shall cling to the sea."

To cling to the sea, such is the motto, which is easier to set forth than to put into practice. For what can you do when the planes come and machine-gun your boat on the high seas? No trenches, no shelters, you are away from the anti-aircraft batteries and the meshes of fire woven by the people's militia. Who among the folk here will not remember that day of June 6th, when, under a shining sun, the fishing boats of Nhantrach were joyfully at work. Suddenly four jet planes swooped down, showering rockets on them. Four fishermen were killed on the spot, others wounded. The survivors carried the dead to the village; the burial took place in the evening. It was a rather unusual funeral: there were tears and sobs but even more cries of anger and hatred. All the village swore to avenge their dead.

The Party secretary told us how the Party section, that night, had long discussions about whether or not to advise people to go to sea the next day. In the end, the decision was taken: to carry on the fishing. The population responded massively to the appeal. That night, under the light of torches, people prepared for the next day's fishing, and early at dawn, one could hear them cry out to each other: "Let's put to sea!" No one failed to come; young and old offered to take the place of those killed or injured. To produce and to fight, everyone knows that neither of those two tasks should be neglected. In each inhabitant of Nhantrach, there was the producer and the fighter, inseparably bound together. Jet planes and rockets have failed

to intimidate the one or the other: that is the greatest defeat for the Pentagon.

I took long walks in Nhantrach, along the little river where people were mending nets, enjoying the fresh air; children were playing in the sand, while calmly fishermen walked towards their boats and men and young girls went to work with rifles slung over their shoulders. On a tree I could see a board with freshly painted inscriptions: here the Yankee pirates killed the children Le Thi Hien, Le Nghia, Nguyen Hoa, Nguyen Vang. Not far from there, a cross with these words: Dickson, U.S. pilot fallen on Feb. 7, 1965. In the distance, the Hoanh Son mountains were outlined against the clear sky, and beyond a row of filaos the sand stretched out, gilded by a brilliant sun, and the blue and calm sea was lulling the village with its humming. The verses of my friend Pham Ho came to my mind:

*The sun darted its rays on the sand,
the sea lulled the slackened nets
and the quiet filaos, far away
islands were slumbering.*

The strident whizz of two F.105's pulled me out of my dreaming. Off the coast the 7th Fleet was roaming.

*

On July 17, Quangbinh received the following message:

"I congratulate the population, the fighting forces and cadres of Quangbinh for having brought down 100 U.S. planes, while reaping a good summer crop. You have fought well and done good work in production..."

HO CHI MINH

The message instilled fresh vigour into everyone's spirit; it came as a reward for many months of fighting and work. U.S. planes had furiously raided the province, first attacking definite targets, then assaulting bridges and roads, and finally bombing schools and hospitals indiscriminately and machine-gunning populated areas. Of the 131 communes of the province, 103 had been hit during these months. At first, these piratical planes, which had not expected such strong resistance and heavy ground-fire, came in groups flying at rather low altitude and dropping large

quantities of bombs on a single spot, with a view to terrorizing the people. On account of that they suffered serious losses: 52 planes in February and March. From April onwards, they attacked in scattered small groups, often one plane at a time, trying to baffle the defence by feints and artful manoeuvres, aiming at many targets at a time. From February to July, enemy vessels carried out some 60 provocations along our coast, seizing fishing boats on three occasions. Enemy propaganda strove to exaggerate our losses and the damage caused by the bombing and to persuade the people that the air raids only aimed at "promoting the restoration of peace". And to give proof of their philanthropy, the U.S. planes, after discharging their loads of bombs, dropped every now and then a few toys for children. Indeed, the men of the White House understand nothing of the Vietnamese people!

The Party committee managed to concentrate the defence on some key spots; it saw through the enemy's designs in time, and laid real "ambushes" to the piratical planes. In particular, the bridges were often attacked in the order foreseen by our command, and the concentration of defence arms inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. In two fights, six planes were shot down over Lyhoa bridge; then it was the turn of Myduc bridge; that time, the enemy lost 19 planes for a little bridge which we could put back into service without too much difficulty. On July 7, Donghoi downed six planes, of which one came down on its nose in the very centre of the town.

However, the number of planes shot down does not tell the whole significance of our victory. The Party Committee of Quangbinh did not stress only this criterion, and knew how to concentrate ideological work on other, more essential points. Its report of July made this clear:

"It is not sufficient to consider the number of planes downed when appraising our victory, but one must examine all fields: military, economic, political. One must ask whether the enemy has achieved his purpose. If we succeed in shooting down many planes, while ensuring our communications, maintaining the morale of the population so that they are always determined to fight, the success is very great. In case few planes are downed, but we manage to ensure our communications and maintain the people's determination to fight, the success is still important. On the contrary, even if many planes are shot down, it is quite a bad result if we fail to ensure our communications and maintain the people's morale."

In July, besides the figure of 100 planes brought down over Quangbinh, that of the 1965 summer crop perhaps told even more eloquently to what extent the inhabitants of the province have defeated the enemy. Let's go into more details. As compared with 1964, the 1965 harvest recorded an increase of 15.5% for paddy production, 20% for maize, 27% for potatoes. If fishermen of coastal villages had clung to the sea in spite of the piratical planes, the peasants had done the same on their fields. Tens of thousands of people worked on the fields day and night, dispersing in shelters and trenches when the planes attacked, resuming work at once when the alarm was over. The enemy attacks in a way quickened the tempo of the work; all thought of improving their style of work and bettering their tools. Many innovations had cropped up. One could say the daily flights of Yankee planes over the province had roused not only the masses' combativeness, but also a powerful drive in production work. Thousands of men, of young people had been mobilized; the defence works, the repair of bridges and roads had required a huge amount of labour, and yet a bewildering result — bewildering for uninformed people — proved that a deep change had occurred: almost everywhere the harvesting and bringing in of grain in the summer of 1965 had required averagely 15 days less than the previous year.

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During the first half year of 1965, irrigation works effected in the province doubled as compared with 1964. The spur of the fighting and the clear-sighted leadership of an experienced party had brought forth the latent forces that were slumbering. Lyndon B. Johnson certainly did not expect that, when unleashing his planes on North Vietnam.

The sun was shining; we walked along a newly-dug canal whose banks were not yet wholly covered with grass. We slowly climbed sloping hills, captivated by something like the dull rustle of a large waterfall. In the distance, on the opposite hills, new houses with red tiles. Suddenly we came in sight of a vast expanse of water, hemmed in by mountains like a pearl in a jewell-case. The emerald of the lake shaded off into the dark blue mass of the woods. We were at Camly, a dam completed on April 1, 1964, by the sheer strength of tens of thousands of pairs of arms.

Before actually seeing it, how often we had heard of this Camly dam! Five thousand hectares irrigated, tens of

thousands of people whose lives had completely changed. In former times, in the dry season, the suffocating wind coming from Laos raised whirls of dust, a dust that penetrated into everything: the rice one was eating, and one's eyes. Everybody, especially the children, got sore eyes. A single rice crop reaped every year on this barren soil did not suffice to feed the population. The grass withered, the buffaloes looked pitiable. Now a shining sheet of water covers the rice paddies, the grass is green, eyes no longer are dimmed by tears. I understood the anger in the voice of an inhabitant of Dinhphung village who told me through his clenched teeth: "If it was only my house that they had tried to burn down! But the dam, no! Our very lives are at stake. The scoundrels!" He pointed at the bomb craters. I could not help crying out in my turn: "The scoundrels!" Fortunately Camly was well defended, and the U. S. pilots rather chicken-hearted.

Trying to destroy a dam so that the ricefields can no longer bear crops, so that the dust comes again to corrode the children's eyes: that's really the doings of scoundrels! At the foot of the dam, some Muong * houses on stilts had been deserted by their inhabitants to avoid the bombs. Those pretty houses, located in the midst of such a beautiful scenery, now abandoned, saddened me. But no one in the region thinks that Camly can be destroyed. Every inhabitant here keeps ready a fifteen-kilo block of baked clay; when the warning is given, tens of thousands of people will rush to the dam to stop any breaches. And with what love everyone glances at the A.A. batteries which keep watch over Camly.

We made our way further west, in the direction of the Truong Son Range. The forests grew thicker. Eighteen years ago, in 1947, pursued by the French troops, our fighters had withdrawn to this region. Old memories came to my mind; huts on the banks of a brook, cries of monkeys, morning mist, odour of humus, inextricable lianas. I felt the past revive with more vigour than ever. But I did not remain long lost in my dreams. For here was, in front of us, an unwonted sight in the middle of the virgin forest: thousands of saplings in straight rows, like a parading army, their whitewashed stems looking like Ligh boots, broad leaves of a soft green colour shining under the sun. Rubber trees: this was the Leninh State farm.

* *A minority people.*

We were introduced to a group of sunburnt men, the pioneers, they said. Coming from the South, regrouped to the North after the 1954 armistice, they had come to these unexplored forests to reclaim a plot of land for their own benefit. Their settlement was prospering when the State decided to create the Lenin farm. The pioneers offered at once to the new farm the land which they had reclaimed, with all the cattle and equipment, and volunteered as workmen for the new establishment. I noticed a group of cheerful young girls. They made up, so it was said, the March Eighth brigade of socialist labour. Their achievement: an average 23.7 workdays a month in a season with frequent bad weather. At this latitude, rubber trees require minute care. The plantation had hardly healed its wounds caused by the last typhoons when came the raids by U.S. planes. For ten times successively, the workers' dwelling houses and the farm installations were bombed; all that is new — dams, hospitals, forestry farms — on this land of Quangbinh excites the rage of the men in Washington. We were about to visit the kindergarten of Lenin when the planes came. The nurses swiftly led the children to the shelters; men and young girls in arms took up positions behind works prepared beforehand. Here, like anywhere we had passed, it was the same atmosphere of order and calm; the most up-to-date planes of the U.S.A. cannot cause panic. I noticed pikes and ropes among the weapons of the self-defence units. It was explained to us that the enemy sometimes drops parashaboteurs, or sends them in through the Laos frontier.

Here also, the difficulties in transport, the damage caused by the bombing, the labour required by defence works had not prevented production from progressing. The yield of ground-nuts had increased by 15% as compared with 1964; in the 2nd brigade, 206 cows had calved with a minimal death rate. Cattle breeding, which had got started with difficulty, began to bring profit. The average work time was 22.3 days a month. The team of tractors had reduced operating costs by 12%; it had saved 2.8 litres of fuel for each cultivated hectare. The truck drivers, compelled to drive by night, had none the less fulfilled the targets assigned to them, and no accident had occurred.

Our forests are no longer simple refuges, as they were twenty years ago. With the new regime, men are stamping their mark there, a mark that no force in the world can rub out.

Nov. 1965

We were back in Quangbinh nine months after the first raid of February. The ferry at the river Gianh had undergone some two hundred air attacks. Practically no bridge was left intact. Nevertheless the traffic was easier than in July; one felt that everything had improved. The vehicles proceeded in orderly columns during the night. In the daytime the peasants placidly ploughed, dug, and replanted rice seedlings beside the craters made by the bombs. Some of those huge holes had been turned into ponds where fish was reared. In the catholic village of Quangphuc, we were told that the two crops had never been so good. Here, we were also told how little Mien, an eleven-year-old girl, had covered her little brother with her own body and died from several bomb splinters. Those who had fled into the mountains during the first raids had all come back to work, rifles in hands. Children went to school, with camouflage boughs on their backs; they discussed various types of aircraft, F.105, AD 4, Phantom, Thunderchief, as if they were playthings. A foreign friend who had visited Quangbinh told us that once, hearing an engine roar overhead, he had jumped into a trench. Schoolboys standing nearby had pulled at his jacket, laughing, and said, "That was a supersonic plane; when you hear it there is no danger any more; it's gone already." Our friend added: "I was a colonel during the Second World War, yet I have less experience than those kids! The planes passed over that village almost every day."

We went by the school — or rather the former school — : four brick-built class-rooms with red tile roofs, a fronton on which one could still see the date of completion: May 19, 1964. The inhabitants of Quangphuc were very proud of that fine school built with their savings and labour. On March 2, 1965, a bomb knocked down a class-room. Fortunately all the children had gone to the shelters. In the evening the schoolmasters gathered all the pupils and announced that the classes would go on. The day after, all were present, except six. The teachers visited the parents of those six pupils and persuaded them to let their children continue to go to school. The junior classes were dispersed into private houses. During the summer holidays, masters and pupils, together with the village people, worked day and night to build three other classrooms scattered in the village, well hidden under the trees. It was in that new school that we talked to the headmaster. He told us:

"At the beginning, masters and pupils passionately joined in the fighting, they all went to the places where our troops were fighting to serve them, taking care of the wounded, stamping out fires. A house having been burnt down, the pupils collected money to help the family rebuild it. We have rectified that tendency, and made them realize that for masters and pupils the main duty at present is to go on teaching and learning. We take part in the fighting to the extent of our means, but if we succeed in concluding the school year well in spite of the bombings, we will have got the better of the Yankees."

For the 1965-66 school year, there are 17 pupils more than in the previous year. As the school is located in a combat zone, it has adopted the shortened curriculum worked out by the Ministry; the teachers try to teach the essential subjects while striving to make their teaching livelier, richer. Ninety five per cent of the pupils were promoted to higher classes in June 1965.

There were excellent shelters round the school, and communication trenches enabled the pupils to evacuate several hundred metres away in case of danger. The children never went to school in groups; I noticed that even during the breaks, they did not get together, many stayed inside the class-rooms so as not to draw the attention of U.S. pilots.

We came to see an old man, the father of a pupil. Mr Hieu was 60 years old, had a son in the army, a daughter in the young volunteers' brigades and his youngest son was a schoolboy. A small jar stood in the middle of a table: it was the jar of rice "against U.S. aggression." Every day, each member of the family puts in it a handful of rice from his ration, thus making a reserve in view of a protracted war. "Moreover," Mr Hieu told us, "look at our garden: since the beginning of U.S. aggression, we have planted tubers, gourds and pumpkins; all this enables us to save rice and improve our diet. We follow the Party's advice to the letter." A cross was hanging from his neck: the family was catholic. He met my thoughts in advance:

"I was quite miserable in former times; the French colonialists burned down my hut. I received my share of land in 1955, built myself a brick house in recent years. I am a believer: as long as I am living, I follow the Party's directives; after my death, God will take care of me."

After Quangphuc, we went past the former Donghoi hospital of which only ruins remained. As we have related,

that hospital was hit during the first raid; as the buildings were still there, some stayed in, although the larger part of its departments was evacuated. They believed that a hospital with its red cross well marked, its compound of buildings in the middle of a field, far from the town, would be spared. The U.S. planes had come back fourteen times. There had been four dead and some twenty wounded. Today, the hospital is evacuated, and we have visited its new installations.

A village like a thousand others, with its bamboos, its thickly-grown vegetation, a green shield behind which thatch roofs can hardly be seen. Bamboo huts scattered in the village among other bamboo huts: they are the hospital. The U.S. pilots will find it hard to pinpoint these installations hidden under the greenery and similar to the peasants' houses in the country.

We enter the surgery room: operation table, forceps, scalpels, anaesthetic apparatuses, all necessary technical equipment is there. By car, by bicycle, on foot, the medical staff and nurses have moved here all that was at the Donghoi hospital. The doctors seem all to be under thirty; they are newly graduates, trained in socialist medical colleges. To live and work in a village without comforts, with only scanty means, does not frighten them. They operate under bombing during whole nights, look after sanitary measures in the village when necessary, handle spades and hoes, travel tens of kilometres by bike to come to the rescue of a wounded person.

The hospital is composed of several wards: urgencies, consultations, ophthalmology, stomatology, and a long-term cure ward. All those wards are scattered among populated villages. At the beginning, some thought that it would be advisable to shift the hospital to a region distant from all populous areas, but shouldn't a medical establishment remain close to the population, especially in war time? Around each ward, shelters have been dug for the sick, some fit for bed-ridden patients: here also communication trenches enable people to evacuate when the place is under direct attack.

Accustomed to large medical establishments in the big cities, I was deeply impressed when going round these modest but efficient installations hidden behind bamboo hedges, seeing those doctors and nurses operate with ease in the middle of that village, so quaintly outdated in some respects. The doctors told me that while curing their patients by current therapeutics, i.e. those used in the

world, they are also seeking to cure some syndromes like the traumatic shock by original methods adapted to the circumstances of our country. The experiments are, it seems, promising.

I told myself: it is fortunate that the organisation and spirit of our medical branch have been, for the last few years, directed toward serving the whole people, and that we have set up a whole network of medical and sanitary establishments down to village level and above all we have physicians and nurses who are accustomed to working in the countryside, meeting the lack of equipment with bold initiative and patient labour. Many doctors in 1954, at the restoration of peace, only thought of building large hospitals in the cities, requiring the most modern equipment, despising traditional medicine and recipes of popular medicine. Where would we be today, if we had followed their advice? What would become of the wounded and the sick when Yankee planes attack all the big hospitals? For our health service the transition from the state of peace to that of war has been effected not without requiring great efforts, but without crisis.

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We arrived at Hophoa co-operative farm when the harvest of the 10th lunar month (Nov.) was in full swing. I noticed, not without astonishment, many new buildings: a large pigsty, a vast yard, seven shelters for manure, and the comrades proudly showed us a rice-husking machine, newly bought. I asked them whether they had been attacked. They had been bombed several times, they answered. In particular, on July 17, two rockets set fire to 12 houses and wounded an inhabitant; on August 30, a bombing followed by machine-gunning set ablaze 13 houses, killed 5 persons and wounded 10.

All those new buildings had been, however, constructed during the summer of 1965, and pointing his finger at the plain, my interlocutor added: "They are not the only ones." In fact, the estate of the co-op, 100 hectares with 950 persons to be fed, had been literally transformed: a dike protected it from the sea, interdicting salt water from penetrating into the rice paddies, while smaller dikes marked out four great areas, divided into large plots of land. On this area, there were formerly several hundred

plots. During long months, two hundred persons worked hard to level the ground and build those dikes; they first worked at night to avoid being spotted by U.S. planes, then after some time, it was decided to work in the daytime, with shelters and trenches dug in the fields. That barren land yielded 1.7 tons per hectare in November 1965 as against 1.26 in 1963. The peasants' income had increased by 24 per cent and the accumulation fund by 50 per cent.

In the evening, I attended a meeting of a production team: 17 members of whom 14 were women. The women ensured the major part of the work in the coop. The meeting was held in the light of a little lamp covered with a kind of shade so as to dim its light: just a little light was allowed to filter out so that the participants in the meeting could note down figures on their notebooks.

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The day after, at Lyninh village, near Donghoi, we met with the same problems, the same atmosphere. The village had been attacked 35 times, which could not prevent 500 peasants working during several weeks from building a 250-metre dike, constituting a large water reservoir which irrigates all the rice fields in the commune.

Lyninh is however well known, above all, for its cultural achievements. That evening, Lyninh celebrated the fulfilment of its five-year plan of supplementary education for grown-ups. All the cadres and members of the Youth Union had reached the 4th form, and all inhabitants from 15 to 40 years of age, the 2nd form. The plan of education for the next five-year plan was already worked out; the cadres and members of the Youth Union would reach the standard of the 7th form, and the other co-operative peasants, that of the 4th form. The ceremony was held in an infant class, prettily decorated by teachers and pupils. Entering the school, I noticed flower beds on the edges of the yard. In spite of war, they had not forgotten the flowers. The local art troupe performed before an enthusiastic audience. Doors and windows had been tightly blinded, and no light could filter out. The peasant at whose home I put up was staying home to look after his children so that his wife could attend the performance, for he had been to a cinema show that week. He was a film fan, and sometimes walked 6 or 7 kilometres to attend

a show in a neighbouring village. As soon as the approach of a plane was announced, all lights were put out. The alarm over, the performance resumed. A little sketch greatly amused the audience: it was a husband trying hard to calm his wife frightened by the planes. At the end, everything was all right; gradually encouraged by the example of young girls, the wife overcame her fears. Naturally the song "Quangbinh, our homeland" was heartily applauded.

*

We are three to have travelled through Quangbinh at different periods of the year. We have put our heads together and asked ourselves what is the strongest impression that that province has left on our minds. A host of faces came back to our memories when we put that question to ourselves: those whom the newspapers or the radio had already glorified, unknown anonymous faces, faces of leaders, cadres, simple peasants or fishermen, of old women bent under the weight of age, of children going to school with camouflage twigs on their backs.

All have left the same impression on us: they were strangely calm, assured in their movements, in each of their gestures. The U.S. planes roamed the skies above their heads, tore the air with the roar of their engines, but nobody seemed to pay any attention to them. In the first days, we did not hear without a shudder the roar of an aircraft, but to live with those people of Quangbinh for a few days was quite enough to get from their example that quiet assurance. Here, the most heroic exploit seemed to be part of the daily life. We remember well that young woman from a coastal village before whom they extolled the courage of her husband who had fought many times against jet planes, face to face with the enemy, without batting an eyelid. The woman only said, "Well, women can do the same." We remember Nguyen Tu Thoan, the provincial secretary of the Party, on whom heavy responsibilities are incumbent: military, political, economic. We saw him between two meetings, calmly playing a game of chess, as if nothing was happening.

The most perfected aircraft cannot impress the people of Quangbinh: that is perhaps the greatest defeat of the U.S. Air Force.

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February 1966.

A photo on the local newspaper shows us some chinaware and other goods produced in the province: the plan for creating certain necessary small regional industries is making headway. The newspaper also informs us that in 1966 the schools of the province have received 8,500 pupils more than in 1965.

On January 31, 1966, after a pause which allowed him to launch his "peace offensive", U.S. President Johnson ordered the resumption of bombing against the D.R.V. American planes again tried to destroy the Camly dam. On February 25, a bomb destroyed the nursery of the Lenin forestry exploitation site: eight children and two nurses killed.

On March 1, 1966, Quangbinh brought down the 887th aircraft downed in North Vietnam.

PRODUCTION AND FIGHTING IN DAI PHONG

After **NGUYEN NGOC ANH**
Head of Dai Phong co-operative

In 1964, we underwent severe trials. Fifty per cent of the 1964 autumn rice crop was lost. Within two months from September 15 to November 15, 1964 we were hit by 11 storms. They were followed by heavy rains, submerging all our fields, and sweeping away 134 out of 142 hectares of rice seedlings. When the water receded, the co-op members worked as best they could to make good the damage suffered. They had transplanted seedlings on 70 per cent of the area grown to rice when the U.S. imperialists came on February 7, 1965 and raided Quangbinh, our province. Our co-operative was repeatedly strafed. Such was the situation at the beginning of the winter 1964-spring 1965 crop. The difficulties we met with were numerous. No sooner had the water receded than enemy planes came. Standing on the frontline of the battle waged by the North against the U.S. imperialists and being the standard-bearer of the agricultural movement in, the North we are well aware of our responsibilities. The more crimes the enemy commits against us, the more we hate him and the more we are determined to struggle valiantly, to overcome all difficulties and to apply advanced technique for intensive cultivation. Our community of 948 families with 4,800 people must be a firm fighting unit in our socialist Fatherland.

Under the old regime, our life was miserable, as evidenced by this popular saying "O my poor jacket, you are so torn up that even lice don't find room there to live!" Under the new regime our livelihood has been improved. For the

past five years, especially since our co-operative embraced the whole village, we have got ever better crops with a steadily increasing output. The average yield per hectare of summer rice crop has risen continuously: 1960: 1.57 tons; 1961: 2.03 tons, 1962: 2.2 tons; 1963: 2.25 tons; 1964: 2.336 tons. Our co-op members eat their fill and have also better clothes. New houses, schools, health stations and storehouses have been built. All that is due to the revolution. The more gratitude we feel for it, the more we strive to defend our co-operative and our socialist Fatherland. We will overcome all difficulties and score achievements both in production and fighting. Thus, despite natural calamities and enemy destruction we recorded unprecedented success for the summer 1965 crop. Rice yield rose to 2.4 tons per hectare. The other trades in the co-operative were also in full activity. The co-op's 2,000 ducks laid over 250,000 eggs and more than 10,000 ducklings were hatched. Brick-kilns and lime-kilns turned out hundreds of thousands of bricks and tiles and thousands of tons of lime. Fishing brought in scores of tons of fish. Lumbering produced hundreds of cubic metres of timber and fire-wood. For the first quarter of 1965 the co-op's income was 608,962 dong, that is 70.34 per cent of the target for the whole year. We also sold much paddy and many other agricultural products to the state and still keep abundant stocks of duck eggs, meat, etc.. The prospects for our autumn crop are also good.

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What have we done to develop production in spite of bad weather conditions and enemy destruction?

We have laid great stress on good ideological work to make all co-op members actively fight against the enemy's war of destruction and at the same time realize that production also requires a bitter struggle and that rice-fields are real battle-fields. Moreover, we have taken energetic measures fitting the new situation. Let's take an example: after the 1964 autumn crop suffered 50 per cent losses we mobilized our co-op members to plant vegetables in anticipation of the rice shortage which would set in about February- March. The vegetables were growing well when they were ruined by a rainstorm. Though deeply affected we hastened to plant other subsidiary crops, but we lacked seeds. The Party Central Committee then sent as aid 5 truck-loads of young sweet potato plants, fertilizers, cabbage and other seeds. On seeing

the convoy arrive after a long and hard journey, all of us were deeply moved. "We must act in such a way as to be worthy of the Party's solicitude," we said to ourselves. The seeds and fertilizer were distributed to the co-op members. Each family got from 50 to 250 young sweet potato plants, from 4 to 9 kilogrammes of nitrogenous fertilizer and a packet of seeds, depending on its size. Only a fortnight later, the fields were again green.

"The buffalo is the peasants' most precious capital" this old saying is still quite relevant. However, the co-op's 430 buffaloes, penned in tumbledown sheds, were so lean that they could hardly be expected to supply enough draught power for deep ploughing and thorough harrowing. Many a cadre or co-op member proposed to reduce production norms. But we resolved to restore their strength to the buffaloes and repair their sheds. A meeting was convened to this effect. Within five days the sheds were put in good repair. But tending buffaloes is no easy matter. Straw is their staple food, but most of our reserves had been damaged by the flood. Each production team was then assigned to a forest area where it would get grass for the cattle not only of our cooperative but of others as well. Everyday at dawn sampan after sampan made for the assigned area 18 kilometres away, to come back at 8 or 9 in the evening with a cargo of fodder. Each beast was given 60 kilogrammes of grass daily and also 200 grammes of rice flour and salt-water. Co-op members who cut grass or tended buffaloes received bonuses. When the co-op members were taken up by work in the fields we asked 600 pupils to help them look after the weaker buffaloes. On his way to or back from school each child cut a few hundred grammes of grass. In this way within two months all the buffaloes had recovered their strength.

Since the co-op embraced the whole village, we have endeavoured to apply advanced techniques and have obtained good results. To meet the requirements of the struggle against the US imperialists for national salvation, beginning with the winter 1964-spring 1965 crop we have improved our technical measures and adapted them to the new situation.

Lying in a low land Dai-phong was formerly under a constant threat of flood. It never got more than one crop a year, the summer one. Our 1961-1965 irrigation plan aimed at combating both water-logging and drought and turning one-crop fields into two-crop ones. The volume of earth moved each year has risen markedly: 17.5 cubic

metres per head in 1960, 22 in 1961, 25 in 1962, 27.6 in 1963 and 32 in 1964. Since the U.S. imperialists started their war of destruction against the North we have thought it safer to put our capital in the fields and so we have postponed all construction work to concentrate on water conservancy. In the past village officials only dug a small number of tiny irrigation canals for they wanted to keep their fields intact. Now we have replaced them with four big channels and a network of dykes. Ten successive storms and floods swept away nearly 20,000 cubic metres of dykes and dams but the co-op water conservancy team worked day and night to repair them. Formerly our fields were divided into a great many small irregular plots, which made it very difficult to apply intensive cultivation. We have built embankments around an area of 400 hectares which was then divided into medium-sized and regular-shaped plots. Owing to difficulties in the transport of gasoline and oil, our co-operative has been able to operate only 2 or 3 pumps out of a total of 8. Now that the U.S. imperialists have unleashed a war of destruction we have envisaged the eventuality of being deprived of the use of even these pumps. To have enough water in any circumstances, we have actively built small irrigation works, urged the co-op members to use more scoops and waterwheels and decided that pumps be reserved for the more difficult cases. In the first nine months of 1965 alone, each co-op member moved 53 cubic metres of earth in an average (as against 35 cubic metres for the whole year under the plan). Thirty per cent of the labour force in the co-operative has been devoted to irrigation work.

We usually grow the following varieties of rice: *chum*, *ren*, *su* and *theo*. *Su* and *theo* are low-yield varieties, giving at most 1.6 tons and 1.2 tons per hectare respectively. On the contrary, *chum* and *ren* give at least two tons per hectare but unfortunately they are not widely grown in our fields. Through selection we have gradually abandoned the former varieties. We have also selected the best strains of maize and manioc.

We advocate devoting ever more care to each area unit as an important measure to carry out intensive farming. Many young co-op members have enlisted in the armed forces. Requirements in economic building and national defence have increased steadily. How could one carry out intensive farming in those conditions? On the one hand, we have mobilized our co-op members' diligence and courage;

no the other hand, we have perfected labour organization and improved farm implements.

In the winter-spring cultivation campaign, to each hectare of land we devoted 28 more work-days to directly productive work, and deducted 6 work-days from indirectly productive work. Hence each hectare got over 8 tons of good organic fertilizer. This summer crop we have set aside some experimental fields where we have tried to get ever higher yields. Each hectare of these fields required 356 work-days and 334 *dongs* and has given 3.66 tons of paddy on an average.

After deduction of production expenses, each work-day spent on the experimental fields is valued at 1.85 *dongs*, each 100 kilogrammes of paddy cost 24.5 *dongs* and require 9.7 work-days. Each hectare of experimental fields requires 44 more work-days compared with other fields but each 100 kilogrammes of paddy cost 1.7 *dongs* less and require 3 work-days less. Hence we are determined to devote more care to each unit of cultivated area in all circumstances, for intensive farming.

In period of war, leadership and organization work must also be improved to suit the new situation.

We always consider ideological work as our prime task. But how to organize production so that our co-op members can give it a resolute and efficient impulse remains a big problem. To this end, we have urged the people to dig good shelters. Within a short time, we have dug scores of kilometres of trenches and thousands of shelters for our co-op members and their families. Anybody visiting our co-operative and caught in a U.S. air raid can, as he likes, run to the riverside or to the fields or can take refuge in a shelter, outside or inside the village. Nurseries now group only six or seven children each, and are provided with solid shelters connected with the fields by trenches to enable mothers working there to join their children during a raid if they so wish. Plane-hunting teams have been set up to keep watch, for if we were to take refuge at the least drone of planes we would sit in trenches all day long. These anti-aircraft squads can distinguish between the different types of planes and ascertain whether an attack was imminent in order to signal co-op members either to take shelter or to carry on with their work.

A co-op member has to fight and serve the fighting, apart from his production job. Without a good organization of manpower it would not be possible to carry out urgent

and multiple jobs at the same time. We have set up "production and combat teams", each comprising less than 10 people, of unequal physical strength, men and women. Team leaders and deputy leaders are experienced in production work and have besides undergone military training; they give leadership in both production and fighting. Production squads become first-aid teams or fire-fighting teams if the village is raided. Their tasks are many. But stress is laid on production. Thus we have organized a specialized water conservancy brigade of 120 people, while another brigade of 180 people, normally engaged in irrigation work, serve the fighting when required.

Party cadres and members bring the Party lines and policies down to the masses to be carried out by them. Only with a body of good and efficient cadres, and close leadership and guidance can we get good results in production and fighting. In peace time we held that all cadres must not only have the required moral and political qualities but also be well acquainted with management work and production technique. Now that war has come, other qualifications are also required: cadres and Party members must be heroic in fighting and valiant in production. On the basis of these qualifications we consolidate the ranks of our cadres. A number of cadres have thus been replaced. Though having to carry out fighting and production abreast, we none the less continue to expand our technical network to bring science and technology into agriculture. Our technical network has reached the production brigades. Technical cadres are responsible for technical guidance of the production brigades of which they are members and are granted an allowance equivalent to five per cent of their work-days in each cultivation season. We strictly apply the principle of collective leadership and personal responsibility. Each standing member of the Party Committee looks after a sector while each Party committee member is in charge of a production brigade. In each brigade, each Party member is responsible for a group of families, or for ploughing and harrowing teams, etc. Each cadre looks after a certain area of fields. After each work drive (ploughing, harrowing, buffalo-tending...) we review the responsibility of each Party member and cadre. Meetings are held periodically for the co-op members to appraise the leadership of the co-op's Party organization and criticize the Party members. In this way we have been able to overcome shortcomings in leadership and correct our mistakes. Implementing the slogan "Ready to go wherever the Party requires" each cadre has trained someone to replace him in case of necessity. Of late, the heads of the

village committee and militia, the chief accountant and many others have been called to other jobs. Sometimes they received only one day's notice but the work in the co-operative has been kept running smoothly.

Though having to carry out production together with fighting, the Dai Phong co-operative has scored all-sided and deserved achievements in the winter 1964-spring 1965 crop. This is due first of all to the fact that we have carried out good ideological work and carefully attended to the co-op members' livelihood.

When the U.S. imperialists began their air strikes against the North (August 1964) we held a meeting of co-op members at which they studied the new situation and tasks. We have asserted that if the enemy increases his escalation, Vinh Linh and Quang Binh will be at the front line of the fighting. Then Dai Phong, which is a part of Quang Binh, will certainly have to bear the brunt of the enemy assault. Our Party organization has told co-op members about our difficulties and shortcomings and let them discuss the measures to be taken. Seeing through the enemy's schemes, they have rapidly dug shelters and trenches and consolidated their organizations, standing ready to fight and win.

Since February 1965 when U.S. jets began to roar in the sky and U.S. bombs and shells to explode in Quang Binh, our Daiphong co-op has also begun a fierce struggle against the enemy. We have time and again reminded co-op members of our people's heroic traditions, inculcated upon them the deepest hatred of the U.S. imperialists, and mobilized them in production and fighting, so as to keep our co-op worthy of the title of standard-bearer of agricultural co-operativization in our country. In the first war of resistance (1945-1954) the Binh Tri Thien (1) army and people had but rudimentary weapons, but they put the French imperialists to rout at Xuan Bo. Today, with their time-tested heroism and the varied weapons they possess, our people will certainly defeat the U.S. imperialists, ringleaders of world imperialism. A woman partisan of Ngu Thuy, who was holding only an ordinary rifle, did not hesitate to shoot at a U.S. war vessel, thus setting a shining example for all the members of our co-op. At the end of August, when 200 co-op members were doing irrigation work at Hac Hai, two AD.6s and four jets came to shower bombs and rockets on them.

1. *The three provinces of Quangbinh, Quangtri, Thuathien in Central Vietnam.*

Our people rapidly got into their trenches. Comrade Day took aim with his rifle and shot 12 rounds at the enemy jets. The more they hate the U.S. pirates, the harder our people work, even when aircraft are circling overhead, taking shelter only when ordered to do so by air-defence teams. As soon as the planes turn tail, they resume their work. The very day the enemy attacked Hac Hai, the tempo of building irrigation work was stepped up (individual norms reached two cubic metres) to make up for the time lost because of the raids. During a period of repeated U.S. raids, the Daiphong co-op's members transplanted seedlings to 30 to 35 hectares of ricefields a day.

After eleven storms and floods some people were depressed on seeing their village and fields devastated and their buffaloes so lean. We reckoned that if the state was asked for help, it would have to grant 200 tons of paddy and use 50 lorries for the transport. During the nine years of the first resistance war, the Binh Tri Thien army and people lacked everything and often had only wild roots to eat. Yet they managed to defeat the French aggressors. Now that in spite of everything we still have rice to eat, why can't we overcome difficulties? The struggle against the U.S. imperialists for national salvation is a sacred task. We must overcome all difficulties and do our utmost to win final victory. Built on wasteland after the war, the Daiphong co-operative has started from scratch. We must keep going forward. So we all agreed that in order to advance we must promote our tradition of self-reliance, industry and frugality. Our ideological work, oriented in this direction, was warmly supported by the people. Owing to difficulties in communications and transport, we were sometimes in want of such commodities as sewing needles, matches or soap. Without soap, we used potash extracted from wood ashes. Without matches, we kept the fire with a wisp of twisted straw. Formerly our toiling peasants were wont to drink some rice wine and eat a kind of fish sauce at every meal. The old folk considered rice wine a good medicine against lumbago. Without rice wine, they refused to go to work. Without fish sauce they had no appetite. But for several months they have gone without rice wine.

Under normal circumstances, every time they met a cadre they would pat their backs and ask him why there was no rice wine coming. Now they say to themselves: "The lorries have to carry ammunition for the militia to fight the enemy; we can go without wine." They still make delicious fish sauce but keep it for the fighters. Formerly at harvest

times, people used to organize parties which would cost them 200 *dongs* for the tea and squander from 15 to 20 tons of glutinous rice. Then after the harvest, the production brigades would slaughter over 30 pigs and cook 3 tons of glutinous rice for a spree. Since this summer crop, that habit has been dropped, waste being incompatible with the requirements of war.

We strive to impress a spirit of self-reliance and endurance on our co-op members, but our Party organization pays the utmost attention to their welfare. Despite difficulties, our co-op provides people with fish sauce and smoked fish, etc. From the five tons of tea and several tons of sugar obtained from reclaimed lands, each family is allotted some tea and six kilogrammes of sugar. We see to it that the co-op members get enough rest and sleep: in places often attacked by U.S. planes they work by turns and the number and duration of work meetings are reduced to a minimum.

Magazines and newspapers come late, but our co-op has a network of 300 loudspeakers which gives them the latest news. The news of U.S. planes shot down by our army and people, of American pilots captured, or of production achievements throughout the North, is for them a great source of encouragement. Living far from the Central Government, we are inspired and stimulated in our work by the words of our beloved Uncle Ho and other leaders, coming to us from the capital. Artistic activities, which educate and mobilize people, hold a large place at Daiphong. After a day's work, people sing in the evening while pounding or husking rice... The Party organization sees to it that the Daiphong cadres and Party members have deep love and keep in close touch with the masses whom they must help and look after.

Whenever difficulties come up the good examples set by Party members always exert a decisive effect. Following an enemy attack people long to have Party members among them and feel reassured by their presence. We often say to one another: "Party members must show exemplary conduct; they must be the first to endure hardships and fight valiantly." Our Party and Party committee members have lived up to their words. They have been present at all places raided by the enemy and have helped our people rebuild their devastated houses. The day the enemy attacked production brigade 28, comrade Y, the Party secretary, arrived in time to direct the fighting. Following the Party members' example, the production brigades, militia units,

stretcher-bearers, firemen, nurses, medical cadres throughout the village have displayed courage and selflessness.

We understand that our struggle against the U.S. imperialists for national salvation and reunification will be long and hard.

We are daily carrying out production and fighting, we know that our determination to oppose the U.S. imperialists for national salvation must first of all tend towards these aims: to produce 5 tons of paddy per hectare a year, and to shoot down as many U.S. aircraft as possible.

Recorded by HUU DUC

CANH DUONG,

a Model Fortified Village

I

The rural areas of Vietnam may be roughly classified, according to their geographical position, into mountain villages, delta villages and coastal villages. Canh Duong belongs to the third category, which is the least favoured in natural means of defense and in conditions for guerilla warfare.

Lying close to the provisional military demarcation line at the 17th parallel, not far from the 225-metre-high Deo Ngang Pass, bordering on the sea and the mouth of the Ron River to the east and the north, on the sand dunes and National Road No. 1 to the south and west, Canh Duong has an area of less than a square kilometre and a population of nearly four thousand. Exposed on all sides both to enemy landings and to land attacks, it is regarded as an important stronghold the defence of which is vital but very difficult. Canh Duong, which was repeatedly ransacked by French mopping-up columns during the Indochina war, is now subjected to frequent air and naval attacks by the U.S. imperialists as part of their escalation against North Vietnam.

This village which has no arable land for rice or other food crops makes a living mainly from fishing and coastal navigation. Founded 400 years ago by seven families of nomadic fishermen who had no other dwelling than their boats, it had been growing through the centuries with the arrival of new fishermen and merchants who finally occupied all the habitable land. Originally a mere shelter on a deserted coast, it had grown into a large agglomeration of homes whose inhabitants were subjected, under the former regime,

to continual pestering by the local authorities, for having no official permits of residence. Still living in Canh Duong are many former victims of feudal and colonial oppression who have been incapacitated by the beatings and tortures they endured. Utter misery was prevailing in the village before the August 1945 Revolution. Some 400 persons had left their native place for ever, 184 had been sent to prison, 119 had become beggars and 98 died of starvation in 1945.

To the population of Canh Duong the foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam meant an end to age-old misery. After one year they went to the polls to choose their leaders and their right of settlement was officially recognized. The first Party cell, which soon came into being, defended newly-won democratic rights and announced further great changes. Loyalty to the new regime during the Indochina war was evinced by fierce resistance against the French colonialists' Expeditionary Corps.

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On March 23, 1947, French troops occupied the provincial capital of Quang Binh and the important Ba Don borough. Canh Duong became an advanced post of the Resistance, cut off from the rear by the Ron River which was for the enemy an excellent means of penetration. The inhabitants, refusing to submit to the enemy, decided to hold on at all costs and turned their village into a bastion. A triple stockade was built around the village with tree trunks from the forest nearby and timber taken from the houses. All the lanes and streets within the enclosure were blocked by barricades made of sand filled fish sauce barrels. Openings were made in walls separating the houses to allow rapid and secret movement from one house to another through the village during an enemy attack. Trenches and shelters were dug for defence against air raids, and underground caches were built, to be used in case of occupation by a large enemy force. Coral, found in large quantity in the region, was excellent for consolidating defence works.

To hamper the movement of a highly motorized enemy, all bridges in the region, including the Ron River bridge, were blown up, and all roads suitable for heavy traffic rendered useless. To prevent enemy penetration and landing, the mouth of the river was blocked by 28 scuttled coral-filled fishing boats. In front of this obstacle hundreds of

pointed spikes were planted which would pierce through the bottoms of small ships and landing boats.

In those critical hours, the local leaders on the one hand endeavoured to strengthen unity, on the other hand exerted the greatest efforts to organize guerilla units. In many families, the father, the sons and the daughters-in-law underwent training in the use of weapons while the mother, most often a member of the Combatants' Mothers' Association, engaged in most varied activities. Three companies of partisans were organized in a record time, armed only with seven rifles, a few dozen hand-grenades, swords and spears. High morale and good organization compensated for this shortage of weapons, which was to be remedied later by the enemy himself.

To ensure the defence of the village without hampering the normal activities of fishermen, handicraftsmen and small merchants, shifts were organized whereby one company stood ready to fight while another went fishing and a third engaged in transportation work for the government. In this way, at any time a whole company could be pitted against an eventual assailant.

Military training was provided chiefly by actual harassing operations against the French post at Ba Don, 12 miles from the village. In each of these skirmishes with patrols from the French post, the enemy suffered two or three casualties.

By mid-1948, the enemy's plan to expand their occupation northwards necessarily led them to the Canh Duong road. On May 15, a combined attack by French forces was launched against the fortified village. Four hundred infantrymen, transported by trucks, advanced toward Canh Duong while other units landed on the beach and planes and artillery pounded at our positions.

At the first signs of attack, the partisans took up positions while the invalids were led to shelters outside the village. When, after the shelling, the enemy columns launched an assault, they met with fierce resistance. The column approaching from the road got bogged down in a murderous mine-field and was decimated by snipers' bullets. It failed to get inside the village after a whole day. Only the sea-borne column managed to penetrate into the barricaded streets at a heavy price. They fought their way in with great difficulty, greeted at each step by murderous fire from unseen combatants. Enraged, they burnt down sixty houses. As the battle was raging, the

French lieutenant who commanded the column was killed by a bullet from an unseen partisan.

The defenders were running dangerously short of ammunition. Several groups already had to use pieces of coral as projectiles thrown by hand. But the enemy troops, exhausted by daylong fighting against unseen adversaries and demoralized by the death of their commanding officer, withdrew in a most dejected mood.

The lesson learnt from this first engagement with the enemy was not lost. The partisans, who returned to their usual occupations the day after the raid, improved their defence system.

Two months later, on July 12, 1948, the enemy decided to liquidate Canh Duong. Three infantry battalions, supported by 28 armoured vehicles, 3 warships, 8 motor-boats and 11 planes, launched an attack against Canh Duong and the surrounding region. As on the previous occasion, two columns marched on the heroic village. Attacking furiously, the first column reached the outer defence positions and broke through the enclosure, at the cost of 11 killed, among whom was a lieutenant. There it stopped until the evening without being able to make a step farther toward the centre of the fortification. The sea-borne column could not effect a landing, despite great efforts, as the defence had been considerably strengthened. At nightfall, the partisans left 50 of their men in the village, then went behind the French lines to harass the movement of the enemy. The 50 men who volunteered to stay behind swore to hold on at all costs.

The operation continued for another day after which the enemy withdrew without having obtained any result. Before leaving they shot some 90 persons on the other side of the Ron River. This atrocity only further deepened the hatred felt for them by the people.

During the following five years Canh Duong knew no other major attack, as the enemy chose to use planes or ships rather than ground forces in their frequent raids. And the puppet authorities set up in the vicinity had no power whatsoever over Canh Duong.

In August 1953, French troops launched a surprise night attack against Canh Duong. On the night of August 6, troops were secretly landed, while from inland, a column was rushed to the village. Three battalions were sent against the partisans. Taken by surprise, the latter promptly reacted. Street fighting and fierce house-to-house fighting broke out.

At 10 a.m., the exhausted assailants made a pause and asked for support by planes and naval guns. Then, at 2 p.m., an all-out attack was launched against the partisans, who were forced to use up their last reserves of ammunition. Thereupon, the defenders decided to form a shock group to strike at the enemy C.P. Truong Van Tich, a party member, managed to get close to a French captain who was directing the attack from a height, and killed the enemy officer with a rifle bullet. This loss demoralized the attacking troops who withdrew soon afterwards. After that day, no enemy troops dared to return to Canh Duong.

The village, though encircled by enemy posts, remained free all through the war, at the price of severe trials. Some 20,000 bombs and shells fell on the area (one square kilometre) occupied by the community. In all, the valiant partisans took part in 120 engagements of various importance. Not only did they keep their village free from enemy occupation but they also transported thousands of tons of food for the Resistance. By intensifying production, they improved their living conditions and were able to supply 425 pigs to the Resistance.

Besides the extraordinary courage of the inhabitants of Canh Duong, who clung to the land which had been valiantly defended through many centuries, we should particularly mention the leadership of the local Party organization which made a great contribution to these brilliant victories. The Party was responsible for the monolithic unity, the unanimous resolution to fight and the excellent organization of defence. The enemy's superiority in armament and equipment was more than balanced by the higher morale, greater mobility and better knowledge of terrain, which are essential characteristics of guerrillas. Other factors contributing to the successes were the scope assumed by guerrilla warfare and coordination of actions of regular troops and regional units.

II

With the restoration of peace, Quang Binh province was completely liberated. The population of Canh Duong could now engage in peaceful occupations.

Victory had been won at the price of heavy sacrifices: 380 houses had been wrecked (out of 830), 112 boats sunk, 113 boats taken away by the enemy. The only equipment left was 7 boats and 7 fishing nets for the 4,000 inhabitants. To avert famine, the D.R.V. government had to give assistance to the population of the war-torn village in the form of 70 tons of rice.

The task now was to make Canh Duong a prosperous centre, politically and militarily secure. First of all, the economy had to be rehabilitated and production increased.

Great efforts were made to restore the fishing industry, the villagers' principal means of livelihood. The State could provide the necessary funds. But should individual and family ownership be restored? A debate took place as to which road to follow, the capitalist road or the socialist road. At last, all came to the conclusion that, to give a strong impulse to production, collective work should be organized, according to a well-conceived plan. The creation of the first cooperatives was greeted with great enthusiasm: fishing cooperatives, boat building cooperatives, fishing net manufacturing cooperatives and fish sauce cooperatives. There was plenty of work for persons formerly unemployed.

To repair the damaged houses, build schools, a dispensary, a maternity home etc., local materials were used: coal made excellent lime, while bricks and tiles were manufactured on the spot after several experiments to improve technique. The brickkilns employed as many as 420 women. Other industries flourished: production of copra oil, manufacture of fish sauce barrels, blacksmith's shops, building industry, manufacture of clothing etc. — in all 24 different trades provided full employment to the local population.

An unexpected event was the creation of the first farming cooperative in Canh Duong, after strenuous efforts to reclaim 60 hectares from the forest in the vicinity. This success was indicative of the tenacity of the Canh Duong inhabitants who until then had lived mainly on fishing.

These efforts soon brought about, if not prosperity, at least remarkable well-being. 65 per cent of the houses had tiled roofs. Junks frequently sailed to Hanoi, Haiphong, loaded with much appreciated local sea products, such as dried fish, lobsters, cuttle-fish. The village also supplied Dong Hoi (provincial capital of Quangbinh) with tiles, lime, copra oil, etc... Within a short time, Canh Duong had become an important handicraft centre.

With higher income, the standard of living rose steadily. As shown below, the average monthly per capita income increased year after year:

1959	9 <i>dong</i>
1960	10
1961	10.50
1962	12.50
1963	14

Brick houses became ever more numerous. Following is the number of new houses built during 5 years:

1959	72
1960	79
1961	68
1962	51
1963	63

In 6 years, as many houses with tiled roofs were built as in the past four centuries.

What is still more remarkable, 80 families have sons or daughters studying at a university or senior high school. The village has its own primary school and junior secondary school, with 852 pupils, that is 20 times the total number of children who went to school during nearly a century of colonial rule. While on the eve of the Revolution of August 1945, only 5 per cent of the population could read and write, illiteracy has now been completely eliminated. Health services have reduced the infantile mortality rate from 50 per cent to 1 per cent.

Those achievements are all the more remarkable as Canh Duong, like other coastal communities just north of the 17th parallel, were subjected, from 1960 to 1964, to brazen acts of provocation by the imperialists and their South Vietnamese lackeys. Three or four times a week, U.S. Air Force planes came reconnoitering over the Quang Binh coastal region, and warships provokingly penetrated into its waters. In some places, saboteurs were parachuted into the forest, or frogmen attempted landings. Several times, units of the U.S. Seventh Fleet bombarded coastal areas with heavy guns, or molested fishing boats from Canh Duong or other places. It was near Canh Duong that in 1961-1962, frogmen made an attempt to infiltrate up the Gianh River and parachutists were caught at Tuyen Hoa.

The aggressiveness of the U.S. imperialists only sharpened the vigilance of those who had just emerged victorious

from a fierce struggle. The local Party leaders and authorities attached great importance to the problem of defence, and devoted their efforts to ideological work, organization of the armed forces and direction of operations.

In the ideological field, besides keeping the inhabitants well-informed on the aggressive acts of the U.S. imperialists and the resolute struggle of our countrymen south of the 17th parallel to liberate their territory, efforts have been made in various ways to preserve and develop the Canh Duong people's traditions of heroism: Political meetings, theatrical and artistic performances and—a most remarkable fact—creation of a local museum of the Revolution where relics of the glorious recent past are displayed. There is a list of the crimes perpetrated by the colonialists and the feudal landowners against each family, to remind everyone of the necessity to defend the fruits of the Revolution.

Sports and physical culture have been encouraged, young recruits of the people's army honoured and great efforts made to speed up the creation of a village people's militia, mainstay of local defence and also, in peace time, a shock brigade in production work. Former guerrillas have become cadres of this strong organization, grouping not only all men and women capable of using weapons but also older people. A unit of "whitehaired troops" has been organized which comprises men of 50 to 70, veterans with much experience. As to the youths of 11 to 15, they got training in liaison work.

All Party members must join these para-military organizations of which they in fact constitute the backbone. While getting education in revolutionary ideology and military art, they have at the same time to engage diligently in production work, in accordance with the motto: "Increase production and stand ready to fight."

In the field of organization, the main difficulty lies in the coordination of activities. The production units, which constitute the basis of the militia organization, being each engaged in its own trade, the question is to ensure constant combat-readiness of the militia without causing any adverse effect on production. Canh Duong found a satisfactory solution. A real forest of filaos has been planted along the dunes and the beach, and disposed in such a way as to prevent an invasion not only by the sand but also by a possible enemy coming from the sea. And each flotilla going to sea makes preparations not only for fishing but also for fighting.

According to the necessities of the moment, the contents and objectives of plans have changed. The struggle during the first years against local counter-revolutionary elements, who opposed socialism and helped the enemy, has changed into struggle against commandos from South Vietnam. All the sabotage agents sent to the region by sea, air or land, have been immediately neutralized, all the spies unmasked. From 1964, as the enemy became more active, Canh Duong has had to make still greater efforts for the protection of the labouring people and the fruits of their work from commando incursions and air and naval raids. Deeply longing for peace, the inhabitants of Canh Duong, like the rest of the nation, are for this very reason ready to fight for the defence of peace.

III

This determination to fight has been brilliantly illustrated since August 3, 1964. That night, a fishing boat left Canh Duong and went out to sea. The fishermen had two rifles. Three quarters of a mile from the shore, they saw three enemy ships heading toward the coast under cover of night. The ships, which sent up flares, were clearly hostile. Determined to do their duty, the fishermen opened fire on silhouettes seen on the decks, then under enemy fire, swam back with their weapons to the shore.

Canh Duong was thus warned in time. Everyone was already in his combat position when the first shells rained on the village. The defenders fired back with all the firearms they had—rifles, machine-guns, sub-machine-guns. Farmers from the agricultural cooperative joined their fighting comrades after running five kilometres in a record time. Two houses were hit by an enemy shell but the fire that followed was immediately put out by a rescue team.

Seeing that their surprise attack was bound to fail, the enemy ships hastily withdrew. Two hours later, the two fishermen whose work had been interrupted went out to sea again and came back with 700 kilograms of fish. The damage caused by the enemy was immediately repaired and the next day the houses hit by enemy shells were again in good condition. But everyone realized that a new period of trials had begun.

Indeed, two days later, on the morning of August 5, 1964, five U.S. jets attacked Canh Duong, concentrating their fire on the houses and the boats sailing peacefully on the Ron River.

The raid was the first one ordered by Washington. It was a surprise, not for Canh Duong, but for the aggressors themselves. This village, like all other places in the country, offered them fierce resistance. Heavy ground fire prevented the jets from operating at a low altitude, and after a brief machine-gun attack they left without having caused much damage. The story is often told of two old fishermen of Canh Duong who, surprised at sea by enemy planes, did not hesitate to fire at them with their rifles. Men working on the beach lay on their backs and shot at the planes. Truong Van Thich (who had shot a French captain in the last war) was firing when his son Truong Ngoc Bich, a boy of 11, brought him two boxes of machinegun cartridges that Thich had had no time to pick up. And the boy remained with his father until the engagement was over to help him. A group of carpenters who were working at a place three kilometres from the village ran through rice-fields to their combat positions, and joined in the fighting.

In the evening, young Truong Ngoc Bich wrote to the local Party committee: "I hate the U.S. imperialists. For ten years now, they have been bringing great sufferings to our countrymen in the South. Now they are sending their planes to attack us. I beg you to accept me as a liaison agent for the village. I will dare all dangers for the defence of our village, of our Fatherland."

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That was only a beginning.

From August 5, 1964 to August 5, 1965, Canh Duong was subjected to 15 U.S. air raids, 5 of them in the few weeks between the end of March and the end of April, 1965. U.S. bombs wrecked the primary school, the dispensary, the fish sauce factory, the brick factory and several houses and boats. The small wooden bridge on the road linking the village with national road N° 1 was bombed a dozen times.

Together with bombs and rockets Johnson's planes also showered leaflets exalting the U.S. president's great love of

peace. While bombarding Canh Duong, U.S. naval units had toys put on the beach for children many of whom were already dead, as a result of the U.S. attacks. The Yankee pirates, while destroying the fruits of our labour, hampering our peaceful occupations, impairing our means of communication and transportation, also made many attempts to deceive our people.

Threatened with a sea blockade and subjected to frequent air raids, how did the inhabitants of Canh Duong react? They did as could be expected from those who had fought victoriously during the eight years of war against the French colonialists. Opposed by the iron will of an entire people, U.S. "air supremacy" has proved to be a myth.

In brief, this is how the defence of Canh Duong has been organized:

I — Measures for protection against air bombing

The population have been told how to minimize by every possible means the damage caused by enemy planes. The characteristics of each type of plane, its capabilities and weak points, have been made known so that everyone may take the necessary precautions.

All those whose presence is not required for the defence of the village are temporarily evacuated to less exposed places. The schools, shops and other places where a large number of people usually gather must take adequate measures of protection. All able-bodied persons have to take part in the building of air raid shelters, entrenchments and communication trenches. Rescue and fire-fighting groups get regular training.

The question of air raid alarms receives especial attention. As most enemy planes coming from the sea or South Vietnam on the way to targets in the D.R.V. fly over Canh Duong, strict observance of air raid warnings by provincial authorities would paralyse all activities in the village. So Canh Duong has its own lookout men, who have so far never been taken by surprise. They have sometimes been of a great help to the provincial command.

With these measures, the damage caused by air raids has been greatly reduced.

2 — Training in shooting

Can U.S. supersonic jets be brought down with light arms? The answer of the Canh Duong inhabitants is Yes, if they descend to a low altitude in order to bomb more accurately. This was proved when two U.S. jets were shot down, in April and September 1965, by peasants armed with rifles and light machine-guns; one of the planes had also been hit by bullets fired from the neighbouring village. The villagers in Canh Duong undergo hard training so as to be able to fight in all circumstances with maximum efficiency. Besides learning to shoot at planes, they are also trained to capture pilots who land by parachute and to fight against enemy commandos.

3 — Defence of National Road N° 1 and the Ron ferry

Canh Duong is entrusted with the maintenance of the portion of Highway N° 1 which crosses its territory and of the important Ron ferry area. Several non-professional engineer groups have been set up which have promised to repair at all costs any damage caused by bombing so that traffic may be resumed soon after each attack. All partisans in Canh Duong are learning more and more about engineering work.

4 — Fight against espionage and psychological warfare

Well aware of the perfidy of their unscrupulous enemy, the Canh Duong people have increased their vigilance to ensure perfect order and security in the village. No defence secret can leak out, no manoeuvre of psychological warfare can produce any effect on the villagers' minds. Anything suspect is reported to the responsible authorities. Even children have taken to the authorities the toys with which Johnson has sought to "conquer their hearts."

5 — Active participation in national defence

Nearly a hundred young men in Canh Duong joined the army during the past year. Others take turns in attending technical courses organized by the provincial military authorities: artillery practice, engineering, signalling, intelligence.

An inexhaustible reserve for the people's army, the young men now constitute an excellent group of technicians and have taken in hand the training of their fellow-villagers. That is why the local people's militia, far from being weakened by the draft, is continuously strengthened by the high quality of the new recruits.

6 — Increased production

To foil the attempts of the U.S. air force to sow destruction, the defenders have not only to inflict severe losses on the enemy but also to greatly increase production. The production groups have also been militarized.

The flotillas of fishing boats go out to sea every evening, as before, but they are now capable of defending themselves in case of enemy attack. Production has been kept at a normal level and in April 1965, when U.S. air raids were most intense, Canh Duong got as much as 29 tons of fish. In Winter 1964-Spring 1965, 200 tons of fish were sold to the State trade organization.

Other branches of activities are carried on as usual. The schools and the artistic group with 30 members are functioning normally.

IV

Clearly, Canh Duong has emerged victorious from the trials of U.S. air bombing. None of the aims pursued by the enemy—to impair the morale of the population, hamper production and traffic—has been achieved.

The criminal acts of the air pirates only exacerbate the patriotism of the Canh Duong population and strengthen their determination to resist against the aggressors. In this war, the moral factor has been given particular attention by the local Party committee but it would be a mistake to think that, consequently, the technical, tactical and organizational factors have been neglected. On the contrary, a local command has been set up to coordinate directives. Under its direction, production work, the construction of entrenchments as well as the combat groups and logistics services are organized in such a way as to allow prompt defence action in case of an enemy attack. During the Resistance

against the French colonialists, the people's armed forces had to rely chiefly on individual contributions, but today, human, financial and material resources are given by the cooperatives. The high morale of the population is evinced by their strenuous efforts to master military techniques and tactics. Partisans are trained in handling different kinds of weapons, in taking advantage of the peculiarities of the local terrain, and in carrying out defence plans under most varied circumstances. Plans have also been made to cope with any eventual enemy landing.

Although the Canh Duong partisans have been provided with a great many automatic weapons, they still find rudimentary arms very useful. A large number of traps and snares, some of which can be rapidly hidden in the sand, can seriously hamper any future landing by the enemy. Old Pham Boc has been nicknamed "the specialist in primitive weapons" for having invented many efficacious devices among which is an arbalest capable of shooting three arrows at one time.

That is how Canh Duong village now lives, organizes itself, works and fights.

We have purposely chosen a locality of average importance, with few favourable natural conditions, to show what we mean by "people's war". The four thousand inhabitants of Canh Duong constitute an organized force of no little significance. Determined to defend the rights and interests gained after centuries of struggle, they have turned their village into a resistance nest, a real political and military bastion. Within the space of some twenty years, the fishermen and other labouring people of Canh Duong have passed from colonial slavery to the victorious construction of socialism, going through untold trials during the anti-colonialist war. No wonder they now remain calm and confident in face of U.S. aggression, even if it should last many decades. For they believe in the righteousness of their cause, are confident of their own forces, of the forces of the Vietnamese people and the world peoples who are supporting us.

We shall win, whatever form U.S. aggression may take.

Huu Mai and Kinh Lich

ON THE BANK OF THE BENHAI RIVER

By **VAN SON**

A river flowing quietly a few score miles before its blue waters join the sea; its mouth at Cua Tung, less than 100 metres wide, can easily be forded at low tide, and people standing on the two banks can engage in a little chat, as neighbours do. This is the Benhai river. About 10 kilometres from its mouth, the Benhai narrows down into a stream, ascends the side of the Truongson range, up the peaks where it mingles with the source of the Sébanhien river of Laos. Since 1954, this river running along the 17th parallel, which separates the North and the South of Vietnam, has assumed historical significance. The only bridge linking the two banks, the Hien-Luong bridge on national road n°1, is now closed.

As stipulated by the Geneva Agreements, two demilitarized corridors, 3 to 5 kilometres wide, have been created, which stretch along both sides of the Benhai river. In this buffer zone, except for a police force to maintain order, all military personnel and armament are banned, and all acts of provocation or war, forbidden. Arrangements should be made to facilitate relations between inhabitants living on both sides of the river, most of whom are relations or friends. But ever since the cease-fire in 1954 and particularly since the beginning of 1965, the Geneva provisions have been completely disregarded by the Yankees and their lackeys. The latter even purposely committed frequent violations so as to maintain a tense situation. From August 28, 1965 to September 16, 1965 the Americans bombed the Hienluong bridge area three times. On August 28, 1965, at 1 p.m. 6 U.S. planes bombed and strafed the area again. A wing of the police station building on the North bank collapsed. The following raid was even more "spectacular". The attackers scored a direct hit on the "friendly" police station near the Southern end of the bridge. It was a holiday

and the policemen were having a good time with their wives and children who had come to see them. A few men were cheering while their U.S. masters were bombing the Northern zone. But suddenly bombs were rained on them.

The main building of the police station was hit and completely wrecked. Sixty-seven persons — policemen and their kins — were killed, some of them literally pulverized. Among the victims was Lieu, a zealous agent, recently promoted chief of the 9th commando section. The survivors furiously insulted the "damned Americans" and the "ruffians Thieu-Ky".

On September 11, 1965, probably to compensate for their "mistake", the U.S. bandits violently bombed the Vinhsou police station, one and a half miles north of Hienluong station. Five days later, on September 16, 1965, they changed their tactics and engaged in night raids. At 9.40 p.m., 6 planes dropped flares over the bridge, then dropped bombs at random. A wall of the police station on the northern bank collapsed; 4 *sao* * of ripe rice were destroyed, a motorboat of the 78th group of the International Control Commission (I.C.C.) was sunk. This time, again, the bandits did not forget to drop their remaining bombs on the Southern bank, wrecking part of the police station there. And to complete their exploit, they fired a rocket which cut off a 10-metre-long span at the southern end of the Hienluong bridge.

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Air bombing of the demilitarized zone began in 1965, but acts of provocation have been frequent ever since the temporary demarcation line came into being. Mysterious bullets suddenly fired from the Southern bank have killed many inhabitants on the Northern bank. On the Southern bank there are many old trees behind which hidden U.S. agents have levelled their guns at the North. Passers-by and peasants working in the fields can be killed at any moment. One day, at 8 a.m., young Loi (from Vinhsou village) was weeding his field when a bullet from the Southern bank killed him on the spot. Two women coming to his rescue were wounded by other bullets. When the I.C.C. came to investigate, the assassins bluntly declared: "We're just shooting at birds. Only an accident!"

* One *sao* is equal to 360 square metres.

Another time, a fisherman was rowing his boat along the Northern bank of the Benhai river when he was killed by a bullet fired from the Southern bank. His tearful 14-year-old son who swam to the boat was also shot at by the enemy.

Frequently, U.S. agents disguised as fishermen took their boat to the Northern bank, in violation of the Geneva Agreements which forbid such incursions. On being discovered they angrily discharged their guns.

Old people came to ask cadres of our people's security force: "Why didn't you return fire when they shot at our people? We can no longer endure these provocations." They got this answer: "We greatly suffer on seeing our countrymen killed by the enemy. But we must show restraint. We have to respect the Geneva Agreements, because our cause is a just one."

The enemy also frequently engage in sabotage activities. At night, when there is no moonlight or when the weather is bad, spies cross the river and secretly penetrate into Northern territory. Apparently invalid persons living south of the river allegedly desired to return to their native village in the north. Among them disguised spies were subsequently discovered.

But the acts of provocation and sabotage are nothing, compared with the sufferings that the population on both sides of the river have been enduring for ten years. Benhai is not a frontier separating two countries. In this small river, for generations, people living on both banks and often belonging to the same village or the same family have been drawing water, taking their bath and doing their washing. The enemy has turned it into an impassable barrier. An old mother had been separated from her only son for ten years when she fell ill. Her relations and neighbours gave her all possible assistance but still she missed her son's presence and loving care. She died without her son at her side to hear her last words. A relation then went to the river bank and called loudly to the departed woman's son and daughter-in-law: "Teo, your mother is dead!" The man and his wife heard the words but dared not show up, for fear of being accused of maintaining relations with the communists in the North. Hiding behind bamboos they sorrowfully watched the funeral procession taking their mother to her resting place.

The U.S. imperialists and their lackeys endeavour to disrupt the relations between the inhabitants on both sides of the river. But their efforts are in vain. On the day

following the bombing of Hoxa, during which our broadcasting system had been damaged, the people on the Southern side sent word across the river: "Comrades, repair the loudspeakers quickly! We are so eager to get news from the North!" The enemy believed that it would take a long time to repair the damage. But only two days later, the voice of the North was heard again, loud and clear, and the inhabitants on the Southern side enthusiastically sent thanks across the river to their "brothers in the North". The voice of the North brings them confidence and the joy of hearing news of victories won by their compatriots in both zones. It exposes the lies of U.S. propaganda.

The red flag with a golden star flying at the top of a 56-metre-high tower near the northern end of the Hien-luong bridge is for the inhabitants on the Southern side an image of the liberated Fatherland from which they have been separated for more than ten years. Whenever some damage to the flag was detected, a voice would come from the opposite bank: "Compatriots, change the flag, it has been damaged." Unknown voices frequently sent good news across the river: "Nguyen Cao Ky was injured on his first flight to the North and came down by parachute after a hasty return; U.S. planes hit by anti-aircraft fire over the North have crashed at such and such places; Bombs have been dropped at random on the Southern side by U.S. planes damaged during a raid over the North and have had to be detonated by puppet agents taking cover in a moat."

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Understandably, the population on the Northern side of the river have to be constantly vigilant, day and night. Vinhgiang village, with a population of 5,000, every year devotes 23,000 workdays to the defences of the demarcation zone. But nobody is complaining and everyone does his duties in this silent, tenacious fight. Has a stranger ventured into the village? Minutes later, the responsible persons have been informed. The village security cadres are helped by children and old people organized into civilian defence groups, who see and hear for them. Well aware of the enemy's designs, every inhabitant actively contributes to the defence of the village against malefactors and spies. Particularly active and vigilant are the Young Pioneers who are as good in production work as in studies at school. When not studying they make fishing nets, raise poultry, pasture buffaloes and oxen.

At Vinhgiang, spies and saboteurs cannot escape the youth's notice. Once in a stormy night, a young girl and a young man, Dinh and Duong were standing guard under the rain. Suddenly they heard a faint noise made by rowing. The noise became louder and louder. Two shadows on the river were slowly approaching the river bank. But they had hardly left their boat when they were caught by Dinh and Duong. Trembling with fear, the two spies raised their hands, dropping a package on the ground. Dinh opened the package, which contained pistols, clothes and forged papers. "How many of you are coming?" asked Duong.— "There are four of us. The two others are coming soon. Spare our lives and we'll tell you everything!" Dinh and Duong tied up the two spies and waited for the two others... That night, four spies were thus arrested. Spies have been caught in all villages along the Northern bank of the Benhai river. Many commandos and spies have come but none escaped arrest. Inside the thick bamboo hedge surrounding Vinhgiang is a labyrinth of trenches and shelters. Each house has individual foxholes and a collective shelter. The trenches, nearly two metres deep, are wide enough to allow simultaneous movement in both directions. They link the houses and hamlets to one another. They are used by children going to school, peasants going to the fields, they lead from the fields to the threshing grounds of cooperatives,—in all 56 kilometres of trenches which make it possible for a population of 5,000 to move about without difficulty.

Huonglap village located in a mountainous area of the Vinhlinh district, is inhabited by people of the Vankieu ethnic group. Formerly the Vankieu lived in caves, fed on raw meat and roots and covered their bodies with tree barks. The Revolution of August 1945 has brought great changes to this primitive life. Now the Vankieu eat white rice, wear clothes and have their own alphabet. Their children go to 1st-level schools; some are getting higher education. The Vankieu have their own delegate to the National Assembly. Deeply grateful to the new regime which has done so much for them they have chosen as a family name HO, which is that of President Ho Chi Minh (they never had a family name before). This village has been subjected day and night to U.S. bombing raids. One hamlet, Caubai, has received one bomb for every five square metres, and has been frequently strafed. Still, the Vankieu are clinging to their rice-fields, to their village. The two harvests of 1965 had higher yields than in previous years, and living conditions are improving continuously. The Huonglap inhabitants have captured whole groups of commandos and spies who had

penetrated into their region. For these exploits they have been awarded the title of "Resolved to Win", like the Cubai guard station, Vinhgiang village and Conco island.

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To the north of the demilitarized zone, a corridor made up of 6 villages, stretch the 16 other villages of Vinhlinh district, the centre of which is Hoxa. During the Resistance against the French colonialists the little town was occupied by the enemy who turned it into a fortified place. When liberated, it was but a large minefield criss-crossed with barbed wire and studded with fortifications and blockhouses. After peace was restored, Hoxa underwent great changes. New brick houses mushroomed, and with electrification, the first factories appeared, and the town became an important administrative and economic centre near the 17th parallel.

On February 8, 1965, U.S. Navy planes attacked Hoxa and Donghoi, capital of the neighbouring Quangbinh province. Bombs and rockets were rained on the two small towns. Anti aircraft batteries, rather scarce at that time, were supported by self defense militia groups armed with rifles and machine-guns.

Aware of enemy designs, Hoxa took adequate measures. Mothers, children and old people were evacuated to neighbouring villages. Only the security forces and selfdefence militia groups remained in the town. An elaborate defence system was built, made up of foxholes, gun nests, communication trenches and observation posts. Daily work was reorganized. Factory workers, office workers and hand-craftsmen engaged in their daily occupations beside the trenches, with arms slung across their backs or near at hand. When the alert given by the lookout man was transmitted from street to street by drum beats, everyone ran to his combat position.

It was the aggressor who was surprised by the prompt, well-organized defence action. Skyraiders, Thunderchiefs, Phantoms and other U.S. planes of the latest types came wave after wave to rain bombs on the city, expecting all resistance to be crushed in the very first minute. But the self-defence militia of Hoxa, with only rudimentary weapons, stood firm.

Bicycle repairman Hoang Phan was in charge of a machine-gun nest. His emplacement near a muddy field in the vicinity of the town was subjected to furious attacks.

Twenty-eight bombs exploding near the machine-gun nest hurled a large quantity of mud on the combatants in the trenches, and one bomb exploded only five metres from Phan. Calmly, the men waited until the diving pirate planes came within the range of their guns, then opened fire. The fight had hardly begun when a bomb fell on a shelter nearby, and a moment later a wounded woman was taken away on a stretcher by a rescue team. A young combatant, seeing that the woman was Mrs. Phan, ran towards his chief to inform him: "Comrade Phan, your wife is wounded. Let us handle the gun; join your wife". Certainly nobody would have objected if Phan had left for a moment to look after his wife. But the battle was raging, and Phan remained at his post. Concealing his emotion, he grasped the machine-gun and fired at a diving plane. All around, light arms were cracking, anti-aircraft guns were rumbling. Suddenly an immense "hurrah" was heard. A plane was burning like a torch in the azure sky; it rolled over and crashed on the sportsground of the town. The other planes shot upwards and fled towards the sea.

For Phan and his comrades, the baptism of fire lasted exactly an hour. During the ensuing lull, the young militia chief ordered his men to clean their weapons and to remain vigilant. Then handing over command to another man, he went to the first-aid station. His wife was lying there, wrapped in a shroud. Crying bitterly, Phan closed his wife's eyes, forever.

The downed plane was an RF 101C. On the ground it lay, decapitated, its wings and tail projected far away. The wreck showed damage caused by anti-aircraft shells and many small holes made by small firearms. The pilot, a very young man, had been literally roasted by the flames, his arms and legs blown off; his sparkling teeth were conspicuous on his blackened and crackled face, his temples were covered with partly burned locks of fair hair. A large crowd gathered around the killed airman and what had been his celestial mount — soldiers, workers, civil servants, tailors, bicycle repairmen, hat-makers... The poor Yankee had misjudged the wrath and the capabilities of these simple folk. An eloquent demonstration, as people said in Hoxa, that the invincibility of the U.S. air force is a myth.

Several days after that U.S. air raid, the inhabitants of Hoxa returned to their homes to fetch what they had not been able to take away on being hurriedly evacuated. Great was their surprise! What had not been destroyed by the enemy had remained intact: furniture, clothes, kitchen

utensils, fruit trees, beds of vegetables, poultry, dogs and cats, pigs... The militiamen had not only been fighting against the aggressor and cooperating with the police in maintaining order, but had also been taking good care of each house, watering the kitchen gardens and feeding the animals, as if they were their owners. The early rice on the outskirts of the town having to be harvested without delay, the militiamen did the work and refused all payment. "It's our duty to do all these things", they told the members of the farming cooperative, "to harvest the rice in time is also to beat the Yankees."

The population, for their part, are most anxious about the combatants' well-being. During each engagement with the pirate planes peasants from the outskirts of the town brought food to the combatants, taking to the combat trenches well-cooked rice and savoury dishes. Each handicraft cooperative contributes every month the fruit of a day's labour to the self-defence fund. For this purpose, the women raise more chickens. Wherever the family of a combatant is evacuated, it is provided with good dwelling quarters and given adequate work in the local agricultural cooperative... The militia and the people are bound by the closest ties, and for this reason the militiamen are ever ready to do all they can to serve the people's cause. U.S. planes have carried out over 20 raids against Hoxa but the fighting citizens are carrying on their usual occupations as workers, handicraftsmen, office employees, while standing ready to take up their weapons when the enemy comes.

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The situation is exactly the same in the Vinh Linh region. The population there are endeavouring to carry on normal production work while fighting against the pirate planes.

The Namho agricultural cooperative, close to Hoxa, has been subjected to as many air attacks as the town itself. But the average yield as well as the total output of crops, far from dropping, has greatly increased. The number of buffaloes, oxen and pigs is growing. The ardent patriotism of cooperative members, galvanized by U.S. aggression, has made them overcome all difficulties and endeavour to improve technique and management even in war time.

For the members of the Namho cooperative, going to the fields is also going to the battleground. For safety, the peasants work at night, first on the fields closest to the town then moving farther towards the countryside as

daylight comes. Often they have to defend themselves against the pirate planes which come purposely to disrupt agricultural work.

The harvest of the 10th lunar month rice, in Autumn 1965, was most dramatic. The cooperative members made preparations as if they were going to the battlefield, determined to harvest the rice even if enemy planes came for an attack.

A system of communication trenches connecting the fields with the village had been built according to an elaborate plan. People's militia units, emergency rescue teams, fire-fighting groups had engaged in several manoeuvres. Each boy and girl had been trained in first-aid tasks: bandaging, provoking artificial respiration, transporting the wounded...The wooden bridges crossing the irrigation canals had been consolidated. Each production brigade had checked its means of transportation and other equipment: hand-carts, bamboo boats, rollers, winnowing machines... A work chain had been organized, made up of three-man teams each of which was placed under a team leader, those who were physically strong helping those who were weaker. Everything was to be done as on the battlefield, under a unified command and in the strictest manner.

On the first harvest day, the farmers went to the fields at cock-crow, when the waning moon had just appeared. The first thing to do was to camouflage oneself with straw. Then the peasants in scattered small groups began to cut the rice plants, while armed militiamen were keeping vigilant watch.

By 7 a.m. the pirate planes came in successive waves from the sea. The alert was given and all jumped into the trenches and took up combat positions, with rifles pointed skywards. Bombs rained on Hoxa, then on the fields where the 7th and 8th production brigades were working. Fortunately, the trenches provided excellent shelter. Only a group of three young girls—Hoc, Ly and Thit,—was buried under the mud projected by exploding bombs but they managed to free themselves by their own efforts. Old Luu, crushed under a large earth block fallen from a hill close by, was rescued in time by a rescue team. In spite of the raid, the two brigades managed on that day to harvest 10 hectares of rice.

Also by 7 a.m., the 9th and 10th brigades had finished harvesting the fields assigned to them. They had hardly piled up the sheaves on the side of the country lane nearby

when the pirate planes dropped their bombs. Calmly, the farmers took the harvested rice to the village, using the communication trenches. The bombs, which kept falling, destroyed 2 kilometres of trenches, buried under a thick layer of mud 19 persons belonging to the two brigades, burned a large thatch-roofed barn and dug craters into several threshing floors of the cooperative. Like real combat units, the two brigades, despite the bombing, extinguished the fire and pulled out the persons buried under the mud. The cooperative management committee sent reinforcements to repair the damaged communication trenches. The harvested rice was threshed, winnowed and dried in time, then stored up in the villagers' houses, as if nothing had happened.

In the evening, by 6 p.m., the pirate planes again attacked, with six AD-6 planes raining shells on the fields where the 14 brigades of the cooperative, in scattered three-man groups, were harvesting the remaining rice. The 5th brigade was particularly threatened. Gia, the brigade leader, commanded his men with great coolness. Standing on the embankment of a rice-field, he watched the movements of the planes and the falling bombs, giving brief, precise orders: "Run to the right, lie flat on your belly!" or "To the left, more to the left", or "Forward!", or "Go back!". His coolness saved the lives of many brigade members: several times the bombs exploded quite close to the place they had just left.

Meanwhile, the planes attacked transport groups on the village lane. Anh, a young girl, was one of those whose task was to save the piled-up sheaves of rice. As she was bending under a heavy load, a bomb splinter cut her bamboo flail in two and the girl lost balance and fell on her face. She got up, laughing defiantly, used a tree branch in replacement of her broken carrying pole and resumed work together with her comrades. Truyen and Su, also in her team, and each in charge of a buffalo cart, were no less courageous. As three planes were diving in their direction, they promptly stopped the carts. Truyen quickly unharnessed the buffaloes while Su with his rifle shot at the pirate planes. A bomb exploded close to them, killing Su and wounding Truyen in the forearm.

At last, the rice battle was won. One hundred hectares of rice-fields had been harvested under enemy bombing. Never before had there been such a good harvest. The yield per hectare rose to 1.65 tons, as against 1.51 tons in 1963, the peak year so far. Harvesting and bringing the rice

home — planned to last 15 days — were done in only twelve days, 10 days less than in any of the previous years. The enemy, far from succeeding in destroying the rice crop of Namho, had lost two planes shot down by the popular forces.

In the Vinhlinh district, each grain of rice, each sweet potato, each ear of maize is worth its weight of gold. For protection against bombing and fire, foodstuffs are kept in large mud-plastered bamboo baskets piled up in a garden corner or in terra-cotta jars hidden in trenches. Great efforts have also been made to protect the cattle. In the daytime, buffaloes, oxen and goats graze in scattered small groups; when enemy planes come they are driven into the bushes. Pigs and poultry are trained to seek shelter whenever an explosion is heard.

With the mobilization of able-bodied men, women now play a most important role in agricultural production. Rice threshing and husking and preparation of cattle fodder will eventually be lightened by the introduction of small machines; in the meantime several measures have been taken to relieve women of household drudgery. Collective kitchens have been organized to serve the production brigades during the important phases of farm work. Many nurseries have been created where each nurse looks after 5 or 6 babies. Kindergartens and infant schools with a limited number of pupils have been set up in relatively safe places provided with a system of shelters and communication trenches and emergency installations to be used in case of necessity. The selling cooperatives send goods to the places of work, to be sold to the women during rest time, thus sparing them the trouble of going to market.

Fighting and production work in no way hamper educational and cultural activities. All educational establishments remain open and the number of pupils is even greater than in previous years. Classes are held in peasants' homes. When going to school, each pupil carries a first-aid bag and camouflages himself like a combatant. All schools have lookout men, rescue groups and fire-fighting groups made up of the older pupils. The Young Pioneers' organization have greatly contributed to the ideological and moral education of the young generation, mobilizing it to the fullest extent of its capabilities for the struggle against the

aggressor. Children contribute much to agricultural production and help their parents at home; well-trained in passive air-raid defence, they go on their own to the shelters when enemy planes come, without any assistance.

Complementary education classes also have a larger attendance than in previous years. The morning dozen—10 minutes every morning—takes place regularly in each hamlet. On Sundays, village cultural groups perform in public, presenting new song and dance numbers and even sketches, all of which are creations by local artists and have themes related to the present aspects of life. It is with an eye to the future that the Vinhlinh inhabitants are fighting against the U.S. aggressors.

Besides agricultural cooperatives, Vinhlinh also has fishing cooperatives in the coastal area, which are constantly exposed to attacks by the enemy fleet and air force. Once, in mid-1965, several units of the 7th Fleet bombarded Vinhloc village, wrecking over 100 houses. On the eve of the last lunar New Year's day (late January 1966), a U.S. warship intruded into Vinhlinh waters, coming as near as 2 kilometres from the coast, and began pounding at Vinhthai village. Our coastal artillery fiercely fired back; after a minute the enemy warship caught fire and fled.

The inhabitants of coastal villages have made gigantic efforts to build up their defence system. They have gone many kilometres inland to fetch earth which they brought home by boat. With this earth they have built shelters and fortifications on the sand itself, and after each air raid or rainstorm they promptly rebuild the damaged works.

Living on sea products, they cling to the sea despite enemy warships and planes. Before the war broke out, each fisherman was specialized in catching certain kinds of fish. A fisherman can now catch a wide range of fishes, and consequently any group can work either on the high seas or near the coast, as required by circumstances. Moreover, each junk is armed with rifles and automatic arms and equipped with life-buoys. The fishermen are ready to use their weapons to defend themselves against any enemy attack.

One night, as four junks were sailing on the high seas, three U.S. warships rushed upon them and surrounded them.

The pirate ships sent up flares then opened fire, sinking one junk. A storm came suddenly and the fishermen jumped into the sea with their life-buoys and, battered about by the roaring waves, swam towards the shore, 10 kilometres away.

Trai, a young fisherman, was tossed about in the dark night by the waves as he was clinging to his life-buoy, with his rifle slung across his back. Suddenly he saw something floating on the waves. He tried to get near it. It was Hung, a fellow-fisherman who, wounded and exhausted, could no longer hold on to the life-buoy. "I must rescue him," Trai told himself. After reaching Hung, he put one arm round his friend's waist, his other arm clinging to the life-buoy, and his rifle still slung across his back. He reassured Hung: "Hold on to the life-buoy. I'll take you to the shore!" Hung feebly replied: "Don't bother about me. Otherwise both of us will be drowned. Go back alone!"—"No," Trai shouted, "I will not let you die. We must live!" The waves rose in mounting fury. Trai thought: "I must not let Hung sink into despair! But what to do?" Suddenly, raising his head, he sang the song "Let's liberate the South!" and asked Hung to sing with him. The two youthful voices rose: The image of the South appeared before their eyes, indomitable and heroic... Darkness soon vanished and dawn appeared on the horizon. Under the first rays of the rising sun, the native land appeared, with its verdant forests of filaos.

"Let's liberate the South!" This is a source of hope, determination and force for the 70,000 inhabitants of Vinhlinh who in ten years have turned their district into an iron wall and repulsed all attacks by the U.S. aggressors. In a year the army and population of Vinhlinh set on fire or sank five enemy warships, shot down 80 planes. On the production front, they fought thirteen battles against typhoons and floods, some of them of great violence. Each family now has a paddy reserve and a "Resistance rice jar" to support a long resistance war, raises poultry and two pigs on an average. Despite enemy attacks, high seas fishing like coastal fishing exceeded the target planned for 1965 by 11 per cent.

Culture and education are developing and the complementary education classes for adults have a continuously growing attendance. Thirty 1st and 2nd-level schools and a 3rd-level school have been founded while in Quangtri, a

neighbouring province south of the 17th parallel, there is only one 2nd-level school, founded 10 years ago. Each of the 22 villages of the Vinhlinh area has a health station, a maternity home with a staff of assistant physicians, nurses and midwives. There is also a big district hospital with specialized departments and a staff of physicians, assistant-physicians and chemists.

*

Vinhlinh, like Quangbinh province, has been awarded a 1st-class Independence Medal by the D.R.V. Government. And in 11 years of struggle and socialist construction the inhabitants of the district have been awarded 270 Labour Medals, 224 Military Medals, 735 merit certificates granted by the President of the D.R.V., the People's Army High Command and the Regional Command.

ON THE CON-CO ROCK

By **TRAN DANG KHOA**

April 2. During the whole day, reconnaissance flights succeeded each other over Con Co, as they had done before the 14th of March, this time supported by two destroyers roaming in the distance, to the south-east. The Party Committee met to assess the situation, predicting imminent intensification of air raids, perhaps on a larger scale and of longer duration. Orders were given to all units to step up political work and reinforce the defence dispositions.

"We will hold on, whatever may happen!" answered the men.

April 3. All was ready. A splendid day peeped out, filled with the cheerful calls of numerous flocks of cuckoos with nut-brown plumages, which the fiercest bombings had not scared away. The men chatted merrily while watching them.

"The birds themselves seem to defy the Yankees," said Lam Van Hieu, laughing. "It's wonderful! Twittering birds in the air, singing waves under our feet..."

All the guns were pointed toward the sky.

When I came to Bui Thanh Phong's group, I found him seated calmly by his gun, with mischievous eyes and a beaming face as usual. At his feet lay a small booklet on Lam Ky, an elite fighter. As Phong was wearing only a pair of drawers, I called him to order:

"Dress yourself properly, Phong! We must have a bearing of victors, old chap!"

"Yes, of course!"

He stood up, laughing, put on his uniform, his helmet and did not forget to pin on his jacket the badge of the

Labour Youth Union of which he had become a member not long before.

Then I came round to Tao's place. I wanted to have a chat with this young man who had just come and whose abilities I did not know. All that I knew, after some fighting of little importance, was that he had an extraordinary sang-troid. Never had I seen him lose his calm, even in the worst circumstances. He had an astonishing appetite too: he could swallow the rations of four men. He could eat at any time and have five or six meals a day. Thus he was dubbed "Doctor Rice".

After giving him a few recommendations and the usual wishes, I returned to the command post. Comrade Tu was on duty in that sector: he was a young cadre, a native of Binhdin. A newcomer in the island, he had won the love of all on account of his great kindness. His general knowledge was good and his know-how in anti-aircraft fighting excellent. Like Bich, he was very fond of music. He played the harmonica and everybody regarded him as an amateur artist of quality.

He was standing in his gun position and looking in the distance. The wind blew up the parachute cloth he was wearing on his back as a camouflage. Suddenly one could hear the look-out man announce:

"Five jets to the west."

"All right!" Tu replied with the greatest calm.

"Noises of planes from the south!" said the look-out man again.

"Good!"

In his calm voice, Tu added:

"Concentrate your attention on the west."

Five planes appeared and right away swooped down on us. Our guns thundered before they let out their bombs. The battle began. Bombs and rockets were showered around us, lifting thick clouds of smoke and dust. After a ten-minute fight, with no score on both sides, the enemy was gone. We were all somewhat bewildered by this sudden leave, like hunters who had let an easy game escape. We availed ourselves of the lull to try to solve this question: "Why didn't we shoot down any plane at the first volley." The idea was to remind the men of the reality of battle and prevent futile regrets.

A few minutes later, 8 AD6s arrived in a thundering roar, interrupting the discussions. They came from different directions and were flying at different altitudes. Tu gave brief and judicious orders. Nguyen Van Tao was busy at his gun, with his usual self-possession and his serene look. I said to myself: "That chap is surely going to achieve something big!"

I must say that I made a good guess, for very soon I heard Pham Kinh, a signal man, cry out joyfully: "Hurrah! Tao! Hurrah!"

In fact, an AD.6 caught fire after an explosion and dived into the sea, lifting a high column of water.

"Hurrah, Tao! Go on!" I cried.

"Con Co one, Johnson nil!" shouted a football fan, causing everyone to laugh.

I came round to another gun in the midst of this gleeful atmosphere. A very young soldier, with delicate features, was smiling while adjusting his aim. It was Ruê, who had arrived in the island at the same time as Tao.

"What is making you so cheerful, Ruê?" I enquired.

He looked back and, still grinning, pointed his finger at the impact of a 20mm. shell behind him:

"Look, chief! Missed me by as much as two spans! They are all ne'er-do-wells, I tell you!"

A few rounds more and the seven AD.6s ran away. But we knew that it was a trick and that they would come back soon. Hardly had we time to breathe when the lookout man warned: "Six jets from the west!"

"To your position! Don't miss them!"

Tu commanded in a clear and sharp voice. His parachute cloth was still fluttering behind him, but it had been pierced in places by small splinters.

The six planes were getting nearer and nearer. Suddenly, contrary to their usual tactics, the first three left their formation and started a vertical dive. One expected Tu to order a general volley. But no, only two guns were ordered to fire.

"It's a trick," he explained. "Concentrate your fire on the fourth!"

Everything happened as he had foreseen. The fourth AD.6, perhaps too sure of itself, rushed down spitting

rockets. Bui Thanh Phong waited till it arrived at good shooting range before opening fire. The plane got a direct hit, fell into the sea and disappeared under the waves. Phong and Tao looked up to their platoon commander, then winked at each other as if to say: "Splendid! What have I told you, eh?" Having thought better of it, the enemy now kept at a good altitude to drop their bombs. The fighting grew ever fiercer. A shower of fire and steel poured over our trenches. The air had become suffocating, a bitter smell filled our lungs. But our men remained undisturbed and held the pirates in check. All over the island the guns were blazing away.

The combat was raging when a voice was heard:

"Comrade Khanh is wounded!"

"Take him away at once!" said Tu in his calm voice.

I shouted to him:

"Concentrate on the firing: I'll take care of everything else!"

I rushed forward along the trench. I could hear Khanh protesting:

"No, I am not going! Leave me here! Go back to your guns!"

He was sitting, his back leaning against the trench wall, his face livid. After looking at his wounds, I told him that he should let himself be carried to the infirmary.

"But this would take two men," he replied, tears running down his cheeks. "And you haven't enough men here. Please don't."

I was moved to tears. I told his comrades:

"Comrade Khanh refused to be carried away so that you could bring down more enemy planes, lads!"

I heard confused hurrahs. I could distinguish the voices of Lam Van Hieu, of Bui Thanh Phong, of Thien, of Tao... and also that of Nguyen Duc Bau, the man in charge of munitions, in a sharp tone as usual. One could hear shouts of "Let's avenge Nguyen Van Troi! Let's avenge Nguyen Viet Xuan!"

A third AD.6 was brought down. It whirled in the sky before crashing in flames. The air pirates probably had enough of it, for they fled and did not return during the day.

Bui thanh Phong then found out that a 20mm. shell splinter had torn his trousers and laid bare his leg. He looked at me, and said jokingly :

" This is what happened to me for having obeyed you!"

I affectionately slapped his shoulder :

" Take it easy," said I, " I 'll give you a brand new pair of trousers."

" You will, won't you?" he answered, laughing. " A plane for a pair of trousers, I would do the barter every day!"

The Party Committee held a meeting that very night. Never had we seen such tired features and such joyful eyes. Everybody agreed that we had fought even better than on the 14th of March and that from the simple private to the commander of the island, everyone had behaved admirably. We also unanimously held that for Con Co the fight had only begun. The Committee took various measures aimed at reinforcing our defence.

We learned from the radio that Uncle Ho had decided to confer a challenge flag on those who would stand out brilliantly in the fight against enemy planes. All the fighters swore to do their utmost to win the high honour of this reward.

We sat up late at night to listen to the singing waves beating against the rocks. The artillery thundered every now and again somewhere Ba Doc way, south of the Ben Hai river, followed by bursts of machine-guns. Down south the battle was even fiercer.

*

" Here they're again!" the soldiers cried out, glad to see that the Committee's prediction was right.

The planes came indeed the next morning, early at dawn, in many isolated groups, obviously determined to take revenge on us. " Thunderchiefs" with pointed heads, " Phantoms" with odd shapes. Huge tanker planes, like flying whales... Strings of bombs, rockets, shells... a hellish roar. The explosions lifted the earth, broke down branches and hurled away big blocks of stone. To our deafened ears the bombs made no more noise than a small shell. Some-

times, we had to guess the nature of the explosion from the shaking of the trench walls or the air pressure.

The bombs were rained on us continually. Yet Dinh Kinh, our cook, managed to bring our rations up to our very gun emplacements. But we had no time to eat. Towards 3 p.m. we had repelled six attacks and shot down three planes. Oddly enough, none of us had suffered any injuries except for some cases of no serious consequences caused by air pressure.

During the sixth attack, comrade Tu, disturbed by the blazing sunshine, put on his sun glasses.

"A real tourist!" he said jokingly.

During the lull that followed, Dinh Kinh brought to each his ration. He toured the batteries, saying kind words to everyone, persuading all to take some food instead of merely drinking tea.

"Beef up your strength! The battle is not yet over!" he said repeatedly.

"We must please Dinh Kinh, boys!" cried Nguyen Van Thiem. "It's no child's play to do the cooking in this hell!"

Phong swallowed his bowl of rice and hugged Dinh Kinh, his eyes wet with tears:

"Old chap," said he, "you are a real Communist. Thank you, Dinh Kinh. And to please you, we are going to bring down some more!"

Dinh Kinh held his comrade in his arms, too moved to answer. As for Tao, he set to and ate his rice without waiting to be invited. But in the middle of his meal the roar of planes was heard again. He looked up, quietly put down his bowl and covered it with a banana leaf.

"Fill it again for me, will you," he said, smiling, to Dinh Kinh. "I will finish it after the fighting."

Coming from the direction of the coast, a group of AD6s was returning to their carrier. At the mere sight of their disordered flight, one could guess that they had just got a thrashing somewhere. We laughed at them, while getting ready to foil any trick on their part. Suddenly, the look-out man warned us of the coming of two F.105s from the east. They arrived in no time, but Tao, who was still chewing his rice, brought down one with his first volley.

"Hurrah Tao!" his mates shouted cheerfully.

The other pirate, visibly disheartened, dropped his load of bombs into the sea and fled.

After a few minutes' respite, a voice cried out from the observation post:

"Look out! B. 57s on the horizon!"

In fact, a dark line appeared in the far distance. Many formations of "flying fortresses" were making toward us. From his command post, the commandant of the island told me through the phone:

"Think of the challenge flag of the President! It's the time to win it!"

The order went round the ranks and roused tremendous enthusiasm. Tu told me, smiling: "Let's see what's coming!"

He put on again his sun-glasses and readjusted the knot of his parachute cloth. The look-out man informed us of the speed and altitude of the planes as they approached.

"Be calm, boys! Follow the targets!" ordered Tu.

"That's done."

"Good! Fire only on my order."

The air was shaking. The huge planes arrived one by one within shooting range, pot-bellied like well-fed capitalists.

"It's time we opened fire, chief!" shouted some impatient men, as they saw one of the planes tip its wings.

"Keep calm!" Tu said. "Wait for my order."

If it had come from someone else, this remark would have caused legitimate surprise, for it was common knowledge that planes tip their wings when they dive to drop bombs. But as it came from Tu whose abilities had just been confirmed in a masterly way, the men obeyed without a murmur.

In fact, it was but a trick. The same manoeuvre was carried out by the second plane. But when the third B.57 started the movement, Tu cried out his order:

"Fire!"

The plane dived, but got a direct hit. An enormous mass fell into the sea while the bombs it had just dropped exploded

some one hundred metres from us. The earth shivered as in an earthquake.

"Hurrah for the commander!" cheers rose from all parts.

The manoeuvre having been thwarted, the flying fortresses gave up their feints and began bombing. It was a terrific downpour of fire and steel over the islet. The sky seemed to us now reddish like an orange peel, now dark like night. The air grew thin, then pressure came that choked everyone. A cold blast succeeded to a furnace heat. But none of our guns had been silenced. The firing continued, keeping the enemy in check.

Suddenly Tao's gun stopped firing. What had happened? I rushed to his gun position, and found him quietly taking out some parts of the gun, which had been jammed. He was working at top speed, yet without haste, as sure of himself as if he were repairing a plough in the middle of a field. The other guns intensified their fire to protect him. Two repairers, Bau and Thiem, arrived. In the twinkling of an eye, Bau found out what was wrong. And a minute later, Tao jumped on his seat, crying: "Thanks, Mr. Engineer without a Diploma!"

Bau, who had only finished the 7th form, had never dreamt of becoming a mechanic. It was an honour for him to be able now to serve his country in this quality.

"Another one!"

Bau turned back and saw a "capitalist shark" set ablaze. The long and fierce flames bursting from this mastodon by far outstripped the fire belched by downed Thunderchiefs and Crusaders. An endless trail of fire was crossing the sky. The monster strove to react. It was in vain. It came nearer and nearer to the sea and finished by being engulfed in it. The huge machine disappeared without a trace.

Thus ended our eighth combat in the day. The night was about to fall. We took off our helmets to cool our burning foreheads. A mild breeze was blowing from the sea and the atmosphere, only a moment before filled with deafening explosions, became extraordinarily quiet. Two storks graciously alighted on a rock and set about picking with their long bills the fish killed by the bombs and left on the beach by the waves.

The men, delighted at this spectacle, called to each other excitedly. Their faces blackened by smoke were beaming:

"Oh! If only I had my blowpipe..."

"I will not let you massacre those peaceful birds!"

"That's right. Look at those graceful birds."

"Just like dancing girls!"

For a moment it was only question of birds. One would say that the hard day had been forgotten. The conversation then turned to other subjects.

"Tell me, Phong," someone started, "if she knows that you are at Con Co, I bet she would be tormented with regret. True?"

"Drop it! It's finished, finished! Why speak of it?" Phong answered with a broad smile. In fact, he had had a stroke of ill luck. When joining the army, he had left behind, in his village, a young sweetheart. On one of his leaves, she had told him: "Let's forget our vows, and remain good friends!" Phong had stood speechless for a while. Then he had pulled himself together and replied: "You have loved me, but now you don't any more; we had better separate indeed." He left the same day. It was only when he got on board the ferry that he burst into laughter, realizing that he had answered the unfaithful girl with a word by Pavel*.

"And you, Hieu, the geologist," the teaser started again, "are you satisfied with the day?"

Everyone knew that Hieu had dreamt of becoming a geologist when he was at school. No other occupation had appealed to him. He had desired it with all the ardour of youth. But, after finishing the eighth form and much pondering, he had told himself: "I must first join the army and drive out the Yankees!"

During all this time, Tao was furbishing his gun, with his shirt off. Then he quietly finished his bowl of rice with visible enjoyment, talking the while about anything he happened to think of, about the making of sugar in his village, the battles of King Dinh Bo Linh, the naval fight at Lach Truong on August 5, 1964! I came up to him and asked:

"Tao, tell me frankly, have you ever lost your sang-froid? How can you keep this calm which amazes us?"

* Pavel Korchagin, hero of Nikolai Ostrovsky's "Thus the Steel Was Tempered". Many Vietnamese translations have been quickly sold out.

"But, chief", he answered, laughing, "we are fighting as victors and they are being defeated; we are rightfully fighting in legitimate defence against pirates; why trouble our heads about it all?"

*

Day after day, the raids went on with increasing fierceness and ferocity. Once, we had to wage twelve battles in a day. The gun barrels became so hot at times that one might think the steel was going to melt. The earth was again and again ploughed, upturned, shattered, often ground into a thin dust that ran between your fingers. Huge craters had been dug beside the singed vegetation. Most of the leaves had been torn off and the wood took on the hallucinating look of an army of stumps. From the cuts on some trees a blood red sap oozed out, which spotted our clothes with ugly stains.

As the day raids no longer could take us by surprise, the enemy attacked at night, choosing moments of complete darkness. This tactics not having brought the expected results, he tried to catch us unawares during showers and storms. But we were always on the lookout, and never could he pull out without damage. He then resorted to his most vicious means of war, using time bombs, shrapnel bombs, phosphorus bombs, napalm bombs... And one night, the dastardly Yankees resorted to chemical weapons, after a day of fierce fighting.

In vain. The ground of Con Co had become a lunar landscape, our former barracks had disappeared completely, but, the flag-mast on which our colours fluttered remained standing, as a symbol of the undaunted spirit of the defenders of the Rock. Each time we went by it, we cast a proud and moved glance at it. Under its shadow, the Con Co fighters have acquired a stamp worthy of epic heroes. Each has some memorable exploit to his credit, the newcomers as well as the veterans, and so personal distinctions have come to be of no particular significance. Anyone may in a few words offer you a fecund subject for thought.

One day, after seven waves of attack, Bich ordered his men to furbish their weapons. In the midst of feverish activity, while the smoke of the bombs had not yet dissipated, one could hear a voice singing:

*Come, come, Johnson,
And get your whipping.*

*Come, come, Johnson,
And go away with your mouth gasping!*

It was Nham, a young artilleryman with a smiling face and whose appetite was only next to Tao's. As I came close to him, I noticed that his trousers were stained with blood.

"What have you got in your leg?"

"Nothing, chief. A scratch."

"Let me see it."

He had a large wound in his thigh.

"Well, put on the dressing again and go at once to the infirmary."

This gave him quite a shock.

"What? For that trifle?" he protested. "I assure you, I can fight on for twenty-four more hours."

I took his arm and looked straight into his eyes. He had told me one day that his father had said to him when he left home: "Behave gallantly, my boy." The boy had not forgotten this recommendation.

The same day, I saw Ruê stretching himself on the ground during a lull. Touching his hand, I felt he was having a fit of fever. He had refused to leave his post even for a moment.

"But why, Ruê?"

"Because I can't let myself be confined to an infirmary bed when the country needs all of us."

Khuoc, the look-out man, dubbed "the living radar" by his comrades, was extremely keen-sighted and sharp of hearing. Never had a piratical plane caught him unawares. Once he told me:

"I assure you, there is nothing extraordinary in my sight and hearing."

He probably meant: "It is morale that counts."

On another occasion, Ap, a gunner, was wounded. I ordered him to be taken away. He said pleadingly:

"You said it is an order, and I'll have to obey it. But as Son, the chief gunner, is ill, please take over the command of the battery, otherwise I can't leave this place with my mind at peace."

Thus, as the fighting goes on, the Con Co garrison is blooming like a flower-bed in spring. The more the soil is upturned, the more the flowers blossom in splendour.

Recorded by HO PHUONG



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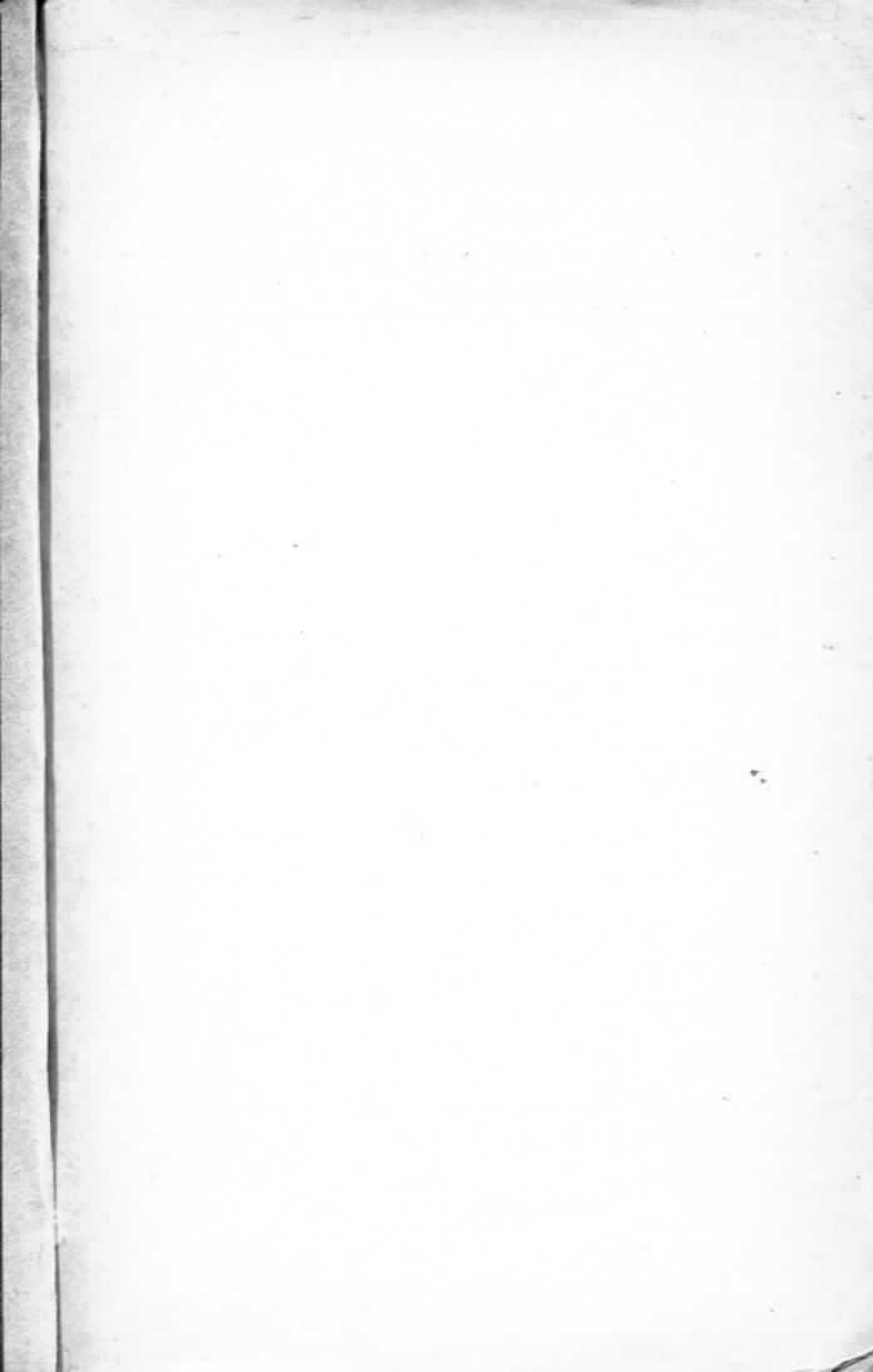


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