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History of the AUGUST REVOLUTION

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

Hanoi - 1972

HISTORY OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

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HANOI — 1972

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PART ONE
HOW THE AUGUST REVOLUTION
WAS PREPARED

I. WORLD WAR TWO AND THE PARTY NEW POLICY

On September 1, 1939, the German fascists attacked Poland, starting the Second World War and throwing mankind into an unprecedented slaughter. On September 3, France and Great Britain declared war on fascist Germany.

Right after the war broke out, the French imperialists mercilessly suppressed the French Communist Party and the democratic and progressive movements in France and the colonies as well.

On September 25, 1939, the Daladier reactionary government ordered the dissolution of the French Communist Party and the arrest of its members. Immediately, the French colonialists in Indochina issued a series of decrees dissolving democratic organizations and closing down progressive papers. In fact, on the eve of the war they had begun

repression against the Indochinese Communist Party and mass organizations¹.

In Indochina, *on the political plane*, the French imperialists decreed general mobilization, and carried out a fascist policy of terror and repression, hoping to annihilate our Party, the leader of the Indochinese revolution. In his speech delivered before the Indochinese Government Council on January 4, 1940, the Governor-General Catroux disclosed this perfidious policy. He said, "We have launched a total and swift attack against the communist organizations; in this struggle, it is necessary to annihilate the communists so that Indochina may live in peace and remain loyal to France. We have no right not to win. The state of war forces us to act without mercy."²

1. As early as August 1939, the Hanoi dailies: *Doi Nay* (Our Time), *Ngay Moi* (New Days), *Nguoi Moi* (New Men), *Notre Voix* (Our Voices) were searched, and many journalists arrested.

In September, fourteen Saigon papers, among them *Le Peuple* (The People), *Dan Chung* (The Population), *Lao Dong* (Labour), *Cong Luan* (Public Opinion) controlled by our Party were closed down. In Bac Bo, 1,051 searches and many arrests were made.

On September 28, 1939, Catroux, Governor-General of Indochina, ordered the dissolution of friendship societies and trade-unions, and the confiscation of their documents and properties. On November 17, 1939, he again ordered the property of the Indochinese Communist Party to be confiscated and put on sale. On October 5, 1939 Bao Dai issued an edict prohibiting assembly and communist propaganda.

2. Twenty years later, in his book *Deux Actes du Drame Indochinois* (Two Acts of the Indochina Tragedy) Catroux reaffirmed his policy, "Regarding the internal affairs, France would not have met with any opposition and any resistance to her presence and tutelage if there had not existed in clandestinity and illegality an active and organized communist party with some 30,000 members, all of them being very resolute and dangerous men who knew to carry out underground activities and strongly believed in their doctrine."

The French imperialists frantically attacked our Party everywhere: in town and country, particularly in cities and industrial centres such as Hanoi, Saigon, Hue, Vinh, Nam Dinh, Hai Phong, Hong Gai...

They reinforced their repressive machinery, set up more intelligence services and police stations, created village police and urban civic guards.¹ Besides the existing prisons, they erected many concentration camps dubbed "camps of special labourers" to detain communists and patriots.²

Or the military plane, they intensified press-ganging, built more roads, airfields, fortresses, set up munition factories, airplane repair-workshops, etc., to strengthen the defence of Indochina.

On the economic plane, they increased poll-taxes and other taxes, made requisitions, issued war bonds, started fund-raising drives; carried out a policy of war-time "guided economy", strictly controlled imports and exports, production and distribution, fixed prices arbitrarily, with a view to using Indochina's manpower and wealth for the fascists' aggressive war.³

1. In September 1939, 14 more police-stations were set up in Hanoi alone. The provinces of Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh and Ha Nam formerly under the control of the Nam Dinh intelligence service now had each its own intelligence service.

2. The French set up camps Ba Van and Nghia Lo in Bac Bo; camps Lao Bao and Tra Khe in Trung Bo; camps Ta Lai and Ba Ita in Nam Bo, etc. Besides, Indochinese revolutionaries were deported to Son La, Poulo Condor, Ban Me Thuot, Madagascar and Guiana.

3. Beside organizing fund-raising drives and fairs, the French compelled the functionaries to contribute part of their monthly salary to a so-called "France-Viet Nam Fraternity Fund". From

All social classes in Viet Nam were badly affected by this policy.

The working class was ruthlessly oppressed and exploited, and put under tight control. All the social laws promulgated after the coming into power of the Popular Front in France were abrogated. Enforcing a decree issued by the Governor-General of Indochina on April 10, 1939 the workers' working hours were increased from 60 to 72 a week. Their salaries were reduced. A number of workers were dismissed, swelling the ranks of the unemployed, or were pressganged into the imperialist army.

The peasantry, in addition to high land rents and interest rates exacted by the feudal landlords, had to bear many other burdens imposed by the fascist imperialists: the exorbitant poll-taxes and other taxes, seizure of land, pressganging, corvées, requisition of paddy, boats, carts and horses, forced cultivation of jute and castor-oil plants in place of rice and maize, etc., in order to supply the imperialist war: Under the double yoke of the imperialists and feudalists, the life of the already destitute peasants was further worsening.

September 1939 to April 1940, 35,000 and 100,000 Indochinese piastres were collected respectively in Trung Bo and Bac Bo.

The budget of Indochina was rocketing as a result of the increase of existing taxes and the imposition of new taxes. Its annual increases were as follows:

1938	80	million piastres
1939	102	—
1940	134	—

Within the first 8 months of 1940, the French imperialists drained Indochina of 37,955 tons of raw materials (against 15,093 tons in the same period of the previous year). 80,000 Indochinese youths were sent to France to be used as cannon-fodder.

The petty bourgeoisie which was harshly exploited had a most precarious life. On account of increased licence taxes, slack business, exorbitant rise of costs of living, the majority of small traders and small owners went bankrupt. The functionaries, whose salaries were reduced, had to do extra hours of work, even on Sundays, to replace their mobilized colleagues. A great number of intellectual workers (writers, artists, journalists, ect.) who could not find a job, were living from hand to mouth. Schools were few, and school and college students were under the constant threat of mobilization which would take them to the front to die for the imperialists.

The national bourgeoisie — except some who took advantage of the war to get richer by speculating, hoarding and working on contract with the army, etc. — was ruined by heavy "national defence" taxes, requisition of means of transport, and the population's reduced purchasing power. A number of national bourgeois went bankrupt.

Among the landlord class, except some big and politically influential landlords who got rich in the war by exacting a usurious rate of interests, speculating, or seizing land from peasants and small landowners, the small and middle landowners were hard hit by the imperialist policy: tax increase, requisition of paddy, compulsory sale of cereals at cheap prices. A number of small landowners were ruined.

The fascist policy of the French imperialists aroused the wrath of the Vietnamese people. Struggles broke out in many places. In big cities such as Hanoi, Hai Phong and Saigon, workers staged strikes to

demand maintenance of the living standard, and to protest Governor-General Catroux's policy to deny them the rights they had won in the days of the Democratic Front. Boycott against fairs organized for the benefit of the "Franco-Vietnamese Fraternity Association", and opposition to the imperialist war were carried out under various forms: distribution of leaflets, meetings and demonstrations. In the whole country, particularly in Nam Bo, the peasants' struggle against high taxes, corvées, pressganging and war, etc. was in full swing. Even the soldiers joined in the anti-imperialist movement.¹

The Second World War and the French imperialists' policy of terror had put an end to the large-scale democratic movement launched and led by our Party from 1936 to 1939. The vital question of national survival required prompt action by our people. To develop and bring victory to the Vietnamese revolution, it was necessary to bring out the watchword "Struggle against the imperialist war and for national liberation."

On the eve of the Second World War, our Party had ordered Party committees at all levels and cadres and members then engaging in legal or semi-legal activities to quickly go underground and keep

1. There was a demonstration staged by 4,000 soldiers in Haiphong; a hunger strike by thousands of soldiers in Saigon, Quang Tri, Vinh Yen to demand improvement of living conditions; a struggle by 5,000 soldiers in Da Nang and a demonstration of thousands of soldiers in My Tho. In Tay Ninh, 60 soldiers took to the jungle with their weapons to prepare resistance against the French. In Thu Dau Mot, 100 Vietnamese soldiers protested against the imperialist war.

contact with the masses to maintain the revolutionary bases and forces in the towns, and at the same time shift their main activities to the rural areas, and turn the latter into a vast base of the revolution.

Right after the Munich Conference (September 1938)¹ the Party Committee of Bac Ky decided to send back a number of Party members to underground work and endeavour to set up bases in the countryside, in anticipation of enemy repression, chiefly in the towns. When the war broke out, the Party Committee of Trung Ky in time sent back its cadres and members to underground work, or assigned them work in other places.² In some localities, in Quang Tri for example, the Provincial Party Committee decided to send some of its cadres and members to regions other than their native places and transfer its leading organs to the mountainous region.

On September 29, 1939, the Party Central Committee sent Party committees at all levels a communiqué, sketching the shift in orientation: "The situation in Indochina will lead to the problem of national liberation", and consequently the forms of organization and struggle must be changed to adapt to the new situation and tasks.

1. Held on September 29 and 30, 1938 with the official participation of 4 countries: Germany, France, Great Britain and Italy. With the United States approval, Great Britain and France renounced their engagements with Czechoslovakia and the USSR, letting Hitler annex Sudeten. This policy of capitulation encouraged the Hitlerite fascists to launch the Second World War.

2. When traced by the enemy, revolutionary cadres had to move to other regions to carry on their work.

Two months after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Sixth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, held at Ba Diem (Gia Dinh province, Nam Bo) under the chairmanship of Comrade Nguyen Van Cu, the Party Secretary General, and with the participation of Comrades Le Duan, Phan Dang Luu, Vo Van Tan, etc. made an analysis of the situation and concluded that the two fundamental tasks of the Vietnamese bourgeois democratic revolution against the imperialists and feudalists defined as early as 1930 in the Party's *Political Theses* were judicious. But following the outbreak of the world war, when the ruling clique in Indochina applied an extremely barbarous fascist policy, when the Japanese fascists were waiting for an opportunity to invade Indochina, and the life of the entire Vietnamese nation was trampled upon, "for the Indochinese peoples to survive there is no other road but the overthrow of the French imperialists and resistance against all aggressors — white or yellow — for national liberation."¹ The Plenum decided that national liberation was the foremost task: "All the questions of the revolution, including the agrarian question, must be settled with this end in view,"² and prescribed "the creation of conditions for violent action and national liberation revolution."³

To concentrate forces on the task of struggling against the imperialist war and for national inde-

1, 2, 3. *Party Documents* (1939-1945), in Vietnamese, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1963, pp. 57, 60, 73.

pendence, the Plenum decided that the slogan of *agrarian revolution* be temporarily withdrawn and the slogan of *confiscating land owned by the French imperialists and landlords, traitors to the nation* set forth instead. It decided to set up the *Indochinese Anti-Imperialist National United Front* in replacement of the *Indochinese Democratic Front* to rally all social strata and classes, all the peoples of Indochina, on the basis of the alliance of workers and peasants — the "two main forces of the revolution,"¹ to direct the spearhead of the revolution against the main enemy of the nation — imperialism and its agents. The slogan of setting up *worker-peasant soviets* put forward in 1930 was replaced by that of founding a "Federal Government of the Indochinese Democratic Republics."²

Concerning the Party, the Plenum adopted concrete measures aimed at consolidating it in all aspects. It made an appeal to the whole Party. "The situation is extremely grave, the task assigned us by history is very heavy...

Comrades! Let us close our ranks! Let all of us unite into a monolithic bloc!"³

Realizing that the contradiction between the Indochinese peoples and the imperialist aggressors was the main one, determined to raise high the banner of national liberation, closely combining the interests of the Vietnamese revolution with those of world

1, 2, 3. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 60, 61, 87.

revolution, the Sixth Plenum of the Party Central Committee *marked a correct change in strategic direction and inaugurated a new period* of struggle of the Vietnamese revolution.

The resolution of the Sixth Plenum was communicated to Party committees at all levels, and thus, in spite of harsh enemy repression, the revolutionary movement in many places was maintained and developed. Anti-imperialist organizations were founded in many provinces, chiefly in Nam Bo. The Nam Bo Party Committee set up propaganda brigades which carried out their work among the crowds, held meetings of protest against pressganging in My Tho, Cholon, Vinh Long, etc. The Anti-Imperialist National United Front formed a unified system from village to province and was about to be unified throughout Nam Bo. Self-defence units were set up in 17 provinces of Nam Bo. Agitation work among the peasants was greatly intensified, and that among the soldiers got satisfactory results.¹ Despite harsh repression by the imperialists, the number of Party members increased by 60 per cent from June to October 1940.

The extension and intensification of the war among the imperialist powers made the Vietnamese people see clearly the decline of French imperialism. On May 10, 1940, the Hitlerite fascists attacked France. About a month later, the French reactionary

1. In important enemy garrisons in O Ma, Tuy Ha, O Cap, My Tho, Tay Ninh, etc. revolutionary bases were founded among the soldiers.

bourgeoisie declared Paris to be an "open city", and capitulated to the German fascists. Two million French soldiers were disarmed and one hundred and fifty of their generals captured. A puppet government headed by a traitor, Marshal Petain, was set up in Vichy. France went through a hard time under the iron heel of the German fascists and their lackeys. The French empire was shaken to its foundation. Indochinese economy was in a chaotic state. French capitulation made "the whole world see clearly the rottenness, degeneration, cowardice of the French reactionary bourgeoisie and its abominable betrayal" of the French people.¹

Availing themselves of French defeat, the Japanese fascist imperialists, one of the promoters of the Second World War for the purpose of conquering colonies and redistributing world markets, laid hands on Indochina, a prey they had long coveted.

On September 22, 1940, the Japanese fascists attacked Lang Son and landed 6,000 troops at Do Son (near Haiphong). After some minor engagements with the Japanese near the Viet Nam-China border, Governor-General Decoux, following the example of his clique in France, ignominiously surrendered Indochina to the Japanese.

Since then onward, the Vietnamese people were under the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. In this situation, they could not but struggle to survive. Unable to resist the Japanese in Lang Son,

1. Letter sent by the French Communist Party Central Committee to the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia on January 28, 1941.

the French troops withdrew to Thai Nguyen through the Bac Son road. The colonial administration in the regions crossed by the retreating troops was strongly shaken. Seizing this opportunity, on September 27, 1940, the people of Bac Son, under the leadership of the local Party committee, rose up and disarmed the withdrawing French troops to equip themselves in order to fight against the French and drive out the Japanese.

Both the Japanese and the French were frightened by this insurrection. The reactionary French colonialists compromised with the Japanese so as to get a free hand in repressing the Vietnamese revolution. Thinking that the time had not come to overthrow the French, the Japanese promptly came to agreement with the French in order to use the latter for the repression against the insurgents.

The Bac Son insurrection failed because conditions for victory were unripe. Still, it laid bare the dark designs of the Japanese and French fascists, and gave birth to the first people's armed forces organized and led by our Party, which were to grow into the Viet Nam National Salvation Army¹ and were to constitute a core for the founding of the Vo Nhai-Bac Son revolutionary base.

The Bac Son insurrection had great repercussions in the whole country. It awakened the masses and inaugurated a new period of the Vietnamese revo-

1. The Viet Nam National Salvation Army comprised three platoons: the first was founded on February 14, 1941; the second on September 15, 1941; and the third on February 25, 1944.

lution, the period of combination of political struggle with armed struggle and of armed insurrection to seize power.

While launching attacks on North Viet Nam, the Japanese fascists instigated and helped Thai troops attack Cambodia. The French colonialists forcibly sent the Vietnamese people (chiefly the people of Nam Bo) and the Cambodian people to the front to be used as cannon-fodder. Refusing to resign themselves to servitude and to die in place of the French colonialists, the Nam Bo people and Vietnamese soldiers who were about to be sent to the front resisted fiercely. From March to July 1940, the Party in Nam Bo held several sessions to discuss preparations for an insurrection with the aim of transforming the Franco-Thai war into a revolutionary civil war. Comrades Nguyen Van Cu, Le Hong Phong, Le Duan and a number of other members of the Party Central Committee having been arrested, Comrade Phan Dang Luu was sent by the Nam Bo Party Committee to Bac Bo to participate in the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee to discuss the tasks of the Indochinese revolution and get instructions on the launching of an insurrection in Nam Bo.

In November 1940, the Seventh Plenum of the Party Central Committee was held in Dinh Bang village (Tu Son district, Bac Ninh province) with the participation of Comrades Truong Chinh, Phan Dang Luu, Hoang Van Thu, Hoang Quoc Viet, Tran Dang Ninh. It pointed out that Japanese aggression and French capitulation had put the Indochinese peoples under a "double yoke". It confirmed that the shift

in strategic direction, the task of national liberation and the temporary shelving of the slogan of agrarian revolution, which had been decided at the Sixth Plenum, were judicious. In the new situation engendered by the Japanese invasion of Indochina, and the Bac Son insurrection, the Plenum came to the conclusion that the Japanese and French fascists were then the two enemies of the Vietnamese revolution; it decided to give the *Indochinese Anti-Imperialist United Front* a new name, the *National United Front against the French and Japanese Fascists in Indochina*.

The important achievement of the Seventh Plenum of the Party Central Committee was the decision to introduce armed insurrection into the agenda of the Indochinese revolution. The Bac Son insurrection had made our Party realize that under the double yoke of French and Japanese oppression and exploitation, "a revolutionary upsurge will certainly take place. The Party must get ready to assume the sacred mission of leading the oppressed Indochinese peoples in their armed insurrection to reconquer freedom and independence."¹

Our country was "not yet in a directly revolutionary situation,"² but in the existing conjuncture at home and in the world, revolution in our country could break out *in the form of local insurrections in places where conditions permitted* (in Bac Son for example), *to progress toward a general insurrection to seize power in the whole country*. The Plenum

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 142.

decided to set up a Provisional Central Committee and re-establish contact with the Comintern and the Party section abroad.

The Plenum also discussed and decided on two burning questions:

1. Development of the effect of the Bac Son insurrection;
2. Proposal for insurrection by the Nam Bo Party Committee.

Concerning the first question, after hearing Comrade Trang Dang Ninh's report, the Plenum decided to maintain the armed forces of the Bac Son insurrection, set up guerilla units which would take up the form of *armed action*, and if need be, combat enemy terror to protect the life and property of the people, develop revolutionary bases, with a view to setting up a guerilla base area with the Bac Son-Vo Nhai region as the centre, under the direct leadership of the Party Central Committee. Comrade Hoang Van Thu was entrusted with executing this resolution.

Concerning the second question, after hearing the report on the situation in Nam Bo by Comrade Phan Dang Luu, a Party Central Committee member, the Plenum instructed the Nam Bo Party Committee to put off preparations for an insurrection, because the Bac Son insurrection had just failed, and subjective and objective conditions in Nam Bo would not ensure success. The insurrection in Nam Bo could be launched only in co-ordination with another insurrection in Bac Bo and Trung Bo according to a general plan of the Central Committee. Comrade

Phan Dang Luu was entrusted with transmitting this decision of the Central Committee to the Nam Bo Party Committee.

But on his return to Saigon, the order for insurrection had already been given, and its postponement was impossible. On November 23, 1940, the insurrection broke out as planned by the regional Party committee.

The whole Nam Bo countryside was strongly shaken by the uprising of the revolutionary masses. In a number of districts and villages enemy administration was disintegrating; with the setting up of revolutionary power, democratic rights were applied, security and order maintained and counter-revolutionaries punished, etc.

During a month, the insurgent masses fought valiantly but the colonialist repression was savage. The French used 20 aircraft to bomb the insurgent regions. Numerous villages were burnt down, and tens of thousands of people killed. In Ba Diem, police commissioner Petail indiscriminately killed anybody he came across. Mass arrestations were carried out and the victims, strung together with an iron wire piercing through their palms or calves, were thrown into the sea.

The Nam Ky insurrection failed because conditions for the success of the Vietnamese revolution were unripe. The people of Bac Bo and Trung Bo were not yet in a condition to rise up for combined action with the people of the South.

The French imperialists' bloody repression against the inhabitants of Nam Bo had not ended when on

January 13, 1941, the soldiers under the command of Sergeant Cung mutinied and occupied Cho Rang and Do Luong posts, then marched to the provincial capital of Vinh. This uprising was not led by our Party and broad popular masses did not participate in it. But after it broke out, the Party called on the masses to support it. It was soon suppressed by the imperialists.

Although the Bac Son and Nam Ky insurrections and the Do Luong mutiny were unsuccessful, they were "first shots heralding the general insurrection and the beginning of an armed struggle of the Indo-chinese people".¹

II. RETURN OF PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH. OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY NEW POLICY

In face of great changes in the internal and external situation, on February 8, 1941, Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Party and nation, returned home to assume direct leadership of the Vietnamese revolution. He opened courses for training cadres, founded, on a trial basis, local organizations of a *Viet Minh Front* to rally all strata of the patriotic people to the struggle against imperialism, for national liberation. He published the paper *Viet Nam Doc Lap* (Independent Viet Nam), propaganda organ of the Front for which he wrote articles, some in verse which could be easily understood. He settled in Pac

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 189.

Bo (Ha Quang district, Cao Bang province). His pilot scheme yielded good results. Soon after, various national minorities in Cao Bang participated with enthusiasm in national salvation organizations. On this basis, Comrade Ho Chi Minh organized paramilitary forces, opened military training courses and built Cao Bang into a revolutionary base. He said, "The Cao Bang base will open up bright prospects for our revolution. Cao Bang has long since had a strong revolutionary movement, it is situated close to the border and thus has conditions favourable to our future international relations. But we must expand the movement to Thai Nguyen and further south, to join forces with the rest of the country. Only in this way can we start armed struggle and take the offensive when conditions are favourable, and hold out in adverse circumstances."¹

In his capacity as a representative of the Comintern, he convened the *Eighth Plenum of the Party Central Committee* in Pac Bo from May 10 to 19, 1941. It was presided over by him and attended by Comrades Hoang Van Thu, Phung Chi Kien, Truong Chinh, Hoang Quoc Viet, Hoang Van Hoan, Vu Anh, etc.

The Plenum analysed the cause and prospects of the Second World War, correctly assessed that the German fascists would attack the Soviet Union, that war would break out in the Pacific; that the war waged by the fascist imperialists would be a horrible

1. Quoted by Vo Nguyen Giap in his book "Tu Nhan Dan Ma Ra" (Sprung from the People), Quan Doi Nhan Dan Publishing House, p. 33.

slaughter but it would weaken the imperialists and give a strong impetus to the world revolutionary movement; the anti-fascist allied camp with the Soviet Union as its backbone would certainly win victory, the fascist camp was doomed to failure. "If the First World War has brought into being a socialist state, the Soviet Union, this imperialist war will lead to the appearance of many other socialist countries; and the revolution will triumph in many countries."¹ It held that the Indochinese revolution was an integral part of the world revolution and of the anti-fascist democratic movement. The destiny of the Indochinese peoples was bound to that of the Soviet Union and of the Chinese revolution.

Concerning the tasks of the Vietnamese revolution, after analysing the social contradictions in Viet Nam and finding that the contradiction between the Vietnamese nation and the French and Japanese fascist imperialists was the main contradiction which requires an imperious solution, the Plenum approved the resolutions of the Sixth and Seventh Plenums on a shift in strategic direction and on an emphasis upon the task of national liberation. It advanced many concrete programs and policies with a view to raising still higher the banner of national liberation, mobilizing all strata of the people in the revolutionary struggle for independence and freedom. It stressed: "For the time being, section and class interests should be subordinated to the vital interests of the nation: should we fail in this moment to liberate the country,

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 180.

to recover independence and freedom for the whole nation, not only would the country and the people remain enslaved for ever, but also the section and class interests could never be restored.”¹

To rally broad sections of the people and win over all revolutionary forces to the struggle against the main enemies of the nation—the French and Japanese fascists and their agents—the Plenum decided, on Comrade Ho Chi Minh’s proposal, to change the name of *National United Front against the French and Japanese Fascists* into *Viet Nam Independence League* (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh) or *Viet Minh* for short. All patriotic mass organizations against imperialism were given the name of “Association for National Salvation” (such as Workers’ Association for National Salvation, Peasants’ Association for National Salvation, Youth Association for National Salvation, Women’s Association for National Salvation, Old Folk’s Association for National Salvation, Children’s Association for National Salvation, Armymen’s Association for National Salvation, etc.) On May 19, 1945, the Viet Minh Front officially made its appearance, and, holding high the yellow-starred red flag, it called on the whole people to attack the French, oust the Japanese, and save the nation. Henceforth, our people’s struggle against the French and Japanese fascists was given the name of *Viet Minh movement*, a name which symbolized the patriotism and indomitability of our people, roused the national spirit of the popu-

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 194.

lar masses, and concretized our policy of great national union, a name which struck terror into the enemy’s ranks.

To bring about further differentiation in the landlord class, the Plenum reaffirmed the necessity of shelving temporarily the slogan of agrarian revolution, and of confiscating land from the imperialists and the traitors, and set forth new slogans such as: “reduce land rents and debt interests, redistribute communal lands, progress toward giving land to the tillers.”

Concerning the method of revolutionary action to reconquer national independence and sovereignty drafted by the Seventh Plenum of the Party Central Committee (in November 1940), the Eighth Plenum, after making a complete and searching examination of it, concluded that to ensure victory for the revolution we had to launch an “armed insurrection.”¹ Thus “preparations for the insurrection was the central task of our Party and people in this period.”² To win victory, the insurrection must have the following subjective and objective conditions and seize the opportune moment to start action:

- 1) The Front for National Salvation is already unified all over the country;
- 2) The people can no longer bear the French-Japanese yoke, and are ready to make any sacrifice and rise up to seize power;
- 3) The ruling circles in Indochina are driven to an economic, political and military crisis at its climax; and,

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 211 and 393.

4) Realization of objective conditions favourable to the Indochinese peoples' uprising: the Chinese army's victory over the Japanese army, outbreak of revolution in France or Japan, total victory of the democratic camp in the Pacific, victory of the Soviet Union over the fascist aggressors, revolutionary upsurge in the French and Japanese colonies...

However, considering the realities of our country, drawing experience from the Nghe-Tinh Soviets and the Bac Son and Nam Bo insurrections, the Plenum held that at the opportune moment, "with the available forces, *we can successfully launch partial insurrections in every region to advance toward a general insurrection.*"¹

This method of moving from partial insurrections to seize power in localities to a general insurrection to seize power in the whole country which had been prescribed by the Seventh Plenum of the Party Central Committee, was now developed and concretized. This shows our Party's creativeness in applying the Marxist-Leninist theory of armed insurrection to the specific conditions of our country.

Concerning the national problem, the Party had previously placed it within the framework of Indochina as a whole. Now the Eighth Plenum decided to settle this question within the framework of each of the three countries of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia, and made it clear that to win victory their national liberation revolutions must maintain close co-operation, support one another and stimulate one

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 213. Italics ours (Commission for Research about the Party's History).

another. Thus, they could on the one hand foil the enemy's scheme of division, and on the other, create favourable conditions for the Cambodian and Lao peoples to develop the spirit of independence, sovereignty, and contribute to the struggle against the French and Japanese fascists, the common enemies, for independence and democracy.

The Plenum paid particular attention to the *building of the Party*, the leading force of the revolution, the core of the bloc of national union, the main factor ensuring victory for the national liberation revolution. It found that the Party lacked cadres, had few proletarian elements, that the revolutionary movement had an unequal development; and that the peasant and rural movement was stronger than the worker and urban movement... And the Plenum decided to urgently train cadres and increase the number of proletarian elements in the Party; to "consider agitation work among the workers a foremost task in mass organization".¹

Although the Party had shifted its main activities to the rural areas on which it relied to build revolutionary bases (the first were those of Cao Bang and Bac Son-Vo Nhai), and consequently had to pay attention to developing the rural movement both in the highlands and the delta, it had to continue developing the revolutionary movement in the cities, industrial regions, factories, mining areas and plantations. "We must see to it that in the Indochinese

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 216.

revolution, the workers' movement in the cities will develop vigorously and become the vanguard of other movements." ¹

The Plenum elected a new Central Committee and appointed Comrade Truong Chinh Secretary General of the Party, and at the same time elected a Standing Bureau with Comrades Truong Chinh, Hoang Van Thu and Hoang Quoc Viet as its members.

The Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee was of great historical significance and was a decisive factor for the subsequent victory of the August Revolution. Its resolution brought to completion the new orientation in strategic direction and the new policy set forth by the Sixth and Seventh Plenums of the Party Central Committee. The national liberation banner was held higher than ever before by our Party. The Viet Minh Front came into being. Preparations for an armed struggle became the central task; the building of armed forces and revolutionary bases was given a strong impetus.

After the Plenum, on June 6, 1941, Comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc (Comrade Ho Chi Minh) issued an appeal calling on the whole people to unite, put national interests above everything, concentrate our forces on the fight to oust the French and the Japanese, to reconquer independence and freedom. "Dear compatriots! Rise up! Let us follow the glorious example of the Chinese people! Rise up immediately! Let us organize the 'League for National Salvation against the French and the Japanese'!"

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 217.

"Dear compatriots! Some hundred years ago, when our country was endangered by Mongol invasion, our elders under the Tran dynasty called on their sons and daughters throughout the country to rise up as one man to kill the enemy. Finally, the danger was warded off and our combatants' glory is carried into posterity for ever.

"The elders and patriotic personalities of our country should follow the example set by our forefathers in the glorious task of national salvation!

"Rich people, military men, workers, peasants, traders, functionaries, youth and women who are animated with great patriotism!

"At present, *national liberation is our supreme duty!* We must unite to overthrow the French and Japanese imperialists and their agents, and save our nation from an unbearable situation!" ¹

This appeal had great effect on the national consciousness and patriotism of all social strata.

As foreseen by the Plenum, one month after its session, a great event took place in the Second World War. On June 22, 1941, breaking off his engagements, Hitler ordered his troops to attack the USSR, forcing the latter to wage a patriotic war. A test of strength opposed the socialist regime which was only twenty years old to the fascist regime, a product of senile and dying capitalism. The Soviet Union, Britain, the United States ² and the world democratic

1. *Ho Chi Minh Writings*, in Vietnamese, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1970, p. 44.

2. Agreements on common defence against German fascism were signed between Britain and the USSR in July 1941, and between the USSR and the United States in June 1942.

forces formed an alliance against the German, Italian and Japanese fascists. This brought change in the character of the world war: the war which at first opposed two imperialist powers became a war between the democratic camp and the fascist camp. The national liberation movement of Viet Nam, formerly an integral part of the world revolution against the imperialist war, now became an integral part of the world democratic movement against fascist aggression.

The Second World War was rapidly growing in scope and intensity. In Europe, using most modern means and barbarous methods, Hitler's troops penetrated deeper and deeper into the Soviet Union, occupied a major part of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia, Donbass, invested Leningrad and threatened even Moscow. The balance of forces at that time between the USSR and Germany compelled Soviet troops to fall on the defensive.

In Asia, as Comrade Ho Chi Minh and the Party Central Committee had foreseen, the Pacific war broke out. On December 8, 1941, in their new offensive, the Japanese fascists launched a sudden attack on Pearl Harbour, and declared war against the United States and Britain, thus starting a war in the Pacific. They successively occupied American, British and Dutch colonies in the Pacific, the Far-East and Southeast Asia. As for French Indochina, it had already been occupied by them in Autumn 1940.

After capitulating to the Japanese, the French colonialists intensified repression against the Viet-

namese people and at the same time tried to appease and deceive them with demagogic measures. They set forth such slogans as "Labour-Family-Fatherland", "Franco-Vietnamese Renaissance", "National Revolution", and "Being strong to serve" to seduce the youth, etc.

In such circumstances, the only judicious policy of the Party was to expose all schemes and manoeuvres of the French and Japanese fascists, and carry the revolution forward.

The revolutionary base of Cao Bang was put under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh and Comrades Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Hoang Van Hoan, Vu Anh, etc., and the Bac Son-Vo Nhai base under that of the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee. Carrying out a decision by the Standing Bureau, a command of the "National Salvation Army" and of the Bac Son-Vo Nhai base was set up, comprising Comrades Phung Chi Kien, Luong Van Chi and Chu Van Tan, with Comrade Phung Chi Kien at its head.

Informed by an A.B.¹ agent, the French colonialists launched a large-scale operation in the Bac Son region with the aim of capturing the Central Committee members who were returning to the delta after the Eighth Plenum, and of annihilating the National Salvation Army and the revolutionary movement in Bac Son-Vo Nhai. The command of

1. A. B. (Anti-Bolshevik): pseudo-communist sabotage agents organized by the French colonialists in the 1934-1945 period for provoking and dividing our Party and sabotaging the Indochinese revolutionary movement.

the base sent a detachment to protect the Central Committee comrades, and prepared to oppose the terror raid. As enemy encirclement was increasingly tightened, by mid-July 1941, the base command decided to withdraw the bulk of its armed forces to the Viet Nam-China border region to found a new base, while those who remained behind were to carry on activities in Vo Nhai (Thai Nguyen province) under the command of Comrade Chu Van Tan. The column withdrawing to Cao Bang fell into an enemy ambush at Na Ri (Bac Can province) and suffered great losses. Comrade Phung Chi Kien was killed in action, Comrade Luong Van Chi was taken prisoner and died in Cao Bang prison.

Having no more objective in Bac Son, the enemy directed their attack toward Vo Nhai where a guerilla war took place during eight months (from July 1941 to February 1942). In intensifying their sweeps, encirclements and mopping-up operations, the enemy tried to find out and annihilate our armed forces and herd our people into fascist-type concentration camps in Na Phao, Dinh Ca, Lang Giua and Dong En, in order to "drain the pond and catch the fish." In this extremely difficult situation, the "National Salvation" platoon of Vo Nhai engaged in guerilla warfare to wear out enemy forces and preserve its own strength. The guerilla action at Vo Nhai stimulated the revolutionary movement in the whole country and brought a modest contribution to the patriotic war of the USSR against the fascist aggressors.

In face of barbarous enemy repression, and when the revolutionary movement in the whole country had not grown strong enough, and when even in Bac Son-Vo Nhai, popular agitation work in its early stage did not allow combined political and military struggle, the *National Salvation Army*, after eight months of fighting, had to split up into small groups to escape enemy encirclement. The major part withdrew to the Viet Nam-China border region to reorganize and equip itself; the rest melting into the population, formed armed propaganda groups to establish bases among the masses. Vast revolutionary bases were thus established in Thai Nguyen and Tuyen Quang provinces, creating favourable conditions for the future insurrection.

The guerilla war in Bac Son-Vo Nhai proved that under the double yoke of the French and Japanese fascists, our people, under the leadership of our Party, were quite capable of establishing revolutionary bases in the highlands and launching prolonged guerilla warfare to wear out and decimate an imperialist army enjoying absolute superiority in numbers and equipment. To achieve this end, the guerillas must be inspired with a radically revolutionary spirit, fight with valour, resourcefulness and stamina, carry out the Party's judicious political line, and besides must rely on large bases among the masses to act and develop. To rely on the masses, to gain strength in the course of fighting, to multiply, to fight with mobility and flexibility, to be everywhere but to be found nowhere, now scattering, now regrouping one's forces, always to act on the

offensive—such are the laws of guerilla warfare. The guerillas must know how to skilfully combine military with political action, combat with propaganda and organization of the masses, to eliminate rural authorities collaborating with the enemy and traitors, and to carry out agitation work among enemy troops, etc.

Following the outbreak of the Pacific war, on December 21, 1941, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee issued a communiqué on *the Pacific War and the Urgent Tasks of the Party*, analysing the reasons why the Japanese fascists had launched this war, the prospects of victory of the democratic forces and the inevitable failure of the fascists. The communiqué defined a line of action to be carried out in case the allied troops should enter Indochina. *Regarding the Chinese Kuomintang troops*, we should ally with them in the fight against the Franco-Japanese fascists and treat them “on an equal footing and in a spirit of mutual assistance.”¹ We should make them understand that “entering Indochina to help the Indochinese revolution means helping themselves,”² that with the victory won over the Japanese through concerted action with the Indochinese peoples, they would thwart the Japanese menace to Southern China, and that they should not think they were coming to Indochina to conquer it. *Regarding British-American troops*, if they helped the Indochinese revolution, we could give them some economic advantages in Indochina; but if they

1, 2. *Party Documents*. op. cit., p. 305.

helped de Gaulle re-establish French rule, we would protest energetically and carry on the fight for independence. When they arrived in any locality, the inhabitants there should rise up to seize power and set up people's revolutionary government, and in the name of the government, should establish relations with them. We must not nurture the illusion that the Chiang Kai-shek or British-American troops would bring us freedom. In the struggle for independence, we must naturally seek allies — even if they are only temporary, wavering or conditional ones — but the struggle for independence and freedom must be carried out with our own efforts.

The communiqué also criticized “leftist” deviations of certain local Party committees which had thought that “with the outbreak of the war and the introduction of Chinese troops into Viet Nam, we shall immediately secure favourable conditions to launch a nation-wide insurrection to seize power”¹ and had proposed methods and forms of struggle suitable to a direct revolutionary situation. The communiqué pointed out that “conditions are unripe for an insurrection in the whole of Indochina”,² but in a given locality where favourable conditions prevailed, “the local Party committee may immediately launch a popular insurrection to seize power and set up a local provisional revolutionary government,”³ to create favourable conditions for the general insurrection.

1, 2, 3. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 306.

Concerning the new tasks, the communiqué laid emphasis on the necessity of building up armed forces and defining specific principles of action for the guerilla units.

Carrying out the Party's line and directives, the revolutionary bases of Cao Bang and Bac Son-Vo Nhai grew steadily and rapidly; the Viet Minh movement launched by way of trial in some districts of Cao Bang early in 1941 extended quickly. The movement for political education and military training developed powerfully. In late 1941, following Comrade Ho Chi Minh's directive, a 12-member armed unit was set up. It was entrusted with protecting the Party's leading organ, consolidating and ensuring communications, while engaging in propaganda work and training "self-defence units for national salvation". In many provinces of Bac Bo under the direct leadership of the Party Central Committee (such as Thai Nguyen, Hanoi, Ha Dong, Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Hung Yen, Ha Nam, Phu Tho, Son Tay, Vinh Yen, Phuc Yen, Hai Duong, Bac Can, Tuyen Quang, Hoa Binh, Quang Yen, Thanh Hoa, Quang Binh, etc.) a large number of associations for national salvation within the Viet Minh front came into being in late 1941 and early 1942. In 1942, the Party members in Nam Bo received from the Party Central Committee directives for founding the Viet Minh front, which was soon set up in Saigon, My Tho, Gia Dinh, Vinh Long. In Gia Dinh, My Tho, Tra Vinh, Tan An, etc., the Party members kept close contacts with the masses, organizing semi-legal associations, such as the associations of ploughmen,

transplanters, roofers, and groups of traditional medicine practitioners... But in face of harsh enemy repression after the Nam Ky insurrection, the movement could not grow in scope or intensity.

In the years 1941-1942, the workers' movement met with many difficulties, but its bases in a number of important enterprises were still maintained and the workers' associations for national salvation kept developing in workers' living quarters. In many localities, workers launched struggles for wage increase, improvement of working conditions against war and the cruelty of the Franco-Japanese fascists.

In the rural areas, at the time when guerilla war was being waged in Bac Son-Vo Nhai, the peasants' movement was in effervescence. Peasants in Bac Ninh, Phuc Yen, Bac Giang, Thai Binh, Vinh Yen, Phu Tho, etc., struggled for redistribution of communal land, against forced cultivation of jute in place of rice, requisition of paddy, market pillage, cheap purchase of beans, ground-nuts and castor-oil.

In Trung Bo, the movement with a strong character of armed struggle which had been launched in Ngoc Trao (Thanh Hoa province) in 1941 and had temporarily subsided, was revived in some localities. In 1942-1943, many peasants' struggles for redistribution of communal land took place in Thua Thien. In Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces, the movement was repeatedly repressed, but its bases were preserved. In February 1942, at Que Son and Tam Ky (Quang Nam province), many peasants' meetings and demonstrations were held, some involving up to

500 peasants equipped with rudimentary weapons, who protested against purchase at low prices of paddy, cotton, ground-nuts and castor-oil.

The Pacific war which revealed deep contradictions among the world imperialists, sharpened the contradictions between the Japanese and French fascists in Indochina, and those between the Vietnamese people and the French and Japanese rulers and their agents. The French imperialists who exploited our people without mercy to fill up their pockets and supply the aggressive war of the Japanese had reduced them to extreme misery.

To drain our people of their foodstuffs, the French carried out, from early 1942, a policy of purchasing paddy. In Bac Bo and Trung Bo, a system of "corporations" to purchase this cereal was set up, which extended its activities down to the hamlets.

The French imperialists' use of banks to control the Indochinese economy, their holding a monopoly of salt, alcohol and opium, and their war-time economic policy had made our people's life miserable. Now their policy of paddy requisition struck at our people's main resources. This perfidious and cruel policy resulted in a terrible famine which took the lives of 2 million people in late 1944 and early 1945.

On the financial plane, the French imperialists had to pay ever greater sums to the Japanese.¹

To make up for the budgetary deficit due to those payments, the French colonialists issued bank-notes in profusion, causing a grave inflation which seriously affected the life of the Indochinese peoples.

1. See page 41.

On the one hand, the Japanese fascists forced the French to supply them with foodstuffs and money; and on the other, they directly drained our people of their resources by investing in commercial enterprises and exploiting the natural resources of Indochina. They requisitioned houses, vehicles and boats; evicted the people from their land to build airfields and barracks; robbed them of their oxen, buffaloes, pigs and poultry; cut ripe paddy for horses' feed; pillaged and made a clean sweep of everything — straw sheaves, vegetable bundles and eggs. Consequently many clashes broke out between the peasants and the Japanese.

Besides, ill-treatment, murder, torture and rape committed by the Japanese fascists deepened our people's hatred for the enemy. Our entire people, rich and poor, felt their national spirit stamped down and their life rendered precarious.

1.

Year	Payment	
1940	6 million piastres	From January to March, monthly payment of 2 million Indochinese piastres
1941	58 »	Monthly payment of more than 4 million
1942	86 »	» 7 »
1943	117 »	» 9 »
1944	363 »	» 30 »
1945	90 »	From January to March, monthly payment of 30 million (★)

(★) Not including 780 million paid by the Bank of Indochina to the Japanese from March to August 1945, during their exclusive domination in Indochina. J. Decoux, *A la Barre de l'Indochine*, Editions Plon, Paris, p. 446.

Forced by the Japanese to give a share in the fat prey of Indochina, the French colonialists sought to resist them. The Japanese overtly encroached on French rights and in fact seized control over the whole of Indochina. The contradictions between the French and the Japanese, between pro-French and pro-Japanese agents became ever more acute, and conflict between the two imperialist powers in Indochina was inevitable.

III. INTENSIFICATION OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN ALL FIELDS, PREPARATIONS FOR AN UPRISING TO SEIZE POWER AT THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT

Since early 1943, the situation of the Second World War had been undergoing great changes. The Soviet army switched from defensive to counter-offensive strategy inaugurated by the historic battle of Stalingrad which started in November 1942 and ended in February 1943 with the total victory of the Soviet army and the annihilation of 330,000 Hitlerite troops.

From November 1942 to November 1943, the Soviet Union recovered nearly two-thirds of the territory occupied by the Nazis. The successive victories of the Soviet army threw the fascists and their agents into utter confusion, greatly inspired the peoples of the West and the East living under fascist rule, thus creating favourable conditions for the liberation struggle. The Vietnamese people were

elated by the victory of the heroic Soviet army and felt more confident in the triumph of their liberation struggle.

Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese people in their struggle against the Japanese fascists also won numerous victories when an equilibrium of forces had been achieved. The struggle movement of the people in the towns and the countryside under Japanese control grew stronger. The Red Army and the Chinese people foiled many mopping-up operations launched by the Japanese against the revolutionary bases, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

Early in 1943, the Vietnamese revolution was given a new impetus. The organizations of the Indochinese Communist Party and the Viet Minh Front took root in the broad masses, chiefly the peasants, workers and part of the school students. The revolutionary bases in the highlands, especially in Viet Bac, were developed and consolidated. The security zone of the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee established since 1940 on the outskirts of Hanoi, in some surrounding districts and part of the provinces of Phuc Yen, Ha Dong and Bac Ninh was now broadened and became more stable. A reserve security zone was also built in the districts of Hiep Hoa (Bac Giang province), Phu Binh and Pho Yen (Thai Nguyen province). The Party's leading organ was transferred to a rural area. The Standing Bureau of the Central Committee remained in the capital to follow the situation, feel the pulse of the movement and lead the Party. This was a positive and

creative measure of our Party. It allowed the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee, when the situation evolved as a result of the Japanese coup de force, to launch in time a powerful and extensive movement for national salvation against the Japanese, a pre-insurrectional movement leading directly to the August Revolution.

In face of rapid changes in the situation at home and in the world, the Standing Bureau met in Vong La (Dong Anh district, Phuc Yen province) from February 25 to 28, 1943. It made an analysis of the situation and concluded that "the Indochinese revolutionary movement *can make a sudden great leap forward.*"¹

The Conference pointed out the shortcomings and weaknesses of the movement: unsatisfactory development of the workers' movement, and the lack of "a bourgeois national revolutionary movement and a movement of youth and school students"² in the cities. It took concrete measures to remedy these shortcomings and laid stress on agitation work among the workers, because "without an active participation of the workers:

"1. It will be difficult for the insurrection to break out in vital enemy-occupied centres (industrial cities, mining areas, plantations, main transport roads, etc.), and the enemy cannot be paralysed;

"2. The insurrection will take on a local and limited character and will not spread to a whole region, to

1, 2. *Party Documents*. op. cit., pp. 384, 385.

the whole country; the enemy will be able to concentrate his forces in some places to repress the insurgents;

"3. The revolutionary guerrilla units will lack combatants who know the technique of sabotage, of manufacturing and repairing weapons..."¹

The Conference decided, on the one hand, to broaden *the National United Front against the Japanese and French Fascists* (Viet Minh Front) on the basis of "constant consolidation and development of workers' and peasants' organizations which constitute its backbone..."² on the other, to launch a *campaign for the setting up of an Anti-Japanese Democratic Front in Indochina*, to enter into conditional alliance with the Gaullists and win over anti-Japanese Chinese residents, with a view to gaining more allies, taking full advantage of the contradictions in the enemy's ranks and directing the spearhead of the revolution at the Japanese and French fascists and their agents.

Bringing to the fore the spirit of the Eighth Plenum of the Party Central Committee (May 1941) which considered "preparations for insurrection the central task of our Party and people at the present stage," the conference worked out an all-round plan for moral and material preparations for the future armed insurrection. The resolution underlined the necessity of stepping up the founding of revolutionary bases in the rural areas and the highlands,

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 394, 395, 389.

setting up and developing the armed forces, giving an impulse to agitation work among various social strata and among enemy troops; at the same time, it prescribed that attention should be paid to work in the cities, and to close coordination of the movements in rural and urban areas, during the preparation for the insurrection and at the time when the insurrection broke out.

In a full chapter, instructions were given on the specific methods to be used with a view to *consolidating the Party* in all fields, and making it possible for the Party to fulfil its glorious mission of leading our revolution to victory.

In February 1943, while the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee met near Hanoi, the leading cadres of the Cao Bang and Bac Son-Vo Nhai bases held a conference in Lung Hoang (Hoa An district, Cao Bang province) to exchange their experiences in building up the movement and its bases, combating terror, developing guerilla forces, and to discuss methods of establishing liaison between the two bases, opening a way to the delta so as to combine the local movement with the general revolutionary movement in the whole country, and ensure communication with the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee.

After this Conference, the detachment of the National Liberation Army which had crossed the border returned to the Bac Son-Vo Nhai base from where the revolutionary movement had spread to Tuyen Quang and Vinh Yen. To facilitate the leadership and development of the movement, the Bac

Son-Vo Nhai base (from now on called the Hoang Hoa Tham revolutionary base) was divided into two sub-sectors: sub-sector A and B separated by the Cau river.¹ The National Liberation Army split up into armed propaganda groups to set up political bases and open the way for "marching north."

The Cao Bang base developed and extended to the provinces of Ha Giang, Bac Can and Lang Son. Carrying out the directives of the Lung Hoang Conference, a detachment comprising 19 groups was set up for "marching south." Hundreds of cadres and young people volunteered into shock units to "march south."

In August 1943, the "march south" detachment commanded by Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap, which was carrying out propaganda work and setting up revolutionary bases, from Cao Bang to Thai Nguyen, effected junction in Nghia Ta village (Cho Don district, Bac Can province)² with the "march north" detachment led by Comrade Chu Van Tan moving from Bac Son to Cao Bang. A *political corridor* was created, which joined the two great revolutionary bases in the North of our country: those of Cao Bang and of Bac Son-Vo Nhai, creating conditions for the birth of the future *liberated zone*.

Everywhere in the Cao Bang base area, organizations for national salvation were founded and developed. The Viet Minh regime, born of democratic

1. Sub-sector A was called *Quang Trung* and Sub-sector B *Nguyen Hue*.

2. To mark this junction, our comrades gave Nghia Ta the name *Thang Loi* (Victory).

elections, was set up from the base to the provincial and inter-provincial levels. The Viet Minh Front defined a policy of nationalities which was strictly carried out. It organized conferences for consolidating national unity. Military and para-military forces were built up rapidly on broad political bases among the people. Underground armed groups and permanent armed units were founded in almost all the villages and districts. A number of comrades who had got military training in China opened courses to train cadres for self-defence units. Frightened by the revolutionary movement in Cao Bang, the French fascists carried out terror raids in late 1943: arrests, massacres, regrouping of villages, concentration of the population, requisition of paddy, etc. The local Party committees sent their cadres to different places to do propaganda and explanation work among the masses, in order to bolster their morale. At the same time, they created permanent guerilla groups for punishing traitors, intercepting small enemy patrols. By strictly carrying out the line and methods prescribed for the struggle against terror, the local Party committees succeeded in maintaining the revolutionary bases and intensifying the mass movement.

In the plains, the watchwords of struggle: "Oppose forced cultivation of jute and castor-oil plants in place of rice and maize", "Oppose land appropriation", "Oppose compulsory sale of rice", "Oppose pressganging and corvées" set forth by the Party were warmly welcomed by the people who actively fought for their application.

Against the Japanese and their agents, the peasants in many places resorted to various forms of struggle, ranging from arguing to violence, to protect their property. On June 14, 1943, when a Japanese, after beating up many peasants in the fields, entered Dong Son village (Tien Du district, Bac Ninh province), manhandled the villagers, set their houses on fire and forced them into rooting up rice-plants to grow jute instead, the alert was given and the villagers soon gathered round the Japanese, tied him up and rained blows on him. He died in hospital. Three days later, Japanese officers and troops accompanied by the French Resident came to Dong Son and spoke to the villagers in a conciliatory way: "From now on, if our soldiers commit excesses, just tie them up and take them to the responsible mandarin, don't beat them to death..."¹ Similar incidents occurred in other places.

Parallel to a powerful development of the movement in the plains and in the Viet Bac base area, the workers' movement was growing ever stronger in the years 1943-1944.

From March to June 1943, workers and employees of many factories in Hanoi, Viet Tri, Dap Cau, Dong Anh, Bac Giang... and of the Bank of Indochina launched a movement of struggle for wage increase, and the right to purchase rice, fabrics, matches and soap.

In May 1943, the crews of the river boats of the Hanoi-Nam Dinh line staged a strike.

1. Quoted from the review *Cuu Quoc* (National Salvation) of August 28, 1943.

In December 1943, workers of printing houses I.D.E.O., Le Van Tan, Tin Moi, Action and Minh Sang, of the S.T.A.I. garage and the Nam Dinh Textile Mill staged a strike for wage increase. Almost all these strikes were successful.

According to the paper *Co Giai Phong* (Liberation Banner), central organ of the Indochinese Communist Party, from 1943 to 1944, in Hanoi there were 18 strikes, one by all the sawyers of Hanoi who left work for eight days to demand a wage increase of 75 per cent. In other localities, such as Bac Ninh, Haiphong, Uong Bi, Kien An, Nam Dinh, Viet Tri, etc, workers also handed petitions or staged strikes for wage increase.

In *Nam Bo*, from May 1942 to June 1943, there were 24 workers' struggles.¹

In March 1944, workers of the rice depot and of the husking factory in Rach Gia struck to demand wage increase.

On May 15, 1944 all the tailors working for the Japanese in Chaigneau Street (Saigon) stopped work to demand that damages be paid to the families of those victims of bombing raids. The same year, 500 building workers employed for the construction of Japanese garrisons in Chi Hoa and Saigon and all the shoemakers of the Japanese-owned Dai Nam manufacture in Saigon staged a strike for wage increase.

In 1944, there were many struggles by dockers working in warehouses Nos 5 and 6 in Khanh Hoa to

1. *Annual Statistics of Indochina, 1939-1946.*

demand wage increase and to protest against Japanese ill-treatment. Some led to clashes between the dockers and Japanese troops.

In late 1944, appeared in Saigon-Cho Lon region nearly 50 trade-union organizations in enterprises, and the first organizations of workers in some quarters, such as Ban Co, Xom Chieu, Tan Dinh, Dat Ho, Phu Nhuan, Go Vap, Xom Cui, Binh Tay, etc.

The growing movement of the youth and school students in the cities caused the Japanese and French fascists great anxiety.

The French tried to win over the youth with the aim of preventing them from joining the Viet Minh or the Japanese, and of making them their own political and military reserve. To this end, they set up many organizations, such as the Association of Catholic Youth, the Association of Catholic Youth and College Students, the Association of Young Catholic Functionaries, the General Association of Indochinese Students, etc.

Under the direction of Ducory, a sports and physical education movement for the youth with the watchword "Be physically strong to serve" was launched in the cities and many rural areas. They opened many coaches' training schools the most important of which was in Phan Thiet, and organized rallies of Indochinese scouts. Bicycle and swimming races, boxing-matches and torch parades, etc. were regularly organized.

Feigning interest in the Vietnamese "nation," they ordered the celebration of the anniversaries of our

national heroes such as the Trung Sisters, Tran Hung Dao, Le Loi, Nguyen Hue, etc. with a view to camouflaging the treason of their lackeys.

Besides those political deceptions, the French tried to poison and debauch the youth by encouraging depraved living. In Hanoi, Saigon and other provinces, brothels, opium dens, dancing halls, gambling houses, etc., mushroomed. Books on fortune-telling, physiognomy-reading, "occult sciences", knight-errants, romantic and detective novels, and books about Confucianism, Buddhism and Catholicism, were on sale everywhere. Worse still, in providing the Trotskyites with money and other facilities, the French helped them set up the *Han Thuyen* Publishing House whose books distorted Marxism with a view to decrying the Vietnamese people's genuine national spirit.

Those pen hirelings, agents of fascism, resorted to mechanical materialism to justify the "civilizing mission" of the French colonialists, misrepresent the patriotism of the Viet Minh and smear the history of our people's national liberation struggle.

Besides the French fascists' cultural and ideological activities, the Japanese fascists conducted an intensive propaganda for the mikado's doctrine of "Greater Asia", "community of culture and race", "creation of a co-prosperity zone". They pretended to be interested in the destiny of the Vietnamese nation and to help Viet Nam resist the French and wrest back "independence." They feigned hatred for the Whites, with a view to gaining the sympathy of

the Vietnamese. They propagated fascism under various forms: opening of schools for teaching Japanese, exhibitions, projection of Japanese films, exchanges of Buddhist, cultural, educational, health and sports delegations between Japan and Viet Nam. All that was aimed at engendering a psychosis of fear, admiration and confidence in the Japanese and propagating their doctrines.

Besides the reactionary culture of the occupants, on the cultural and ideological front, appeared romantic trends with bourgeois reformist or pessimistic tendencies, turning away from the present life and toward a remote past. There were a few literary, poetic, musical or theatrical works by authors belonging to the petty bourgeoisie or national bourgeoisie, which exalted love of the Fatherland and of the people, but failed to put forward an orientation of struggle.

Opposing that reactionary culture and those aberrant ideological tendencies was the revolutionary cultural and ideological front led by our Party. Illegal books and papers published in ever greater numbers by the Party and the Viet Minh Front from central to local level played an important role in propaganda, mobilization, educational and organizational work among the masses for the struggle against the fascists and their agents, and for the application of the line and policies of the Party and the Viet Minh Front.

In 1943, the Party presented its *Theses on Vietnamese Culture*, clearly defining its viewpoints:

"a) The cultural front is one of the three fronts (economic, political and cultural) on which communists must fight;

"b) Political revolution must be accompanied by cultural revolution;

"c) Only by leading the cultural movement, can the Party exercise influence upon public opinion and make its propaganda work more effective."¹

After pointing out the danger which menaced Vietnamese culture under the Japanese and French rule, the *Theses* analysed the relation between political and cultural revolution, underlining the Indochinese Communist Party's leading role in the cultural revolution. The objective of our Party was to bring about a socialist culture in Viet Nam. But to achieve this aim, it was necessary to build a new democratic culture first.

The *Theses* prescribed for Vietnamese patriotic cultural workers the following tasks:

— To combat the fascist, feudal, backward, enslaving, obscurantist and demagogic culture; and.

— To build a new Indochinese democratic culture, with a national, scientific and popular character.

The Theses on Vietnamese Culture not only armed the whole Party, in the first place cultural cadres, with a program of new democratic cultural revolution (people's democratic) to fight against the Japanese and French fascists on the cultural and ideological front, but also defined a judicious orien-

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 412.

tation for the building of a revolutionary culture in our country. At the same time, it rallied patriotic writers, artists and intellectuals and showed them the way of struggle for national liberation, cultural liberation and for their own emancipation.

After issuing the *Theses on Vietnamese Culture*, our Party promoted the founding of the *Viet Nam Cultural Association for National Salvation* to rally the intelligentsia and cultural workers to the Viet Minh Front. This association has made its contribution to the victory of the August Revolution and the defence of revolutionary power.

The launching of armed struggle in many localities, the prestige of the maquis, the revolutionary movement in the countryside, the movements of workers and petty bourgeois school students in the cities, and the successive victories won by the USSR and the Allies exerted a favourable influence upon the national bourgeois intellectuals. Besides, the daily acts of the Japanese and French fascists who stamped down our national sentiment resulted in the splitting up of the intelligentsia: a patriotic faction followed the Viet Minh, a second faction became pro-French and another, pro-Japanese. The number of pro-French elements was increasingly reduced. The pro-Japanese were more and more disappointed on account of the Japanese setbacks. Meanwhile, our Party, holding aloft the national and democratic banner, succeeded in winning them over by a judicious policy, considering them allies who could participate in the people's democratic power after the

victory of the revolution. The Viet Minh influence gradually awakened their political consciousness and rallied them to the Front.

In June 1944, under our Party's influence, a number of intellectuals and students founded the *Viet Nam Democratic Party*, an authentic revolutionary party of the national bourgeoisie and of the intellectual, patriotic and progressive petty bourgeoisie. The birth of the *Viet Nam Democratic Party* and its adhesion to the Viet Minh Front frustrated the Japanese fascists' perfidious scheme of drawing the Vietnamese national bourgeoisie and intelligentsia to their side. For the first time in the history of the Vietnamese people's anti-imperialist struggle, there appeared a genuine party of the national bourgeoisie and patriotic petty bourgeoisie militating in the National United Front under the leadership of the working class. This was a creative application of the Marxist-Leninist principle of seeking allies in the concrete conditions of our country, a success of our Party in its Front work.

At the same time, our Party intensified agitation work among enemy troops (Vietnamese, French, Foreign Legionaries, and troops from other French colonies), mainly among Vietnamese troops. The *Vietnamese Militarymen's Association for National Salvation* was founded to rally patriotic Vietnamese soldiers. From the central, regional to provincial level, our Party set up organs for agitation work among enemy troops, and cadres were assigned for this task. In 1943, in Hanoi alone, our Party organized groups of military men for national sal-

vation in several important units of the French Army: the Indochinese First Tirailleur (infantry) Regiment (1er RTI), the colonial Fourth Artillery Regiment (4e RAC), the French H.Q., the Drafting Service, Bach Mai airfield, etc.

Carrying out the directives of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee concerning agitation work among enemy troops, and the founding of the *Anti-Japanese Democratic Front in Indochina*, early in 1944, our Party established liaison with a number of German communists and Austrian socialists in the Foreign Legion, and French functionaries of the colonial administration. A "socialist-communist" group came into existence in Bac Bo with clearly anti-fascist objectives. Through the intermediary of this group, the Party Central Committee and the Viet Minh National Committee came into contact with the French left-wing socialists and Gaullists in Indochina. In November 1944, the Viet Minh National Committee organized in Hanoi a meeting attended by representatives of the above groups which included communists in the Foreign Legion. At this meeting, the representatives of the Viet Minh National Committee analysed the situation, pointing out that the contradictions between the Japanese and the French would lead to bitter conflict, and proposed united actions between the parties concerned against the Japanese and French fascists. To achieve this unity, the Gaullists should use their position in the ruling apparatus in Indochina in order to:

1. Work for the cessation or reduction of the "requisition of paddy";

2. Work for the liberation of political prisoners in Indochina; and

3. Seek ways to hand over weapons to the Viet Minh for combating the Japanese.

Conditional alliance with the Gaullists advocated by our Party in order to set up an Indochinese democratic front could not be achieved, as those Frenchmen were obdurate colonialists in dread of the Japanese. It was only after the Japanese coup de force of March 9, 1945 that the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam, through its negotiation with a French unit withdrawing from Bac Can township (occupied by the Japanese) to Cho Don, could found an organization with the character of an anti-Japanese front, called the *Franco-Vietnamese Committee against the Japanese*. This Committee did not last long, because the French troops, not daring to confront the Japanese, withdrew to South China after handing part of their weapons to us.

Our Party paid great attention to gaining the aid of anti-Japanese forces in China, and rallying patriotic Vietnamese residents to the national liberation movement.

On August 13, 1942, Comrade Ho Chi Minh went to China as a representative of the "League for the Independence of Viet Nam" and the "Vietnamese Section of the International Organization against Aggression" to seek international aid. Hardly had he arrived in Tukvin, a market-town of Tsinsi district (Kwangsi province, China) when he was arrested by the local Chiang Kai-shek administration. Confined

in nearly thirty prisons during fourteen months, he endured a dreadful penitentiary regime. It was during that time that he composed more than one hundred poems which constituted his *Prison Diary*. This is a literary masterpiece, a precious historical document forcefully denouncing the barbarous and rotten penitentiary regime of Chiang Kai-shek. Reflecting the revolutionary optimism, the iron will, the heroic character, the indomitability and serenity of a communist, it is of profound educative value for the present and future generations in revolutionary virtues and morality.

On September 10, 1943, no sooner had he been set free from Liuchow prison than Comrade Ho Chi Minh got in touch with the *Hoi Giai Phong Viet Nam* (Association for the Liberation of Viet Nam), a section of the Viet Minh in Yunnan. At the same time, he established co-operation with the *Viet Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh Hoi* (Viet Nam Revolutionary League), an organization of Vietnamese residents in China, in order to achieve broad union with Vietnamese patriots and isolate the pseudo-revolutionaries. Thanks to his efforts, a conference of representatives of anti-French and anti-Japanese parties and organizations of Vietnamese residents in China was convened. Attended by delegates of the *Viet Minh*, *Phuc Quoc* (Restoration of the Country), *Dai Viet* (Great Viet Nam), *Hoi Giai Phong Viet Nam* (Association for the Liberation of Viet Nam), *Viet Nam Giai Phong Dong Minh Hoi* (League for the Liberation of Viet Nam), *Quoc Te Phan Xam Luoc Phan Hoi* (Section of International Organization

against Aggression), the Conference adopted a manifesto calling on the people at home and abroad to stand up and struggle against the aggressors, save the country and reconquer national independence. It elected an executive committee which, in fact, could not do much on account of sabotage by Chiang Kai-shek's agents (Nguyen Hai Than, Vu Hong Khanh, Nguyen Tuong Tam, etc.).

Our Party also worked for the creation of the *Mat Tran Trung-Viet Lien Minh* (Front of Sino-Vietnamese Alliance). Knowing that the Chiang Kai-shek clique were trying to use that organization to serve their aggressive schemes against Viet Nam, our Party availed itself of this opportunity to increase our revolutionary strength and, in the name of the Front, it sent many cadres home to work.

In the *building of the Party*, particular attention was paid to consolidating the Party ideologically and organizationally.

In the *ideological field*, our Party combated factionalist and secessionist tendencies in some localities, which weakened Party leadership. At the same time, it made a timely criticism of rightist and "leftist" deviations in the preparations for insurrection and the application of the Front policy, etc., thus strengthening unity of mind and action within the Party.

In the *organizational field*, in view of the illegality of our activities under a fascist regime, the Central Committee continuously enjoined the Party committees at all levels to be cautious in recruiting Party members, to prefer quality to quantity, and in particular, to be vigilant with regard to the infiltration

of A.B. agents into the Party for sabotaging activities. In 1941, thanks to its vigilance, the Party quickly uncovered the plot of an individual named Cong who had induced some discontented comrades in the Bac Bo Party Committee to oppose the Central Committee and form a faction within the Party. In Trung Bo, it discovered a group of A.B. agents led by Dinh Van Di, who had infiltrated into the Party since a long time and caused serious damage to it.

The Central Committee paid great attention to *training cadres* who were entrusted with propagating and explaining the Party's line and policies to the masses and making them carry into effect those line and policies. The task of preparing for insurrection to seize power required intensive training and selection of cadres, and their assignment to adequate tasks. Short-term courses were regularly opened to train and educate political and military cadres, cadres for agitation work among enemy troops and cadres of minority nationalities, to serve the growing revolutionary movement. Despite these efforts, the number of cadres was insufficient to meet the needs of the revolution. In view of this situation, as early as 1943, our Party decided to liberate by all means a number of cadres detained in Son La, Cho Chu, Ba Van, Nghia Lo, Ban Me Thuot etc. They were comrades tempered in revolutionary action, animated by an indomitable revolutionary spirit and tenacious in the struggle against the imperialists and their lackeys. In imperialist prisons, the communists loyal to the revolution had set up Party cells, led the internees in the struggle

for the most elementary rights, and turned the prisons into "revolutionary schools." After their escape, most comrades became principal leaders in popular uprisings for the seizure of regional power.

After the execution of Comrade Hoang Van Thu¹ by the French, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee decided to admit into the Party a "Hoang Van Thu batch" of new members, in order to strengthen its ranks with good elements, chiefly of worker and peasant stock, selected from organizations for national salvation.

In the years 1943-1944, parallel to the powerful revolutionary movement in Bac Bo, the movements in many provinces of Trung Bo (chiefly in Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai) recovered quickly and began to develop.

In face of the growing revolutionary movement in the whole country, on May 7, 1944, in accordance with the Party Central Committee's line, the Viet Minh National Committee issued instructions for the *preparation of an insurrection*, and the building of forces for an insurrection to seize power.

On August 10, 1944, the Party Central Committee made an appeal calling on the people *to get weapons and drive out the common enemy*. All efforts were directed toward making moral and material preparations for the armed uprising. The Party's political line was warmly welcomed. The Viet Minh National Committee issued *bonds* to finance the preparations. Many localities developed and consolidated their

1. Arrested at Tam Mai (Hanoi) in August 1943 and shot by the French at Bach Mai (Hanoi) on May 24, 1944.

associations for national salvation, reinforced the existing self-defence units and set up new ones, purchased more weapons and stepped up their military training and political education. The revolutionary masses raised fund for the purchase of weapons.

The revolutionary atmosphere was seething in many provinces. In many provincial capitals and market-towns, by their activities, the armed propaganda brigades brought great prestige to the Viet Minh, and helped step up associations for national salvation. The bold and clever actions of the Hanoi Young Shock Propagandists' Brigade echoed in the neighbouring provinces. Especially, in the revolutionary base areas, the masses were ready to rise up. But it was still the stage of accumulation of forces for the insurrection.

In October 1944, under Japanese pressure, the French fascists launched a large-scale mopping-up operation, the third so far, against the Vo Nhai region in the Hoang Hoa Tham maquis. Inspired with deep hatred of the enemy and enhancing a long tradition of armed struggle, the National Salvation Army and the revolutionary masses were ready to fight the enemy. In the prevailing circumstances, instead of closely combining political with armed struggle, giving political struggle the main role in resisting enemy repression and protecting the people, the leading committee of the maquis evacuated the masses to the forest, engaged in armed struggle, punished traitors, laid ambushes, cut enemy communication lines, etc. This struggle against terror took on an insurrectional character.

The Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee, on the one hand, commended the revolutionary spirit of the masses and, on the other, criticized the leading committee of the maquis for hasty action, not taking into account the general situation, and prematurely revealing our forces. Soon after, cadres were sent to help them correct their parochialism and impatience. On the whole, the revolutionary bases and the forces of the revolution could be preserved in waiting for a better opportunity.

In the Cao Bang revolutionary base, as early as 1944, the Cao-Bac-Lang inter-provincial Party committee held that conditions were ripe for launching an armed struggle. Preparations for insurrection were urgently stepped up. The inter-provincial Party committee was about to hold a last meeting to decide on the date and time for the uprising. Right at that moment, Comrade Ho Chi Minh returned from China and in time ordered the uprising to be put off. He held that the Committee's decision was based only on the situation in Cao-Bac-Lang provinces, not on the situation in the whole country, or in other words, that the Committee had seen only a part, not the whole of the situation. He said, "The period of peaceful development of the revolution is over, but the time for nation-wide uprising has not come yet. Therefore, if we limit our actions to the political sphere, they will not be enough to push the movement forward. But if we start armed uprising immediately, the enemy will concentrate their forces to suppress it. It is time to move from political to armed struggle, but at present, the former is still more

important than the latter. So an appropriate form should be found to drive the movement forward. Our struggle will meet with many difficulties: if every time the enemy comes, the population have to take to the forest. We must find a way to ensure that while taking up armed action, the people can remain on their land to carry on production work. To do so, the system of watch and alert must be strengthened to prevent the enemy from capturing and killing our combatants..."¹

With this clear-sighted decision, Comrade Ho Chi Minh had saved Cao-Bac-Lang from great losses. He also gave instructions for the setting up of the *Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam*: "The armed forces must rely on the people. If they rely firmly on the people, the enemy can never annihilate them. The organization of the Brigade must have the Party cell as a leading core."² "Our war of resistance being that of the entire people, the entire people must be mobilized and armed; thus while concentrating efforts to set up the first unit of our army, the local armed forces must be maintained, their task being to conduct concerted action and assist the army in every field. Conversely, the main-force unit has the duty to assist local military cadres, give them training, and weapons if possible, to ensure continuous growth of the local units."³ Comrade Ho Chi Minh's instructions on the founding of the *Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation*

1, 2. Vo Nguyen Giap : *Tu Nhan Dan Ma Ra*, op. cit., pp. 133, 134.
3. *Party Documents*. op. cit., pp. 459, 460.

of Viet Nam thus summed up our Party's line of armed struggle and of building the armed forces. On December 22, 1944, the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam comprising 34 members and led by Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap came into being in Nguyen Binh district, Cao Bang province. The task assigned to it was of a transitional character. This means that *the political action is more important than the military one, propaganda more important than fighting*. The Brigade should resort to armed propaganda to call on the whole people to rise up and prepare the political and military base of the coming uprising."¹

Soon after its birth, the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam wiped out the two enemy posts of Phai Khat (December 24, 1944) and Na Ngan (December 25, 1944), killing the two commanding officers, capturing all the enemy troops and their weapons. These brilliant victories had a great repercussion, stimulated the masses and introduced a new period of development of the Vietnamese people's armed struggle. After only a week, the "brigade" developed into a company with three platoons.

After returning home, Comrade Ho Chi Minh sent the people and the Party members a letter announcing his return after more than a year abroad "to seek foreign assistance."² Making an analysis of the world situation and laying emphasis on the imminent

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 461, 446.

victory of the Allied forces and the annihilation of the aggressive fascist camp, he wrote: "The opportunity for our people to liberate themselves will come within one year or one and a half year."¹ He called on all the political parties and organizations to make active preparations for a *National Congress* in the current year. He had correctly assessed the situation. His assessment proved to be quite correct.

The situation was pressing.

In late 1944 and early 1945, there appeared signs of a great change. World War II was drawing to a close. The heroic Soviet Army was advancing impetuously toward Berlin, the last lair of German fascism². After many delays, Britain and the United States had at last opened a second front. On June 6, 1944, British and American troops landed in France and marched on Nazi Germany. In August 1944, Paris was liberated and De Gaulle came to power.

On the Pacific front, the Japanese fascists suffered repeated defeats. In Burma, they were beaten back by British troops. American troops landed in the Philippines. The Japanese sea-communication line was controlled by the Allies. The Japanese feared a possible landing of Allied troops in Indochina and Okinawa.

1. *Party Documents*; op. cit., p. 447.

2. The Soviet Army broke the siege of Leningrad (January 1944), liberated a vast region extending to the Czechoslovak and Rumanian borders (April 1944) and Crimea (May 1944); defeated the Hitlerite troops in the Isthmus of Carelia (June 1944); swept them out of the Soviet Union and pursued them into German territory (late 1944).

They made every effort to launch attacks against South China but were increasingly bogged down in their aggression against this immense country. The Chinese people's anti-Japanese resistance had moved to the stage of counter offensive.

In late 1944, at the invitation of Chiang Kai-shek's representatives in South China, a delegation of the Viet Minh National Committee went to China to discuss Chinese aid to the Vietnamese people's struggle against the Japanese and for national liberation. Early in 1945, by a decision of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee and the Viet Minh National Committee, a delegation led by Comrade Hoang Quoc Viet left for Kwangsi. In March 1945, it made contacts with representatives of the Chiang Kai-shek government, the Viet Nam Revolutionary League, and the Viet Nam Nationalist Party. Comrade Hoang Quoc Viet found that the Chiang Kai-shek clique only wanted Viet Minh help and support for its troops which were to enter Viet Nam to fight the Japanese, and he reported that to President Ho Chi Minh then in Kwangsi. President Ho Chi Minh instructed the delegation to return home quickly as the situation was changing rapidly.

In Indochina, the contradiction between the Japanese and the French became increasingly acute. On the night of July 6, 1944, an envoy of De Gaulle was dropped on Lang Son. He went to Hanoi to transmit to Mordant De Gaulle's order to French troops in Indochina to fight the Japanese with a view to maintaining French domination after the victory of the Allies. To organize the anti-Japanese

resistance, Mordant, under pretext of old age, resigned his post as Commander-in-Chief of French troops in Indochina. In late 1944, he drew up a plan according to which the French forces would, in case of Japanese attack, withdraw to the mountainous areas of Viet Bac and Laos while guerilla war would be waged in the delta. To supply De Gaulle's troops, Allied airplanes dropped men, armaments and war material on a number of places in Viet Bac, Laos, Trung Bo, Nam Bo, etc.

The Gaullists speeded up the preparations. Having no sufficient forces to attack the Japanese, they chose to wait until the landing of Allied troops to restore their domination over Indochina.

Though aware of the French plan, the Japanese did not try to stage a coup de force to topple the French, for fear that the Indochinese people should avail themselves of this opportunity to annihilate both French and Japanese. That was why they did their best to prolong their accommodation with the French. But the situation did not permit them to remain in that "conciliatory" attitude. The Party Central Committee assessed correctly that "this accommodation is comparable to an abscess which will sooner or later burst. The Japanese and the French are preparing to settle accounts with each other."¹

The relations between the Japanese and the French were becoming increasingly tense. On March

1. The newspaper *Co Giai Phong* (Liberation Banner), No. 7 of September 27, 1944.

8, 1945, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee was informed that Governor-General Decoux had been summoned to Saigon by the Japanese authorities for an urgent affair. There appeared signs of preparations for an attack by Japanese troops. Finding that the Japanese were about to overthrow the French, Comrade Truong Chinh convened on March 9, 1945, an enlarged conference of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee.

PART TWO
THE ANTI-JAPANESE MOVEMENT AND
THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

I. THE ANTI-JAPANESE MOVEMENT

Just as our Party had anticipated, acute contradictions between the Japanese and the French in Indochina and their ever more critical situation in the Pacific forced the Japanese fascists to stage a coup d'etat to overthrow the French and occupy Indochina.

In the night of March 9, 1945, the Japanese simultaneously attacked the French in the whole of Indochina. The latter resisted weakly in Hanoi, Lang Son, Hue, Ha Giang, etc. French civilians were arrested while the colonial troops quickly surrendered, disintegrated or fled to Southern China. The French colonialists who had been so arrogant and cruel toward the Vietnamese people, now acted cowardly and vilely before the Japanese aggressors. They co-operated with, even offered their wives and daughters to, Japanese officers.

While retreating, the remnant French troops plundered the Vietnamese people and forced the latter to work for them. Before withdrawing from

Cao Bang they threw hand-grenades into the prison, killing one hundred odd Vietnamese political prisoners.

The March 9, 1945 coup d'etat ended quickly with the collapse of the French colonialist administration, but the Japanese fascists could not yet establish a complete domination apparatus. Such a situation created favourable objective conditions for the preparation of the general insurrection of our people.

Right at the moment the Japanese fascists toppled the French in Hanoi, an enlarged conference of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee was convened at Dinh Bang village (Tu Son district, Bac Ninh province), 16 kilometers from Hanoi¹.

Held from March 9 to 12, 1945, under the chairmanship of the Party secretary-general Truong Chinh, the conference determined the following causes which led the Japanese to oust the French and solely occupy Indochina:

1. Two hungry dogs could not share one prey like Indochina, rich in raw materials, foodstuffs and manpower;

2. Since France was liberated, the Gaullists in Indochina had been actively preparing to fight against the Japanese. The latter feared that when the Allies attack Indochina, the French will turn against them and act as a fifth column for the allies . and

1. At the moment, it was impossible to convene all members of the Party Central Committee, because some who were engaging in revolutionary activities at Cao Bang or in China could not come back in time.

3. After the Philippines and the Mariana islands had been reoccupied by the Americans, the sea route linking Japan with her colonies and strategic bases in Southeast Asia was cut off, therefore the Japanese must, at all costs, occupy Indochina, which had become a bridge on their only remaining supply line in the South Pacific area.

The Conference anticipated the French defeat and a temporary Japanese success, because the French in Indochina had no heart to fight, were short of modern weapons, and did not co-ordinate action with anti-Japanese forces among the Indochinese peoples.

It assessed that the Japanese coup would create a deep political crisis which would hasten the maturing of conditions for an armed uprising. Three factors favouring this maturing were:

- “a) The political crisis (the enemy did not have a free hand to repress the revolution);

- “b) The terrible famine (and the masses, hatred of the aggressors); and

- “c) The war had reached a decisive stage (the Allies were to land in Indochina to attack the Japanese)”¹.

It was then the “pre-insurrectional period” and the Party’s task was to launch a large-scale struggle against the Japanese for national salvation, mobilize the entire people to step up preparations for the general insurrection to seize power in the whole country.

1. *Party Documents* op. cit., p. 475.

As regards the target to be attacked the Conference found that "after their coup, the Japanese fascist imperialists have become the principal and immediate enemy of the Indochinese peoples."¹ The French imperialists who have been overthrown by the Japanese and have lost their authority over Indochina were no longer the immediate enemy, but the Indochinese peoples must still remain on their guard against the Gaullists' intention to re-establish their domination in Indochina."²

The Conference replaced the slogan "Drive out the French and Japanese fascists" with the slogan "Drive out the Japanese fascists" and prescribed the setting up of the "people's revolutionary power."

It decided to change the forms of propaganda, agitation, organization and struggle to adapt them to the pre-insurrectional period, and in particular to call on the masses to turn out to seize the imperialists' paddy stocks and save the people from starvation, with a view to "launching a powerful movement of struggle against the Japanese fascists, for national salvation," as a premise to the general insurrection. That movement could assume various forms ranging from non-co-operation, factory and market strikes, acts of sabotage to armed demonstrations and guerilla warfare.³

The Conference estimated that *to launch guerilla warfare, liberate one region after another, enlarge bases, maintain and develop guerilla forces* should be the method of struggle of our people who were to

1, 2, 3. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 476, 477.

play an active role in driving the Japanese aggressors out of our country."¹ The situation was fast developing, therefore it was necessary to employ transitional forms of propaganda, organization and struggle and "stand ready to wage a general insurrection once necessary conditions have been secured." The Conference indicated that the Allies' landing in Indochina would create favourable conditions for our general insurrection, but stress was also laid on the necessity of relying essentially on our own forces. "*We must not, however, consider the Allies' landing in Indochina as a necessary condition for our general insurrection*, because that would mean to rely on others, and get our hands tied when the situation evolves in a way favourable to us. If the revolution of the Japanese people breaks out and revolutionary power is set up, or if they lose the war, like the French in 1940, and their expeditionary corps is demoralized, then even before an Allied landing we can launch our general insurrection and bring it to success."²

The correct assessment and important decisions of the enlarged Conference of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee were found in the March 9, 1945 historic instructions "*Our action when the French and the Japanese are shooting at one another.*" This directive embodied our Party line which was clear-sighted and determined, timely and adapted to the changing situation, cool, cautious and highly creative. It was a compass guiding every activity of the Party and the Viet Minh Front in the

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 462, 463.

great movement of struggle against the Japanese, for national salvation, and directly exerted a decisive influence on the success of the August general insurrection.

The Vietnamese revolution thus entered a new period, *the period of pre-insurrection, of revolutionary effervescence against the Japanese for national salvation.*

After overthrowing the French, the Japanese fascists deceitfully declared to grant "independence" to Viet Nam. In fact, it was only bogus independence.

On the *political plane*, they retained the old domination apparatus, maintained Bao Dai, rigged up the Tran Trong Kim puppet government. There were some politically inexperienced Vietnamese who imagined that the Japanese would abolish the division of Viet Nam into three "Kys." But no! Bac Bo remained a protectorate, Trung Bo had a king, while Nam Bo was placed "not only under the control but also under the administration of the Japanese army."¹

In order to get support for their regime, the Japanese fascists rigged up a series of reactionary organizations grouping the compradore bourgeoisie, reactionary land-owners, hooligans and bandits, etc.²

1. Declaration of Minoda, the Japanese Governor, in Nam Bo on March 30, 1945.

2. In Bac Bo and Trung Bo many new reactionary organizations were rigged up: *Dang Tan Viet Quoc Dan* (New Viet Nam Party), *Dang Dai Viet Quoc Xa* (Greater Viet Nam Party), *Dang Phung Su Quoc Gia* (National Service Party), etc. *The Dai Viet Quoc Gia Lien Minh* (Greater Viet Nam National Alliance) was a front grouping various reactionary organizations in Bac Bo...

They seized control of the information, propaganda and publication apparatus to induce the Vietnamese people to participate in their "Greater Asia" war, recruited Vietnamese into their troops, opened schools to turn out unemployed youths and hooligans into their agents. They stirred up anti-French feelings among the Vietnamese, directed the latter's hatred against the French with a view to making the Vietnamese people forget their immediate enemy, the Japanese fascists.

The Japanese fascists formerly had used the French to repress the Vietnamese revolution and the Viet Minh, with their own troops they now attacked our maquis and revolutionary bases, encircled villages, arrested, tortured people savagely, beheaded and disemboweled them to terrorize the population. They infiltrated their agents into revolutionary organizations to collect information, sent letters to the Viet Minh to induce or threaten it into "co-operating" with them. These letters often ended with these words: "Choose your way, you have only one alternative: either co-operate with us or be wiped out."¹

In the economic field, formerly the Japanese fascists had drained our people of their properties and foodstuffs through the French, they now directly

In Nam Bo, besides the old pro-Japanese factions and politico-religious sects like Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Tinh Do Cu Sy, many others appeared: *Viet Nam Quoc Gia Doc Lap Dang* (Viet Nam National Independence Party), *Phuc Viet* (Viet Nam Restoration), *Nhat Viet Phong Ve Doan* (Japan-Viet Nam Defence Group), etc.

1. Tran Dan Tien "Nhưng Mau Chuyen Ve Doi Hoat Dong Cua Ho Chu Tich" (Glimpses of the life of President Ho Chi Minh), Literary Publishers, Hanoi, 1969, p. 101.

robbed the people of their properties on all possible occasions. They seized the banks, the treasury, factories, mines and the French possessions, shamelessly stripped people who were searched by them of their clothes, money, bicycles, and other belongings. They created new taxes and forced the population to sell at a low price an increasing quantity of paddy. But the peasants' reserves, like themselves, were exhausted, and famine was spreading. The Japanese forced the Bank of Indochina to issue more banknotes with which they could grab more paddy from our people.

In short, the Japanese policy was *to use barbarous fascist methods and demagogic manoeuvres to carry out economic plunder, political division and military aggression.*¹

By a slanderous propaganda the Japanese and their reactionary organizations tried to isolate and attack the Viet Minh.

Soon after the Tran Trong Kim puppet government was rigged up, it put forth a deceitful political program, and promulgated a series of decrees to help the Japanese realize their perfidious schemes on the political and economic plan².

1. Truong Chinh: "*Chinh sach giac Nhat doi voi dan ta*" (The Japanese policy toward our people), *Tap chi Cong san* (Communist Review No. 3.

2. This program consists of three points:

"First, to realize the Vietnamese people's aspirations for national independence, re-establish the old state of things, then reinforce and perfect it.

"Second, to solve the rice problem which is more pressing than that of politics and culture...

Unmasking the puppet clique, the newspaper *Co Giai Phong* (Liberation Banner), central organ of the Indochinese Communist Party, wrote: "Whatever tricks the Japanese fascists may use, they cannot deceive our people. Can the Tran Trong Kim puppet government do anything worth mentioning? Certainly not. Puppets will always be puppets. Their guiding principle is to promise much, but to do little, or to do things contrary to what they have promised. Their task is to "wrap up the Japanese yoke in velvet," tail after the aggressors to oppress and exploit our people.

"Therefore, they keep silent when the Japanese requisition rice, nod approval at their tax increase, wink at their massacre of our people, help them pressgang our youths and induce our people to join their army or work as coolies for the Japanese.

"And here is their main job: gang up and collude with one another to sign contracts with the Japanese

"Third, to forge a national consciousness chiefly by improving education methods, enhancing youth morale, launching a movement, and taking measures for repressing illegitimate organizations (i.e. the Viet Minh and the Communists - Pub.), in order to consolidate nationalist ideology among the people." *Viet Nam Tan Bao* (Viet Nam New Paper) of May 22, 1945.

The May 30, 1945 decree specified: "From now on, newspapers, reviews, books, theatrical plays, speeches, public notices, etc., must be submitted to censorship; violation of these regulations will be severely punished."

The June 13, 1945 decree prescribed: "Those who intentionally damage, wholly or partly, bridges, culverts, canals, irrigation networks, railways, constructions, trains, roads, waterways, dykes, public services, storehouses, generators, machines, etc., and those who in groups of more than ten persons, plunder or damage cereal stores, food, drinks, commodities, rice, will be sentenced to death."

The May 17, 1945 decree said that all political prisoners except Communists would be amnestied.

army for construction projects; monopolize the selling of certain Japanese goods imported by the Mitsui, Dainan companies; ask for part of the economic interests left by the defeated French.”¹

The Japanese aggressors, however cruel and machiavellian, could not prevent the Vietnamese revolutionary tide from rising all over the country.

Right at the moment when the Japanese and the French were shooting at one another, Party Committees from top to bottom carried out the policy which had been worked out long since by the Party Central Committee. Particularly after the directive: “*Our action when the French and the Japanese are shooting at one another*” had been given, political struggle in co-ordination with armed struggle, and partial insurrections broke out continuously under varied forms.

In Cao Bang, the Cao-Bac-Lang inter-provincial Party Committee meeting on March 10, 1945 decided:

1. To immediately overthrow the French administration in rural areas, and taking into account the concrete conditions in each locality, to set up people's power at village, district or provincial level;

2. To send cadres of the Armed Propaganda Brigade who will co-operate with the local armed groups to set up new Liberation Army units, with a view to preparing for direct attacks against the Japanese; and

1. The newspaper *Co Giai Phong* (Liberation Banner), No. 13 of June 16, 1945.

3. Not to attack retreating French troops, but call on them to join us in a common resistance against the Japanese.

Bringing this decision into effect, the Armed Propaganda Brigade was divided into many small detachments and scattered to different regions to lead the popular insurrections. One of these detachments went to Bao Lac (Cao Bang province), then marched toward That Khe, Binh Gia (Lang Son province) to co-ordinate action with the National Salvation Army there. Another went up to the Sino-Vietnamese border, attacked Soc Giang post, liberated Ha Quang district and continued its march toward Bac Quang (Ha Giang province). The rest commanded by comrade Vo Nguyen Giap marched down to Ngan Son district and encircled the local post whose chief, a Frenchman, surrendered with all his men. After that, they liberated Cho Ra, Phu Thong district, Cho Don, Na Ri (Bac Can province), Chiem Hoa (Tuyen Quang province). The chief of Cho Ra post surrendered with his four platoons of Indochinese guards and all weapons. Wherever the Armed Propaganda Brigade went, it was warmly welcomed by the masses carrying yellow-starred red flags, and rudimentary weapons. The population joined forces with the troops to disarm puppet soldiers, confiscate certificates and seals of village and canton chiefs, punish traitors and set up people's revolutionary power. The Brigade also undertook to develop and consolidate Associations for national salvation, and to organize self-defence and guerilla units to safeguard the newly-established people's power.

In Bac Can, the French still had about five platoons commanded by a colonel. The Viet Minh got in touch with them to set up a *Franco-Vietnamese Committee to Fight the Japanese* with the following conditions :

1. The French must respect our national sovereignty ;
2. Their soldiers must not molest our people ; and
3. They can buy foodstuffs from our people.

But with their colonialist nature, their fear of both the Japanese and the Viet Minh, and their unwillingness to endure hardships, the French forces were soon demoralized. The Vietnamese tirailleurs demanded their demobilization, while the European troops fled to China, leaving behind hundreds of weapons. In Cao Bang, a number of French units which resisted the Viet Minh were completely disarmed, as in Tra Linh, Ma Phuc, etc.

In Cao Bang and Bac Can, revolutionary power was set up in all villages and districts.

In the Hoang Hoa Tham maquis, the National Salvation Army intensified its activities.

In *Sector B*, the leading committee, on learning that the Japanese had attacked the French, decided to mobilize the masses for an uprising to seize power. The first attack was launched upon Son Duong district on March 13, 1945. Soon afterwards the National Salvation Army attacked Cho Chu and joined forces with the masses in successful attacks at Cho Chu (March 25), Dai Tu (March 29), in Thai Nguyen province, at Yen Son (April 1), Yen Binh (May 18), in Tuyen Quang province. At Cho Chu, about 30

revolutionary cadres detained in prison were freed. It also disarmed a French unit which was retreating to China through Thai Nguyen and Tuyen Quang. In ambushes against Japanese troops at Deo Khe Pass, the National Salvation Army captured a great quantity of weapons and war material.

The revolutionary ardour of the masses in *Sector B* was mounting. National Salvation Associations and self-defence units were rapidly developed and consolidated. This sector also benefited by both a favourable terrain and facilities for establishing liaison with the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee stationed near Hanoi.

In *Sector A*, the National Salvation Army launched attacks and set up revolutionary power in many places in the provinces of Thai Nguyen and Lang Son: La Hien, or Vo Nhai district town (March 19), Trang Xa (March 23), Dinh Ca (April 10), Mo Gia (April 15), Vu Le (April 16), Nam Nhi (April 17), Bac Son (April 18), Binh Gia (April 29), Bang Mac (May 2). In co-ordination with the Armed Propaganda Brigade coming from Cao Bang, it liberated Trang Dinh, Diem He, Thoat Lang. By joint action with the Bac Giang self-defence unit, it launched attacks against Yen The, (April 1), Huu Lung (April 15), Ba Ha (April 18), Mo Sat (April 19), Luc Ngan (May 30) and Phu Yen (June 3). The district chiefs of Huu Lung and Luc Ngan surrendered to the Viet Minh. In many localities paddy stocks were seized and distributed to the population.

In one part of the *Reserve Security Zone* of the Party Central Committee in Bac Giang province,

national salvation committees were set up in almost all villages as early as March 1945. The first was set up at Xuan Bieu village only one day after the instruction "Our action when the French and the Japanese are shooting at one another" was issued. At Xuan Bieu and Trung Dinh villages, the revolutionary masses held a meeting, confiscated certificates and seals of village headmen, and set up national salvation committees. This meeting was turned into an armed demonstration of thousands of people marching to the Vat plantation owned by Tartarin, a French colonialist. Panic-stricken, the plantation guards had to hand eight rifles to the demonstrators who then confiscated hundreds of tons of rice. This was the first confiscation of paddy stocks by Bac Giang peasants.

In face of the rising revolutionary movement, the French chief of post at Tri Cu and 20 of his soldiers retreated to Hiep Hoa, but they fell into an ambush at Hoang Lai on March 16, 1945. The next day, young political prisoners at Tri Cu, followed by all the prisoners detained there, disarmed the soldiers, destroyed the prison and joined the Viet Minh. Together with national salvation youths they set up the first guerilla unit named the *Bac Giang Liberation Brigade*. Putting into effect the directive of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee in the summer of that year, the Bac Giang revolutionary power confiscated rice-fields belonging to French landowners and distributed them to the tenants and the families who had rendered services to the revolution.

In face of the revolutionary upsurge, the Yen The district chief fled from his post. The Hiep Hoa district chief got in touch with the Viet Minh, and acted as a Trojan horse for the latter to capture the district town (June 1). Thus, the whole of My Hoa district and part of Phu Binh and Pho Yen districts were liberated.

In *Bac Ninh*, one day after the Japanese coup (March 10), the Party cell of Trung Mau village (Tien Du district) met to assess the situation, and decided to launch popular uprising to confiscate the Japanese paddy stocks and distribute them to the peasants and to set up a strong self-defence unit. In the evening of the same day, the self-defence unit confiscated seals and certificates of village chiefs. The following day, a show of force was organized and the manifestants marched to Duong Huc, a nearby village. The people of the two villages held a meeting and declared the confiscation of enemy paddy stocks, abolition of the puppet administration and setting up of the village revolutionary power.

On March 10, the Bac Ninh provincial Party committee met in Tien Du district and decided to speed up propaganda work to push ahead the mass movement, disarm French remnant troops to equip its self-defence units, and to punish traitors.

From then on, the mass movement developed powerfully, many paddy stocks were seized and many struggles waged against Japanese raids. Within a short period of time, the number of Viet Minh members increased from some thousand to tens of thousands.

In *Hung Yen*, on the night of March 11, 1945 the local self-defence unit under the direct leadership of the Party Standing Committee of Bac Bo, attacked Ban Yen Nhan post, capturing all weapons before the Japanese arrived. The chief of that post fled.¹

In *Quang Ngai*, learning of the Japanese coup, a number of cadres and Party members detained in Ba To camp held a meeting on March 10, 1945 and decided to rise up and occupy the Ba To post. The following night, with the support of the masses and soldiers who sympathized with the revolution, they succeeded rapidly, with the capture of all enemy weapons. The Ba To guerilla detachment was officially founded on March 14, 1945, with 28 combatants and 24 rifles. This was the first armed unit organized and led by our Party in southern Trung Bo. It operated in a region of the Truong Son range inhabited by national minorities continuously pursued by the Japanese who tried to annihilate it. After the outbreak of the Ba To insurrection, the movement in Quang Ngai began to develop in the plains and, at the same time, the two maquis of Vinh Tuy (Son Tinh district) and Dau Rai (Mo Duc district) were rapidly set up.

Turning to account the Japanese-French conflict, many detained revolutionary cadres liberated themselves by escaping or destroying their prisons. In *Nghia Lo* (Yen Bai province) about one hundred political prisoners destroyed their jails, then scatter-

1. This post lay on Highway 5 (Hanoi-Haiphong road) 27 kilometers from Hanoi.

ed to different localities to engage in revolutionary activities. 15 among them were killed in action. Revolutionary cadres detained in *Son La* prison availed themselves of the disarray of the troops escorting them to Nghia Lo prison to escape and go to the delta for resuming their revolutionary work. By their resolute struggle, revolutionaries detained in Ban Me Thuot prison force the enemy to release them. A number of cadres, Party members and sympathizers succeeded in escaping from *Hanoi central prison*. After the Japanese coup, a great number of political prisoners went back to different regions and served as a leading core in 'the masses' struggle. They reinforced the ranks of cadres, and contributed to rapidly revive the revolutionary movement and intensify the struggle against the Japanese, for national salvation.

The armed and political struggle powerfully developed in the cities and in the countryside. In *Hanoi*, right in the night of March 10, 1945, the Municipal Party Committee mobilized its self-defence units and armed propaganda shock groups who, riding bicycles and motorcycles, distributed leaflets exposing the Japanese fascists as the principal enemy of our people and denouncing the farce of pseudo-independence of the pro-Japanese clique. The Armed Propaganda shock brigade went into information halls, movie houses, cross-roads, etc., calling on the population to support and join the Viet Minh in the struggle against the Japanese fascists. On April 20 and 29, 1945, Viet Minh cadres in a meeting at Me

Tri and Canh Market informed thousands of young people of the Japanese-French conflict and the Viet Minh policy.

On May 1, national salvation workers in many factories organized meetings, distributed leaflets, hoisted flags, speeded up propaganda work to prepare for the general insurrection. School students were eager for action after listening to the Viet Minh speeches. Teachers and school students of the Thang Long private school warmly welcomed Viet Minh militants.

While the Viet Minh movement was rapidly spreading throughout the country, a terrible famine which had broken out by the end of 1944 in Bac Bo and Trung Bo was raging. Inflation triggered an unprecedented increase in the cost of living. Rice price rose from 150 piasters a ton in October 1944, to 500 in December 1944, 800 in February 1945, and even higher afterwards.

The main cause of the famine was the application of the wartime economic policy of the French and the Japanese who tried to drain our people of their foodstuffs. They forced our peasants to sell paddy at dirt cheap price. Production cost of a ton of paddy was about 80 piasters, and market price 200 piasters, but our peasants got only 25 piasters. In spite of crop failures caused by drought and flood, our peasants were forced to sell the required quota of rice. Therefore, in many places our peasants had to buy paddy at the market to sell it at a loss to the Japan-

ese. The landlords were also forced to sell paddy, but they resorted to all means to shift the burden on to our peasants.

The famine played havoc from Bac Bo to the provinces of Quang Tri and Thua Thien in Trung Bo, but it was most disastrous in the Bac Bo delta and in northern Trung Bo. As a result of the criminal policy of the Japanese and the French fascists, in a short period of time (late 1944-early 1945) the famine took a toll of one-tenth of the Vietnamese population. This was the most terrible disaster ever known in our history. The famine weakened our people's physical strength, but it fanned up our hatred for the fascists, further strengthened our people's determination to fight and defeat the aggressors, to win back the right to live. If in the Russian October Revolution the watchword: "Peace, bread and land" had been an imperative claim of large masses and had rallied tens of millions of Russian workers and peasants for an uprising to overthrow the Kerensky bourgeois government, in the August Revolution of Viet Nam, the slogans "National Independence", "Seize paddy stocks to save the people from starvation" were the pressing demands of our masses, which rallied and stimulated the entire Vietnamese people to stand up and overthrow the domination of the Japanese fascists and their agents.

In the people's interests, the Party set forth the slogan "*Seize paddy stocks to save the people from*

starvation", regarding it as the central task for mobilizing the masses in the pre-insurrectional period.

Bringing a correct solution to the acute contradiction in social life and responding to the people's aspirations, our Party succeeded in launching an unprecedentedly powerful revolutionary movement.

The struggle of millions of people to seize paddy stocks took on various forms, ranging from lower to higher forms. In many places, the masses co-ordinated the seizure of paddy stocks with the destruction of the enemy power, using diverse forms of organization and struggle, thus proving that there is nothing more vivid and richer than revolutionary practice.

When launching insurrections in places where paddy stocks were found, the Liberation Army and the National Salvation Army never failed to seize and distribute them to the people.

In *Bac Giang*, immediately after the Japanese coup, many paddy stocks of the Japanese, the French and the Vietnamese reactionary landowners were seized, as at the Tartarin and Chesney plantations (Luc Lieu), at Cau May, Ben Bo, Khanh Giang, Song Hoa, Phong, Cam Ly and the Fontaine distillery, etc.

In *Bac Ninh*, only two days after the Japanese coup, the revolutionary masses confiscated Japanese paddy stocks in Duong Huc village (Tien Du district), then seized others at Cho Dau, Cho Keo (Thuan Thanh district), two at Bang Tien (Tien Du district), three at Que Duong from landowners, and many

other Japanese stocks at Bai Cat, Qua Cam (Vo Giang district), Dai Lam (Yen Phong district), etc.

In June 1945, the Viet Minh summoned a number of village chiefs to a meeting of thousands of people at the communal house of Huong Trien village. The Huong Trien village headman who had been won over to the revolutionary cause tore up his certificate, destroyed his seal and promised that he would neither requisition paddy nor collect taxes for the Japanese.

Early in July 1945, Japanese troops went to Phu Ninh (Tu Son district) to requisition paddy. But they were immediately encircled by 500 self-defence combatants equipped with rudimentary weapons and thousands of people. Panic-stricken, the Japanese fled after killing two people.

In *Vinh Yen* from March to May 1945, the movement to seize paddy stocks was greatly intensified, nearly 50 paddy stocks of the Japanese and reactionary landowners in Tam Duong, Binh Xuyen, Yen Lac, Lap Thach, Vinh Tuong districts were seized, and tens of thousands of tons of paddy were distributed to the people. The stock in Bat Soan hamlet with 6,000 tons of paddy was confiscated. Tens of thousands of peasants living in those districts were given a share of the paddy.

In Vinh Tuong, Yen Lac and Tam Duong, the Viet Minh put under house arrest hundreds of village and canton headmen, thus preventing the Japanese and puppet authorities from using them to requisition paddy and collect taxes.

One day, as Japanese troops were going to Can Lac (Yen Lac) to take 18 lorries of paddy, they were surrounded by peasants under the leadership of the Viet Minh. The Japanese opened fire. Three villagers were killed, but all the paddy was wrested back. On May 30, 1945, the people of Lap Thach attacked a group of ten guards headed by the district chief who, followed by hundreds of coolies, were coming to requisition paddy. Three guards were killed and the district chief fled. The seizure of paddy stocks in Vinh Yen had a great repercussion in other provinces. Peasants from Son Tay, Phuc Yen, Ha Dong came to take part in it.

In *Phuc Yen*, only a few days after the Japanese coup, the inhabitants of Anh Thang village confiscated 70 tons of paddy stocked at the village chief's house. In May 1945, in the Party Central Committee security zone, the masses under the leadership of the group in the service of the Central Committee confiscated the paddy stock in Dai Lo (Dong Anh district). A junk transporting rice for the Japanese was intercepted on the Red river.

In *Ninh Binh*, on March 15, 1945, 3,000 inhabitants in Nho Quan and Gia Vien districts staged a demonstration, then confiscated 12 paddy stocks to distribute them to poor peasants. The people in other districts also seized the paddy stocks of plantations whose owners were absent. The Japanese sent troops to repress them. And the attacks against paddy stocks soon turned into a struggle against enemy

terrorist acts and mopping-up raids! In this way, the building of the Quynh Luu revolutionary base was accelerated.

In *Thai Binh*, in May 1945, the peasants rose up and recaptured scores of junks of paddy. They seized paddy stocks in Dong Xam (Kien Xuong district), Dai Dien, Vong Lo, Trang Lu (Phu Duc district) and confiscated many junk-loads of paddy at Ben Hiep (Quynh Coi district), Ha Thanh (Hung Nhan district), etc.

In *Hai Duong*, the movement began with the seizure of two paddy stocks in the provincial capital in March 1945. During the insurrection and the organization of the 4th resistance base, the masses not only seized paddy stocks but also captured many junks and ships transporting rice for the Japanese.¹

In *Hung Yen*, from May 9 to June 8, 1945, the revolutionary masses seized many paddy stocks in Giai Pham (Yen My district), Ban Yen Nhan (My Hao district), Dong Vong (Kim Dong district), etc., and distributed them to about 40,000 people.

The struggle against taxation in Hung Yen was also intensified. From June 21 to August 5, 1945, hundreds of demonstrations, 30 meetings with the participation of 100,000 people from 350 villages were organized in response to the appeal of the Viet Minh not to pay taxes to the enemy.²

1. According to incomplete statistics, 39 paddy stocks and 43 junks with nearly 2,000 tons of paddy were seized by the population in the whole province.

2. The Newspaper *Cuu Quoc* (National Salvation). No. 28.

In *Son Tay*, on May 4, 1945, under pressure of the masses, the chiefs of seven villages of Bat Lam canton had to give back to the peasants the paddy they had requisitioned.

In *Thanh Hoa*, the masses intercepted Japanese paddy-laden lorries. They took advantage of the panic among the Japanese during the American air raids to seize paddy.

The seizure of paddy stocks to save the people from starvation also took place in the provinces of *Ha Dong, Ha Nam, Quang Yen, Nghe An, Ha Tinh*, etc. In *Hanoi*, on April 20, 1945, led by national salvation workers, the masses attacked three times the paddy stock in Bac Ninh street. Japanese troops armed with bayonets intervened, killing one person and wounding several others. Other stocks near the slaughter-house, at Pha Den, Moc Quan Nhan were also attacked.

The seizure of paddy stocks in many provinces relieved famine and sharply reduced rice price. Under pressure of the masses, landowners and rich peasants had to lend paddy to working peasants. The Viet Minh prestige mounted with every passing day.

The confiscation of paddy stocks by the masses had not only an immediate economic effect but also a great political significance: the masses could no longer endure the fascist aggressors' yoke or accept the authority of the Japanese and their henchmen; armed demonstrations to seize paddy stocks to save the people from starvation were the most appropriate form of mobilizing the masses, which drew millions

of people into the revolutionary struggle, beginning with partial insurrections and advancing toward a general insurrection.

Participating in this movement, the masses clearly realized that it was the fascist imperialists and the feudal landlords, their lackeys, who had driven them into starvation, that for their survival they had to unite and struggle to put an end to the famine through their own efforts. In order to seize paddy stocks they had to carry out a revolution, follow the Viet Minh, organize themselves, join national salvation organizations, set up self-defence units, equip themselves and resolutely fight the enemy, rise up to overthrow their domination and seize power.

Under the leadership of the local Party committees the movement to seize paddy stocks was a form rallying the people (from a few hundreds to tens of thousands), a way of training the masses in struggles from lower to higher level, from political struggle to combined political and armed struggle, with a view to gradually creating a powerful "political army of the masses," and at the same time organizing people's armed forces serving as a core for the entire people in the general insurrection.

The influence of this movement in Bac Bo and Trung Bo spread to the entire country. In Nam Bo, the people campaigned for collecting rice to support the North. By mid-June, over one million piasters and one thousand tons of rice were sent to the North to relieve famine.

The movement against famine also developed rapidly in towns and cities, involving all strata of

population, particularly the youths, school and college students. It stirred up the masses' patriotism, fanned up their hatred for the Japanese and made them realize the barbarous nature of the Japanese aggressors and the powerlessness of the puppet clique.

On April 16, 1945, the Viet Minh National Committee gave instructions for the founding of *National Liberation Committees* at all levels and of the *Viet Nam National Liberation Committee*, i.e. the *Provisional Revolutionary Government* of new Viet Nam. After March 9, 1945, two powers were formed in our country: the people's revolutionary power and the pro-Japanese puppet administration. Revolutionary power in a number of localities was born of the successful partial insurrections.

In order to actively accelerate preparations for the coming general insurrection, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee convened the *Bac Ky Revolutionary Military Conference* at Hiep Hoa (Bac Giang province) from April 15 to 20, 1945, under the chairmanship of Party Secretary-General Truong Chinh. This was the first important military conference of our Party.

After assessing the world situation and our people's struggle against the Japanese for national salvation, the Conference decided: "*The present situation has placed the military task above all other important and urgent tasks. We must actively develop guerilla warfare, set up anti-Japanese resistance bases in order to complete in time preparations for the gene-*

ral insurrection.¹ The Conference pointed out that in face of the Japanese offensive, "we are in the strategic phase of launching guerilla warfare to prepare for the general insurrection".²

It decided to develop military and para-military forces and unify all the existing armed forces — the Viet Nam National Salvation Army and the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam into a single organization, the *Viet Nam Liberation Army* (Its founding ceremony was celebrated at Dinh Bien Thuong, Cho Chu, Thai Nguyen province on May 15, 1945). Its Command was composed of comrades Vo Nguyen Giap, Tran Dang Ninh and Chu Van Tan.

In order to establish springboards for the general insurrection, the Conference decided to set up seven resistance bases in the whole country³ and *establish liaison among them*.⁴

It assigned the *Bac Ky Revolutionary Military Committee*⁵ to command the maquis in northern Indochina and give military assistance to the other maquis⁶.

It discussed measures for putting into effect the directive: "*Our action when the French and the*

1, 2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 494, 497.

3. The resistance bases of Le Loi, Hoang Hoa Tham, Quang Trung, Tran Hung Dao (in Bac Bo), Trung Trac, Phan Dinh Phung (in Trung Bo), Nguyen Tri Phuong (in Nam Bo).

4. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 495.

5. It was composed of Vo Nguyen Giap, Van Tien Dung, Le Thanh Nghi, Tran Dang Ninh and Chu Van Tan.

6. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 502.

Japanese are shooting at one another." Its resolution, which was approved by the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee, marked a new step in the development of the military thought of our Party. It concretized the directive of the Party Central Committee concerning the tasks and military work in order to speed up preparations for the armed uprising to seize power in the whole country.

Early in May 1945, Comrade Ho Chi Minh left Cao Bang for the Hoang Hoa Tham resistance base, and settled at Tan Trao to lead the movement and prepare for the National Congress which he intended to convene at the end of 1944. After listening to reports on the general situation in the country and on the Bac Ky Revolutionary Military Conference, he gave instructions for setting up a vast revolutionary base named *Liberated Zone* comprising the larger part of the provinces of Cao Bang, Bac Can, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen in the mountainous region of Bac Bo, and a part of the provinces of Bac Giang, Phu Tho, Yen Bai, Vinh Yen.

Carrying out that instruction, the Viet Minh National Committee convened a conference on June 4, 1945, and decided on the official creation of the Liberated Zone placed under a Provisional Committee which was to build up the zone in all aspects — political, military, economic and cultural.

In the Liberated Zone, *Revolutionary People's Committees* elected by the people carried out the following ten major policies:

1. To eliminate Japanese forces, liquidate traitors, punish hooligans.
2. To confiscate the properties of the aggressors and the traitors to make them common property or to distribute them to the poor.
3. To proclaim universal suffrage and other democratic freedoms.
4. To arm the masses, urge them to support the guerrillas and join the Liberation Army.
5. To organize land reclamation, encourage production and achieve a self-supporting economy.
6. To limit working hours, implement social insurance and organize relief work.
7. To redistribute communal land, reduce land rent and debt interests, and order a moratorium of debts.
8. To abolish taxes and corvées, study the creation of a single tax system constituted by a light progressive income tax.
9. To combat illiteracy, provide military training and general political education.
10. To ensure equality among various nationalities and between men and women.

Thus "a new Viet Nam came into being... A part of Bac Bo was effectively controlled by the revolutionary power."¹ Over a million people began enjoying a new life brought about by the revolution.

Facing the ever growing prestige of the revolution, the Japanese fascists ordered their troops to launch

1. Truong Chinh, *The August Revolution*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962.

attacks against places where revolutionary power had been established. But they were intercepted by the liberation troops operating in coordination with the national salvation self-defence units and the revolutionary masses in Phu Thong (Bac Can), Tinh Tuc (Cao Bang), Van Lang, Deo Khe (on the Thai Nguyen-Tuyen Quang road), etc.

On several occasions, the Japanese crossed the Lo river, penetrated deep into the Liberated Zone but were driven back. At the end of June, 500 Japanese troops marched on Tan Trao, Hong Thai, etc. But they fell in an ambush laid by the Liberation Army on the road to Chan Pass. Taken by surprise, many enemy troops were killed by our first salvos. Unable to counter-attack, they retreated in two columns, the first one with horses and carts toward Thai Nguyen by road No. 13, and the other composed of light-infantry troops toward Tuyen Quang. And that was the last Japanese attack against the liberated area.

In February 1945, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee met and decided to set up the *Quang Trung or Hoa-Ninh-Thanh Resistance Base* which was officially established in May. The regions of Quynh Luu (Ninh Binh), Ngoc Trao (Thanh Hoa) and Diem Tu Ly, Muong Khoi, Cao Phong, Thach Yen (Hoa Binh) were chosen as its center. This mountain region between North and Central Viet Nam, with numerous communication lines, was of great strategic importance. There the revolutionary bases created before March 9, 1945 had been developing vigorously.

Early in June 1945, the maquis had its first platoon of Liberation Army, which constituted the core in the building of its armed forces. On August 11, 1945, the Japanese sent a company to attack its center. The people immediately beat their drums, gongs and rattles. The guerilla and self-defence units destroyed all roads leading to the base to check the enemy's advance while the regular troops intercepted and killed several Japanese and forced the others to retreat to Nho Quan. That victory gave a strong impulse to the revolutionary movement of the masses and the development of guerilla and self-defence units. The enemy administration in the countryside further disintegrated.

In the *Van Hien Luong Resistance Base* (Phu Tho and Yen Bai provinces) in June, 1945, guerilla units attacked Phu Ninh, Thanh Son, Thanh Thuy, Ha Hoa districts and Vang post (Phu Tho province), Nghia Lo, Lac Yen Chau, Tu Le, Gia Boi, Phu Yen, Quang Huy (Yen Bai province) and set up revolutionary power in those places.

In Vinh Yen, the Liberation Army attacked the Tam Dao post on July 16, 1945, killed 10 Japanese soldiers and liberated a number of French civilians detained there.

On June 8, 1945, the population in the Northeast, under the leadership of the Party, rose up and attacked Dong Trieu, Chi Linh posts (Hai Duong province), Mao Khe, Trang Bach (Quang Yen province) and set up the *Fourth Resistance Base*

(or Tran Hung Dao maquis), with its People's Revolutionary Committees and guerilla units. This resistance base which occupied a very important position in Northeast Bac Bo was connected with the Liberated Zone by Bac Giang province. It was a rich mining region with big agglomerations of workers and a high revolutionary tradition. For these reasons, at the outbreak of the insurrection, the Japanese immediately launched two successive operations on June 10 and 17 against the base, but they were defeated.

The insurgent forces continued their attacks against Uong Bi, Bi Cho posts, seized power in Kinh Mon and Thanh Ha district towns (Hai Duong province), disarmed Japanese troops in the Cat Hai military post (Quang Yen province). On July 20, 1945, the guerilla units occupied Quang Yen provincial capital and Yen Hung district center. All local mandarins and soldiers surrendered and more than 500 guns were captured. This was the first provincial capital occupied by the revolutionary forces in the pre-insurrectional period. In July 1945, the Japanese fascists launched two other operations against the base, but they were completely defeated by the revolutionary armed forces.

In the course of those combats, guerilla forces of the *Fourth Resistance Base* increased from a few dozens to over 500 with thousands of weapons of different kinds. The combatants had the merit of knowing how to rely on the mass movement in the whole country and closely combining combat with agitation work among the enemy.

At *Kim Son*,¹ on July 11, 1945, the people rose up and overran Bang post (Kien Thuy district, Kien An province), seized many salt and paddy stocks, and held a meeting to announce the establishment of people's revolutionary power. On July 15, 10 Japanese and 50 puppet soldiers came to repress the uprising, but they were repelled by the self-defence combatants and the revolutionary masses.

In July 1945, the northern resistance base (Phan Dinh Phung) and the Southern resistance base (Hoang Hoa Tham) of Quang Ngai province, created after the Ea To insurrection, were connected with one another and each had one guerilla company. Thanks to the propaganda work of its guerilla units, the revolutionary movement in the Quang Ngai delta grew vigorously. Associations for national salvation and fighting militia units developed throughout the countryside, and the revolutionary masses feverishly prepared for the insurrection.

Apart from the above-mentioned maquis, many provinces set up their own, such as Yen The (Bac Giang), Lap Thach (Vinh Yen), Ngoc Thanh (Phuc Yen), Bai Say (Hung Yen), Tram Long (Ha Dong), Dong An (Ha Nam), Phuong Qua (Thai Binh), Huong Son, Cam Xuyen (Ha Tinh), Trung Thuan (Quang Binh), Tam Ky, Que Son (Quang Nam), Bau Beo (Ninh Thuan), etc.

1. It was commonly called the Kim Son maquis by local cadres, because it had a strong popular movement and conducted effective struggle against enemy terrorist raids. This base included Tan Trao village (Kien Thuy district, Kien An province).

In the preparation of a general insurrection to seize power in a country like ours, *the realization of partial insurrections and the setting up of revolutionary bases* constituted a correct and creative policy of our Party.

The revolutionary bases, in general, were established first of all by patiently building political foundations among the masses. Armed forces and semi-armed forces gradually developed as mass political foundations were built, then the revolutionary bases expanded and their organization improved, with the organization of political forces, armed forces and the people's revolutionary power.

That method was a suitable one for our country, because in the beginning the balance of forces between the enemy and us was not in our favour. We were politically and morally superior, but the enemy's armed forces were much stronger. Revolutionary forces had to be built from scratch, developed and strengthened. A favourable terrain that enables us to attack when on the offensive and to hold on when on the defensive was an important condition for the building of revolutionary bases, but the fundamental condition was to win the people's heart. The revolution could build a strong base wherever it enjoyed the population's support, and the masses were organized.

Our revolutionary bases created before the August Revolution had played an important role; those of Viet Bac grew into the Liberated Zone, the standard-bearer which aroused and stimulated the revolutionary movement in the whole country; our bases cons-

tituted a serious threat to the enemy, a secure zone for the leading organs of the revolution and an embryo of the DRVN. Other bases also played an important role in local insurrections.

The building of revolutionary bases is a precious experience in the history of our national liberation movement.

Together with the partial insurrections and the actions to seize paddy stocks, in a great number of localities, meetings, demonstrations, speeches were organized at markets, wharves, in factories, schools, theatres, etc. to unmask the Japanese fascists and their henchmen, call on the people to stop contributing paddy and taxes to the enemy and join the Viet Minh to save the fatherland. In many places in the countryside, *national salvation self-defence units* disarmed isolated civil guards and Japanese soldiers, gave warning to mandarins, village and canton chiefs and punished traitors. In the towns and cities, *Viet Minh crack units* operated right under the Japanese troops' nose, liquidated dangerous traitors and cruel Japanese officers, thus throwing the enemy into confusion.

The movement of workers, peasants, petty bourgeois and students developed vigorously, leading even the national bourgeoisie and a number of landowners (chiefly small ones) to side with or support the revolution.

In many localities, the enemy administrative machine was completely paralysed. In the regions where the revolutionary movement was strong, the masses, in defiance of the puppet authorities, sought

Viet Minh cadres' advice on how to settle their daily disputes. A number of village, district chiefs, and even some provincial heads also met Viet Minh cadres to justify their political attitude and promise to hand over power to the revolution.

Civil guards — the armed forces of the puppet administration — were in utter confusion and vacillating. In some regions, they sided with the Viet Minh.

In order to push ahead preparations for the general insurrection on the ideological front, our Party paid particular attention to the press and other forms of propaganda, with a view to neutralizing Japanese influence and energetically combating pro-Japanese tendencies, the fear of the Japanese or the illusion about making use of them.

The Party strongly exposed the demagogic manoeuvres of the Japanese fascists and of pro-Japanese parties and factions, and the provocations and acts of sabotage of the Trotskyists. In an article entitled "The Japanese policy with regard to our people" in *Tap Chi Cong San* (Communist Review) N° 3, our Party pointed out: "To believe in the Japanese is to commit suicide. To follow the pro-Japanese traitors is to fall into the Japanese trap. In face of the Japanese, *there is no other alternative than to realize national union and take up arms against them.*"

Our Party criticized in time the erroneous, illusory and opportunist tendencies which began emerging among certain cadres and people who wanted to make use of the Japanese. The *Co Giai Phong* review published in April 1945 wrote: "At present, two

erroneous opinions have appeared among the cadres and the population. One holds that sooner or later the Japanese will be liquidated because the Allies will counter-attack, while French imperialism is on the way to restoration. We should make use of the Japanese coup d'etat to eliminate the French before the Japanese are defeated. This opinion diverts our attention from the principal enemy and makes us depend on the Allies... The other holds that we should turn to account this coup to expand our anti-French movement, so as to bolster the will for independence of the Indochinese peoples and temper them in the struggle against imperialism. This is too naive a view! The will for independence, the anti-imperialist spirit can be strengthened in revolutionary struggle, not through reforms or legal organizations authorized by the Japanese." Our Party Central Committee severely criticized these two erroneous opinions and called on our people to direct their struggle against our principal enemy, the Japanese fascists.

Within the Party, the Party sternly criticized the erroneous tendencies of some comrades in Trung Bo who advocated the reshuffle of the Tran Trong Kim cabinet, in the hope of achieving independence through peaceful negotiations with the Japanese, of making the pro-Japanese puppet government promulgate a "monarchic constitution" drafted out by these comrades. The Party pointed out that this tendency was very dangerous, because it presented the Japanese fascists under a favourable light, resuscitated the Tran Trong Kim political corpse,

gave our people an illusion about the Japanese aggressors and their henchmen, and deviated us from the general insurrection to seize power.

The Party Central Committee severely criticized the "rightist" opportunism of the comrades in charge of the newspaper *Tien Phong* (The Vanguard) in Nam Bo who, before the Japanese coup d'etat on March 9, 1945, had put aside the slogan of struggle against the French fascists and advocated the use of the Japanese to "win power". It also criticized the "leftist" tendency of the comrades in charge of the newspaper *Giai Phong* (Liberation) in Nam Bo who maintained the slogan "Drive out the Japanese and the French" after the Japanese coup had already taken place and the French had lost all their power in Indochina. The views of both papers were equally erroneous, yet they kept criticizing each other sharply. The Party Central Committee pointed out the errors of both sides and called on them to unite, get rid of their prejudices, follow the Party line, cancel their own slogans and carry out that of the Party... We shall commit a serious crime if we remain divided.¹ *In the pre-insurrectional movement, our Party spearheaded all its political, military, ideological activities against the Japanese fascists and their lackeys with a view to achieving the immediate objective to seize power through a general insurrection.*

The Second World War was drawing to an end. Early in 1945, the Soviet Army liberated the whole

1. "Let us Follow the Party Line!" *Co Giai Phong* (Liberation banner) No. 15, July 7, 1945.

of Poland and a great part of Czechoslovakia, defeated the Hungarian reactionary regime, a European ally of the Hitlerite fascists, helped the Hungarian people set up people's democratic power, marched into the German territory, occupied East Prussia and a large part of Silesia, and was heading toward Berlin. Meanwhile, on the Western Front, Anglo-American troops hurriedly crossed the Rhine and made their way into West Germany without meeting any serious resistance, as all the main forces of the German fascists had been thrown into the Eastern front in a vain attempt to stop the Soviet Army's advance. In April 1945, the Soviet Army attacked Berlin. On May 2, 1945, it annihilated the Hitlerite fascists right in their den, forcing the Nazi Germany to lay down arms and surrender unconditionally. On May 8, 1945, the Nazis signed the surrender act before the representative of the Supreme Command of the Soviet Army in Berlin. Thus the hotbed of war of fascism in Europe was eliminated!

In Asia, the military situation was not in favour of the Japanese. Their troops were reduced to strategic defensive.

In August 1945, a direct revolutionary situation appeared in Viet Nam. The political crisis in Indochina ripened quickly. The combination of guerilla warfare in the maquis with the mass movement in the countryside and in the towns created a seething revolutionary atmosphere. The vanguard stood ready for a life-and-death struggle, and the reserve forces were also ready to follow the former.

Although the revolutionary movement developed unevenly in different parts of the country, the revolutionary masses were ready to take action, they were only waiting for the favourable objective condition as had been foreseen by the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee in its directive on March, 12, 1945.

Indeed, the end of World War II in the Autumn of 1945 brought those favourable conditions for the Vietnamese revolution.

Putting into effect its commitments at the Yalta Conference,¹ on August 8, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on the Japanese fascists. Its Army launched a powerful offensive against the Japanese forces in northeast China in four directions:

1. Advance from Baikal Lake toward Chang Chun and Chen Yang.
2. The Soviet-Mongol troops advance toward Cheng Teh, Kin Chou and Chang Gia Kow.
3. March on Kirin and Harbin from Vladivostock.
4. March on Harbin and Tsitsihar from Khabarovsk and Hinlanpao.

In the meantime, the Soviet Pacific Fleet landed in North Korea and in the southern part of Sakhalin and Kouriles islands.

1. At the Yalta Conference, the USSR pledged to Great Britain and the United States that it would attack the Japanese fascists three months after its victory over the fascists.

Within only a few days, the heroic Soviet Army crushed the most important strategic base of the Japanese fascists in Toung Shan Shen and their crack Kwantung army over a million-strong, and forced them to lay down their arms.

Knowing very well that the Soviet Union would attack the Japanese, the American imperialists hurriedly dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 8, 1945), killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, then occupied Japan. That odious manoeuvre of the Americans was aimed at making theirs the merit of defeating the Japanese and at minimizing the victory of the USSR in the Far East.

In the morning of August 10, 1945, a meeting of the Mikado with the Japanese Cabinet and the War Council led to the decision to surrender. The Japanese recognition of the Postdam Conference Declaration was immediately communicated to Stockholm (Sweden) and Bern (Switzerland). And on August 14, 1945, the Mikado proclaimed before the Japanese people the unconditional surrender of Japan to the USSR and the Allied powers.

Thus ended the Second World War.

The Japanese troops, undisputed masters of Indochina for many years, were now like a beheaded snake. Japanese commanders in Indochina were split into two groups and shot at one another at their staff

meeting.¹ The Tran Trong Kim government which was rigged up by the Japanese and had no popular support fell into utter confusion amidst the masses' hatred. Frightened and powerless, many puppet ministers sent in their resignation. But the traitors did not willingly hand over their power to the revolution. After the Japanese capitulation, Tran Trong Kim still tried to patch up his puppet administration by establishing a so-called "provisional government" in a desperate attempt to oppose the revolution. On August 14, 1945, it declared that, "To regain His Majesty's confidence, our entire Cabinet are determined not to shrink back from any difficulty, in order to rebuild our country and consolidate our independence. To this end, we will maintain close contact with the Japanese authorities, never forgetting that it is the Japanese Army who has liberated us from foreign yoke."

Bao Dai and the "provisional government" shamefully begged for the power which had been in Japanese hands since March, 9, 1945. On August 15, 1945, the Japanese handed over to the imperial delegate in Bac Bo, representative of the "provisional government", the Civil Guard, the Central Security Service and the Censorship Service.

The Japanese also made a last-minute transfer of the Nam Bo administration to the puppet govern-

1. The August 13, 1945 Communique of the Bac Bo Viet Minh on the new situation after the Japanese capitulation said, "Before the Japanese announced their capitulation in their own country, the Japanese in Hanoi held two conferences at their HQ and at the City University, but both were dispersed by gun-shots exchanged between the two groups."

ment. On August 23, by order of the Japanese, the pro-Japanese clique in Saigon officially greeted Nguyen Van Sam, the newly-appointed imperial delegate in Nam Bo.

After the Japanese capitulation, Bao Dai and the pro-Japanese puppet government immediately sought new masters by trying to get in touch with British, American and French imperialists, but to no avail for all their schemes were foiled by the Viet Minh.

With extremely favourable objective conditions and the subjective conditions developing rapidly in the struggle against the Japanese for national salvation, the general insurrection could break out at any moment in the whole country.

The people, chiefly the masses in the Viet Minh organizations for national salvation who had long since been ready to sacrifice themselves for regaining national independence, were now more resolved than ever to fight. The intermediary class, who formerly had hesitated in responding to the Viet Minh appeal for fear of Japanese strength, now also sided with the revolution.

Another objective condition which hastened the general insurrection was the imminent landing of Allied troops in Indochina to accept the Japanese surrender. That situation posed a problem: what could be the fate of Viet Nam when, immediately after the downfall of the Japanese aggressors, new imperialists with international recognition were preparing to enter Indochina. It was certain that the imperialists would not let the Vietnamese people freely choose their own social regime. The revolution

had to solve that problem by engaging in a race with Anglo-American troops, in order not to have to "fight at the same time against different allied forces (Chiang Kai-shek, French, British and American forces) who were to enter our country to impose on our people a French Gaullist administration or some puppet regime."¹

At the People's Congress at Tan Trao, on behalf of the Party Central Committee, Comrade Truong Chinh, the Party Secretary-General, advanced a judicious solution which was unanimously adopted: The Vietnamese people had to avail themselves of the Japanese and their agents before the landing of Allied troops, in order to receive in the capacity of masters of the country the forces coming to disarm the Japanese.

The decisive hour had struck!

We had to act without delay. With or without a revolution in Japan, the Vietnamese people had to decide their own destiny.

Thus, the August revolution broke out in a most pressing and favourable situation.

II. THE VICTORY OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

Right after the Japanese collapse and surrender to the USSR and the Allies, on August 12, 1945, the Provisional Command of the Liberated Zone gave

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 548.

order for insurrection to the National Liberation Army, self-defence units, people's revolutionary committees and the entire people of the Zone.

On August 13, 1945, the Party National Congress was held at Tan Trao (Tuyen Quang province) with the participation of all delegates of Bac Bo, Trung Bo and Nam Bo and a number of overseas Vietnamese revolutionaries.

In a most urgent situation, the Congress worked for three days from August 13 to 15, 1945.

Finding the subjective and objective conditions for a victorious general uprising had been realized, the Congress decided to mobilize in time the entire people to launch a general insurrection for wresting power from the hands of the Japanese fascists and their puppets before the arrival of Allied troops. To ensure the success of the insurrection it set forth three principles:

"a) To concentrate forces on major tasks,

b) To unify leadership in all fields — military, political action and command.

c) To act in time, not to miss any opportune moment."¹

The Congress urged "to concentrate forces against positions to be taken"² and to immediately attack and occupy places whenever victory is certain in the cities or in the countryside."³

Apart from immediate tasks for seizing power, the Congress also prescribed important measures

1, 2, 3. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 545, 546, 550.

concerning domestic and foreign affairs, to be carried out after the triumph of the insurrection.

As regards *internal affairs*, the Congress laid stress on the work of propaganda, education, organization for the popular masses, first of all for the mass organizations in the Viet Minh front; it endorsed the Ten Major Policies of the Viet Minh regarded as constituting the basic policy of the Party and the people to be carried out immediately; the Congress paid attention to agricultural production, first of all to food production.

With regard to *external affairs*, the Congress pointed out that we had to exploit the contradictions among the French, the British, the Americans and the Chiang Kai-shek clique, to carefully avoid fighting against several enemies at a time, to win the sympathy and support of the Soviet Union and of the world's people, particularly the French and the Chinese people: to foil the French colonialist scheme of reoccupying Viet Nam and the Chiang Kai-shek clique's design to turn our country into a "satellite state".

On the night of August 13, a National Insurrection Committee was set up, which comprised Comrades: Truong Chinh, Vo Nguyen Giap, Tran Dang Ninh, Le Thanh Nghi and Chu Van Tan, with Comrade Truong Chinh, the Party Secretary-General, as Chairman. That very night, the Committee published an order for general insurrection:

"Combatants and fellow-countrymen in the whole country!

"The hour of general insurrection has struck!

"A unique opportunity has come for the Vietnamese people and army to rise up and wrest back independence for our country!

"We have to *act promptly* with great courage and extreme precaution!

"The Fatherland is requiring from all of us great sacrifices!

"We will certainly win complete victory!"¹

The *People's Congress* was held at Tan Trao on August 16, 1945, following the conclusion of the Party National Congress. It was attended by over 60 delegates representing all political parties, mass organizations, nationalities, and religious communities in the country and overseas Vietnamese. The Congress enthusiastically approved the resolution on general insurrection of the *Indochinese Communist Party*, sanctioned the order for general insurrection and adopted the Ten Major Policies set forth by the *Viet Minh National Committee*.

"1. To seize power and establish the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on the basis of complete independence.

2. To arm the people and develop the Viet Nam Liberation Army.

3. To confiscate the properties of the foreign aggressors and the traitors and make them state property or distribute them to the poor.

4. To abolish all taxes imposed by the French and the Japanese, create an equitable and light tax.

5. To promulgate democratic rights:

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 542.

- a) human rights,
- b) right of property,
- c) rights of the citizen : rights of universal suffrage, democratic freedoms (creed, thought, opinion, association, movement), equality among different nationalities and between men and women.

"6. To redistribute communal land on an equal basis, put off debts and organize relief work.

"7. To promulgate labour legislation, 8-hour work-day, minimum wages and social insurance.

"8. To build up national economy, develop agriculture. To set up a national bank.

"9. To establish a popular education, combat illiteracy, enforce obligatory primary education. To create a new culture.

"10. To establish friendly relations with the Allies and with developing nationalist countries, with a view to gaining their sympathy and support."¹

The People's Congress adopted the national red flag with a five-point yellow star in the middle, and the *national anthem* "Tien Quan Ca" (March Song), then elected a *Viet Nam National Liberation Committee* headed by President Ho Chi Minh. Its Standing Committee was composed of five members: Ho Chi Minh, Tran Huy Lieu, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Luong Bang and Duong Duc Hien.

The Tan Trao People's Congress reflected the unity and oneness of mind of the entire Vietnamese people united in the Viet Minh Front under the leadership of our Party. It expressed our people's firm deter-

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., pp. 555, 556.

mination to win victory, relying essentially on our own forces. "The defeat of the Japanese will not automatically bring independence to our people. We are facing innumerable difficulties and obstacles. We must act wisely and resolutely, in order to avoid stumbling-blocks and win complete independence. After this World War, *a people united and determined to wrest back independence will certainly win victory.*"¹

Determined to put into effect the Party's instructions for the general insurrection, the Congress expressed its absolute confidence in the leadership of the Party and of President Ho Chi Minh.

Right then President Ho Chi Minh issued an appeal to the entire Vietnamese people :

"Dear fellow-countrymen !

"At present, the Japanese forces have collapsed, the national salvation movement is spreading throughout the country...

"The decisive hour for the destiny of our nation has struck. Let our entire people rise up and liberate ourselves with our own forces.

"Many oppressed peoples in the world are emulating one another in the struggle for independence. We cannot remain behind.

"Forward ! Fellow-countrymen !

"Let us march forward valiantly under the Viet Minh banner !"²

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 557.

2. Ho Chi Minh, *For Freedom, Independence and Socialism*, in Vietnamese, Su That Publishing House, p. 48, 49.

The Indochinese Communist Party also issued an *Appeal* to the whole nation, to all national salvation organizations placed under the leadership of the National Liberation Committee and the Insurrection Committee, urging to co-operate with the Liberation Army and self-defence units in rising up and seizing power. In particular, the Party called on its members: “to keep their lucidity in the leadership of the movement and to make sacrifices in the struggle for achieving national independence, so as to be worthy of the vanguard of the nation.”

“The hour of insurrection has struck!

“The glorious days of Viet Nam have come!

“Let us fight resolutely!

“Victory will certainly be ours!”¹

The situation was most pressing. A number of delegates then on their way to Viet Bac received the order to turn back immediately to lead the movement. Conditions were ripe for a victorious uprising in the whole country. This was clear as daylight. Many provinces had not yet received the order for insurrection, but the regional Viet Minh Committees inspired by the spirit of the Party's former resolutions, particularly the directive of the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee: “*Our action when the French and the Japanese are shooting at one another*”, and taking into account the changes in the enemy's ranks and the Allies' attitude, took action in time with initiative, creativeness and flexibility, and the local insurrections won prompt victories.

2. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 538.

The revolution was progressing by leaps and bounds, from partial uprisings to a general insurrection to seize power in the whole country.

The revolutionary storm was growing. The Communists, the Viet Minh militants and the people throughout the country displayed a strong determination to fight valiantly for the national cause, in accordance with the instructions given by President Ho Chi Minh when he fell ill at the most pressing moment. “Now, the favourable occasion has come. Even if we have to make heavy sacrifices, even if we must burn the Truong Son Range, we will fight until independence is won.”¹

From August 14 to 18, many villages and districts of the provinces of Cao Bang, Bac Can, Lang Son, Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Bac Giang, Vinh Yen, Bac Ninh, Ha Dong, Son Tay, Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Kien An, Ninh Binh, Thai Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Ngai, Khanh Hoa, My Tho, Sadec acted in time to seize power. Three villages, Dich Vong, Khuong Thuong and Giap Nhi in the suburbs of Hanoi also succeeded in their uprisings on August 17 and 18.

In *Quang Ngai* province, guerilla and self-defence units successively liberated the districts of Tra Bong, Ba To, Minh Long, Dac Pho and Gi Lang post (Aug. 15), Binh Son, Son Tinh, Nghia Hanh, Tu Nghia (Aug. 16), Mo Duc (Aug. 17). The revolutionary forces fought against the Japanese troops in Xuan Pho

1. Vo Nguyen Giap, “*Tu Nhan Dan Ma Ra*” (Sprung from the People), *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* Publishing House, 1969, p. 212.

(Aug. 15), Thi Pho Nhi, Mo Cay (Aug. 16). The Japanese fascists sent troops to take revenge in a barbarous manner. They attacked on the rear of the revolutionary forces at Vinh Phu, Song Ve, etc. In the meantime, our forces invested and attacked Japanese troops stationed at Quang Ngai provincial capital, completely liberated the city on August 28.

On August 16, a unit of the Liberation Army commanded by Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap set off from Tan Trao to liberate Thai Nguyen provincial capital. In the morning of August 19, the Vo Nhai propaganda shock brigade mobilized self-defence combatants and the population of Dong Bam village for a march into the provincial capital. The population took to the streets and staged a demonstration of force. The Japanese troops were forced to retreat into their barracks for defence. Early on August 20, the Viet Nam Liberation Army occupied positions around the town and received the surrender of the Thai Nguyen provincial chief, the Dong Hy district chief and the commander of the civil guard. The revolutionary forces were immediately equipped with the 600 rifles captured from the guards. With warm encouragement and support by the people, the insurgents launched an attack against Japanese troops. Tightening their encirclement, they called on the Japanese to surrender. On August 20, the provincial revolutionary power presented itself before a big meeting organized by the population of the town and the neighbouring villages. The Liberation Army and self-defence units continued to surround and attack the Japanese garrison. On

August 23, by order of the Party Central Committee, a major part of the Liberation Army had to march to the capital. On August 26, the special envoy of the Japanese Command and that of the Viet Minh left Hanoi for Thai Nguyen to negotiate on the withdrawal of Japanese troops to Hanoi. On the same day, all Japanese troops withdrew after handing over to the revolutionary forces all the weapons they had taken from the French.

Carrying out the order of the Provisional Command issued on June 12 and of the Insurrection Committee, the Liberation Army units successively attacked the remaining Japanese posts in the provinces of *Cao Bang, Bac Can, Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai*, etc., and liberated the provincial capitals.

On August 17, the Liberation Army attacked Tuyen Quang provincial capital. The Japanese troops there resisted, but in face of the valiant fighting spirit of the revolutionary forces they offered to negotiate, then withdrew. On August 21, the provincial revolutionary power was set up.

On August 15, while the National Cadres Conference was held at Tan Trao (Tuyen Quang province), the Bac Ky Party Committee also held a conference at Van Phuc village (Ha Dong province). Acting in the spirit of the directive "Our action when the French and the Japanese are shooting at one another", it decided to launch insurrections in the provinces by generalized uprisings in all villages, districts and seizing power in the towns.

On August 18, the population in the provinces of *Bac Ninh, Hai Duong, Ha Tinh* and *Quang Nam*

seized power in these provincial capitals. They were the first provinces to set up revolutionary power in the country.

In *Hanoi*, the General Association of functionaries of the puppet administration organized a big meeting with the participation of thousands of people at the municipal theatre to support the Tran Trong Kim "provisional government". Under the leadership of the Bac Ky and the Hanoi Party committees, the revolutionary masses occupied the platform of the meeting, and Viet Minh cadres informed the people of the capitulation of the Japanese fascists, explained briefly the program for national salvation of the Viet Minh front, called on them to rally to the Viet Minh banner to overthrow the pro-Japanese puppet government. The puppet police and civil guards also sided with the Viet Minh. The meeting was immediately turned into a huge demonstration. Marching through the streets, the masses shouted slogans:

- Support the Viet Minh!
- Down with the puppet clique!
- Complete independence for Viet Nam!

Starting from the municipal theatre, the demonstrators marched through Hang Dao, Hang Ngang, passed Dong Xuan market, Cua Bac, the Governor-General Palace then occupied by the Japanese Command, marched down Cot Co street toward Cua Nam cross-road. The whole capital was seething with a revolutionary atmosphere. In the morning of August 18, the Revolutionary Military Committee (Insurrec-

tion Committee) of the Hanoi Party committee moved from the suburbs to N° 101, Tran Hung Dao street to lead the insurrection.

In the morning of August 19, the whole of Hanoi looked like a forest of yellow-starred red flags. Many factories and shops closed down and markets were empty. The entire population poured into the streets. The revolutionary masses and national salvation self-defence units paraded through the streets, ready to fight the enemy.

Tens of thousands of peasants from the suburbs and the districts of Thanh Tri, Thuong Tin, Phu Xuyen, Hoai Duc, Dan Phuong (Ha Dong province), Gia Lam (Bac Ninh province) equipped with sticks, scimitars, matchetes and a few rifles marched to the capital.

Under the leadership of the Party, the revolutionary masses from all corners of the capital poured into the Municipal Theatre Square to participate in a big meeting organized by the Hanoi Viet Minh Front. While marching they shouted slogans:

- Down with the Tran Trong Kim puppet government!
- Set up a democratic republican government in Viet Nam!
- Soldiers, rally to the Viet Minh with your arms!
- Complete independence for Viet Nam!

The meeting began at 11 a.m. After firing a salvo to salute the national flag and executing the national anthem *Tiên Quân Ca*, the representative of the

Revolutionary Military Committee read the Viet Minh appeal for insurrection and establishment of a democratic republican government.

The meeting soon became an armed demonstration. Headed by the self-defence combatants the revolutionary masses split into several columns which attacked and occupied the imperial delegate's residence, the civil guard barracks, the police headquarters and other services of the puppet administration. After occupying the imperial delegate's residence, we used the telephone there to tell the mayor of Haiphong, the chiefs of the provinces of Hai Duong, Bac Ninh, Ha Nam, and Nam Dinh that the Viet Minh had already seized power in Hanoi and ordered them rapidly to hand over power to the Viet Minh, otherwise they would be executed.

Near the civil guard barracks, the demonstrators found the streets blocked by Japanese tanks and soldiers. But in face of the powerful revolutionary movement throughout the country and the revolutionary ardour of the masses and of the 2,000 armed self-defence combatants in the capital, the Japanese had to give in and led the Viet Minh seize power, although at that moment they still had tens of thousands of troops in Hanoi. That passive attitude of the Japanese commanders in Hanoi created favourable conditions to bring to an end the fierce combats against the Japanese in Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, Quang Ngai, etc.

After the success of the Hanoi Party committee which relying on combined political and armed forces had forced the Japanese to hand over power

to us, the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee issued the following instructions to the provinces: "Try to follow the example of Hanoi if possible. Wherever the Japanese resist, fight resolutely. Power must be seized at any cost."

The successful uprising in the capital stimulated other localities to rise up and seize power, and greatly contributed to the success of the August Revolution. In Ha Dong, Vinh Yen, Phuc Yen and some other provinces, the pro-Japanese puppet clique offered some resistance, but they were completely crushed by the revolutionary forces.

On the same day as in Hanoi (August 19, 1945), power was seized in the provincial capitals of *Yen Bai*, *Thai Binh*, *Phuc Yen*¹ (Bac Bo), *Thanh Hoa*, *Khanh Hoa* (Trung Bo).

On August 20, the insurrection triumphed in the provincial capitals of *Bac Ninh*, *Thai Nguyen*, *Ninh Binh* (Bac Bo).

On August 21, at *Cao Bang*, *Tuyen Quang*, *Son Tay*, *Nam Dinh*, *Kien An* (Bac Bo), *Nghe An*, *Ninh Thuan* (Trung Bo).

On August 22, at *Hung Yen* and *Quang Yen* (Bac Bo).

1. The population in Phuc Yen rose up and seized power on August 19. The chief of the province surrendered, but the chief of the civil guard resisted with the backing of the Japanese. Strategically, we formed with them a "coalition power". On August 27, the VNQDD (Vietnamese Nationalist Party) colluded with the civil guard chief to oppose the revolution, but the attempt was crushed. On August 30, the provincial power fell entirely into the people's hands.

The news of the successful uprisings in Hanoi, Thanh Hoa and Ha Tinh and the victorious insurrection of the Ba To guerilla forces (in Quang Ngai province) against Japanese troops spread like wild-fire to Hue. In the districts of *Thua Thien* around Hue, the masses had already seized power. But before its collapse, the Tran Trong Kim puppet government still tried to organize a demonstration on August 23 for celebrating the "return of Nam Bo to Viet Nam by the Japanese." The insurrection committee of Thuan Hoa decided to launch a mass uprising to occupy Hue on that very day. In the night of August 22 and on the following day under the leadership of the Viet Minh, Hue was covered with yellow-starred red flags. More than 150,000 people, including peasants from the suburbs and surrounding districts, workers and labouring people, youths and other strata of the urban population¹ poured into Hue streets. The insurgents seized the public services one after another without meeting with any resistance. In the night of August 23, the Viet Nam National Liberation Committee, i.e. the Provisional Government, sent a telegram to Bao Dai demanding his abdication. On August 28, the Hue people warmly welcomed the delegation of the Central Government coming to acknowledge the abdication of Bao Dai and receive his royal seal and sword. The delegation was headed by Tran Huy Lieu and included Nguyen Luong Bang and Cu Huy Can. In the afternoon of

1. At that time, the population of Hue was around 50,000.

August 30, before tens of thousands of people assembled at Ngo Mon gate (the Southern Gate of the Imperial Palace) the three-striped yellow flag was lowered, and the yellow-starred red flag hoisted. Bao Dai read the abdication act: "...I prefer to be a citizen of an independent nation rather than to be the king of an enslaved country," and handed over the royal seal and sword to the representatives of the Provisional Government of the DRVN who declared the abolition of monarchy in Viet Nam.

Thus, the August Revolution overthrew the thousand year-old feudal power, creating conditions for the complete abolition of feudalism in Viet Nam. It accepted Bao Dai's abdication and made him an adviser to the Provisional Government, so as to differentiate to the maximum the feudalist ranks and foil the manoeuvres of the imperialists when they returned to our country.

On August 23, successful insurrections also took place in the provincial capitals of *Bac Can*, *Hoa Binh*, *Haiphong*, *Ha Dong* (Bac Bo), *Quang Tri*, *Quang Binh*, *Binh Dinh*, *Lam Vien*, *Gia Lai* (Trung Bo), *Tan An* and *Bac Lieu* (Nam Bo).

On August 24, at *Ha Nam*, *Phu Tho* (Bac Bo), *Go Cong* and *My Tho* (Nam Bo).

On August 25, at *Lang Son* (Bac Bo) and *Cong Tum* (Trung Bo).

On the same day, the masses in Saigon and other provinces in Nam Bo, such as *Cho Lon*, *Gia Dinh*, *Soc Trang*, *Long Xuyen*, *Vinh Long*, *Ba Ria*, *Thu*

Dau Mot, Chau Doc, Tra Vinh, Tay Ninh, Bien Hoa, Ben Tre and *Sa Dec* launched successful uprisings after being informed of the Viet Minh seizure of power in Hanoi, Hue and other places.

In Saigon, the yellow-starred red flag made its appearance on August 20, after a decision of the Nam Ky Party Committee. Tens of thousands of Viet Minh leaflets were scattered in its streets. At the news that Hanoi and Tan An (pilot locality for insurrection in Nam Bo) had fallen into Viet Minh hands, the Party committee held a session at Cho Dem on August 23 to decide on the insurrections in Saigon and other provinces on August 25. In the night of 24, order was given to muster Saigon's and Cho Lon's brigades of "voluntary trade-union members" and "voluntary youth." Groups of workers, peasants and youths carrying spears, scimitars and sharp-pointed bamboo sticks flocked to Saigon by every available means from the provinces of Gia Dinh, Cho Lon, My Tho, Bien Hoa, Thu Dau Mot, etc. In the morning of August 25, the insurgents seized the security service, the police headquarters, the railway station, the post-office, the power-house and other district administration centres and military posts.

At the secret police headquarters in Catinat Boulevard, the reactionaries offered a weak resistance and were swiftly crushed by the insurgents. More than one million people in Saigon, Cho Lon and adjacent provinces staged a parade through the streets chanting slogans :

- Down with the puppet Nguyen Van Sam!
- Complete independence for Viet Nam!
- All power to the Viet Minh!
- Long live the Indochinese Communist Party!

Yellow-starred red flags were fluttering at the top of the Thu Ngu flag-pole and over public offices. The masses gathered in a gigantic meeting to welcome the Nam Bo People's Committee. The paralyzed Japanese troops offered no resistance. The insurrection was quickly brought to victory. All the major services supplying electricity, running water, means of communications and transport, food and fuel, medical facilities, etc., were kept in running order.

Successful insurrections for power were also made in *Hon Gai, Son La* (Bac Bo), *Can Tho* (Nam Bo) on August 26, in *Rach Gia* (Nam Bo) on August 27, in *Dong Nai Thuong* (Trung Bo) and *Ha Tien* (Nam Bo) on August 28.

In a number of places where no Viet Minh bases existed the patriotic masses who had long been influenced by the Indochinese Communist Party rose up spontaneously to win power such as *Gia Lai, Dong Nai Thuong* (Trung Bo) and *Ha Tien* (Nam Bo).

Moreover, a number of places, such as the provincial capital of *Vinh Yen*, were still in the hands of the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party) helped by Japanese troops. The towns of *Ha Giang, Lao Cai, Mong Cai* (Bac Bo) were occupied by the Chiang Kai-shek troops and their henchmen

right in August. The provincial capital of *Lai Chau* was recaptured by the battered French troops who had been driven away by the Japanese troops after the March 9, 1945 Japanese coup d'état.

After Japan's surrender to the Soviet Union and the Allies, while our entire people were rising up to seize power, the French Gaullists dropped their men by parachute on many places in our country, scheming to re-establish the former French colonialist ruling apparatus and restore their domination over our people. However, hardly had those Frenchmen set foot on our soil when almost all of them were caught in the act.

Thus within only 12 days (from August 14 to August 25, 1945) the imperialist domination of nearly one hundred years and the ancient monarchical regime in our country were overthrown. *For the first time, the administration of the entire country was in the hands of the people.*

In its process, the August Revolution took most varied forms. In the upsurge for national salvation against the Japanese fascists, partial insurrections broke out in many rural areas. On the threshold of the August general insurrection, in 28 provinces — Cao Bang, Bac Can, Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Hung Yen, Nam Dinh, Ha Nam, Quang Ngai, Lang Son, Phuc Yen, Bac Ninh, Bac Giang, Ha Dong, Son Tay, Hai Duong, Kien An, Ninh Binh, Thai Binh, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Thua Thien, Khanh Hoa, My Tho, Sa Dec — and 2 municipalities of Hanoi and Hue, insurrections in general

broke out¹ in villages and districts, then spread up to provincial capitals or spread from the outskirts to the cities.

24 provinces in Nam Bo and southern Trung Bo — Quang Nam, Phu Yen, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Gia Lai, Kontum, Dac Lac, Lam Vien, Dong Nai Thuong, Binh Dinh², Tan An, Tay Ninh, Go Cong, Cho Lon³, Gia Dinh, Bac Lieu, Soc Trang, Long Xuyen, Ha Tien, Chau Doc, Thu Dau Mot, Can Tho, Bien Hoa, Rach Gia — staged insurrections in provincial capitals first and in the districts and villages later on.

In the remaining 7 provinces of Son La (Bac Bo), Quang Binh, Quang Tri (Trung Bo),⁴ Ba Ria, Vinh Long, Tra Vinh and Ben Tre (Nam Bo), insurrections were launched both in the town and countryside on the same day.

In most provinces and municipalities of Bac Bo and northern Trung Bo insurrections took place first in the villages and district centres, due to the fact that the bases of the Party and the Viet Minh Front

1. We use the term "in general" for in these provinces and municipalities a number of villages and districts seized power after the provinces and municipalities.

2. In Binh Dinh, there were two Viet Minh groups, one group led the insurrection in the provincial capital on August 23, the other led the insurrection in the countryside which took place some time later.

3. A number of villages belonging to Cho Lon province rose up before the provincial capital, after learning of the insurrection of Tan An province on August 23.

4. In Quang Tri province, the insurrection in Dong Ha took place some time later.

in the countryside were rather strong and the Japanese and puppet forces in the countryside were remarkably weak.

In the South, the revolutionary movement which had met with many difficulties, was on the whole developing rapidly after the Japanese coup d'état. That was why with the defeat of the Japanese fascists, when many localities in the North had already staged successful insurrections, most provinces of Nam Bo and southern Trung Bo were only beginning to rise up; however, conditions for the seizure of power in the cities were ripe, that was why we worked against time to seize power in the cities first and in the countryside after.

In the first days of the general insurrection, from August 14 to 17, preliminary uprisings were launched in the countryside to sound the Japanese reaction. From August 18 onwards, the revolutionary masses took the initiative to rise up in time in the cities and the remaining rural areas.

The success of the insurrections in Hanoi, Hue, Saigon and other cities had great impact and a decisive effect on the victory of the August Revolution in the whole country.

In the August Revolution, insurrection took diversified forms, as the working class had been able to mobilize the workers and the peasants for the revolution, rely on the countryside and build revolutionary bases there for a protracted struggle, and at the same time, had attached great importance to agitation work in the cities, having correctly assessed that the

urban revolutionary movement could strike direct blows at the enemy's vital organs.

Carefully prepared and launched in time, the August Revolution mobilized the entire people to rise up, closely combined political struggle with armed struggle, and brought about a quick victory without much bloodshed. No revolution had ever been so successful in any colonial country before 1945. However, it also had some shortcomings. A few examples: *the failure to seize the Banque de l'Indochine and to capture more weapons from Japanese troops.*

One of the causes of the failure of the Paris Commune, which has been mentioned by Karl Marx, lies in the fact that the Commune had failed to seize the *Banque de France*, the nerve centre which controlled all branches of activities of capitalism. The failure to seize the *Banque de l'Indochine* later on resulted in financial difficulties caused by the enemy for the people's power.

The *Banque de l'Indochine* was owned not only by French capitalists, but also by a group of international capitalists. The Hanoi Party committee mustered forces to attack and occupy the bank as it had done with other organs. But here, at the bank, the Japanese troops refused to yield as they had done at other places. They tried at all costs to hold on to it, for fear that Allied troops would later remonstrate with them. They agreed to mount guard together with the insurgents at the bank, but clashes were frequent between the two sides. In view of the situation, at that time, the revolution had to

concentrate its forces to crush the enemy's administrative apparatus and establish a new administration before the entry of British, American, Chiang Kai-shek and Gaullist troops into Indochina. During the general insurrection, we failed to seize the *Banque de l'Indochine*, but took control of all the treasuries. The failure to seize the bank later on brought about difficulties for the revolution but in an agricultural country like ours, an imperialist bank has in fact no decisive effect on national economic life as in developed capitalist countries. Therefore, the above-mentioned shortcomings were not so serious.

Another shortcoming was *the failure to capture more Japanese weapons*. This was explained by the balance of forces between us and the enemy, and first of all by the fact that our armed forces had not yet the necessary strength, but not by a lack of determination of the masses. During the insurrection nearly all the cases of the Japanese handing over weapons to us were the result of our political struggles, and besides, we got only the armament which had been taken from the French.

Comrade Le Duc Tho was sent by the Party Central Committee to the resistance base to accompany President Ho Chi Minh back to Hanoi. The President arrived in the capital on August 26 and attended a session of the Provisional Government. On his proposal, a national united government was formed which reflected a policy of broad unity, with the participation of representatives of different patriotic parties, and a number of well-known non-party personalities. Many members of the Viet Minh National Committee

who were in the Provisional Government willingly made place for non-Viet Minh personalities. President Ho Chi Minh said: "This is a beautiful gesture of selflessness from comrades who do not seek high positions, but put the interests of the nation and of national unity above their own. This is a gesture worthy of praise and respect which is a good example to us."¹

On September 2, 1945, in a meeting of more than 500,000 people at Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi, to welcome the Government, President Ho Chi Minh, on behalf of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam read the *Declaration of Independence* solemnly proclaiming before the world:

"All men are created equal, all men have a right to life, liberty and happiness.

"A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have courageously sided with the Allies to fight fascism in the past few years, such a people must have the right to freedom, such a people must have the right to independence!

"Viet Nam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence, and in fact it has become a free and independent country. The entire Vietnamese people are resolved to mobilize all their moral and material strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to defend their right to freedom and independence."²

1. Ho Chi Minh, *Vi Doc lap, tu do va chu nghia xa hoi* (For independence, freedom and socialism), Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1970, p. 102.

2. Ho Chi Minh, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 65.

The *Declaration of Independence* read by President Ho Chi Minh was an extension of the demands he had sent to the Peace Conference at Versailles in 1919, and an enlargement of the Viet Minh program he had written in 1941. It embodied the fundamental rights and most cherished aspirations of the Vietnamese nation and was a reflection of the noble sentiment and heroic character of our people.

"It is the fruit of much bloodshed and many sacrifices in lives of the heroic sons of Viet Nam in enemy prisons and concentration camps on far-away islands, at the guillotines and on the battlefields.

"It is the fruit of so many hopes, efforts and of the faith of more than twenty million Vietnamese."¹

The 2nd of September, 1945 was a great festival for the Vietnamese nation. It put an end to the colonial and feudal regime in our country, and at the same time ushered in a new era in which our people could decide their own destiny in order to build up their life in *independence, freedom and happiness*.

Thus, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam came into being with the victory of the August Revolution.

III. THE CAUSES OF THE VICTORY OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

Human society has undergone profound changes since World War II. The German, Italian and Japan-

1. Tran Dan Tien, *Nhung Mau Chuyen Ve Doi Hoat Dong Cua Ho Chu tich* (Glimpses of the life of President Ho Chi Minh), Literary Publishers, Hanoi, 1969, p. 110.

ese fascists were totally defeated. The Soviet Union's prestige and power have reached an unprecedentedly high level after her total victory. With her support, the peoples of Albania, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Korea, etc. rose up in arms to fight fascism and wrest back national independence, establish people's democracy and proceed to socialism.

The national-liberation movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries rallied hundreds of millions of people and rocked the imperialists' colonial system to its foundation. In Southeast Asia, the struggle for independence and freedom in many countries was ebullient. But why only the Vietnamese working class and people were able to avail themselves of the Japanese fascists' defeat, and bring to victory the August Revolution? It was because the August Revolution had necessary subjective conditions and extremely favourable objective ones.

As regards subjective conditions, mention should be made of the following:

First, the Vietnamese revolution was led by *our Party, a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party*. Since 1930, our Party has become the sole leaders of the Vietnamese revolution. And it was through struggles and trials that the Party was able to consolidate its leadership and lead the August Revolution to victory.

Comrade Le Duan has said:

"Without the Communist Party, there would be no August Revolution.

“Without the Communist Party, there would be no Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.”¹

The great Russian October Revolution was the outcome of nearly 20 years of hard struggle waged by the Bolshevik Party with V. I. Lenin at its head. It was the outcome of two great rehearsals: the Revolutions of 1905 and of February 1917. The victory of the Chinese Democratic Revolution in 1949 was the outcome of a whole revolutionary process of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party: the Northern Expedition, the Long March, the three revolutionary civil wars and the war of resistance against the Japanese.

Inheriting the experience of our forefathers in fighting foreign invasion during thousands of years, and that of our elders who struggled for nearly one hundred years against the French colonialists, the August Revolution was the outcome of fifteen years of struggle waged by our people under the leadership of the Party, the result of three great rehearsals: the revolutionary upsurge in 1930-1931, the broad democratic campaign in 1936-1939 and the national-liberation movement in 1939-1945.

The 1930-1931 revolutionary upsurge, culminating in the Nghe-Tinh Soviet movement, constituted the first great rehearsal of the August 1945 Revolution. In this movement, our Party held aloft the banner of national independence and democracy, brought about a firm worker-peasant alliance and won total

1. Le Duan, *Giai Cap Vo San Voi Van De Nong Dan Trong Cach Mang Viet Nam* (The Proletariat and the Peasant Question in the Vietnamese Revolution), Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1965, p. 80.

leadership of the Vietnamese revolution. The Party learnt in the process the art of mobilizing and organizing the masses, starting from small groups to a large movement with the participation of hundreds of thousands of people. It closely allied the workers' movement to that of peasants, resorted to revolutionary violence to seize power in a number of rural areas of the two provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh, so that fifteen years later it could launch an insurrection to seize power in the whole country.

The *1936-1939 democratic campaign* was the second rehearsal of the August Revolution. Organized and led by our Party, it trained millions of people in the struggle against the reactionary colonialists, for democratic liberties and the betterment of the people's livelihood, against fascism and war, for the safeguard of world peace. The Party's leadership had formerly been exerted mainly over the working class and the peasantry, it was now extended to other strata of urban and rural population, making it possible to create a broad democratic front. Starting from illegal activities, the Party now shifted to a combination of illegal activities with legal and semi-legal ones, and launched a nation-wide movement of political struggle of an unprecedented effervescence. Its prestige was greatly enhanced.

With those two rehearsals, the revolutionary movement led by our Party was prepared politically, ideologically and organizationally, both in the towns and the countryside; our people staged illegal and legal struggles, struggles in the streets and in elected assemblies, and exercised to hold power in a number

of rural areas. Our Party drew lessons of success and failure in those two great rehearsals, so as to lead the August Revolution successfully.

The 1939-1945 *national-liberation movement* was the third rehearsal, the outcome of which was the victory of the August Revolution. In this period, the Party with great President Ho Chi Minh at its head, applied Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of our country, set forth correct lines and policies, organized strong political and armed forces, and used appropriate revolutionary methods. It advocated the people's national democratic revolutionary line, correctly solved the relations between the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist tasks, held aloft the standard of national liberation and democracy, and united the entire people under the banner of the Viet Minh Front to fight the fascists and their stooges. The Party brought into full play the spirit of relying mainly on its own forces, and was resolved to use revolutionary violence to win power. The Second World War broke out in 1939. It created difficulties, but in a calm and timely manner our Party transferred the centre of its activities to the countryside on which it relied to build its revolutionary bases. At the same time, it attached much importance to the urban movement; closely combined the urban movement with the rural one, the building of political forces with that of armed forces; grasped the opportune moment to stage partial uprisings for the seizure of local power and proceed to a general insurrection to win power in the whole country.

Second, our Party was able to bring about a *firm worker-peasant alliance* which served as a core to unite the entire people and rally them to the revolution. The majority of our people are workers and peasants. Being the most heavily oppressed and exploited people, they were most ready to make sacrifices for the revolution. They constituted the driving force of the revolution. To ensure the triumph of the revolution, the participation of the broad masses of the people is indispensable, especially the worker and peasant masses.

In the August Revolution, the workers and the peasants as close allies took part in the revolution, and therefore could arouse the entire people in the general insurrection for the seizure of power all over the country.

With a firm worker-peasant alliance, our Party was able to consolidate the working class leadership, i.e. the Party's leadership of the revolution — a factor of primary importance which made possible the victory of the August Revolution, the seizure of power by the people, the coming into being of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the protracted resistance war of our people to preserve the fruits of the August Revolution and to defend the revolutionary power when the French colonialists came back and attempted to reconquer our country.

Third, the Vietnamese revolution had at its disposal immense forces of the entire people united in the *Viet Minh Front on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance*, under the leadership of the Party. With a long-standing tradition of fighting foreign

aggression and thanks to the education, organization and leadership of the Party, our people were able to bring into play and invigorate their moral and material strength. During the Second World War oppressed and exploited without mercy by many enemies at the same time, our entire people, comprising people of different social strata and classes, nationalities and religious communities, nurtured a deep hatred for the enemy. They quickly and thoroughly grasped the Viet Minh lines and policies, and had an absolute confidence in the correct leadership of the Party. They enthusiastically joined the Viet Minh national salvation organizations. When the opportune moment came, in response to the call of the Party and of President Ho Chi Minh, our people from the North to the South simultaneously rose up to overthrow the domination of the fascist imperialists and their valets with wonderful creativeness and courage.

Fourth, the Vietnamese revolution had at its disposal *the people's armed forces* built and led by our Party. The struggle for the seizure of power in a country dominated by the imperialists like ours must necessarily go through revolutionary violence. To lead the Vietnamese revolution to victory—the decisive victory being the seizure of power—our Party has always paid attention to building the masses' political forces, and on this basis has built the people's armed forces under different forms.

In the 1939-1945 national-liberation movement, the preparation for armed insurrection was considered as the Party's central task because the seizure of power can be realized only through armed insurrection. And

armed insurrection requires sufficient forces. All Party activities during this period were aimed at preparing political and armed forces for an armed uprising to seize power. Our Party has clearly realized that the seizure of power constitutes only a preliminary step of the revolution, for once power has been seized the task is to defend it and bring the revolution to a higher stage. Therefore attention must be paid to building and developing the people's armed forces in order to seize power and defend the revolutionary power after a successful insurrection.

Immediately after the failure of the Bac Son insurrection, our Party decided to maintain the people's armed forces born from this insurrection, and later on built those units of the Bac Son guerillas into the *Viet Nam National Salvation Army*. The *Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam* was formed thereafter and was integrated in April 1945 with the Viet Nam National Salvation Army to form the *Viet Nam Liberation Army* in April 1945. Besides those armed forces—the early form of our regular army—organized and led by the Party Central Committee, our Party had on many occasions instructed the Party committees at various levels to organize, according to local conditions, people's armed forces under different forms, such as detachments of guerillas, commandos, national salvation militia, fighting militia, groups of armed volunteers, sections for the elimination of traitors, honour brigades, etc.

Before and during the August Revolution, we had not been able to build a strong regular army, but we had many units of guerillas who were relieved from

production work, and especially hundreds of thousands of national salvation and fighting militia. Being the armed forces of the masses, they played an extremely important role in the preinsurrection period and in the general insurrection of August 1945.

Indeed, the people's armed forces made possible the Bac Son and the Nam Ky insurrections. This accounted for the eight-month guerilla fighting at Dinh Ca-Trang Xa (Thai Nguyen province), the annihilation of Japanese fascists and traitors, and in particular the big demonstrations for the seizure of paddy stocks in order to cope with the famine. They also made possible the guerilla combats, the partial uprisings, the building of revolutionary bases and the setting up of revolutionary power in many localities after March 9, 1945. Those successes constituted the premises of the August Revolution. Lastly, it was with armed and semi-armed forces acting in co-ordination with political forces, that our people enthusiastically and resolutely rose up all over the country to overthrow the rule of the Japanese fascists and their henchmen and set up the people's power.

The above-mentioned subjective conditions were, however, not sufficient for a quick victory of the August Revolution. Favourable objective conditions were called for.

Following are the *objective conditions*. The war between the world's democratic forces and world fascism with the Soviet Union as the core, ended with the glorious victory of the Soviet Union and other democratic forces and the ignominious defeat

of aggressive fascism. This created extremely favourable conditions for the world's national-liberation movement. The Vietnamese national-liberation revolution was a part of the world's democratic anti-fascist movement.

In the Second World War, the Japanese and French fascists, immediate enemies of the Vietnamese revolution, weakened each other with the March 9, 1945 Japanese coup d'état. Under the leadership of the Party, our people *exploited to the utmost the contradictions between the Japanese and the French* in order to stage partial uprisings and head for the general insurrection. Later on, the heroic Soviet Army defeated the Japanese fascists who had to lay down their arms and surrender unconditionally. This situation created a unique opportunity, which allowed the August Revolution to succeed rapidly and without much bloodshed.

The victory of the August Revolution was the result of a close combination of objective conditions with subjective ones; of our Party's correct lines and policies with our people's creativeness, heroism and combat strength; of the Vietnamese people's own efforts with the Soviet Army's glorious military exploits and the victory of the world's democratic forces over the aggressive fascists.

The subjective conditions *played a decisive role in bringing about the victory* of the August Revolution. Why so? Because the revolution of a country must essentially be undertaken by its own people, and the decisive condition for victory must be achieved by themselves. That is why the revolutionaries, to ensure

the victory of their country's revolution, must endeavour to create the necessary subjective conditions. They must essentially rely on their own forces and should try not to be solely dependent on other countries. Nevertheless, it is evident that in our era, a country's revolution constitutes a link in the chain of the world revolution. The world people's movement for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism certainly has a deep influence on the revolution in a country, and vice versa, the revolution of a country certainly has an echo in the world, stimulating and impelling forward the world people's revolutionary movement.

PART THREE

CHARACTER, SIGNIFICANCE AND LESSONS OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

I. CHARACTER OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

To characterize the August Revolution, one must place it in its historical context and proceed from its strategical tasks, concrete goals, motive forces, enemies to be defeated and, lastly, its historical achievements.

The August Revolution broke out and succeeded in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale, a period ushered in by the Great Russian October Socialist Revolution. It broke out at the close of the Second World War, at a time when the Soviet Union and anti-fascist democratic forces were triumphing over the Japanese militarist fascists after having completely defeated the German and Italian fascists. This period and this historical conjuncture left the August Revolution with profound marks. But what matters most is to determine the character of the August Revolution in the very concrete conditions of Viet Nam at the moment when it took place.

Carried out in a colonial and semi-feudal country, our revolution assumed two tasks: anti-imperialist struggle and anti-feudalist struggle, in order to win back national independence, put into effect the slogan: "Land to the tiller" and ensure real democratic liberties for the people. Those two strategical tasks were interrelated.

Our country's revolutionary forces comprised four classes: the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie which were led by the working class, on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance.

Our Party terms the revolution undertaken by the people under the imperialists and feudalists a *national people's democratic revolution*.

Imbued with the gist of Marxism-Leninism and having the experience of many years of struggle, our Party had, at the outbreak of the Second World War, correctly shifted its strategic direction, holding high the banner of national liberation. Consequently, the Party was able to unite the entire people against the imperialists and their agents, the feudalist clique, and ensure the victory of the revolution. Therefore, *national liberation* constituted the predominant characteristic of the August Revolution.

In addition to this characteristic, the August Revolution also took on a *democratic* one. It shattered the feudalist and comprador bourgeois puppet ruling apparatus from the central down to the village level and founded the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam with a real democratic and progressive Constitution guaranteeing the people the rights of universal suf-

frage, equality between the various nationalities, between man and woman and other democratic liberties.

Due to the historical conditions and the balance of forces at that time, the August Revolution did not immediately abolish the feudalist land-owning regime and realize the slogan: "Land to the tiller." But it nevertheless confiscated the land owned by the imperialists and the traitors, which was distributed to the poor peasants, decreed 25 per cent land rent reduction and redistributed communal land, etc. Therefore, after the August Revolution, the semi-feudal characteristic of Vietnamese society still lasted for a rather long period of time, but its content was not the same as before.

The August Revolution also blazed a trail for a cultural revolution aimed at ridding Vietnamese society of the imperialist culture of servitude and obscurantism in order to build a national and democratic culture, in the spirit of the *Party's Theses on Vietnamese Culture* in 1943.

Strategically, the August Revolution was considered as a *bourgeois democratic revolution* (of a new type) for under the leadership of the working class, it was aimed at abolishing all forms of feudalist oppression and exploitation in our country, paving the way for the development of a modern industry, creating conditions for the building of an independent economy and putting an end to the state of backwardness and dependence on other countries on the economic and other domains. But it was at the

same time a *national liberation revolution* for it overthrew the domination of foreign imperialists and wrested back national independence.

Our Party did not consider as opposed to each other the bourgeois democratic revolution and the national-liberation revolution in a colonial country still vested with many feudal vestiges (even feudalism forms of exploitation) like ours. Quite the contrary, the two revolutions were interrelated and constituted the *national people's democratic revolution*. In our country the national-liberation revolution and the bourgeois democratic revolution could go hand in hand with each other, because the leadership of the revolution was in the hand of the working class. The *national liberation* and *people's democratic* character of the August Revolution was quite obvious. Yet, since its national-liberation character was most prominent, it may be called a national-liberation revolution, *a decisive step* and *an integral part* of the Vietnamese national people's democratic revolution.

The Communist International had distinguished in its Program three categories of revolutions:

1. *Socialist revolutions* in developed capitalist countries like Britain, the USA, France, etc.

2. *New-type bourgeois democratic revolutions* led by the working class in politically independent countries with a relatively developed industry but also many feudal vestiges, and dependent on foreign imperialists, such as Spain, Portugal, etc. or in colonial and semi-feudal countries where different forms of feudalism still exist and where the

national-liberation task and the agrarian revolution had not yet been accomplished, like Viet Nam, China, Korea, Indonesia, etc.

3. *National-liberation revolutions* in almost all African countries — colonial countries with a feudal or pre-feudal regime, an underdeveloped economy and no industrial working class.

However, as regards the revolutionary movements in colonial and semi-feudal countries, the Program of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International held in 1928 was of the view that:

"The bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies is quite different from that in independent countries, especially because it is closely related to *the struggle for liberation from the imperialist yoke*. The national factor has a great influence on the revolutionary process of all the colonies and semi-colonies.

"It is extremely important to study minutely, according to concrete cases, the particular influence of the national factor, a factor which largely decides the specific character of revolution in the colonies."

Concerning the Chinese and Indian revolutions, the Second Congress of the Communist International clearly pointed out:

"... Foreign monopoly always hampers the development of social life, and for that reason, the first step of revolution in the colonies is to overthrow foreign capitalism (i.e. imperialism)."

Applying the Program of the Communist International to the country's concrete conditions, since 1930 the Party called our revolution a *bourgeois revolution*

for the people's rights (i.e. a new-type bourgeois democratic revolution). In February 1951, at its Second Congress, our Party held that the Vietnamese revolution was a *people's national democratic* revolution:

National, because it annihilates the imperialist aggressors to realize complete national independence and unity.

Democratic, because it abolishes different forms of feudal and semi-feudal oppression and exploitation, carries out land reform, develops industry and commerce and ensures democratic liberties for the people.

Popular, because it is undertaken by the people under the leadership of the working class.

National and *Democratic*, that is the character of our revolution, and the people constitutes its forces."¹

At the Second Congress, the Party was also of the view that after the victory of the national people's democratic revolution we must immediately shift on to a socialist revolution, that the national people's democratic revolution constitutes the premises of the socialist revolution in our country.

The national people's democratic and the socialist revolution constitute two different revolutionary strategies, yet the former is transformed into the latter, and the latter is the continuation of the former. Between the two, there is no "Great Wall."

1. Truong Chinh, *Ban ve Cach Mang Viet Nam* (On the Vietnamese Revolution) in Documents of the Party's Congress, February 1951, edited by the Party History Research Commission, 1965, p. 100, in Vietnamese.

The former war of resistance against the French colonialists and the present resistance war against the American imperialists in South Viet Nam constitute stages of the national people's democratic revolution in the whole country. However, we did not wait until it is totally accomplished to begin with the socialist revolution. On the contrary, after the great victory of Dien Bien Phu, and the complete liberation of the North, we immediately shifted on to the stage of socialist revolution in the Northern half of our country, while in the South our people were carrying on the national people's democratic revolution, in the spirit of the Political Program of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation.

II. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

The Vietnamese people have written many pages of glorious history of struggle against foreign invasion and domination. The Revolution of August 1945 was one of the most glorious and remarkable ones, marking a great turning-point in our national history.

It was a great achievement of the broad masses of our people realized under the leadership of the Party headed by President Ho Chi Minh.

It was a revolution which reflects, with a strong popular character, our nation's heroism, undauntedness and unity.

It was the crystallization of the most beautiful traditions of a heroic and indomitable people who have a millenary history of struggle against foreign feudalist invasion and around one hundred years of struggle against colonialist domination. It was the result of fifteen years of struggle of the working class and the entire Vietnamese people since the coming into being of our Party, which mobilizes, organizes and leads our people in their revolution. In those fifteen years, the Vietnamese Revolution underwent three rehearsals: the 1930-1931 revolutionary upsurge, the 1936-1939 democratic campaign, and the 1939-1945 national salvation upsurge.

The August Revolution was a great leap forward marking an extremely great change in the history of the evolution of the Vietnamese nation. It shattered the colonialist and feudalist administration, founded the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam — the first worker-peasant State in Southeast Asia — turned our people from slaves into real masters of the land, transformed our country from a colonial and semi-feudal one into an independent country and a people's democracy, changed our Party from an illegal party into one in power, and raised our nation to the rank of vanguard nations.

The August Revolution was an armed general insurrection. It showed that in our time, if the people of a colonial or dependent country hold firm the banner of national independence and democracy and persevere in the line of revolutionary violence they surely can, under certain historical conditions, win victory in a general insurrection.

The August Revolution ushered in a most glorious and new era for the Vietnamese nation, an era of independence and freedom, of people's democracy and socialism. It led us to the great victory of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and is now leading us to brilliant exploits in the present resistance war against the American imperialists, which draws the admiration of the whole mankind.

The August Revolution was the victory of the strategy of the national people's democratic revolution advancing to a socialist revolution set forth and led by our Party with President Ho Chi Minh at its head. President Ho Chi Minh had founded and trained our Party, guided the ship of the Vietnamese revolution to the victory of the August Revolution and therefrom to other victories.

Internationally, the August Revolution has made great contributions.

Through it, the Vietnamese people participated at the price of heavy sacrifices in lives, in the great struggle to crush the world fascists comprising the Japanese fascists in Indochina.

The victory of the August Revolution had direct repercussions on the anti-imperialist movement for independence and democracy of the two neighbouring peoples of Laos and Cambodia, stimulated the national-liberation movement in the world, especially in Southeast Asian countries and in the French colonies.

Proceeding from the law of unequal development of capitalism and the thesis that imperialism is the supreme stage of capitalism, Lenin affirmed that since

there existed weak links in the chain of capitalism, socialist revolution might be successful first in a certain number of countries or even in a single country. This prediction of genius became a reality. The victory of the Russian October Revolution in 1917 was the first victory of Marxism-Leninism in a capitalist country, the weakest in the whole system of capitalism, heralding a new era for human society.

The victory of the August Revolution in Viet Nam in 1945 was the first victory of Marxism-Leninism in a colonial and semi-feudal country. It contributed to opening up a period of decline of the colonial system of world imperialism.

During the Second World War, our Party examined the situation at home and abroad in the light of Marxism-Leninism, and placed our country in the conditions of the world war, of the great struggle of socialist, democratic and progressive forces against the savage fascists. France was then one of the weakest imperialist countries, and Indochina, the weakest link of the colonial system of French imperialism. After the occupation of France by the Hitlerite troops, even in the "metropolis," the French ruling bourgeoisie was split into two antagonistic groups: that of Petain capitulating to the Nazis, and that of De Gaulle which fought against the army of occupation. The structure of French imperialism was rocked to its foundation. In Indochina, the French fell to their knees before the Japanese fascists and, together with them, ruled over and exploited the Indochinese peoples; however, the contradictions between them grew ever more acute and

would naturally lead to the elimination of the French by the Japanese. As for the Japanese fascists, aggressive as they were in Indochina, they would surely be defeated by the Soviet Union and the Allies.

In this situation, our Party was resolved to lead the entire people to rise up and bring the August Revolution to victory. It did not sit with folded arms to wait for the revolution to break out in Japan, or for Soviet troops or Allied troops to come and liberate us.

The victory of the August Revolution proved that in our time the victory of national people's democratic revolution led by the working class is quite possible in a colonial country encircled by the imperialists and their henchmen, that the revolution in the colonies is closely linked with the socialist revolution in the "metropolis" without, however, being dependent on it, and can triumph before the working class in the "metropolis" seizes power.

The August Revolution made a breach in the bastion of imperialism, breaking the weakest link in the chain of colonialism, and paved the way for the national people's democratic revolution in an agriculturally backward country to advance to socialist revolution, by-passing the stage of capitalist development. That was why the imperialists and their henchmen, directed by the American imperialists, hastily entered our country in order to strangle the August Revolution. They began to perpetrate mad and barbarous acts against our people, which continued up to the present time.

The victory of the August Revolution placed Viet Nam among the people's democratic and socialist countries. It testified to the correctness of the line and policies of the Party and President Ho Chi Minh. Our Party correctly applied Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of Viet Nam, led the country's revolution in a radical, independent, sovereign and creative spirit. Under the leadership of the Party, our popular masses showed great courage and intelligence.

On the historical significance of the great August Revolution, President Ho Chi Minh said:

"Not only the working class and people of Viet Nam, but also those of other oppressed countries can be proud of the fact that, for the first time in the history of revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries, a party only *fifteen years after its foundation has led the revolution to victory and seized power throughout the country*".¹

Highly valuing the significance of the August Revolution, we will intensify our struggle to defend and develop its great achievements.

III. SOME LESSONS OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

The August 1945 Revolution gave our Party and people many precious lessons. Following are the most important ones:

1. Ho Chi Minh, op. cit., *Su That Publishing House, Hanoi 1970*, p. 161.

1. Stand firm on the working class position, hold high the banner of national independence, correctly solve the relation between the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist struggles.

Since its foundation, our Party has held that the Vietnamese revolution, waged after the victory of the great Russian October Revolution, constituted an integral part of the world proletarian revolution. It must be put under the leadership of the working class, the only class which has sufficient conditions to lead it to complete victory; wrest back independence for the nation, land for the peasants and democratic liberties for the entire people; take the country on the path toward socialist revolution, carry out socialist transformation and construction, liberate our working class and people from all forms of oppression and exploitation and build a new life in genuine independence, freedom and happiness.

In view of the situation of Viet Nam, a colonial and semi-feudal country, the national people's democratic revolution assumed two tasks — anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist — which are closely interrelated. To rule over the country, imperialism relied on the feudal land-owning class who had surrendered and become willing tools of the former. To drive away imperialism, we must overthrow feudalism and vice-versa, to overthrow feudalism we must drive away imperialism. These two tasks, anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist, correctly reflected the objective law of development of Vietnamese society, and met the fundamental and urgent demands of people of all walks of life.

Thanks to the experience gained from the two rehearsals of 1930-1931 and 1936-1939 while in the world and in the country great changes took place at the outbreak of World War II and the fascist imperialists stepped up their oppression and exploitation of our people, the Party clearly saw that the contradiction between the Vietnamese people and the fascist imperialists was the essential one, hence the necessity to aim the spearhead of the revolution at them and their valets. That was why the Party changed its strategic orientation and made national liberation its primary task. Holding that the two tasks — anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist — are interrelated, our Party made a further step in realizing that of those two strategic tasks, the task of anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation was the principal one.

Indeed, imperialism and the feudal land-owning class were the main opponents of the national people's democratic revolution, but owing to the concrete conditions of our country during the Second World War, they could not be considered on a par with each other.

It was necessary to realize that the fascist imperialists were the principal, the most powerful and the most dangerous enemies. Failing to drive them out, we could not win national independence and democratic liberties and realize the slogans "land to the tiller", "an eight-hour working day", etc.

To a people who have lost their fatherland, the national element not only exerts an influence on the basic masses — the workers and the peasants — but

also on other classes, even on certain land-owners (especially small land-owners) and in particular on intellectuals and students issued from families of land-owners. Holding high the banner of anti-imperialism for national independence, the Party was able to muster not only the masses of workers and peasants, but also other patriotic classes and strata into a powerful force in order to defeat the aggressors.

The anti-imperialist struggle was considered as a primary task whereas the anti-feudalist struggle was to be carried out step by step, so as to serve the task of national liberation. We must thoroughly exploit the contradictions between the imperialists and the land-owners, split up the ranks of the feudal land-owning class — social base of imperialism — rally as many people as possible to our cause, neutralize those whom we are unable to win over and completely isolate the most dangerous enemies, namely the imperialists and their stooges.

Standing firm on the position of the working class and holding high the banner of national independence, our Party correctly solved the relations between the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist tasks. This correct and creative change in strategic orientation played a decisive role in the victory of the August 1945 Revolution.

2. Thoroughly exploit the contradictions within enemy ranks, turn the spearhead of our struggle against the immediate enemy.

In any revolution, the enemy of the revolution also shows its strength and weakness. Its fundamental

weakness lies in the fact that it runs counter to historical evolution, to the interests of the masses of the people, hence justice is not on its side and its ranks are always in disunity. This disunity is a general law of imperialism, an irretrievable weakness.

In the course of the preparation and execution of the August Revolution, our Party made the most of the enemy's weaknesses, thoroughly exploited the contradictions within its ranks, isolated to the utmost the immediate enemy who was also the main enemy of the revolution, created conditions for the revolution to win and maintain power. That was a credit for the strategy of our Party.

In the movement for national liberation in the 1940-1945 period, the concrete and immediate targets of our attack were the Japanese and French fascists and their hirelings. On the basis of a scientific analysis of the situation in the world and in Indochina during that period, our Party had since the start realized that the Japanese and French fascists only temporarily agreed with each other to dominate Indochina, pursued the same aims of fighting communism, the Soviet Union and Allied forces, of opposing national liberation and democracy; but there existed between them irreconcilable sharp contradictions in interests. Those contradictions were increasingly antagonistic and bitter, and sooner or later the Japanese and the French would seek to eliminate each other. Our Party made use of the contradictions between the Japanese and French fascists, between French and Japanese lackeys to the

full, creating more favourable conditions for the development of the Vietnamese revolution.

As regards the French colonialists, our Party drew a distinction between the Petainists and the Gaullists, exploited the contradictions between them, in order to split up the ranks of the French colonialists in Indochina and direct the spearhead of the struggle at the Japanese and French fascists.

After the Japanese staged the coup d'état of March 9, 1945 against the French with the aim of exclusively occupying Indochina, our Party replaced the slogan "Drive out the Japanese and French fascists" by another one: "Drive out the Japanese fascists." This was aimed at driving the spearhead of the revolution at the concrete and immediate enemies of the revolution during that period, viz, the Japanese fascists and their agents. At the same time, the Party sought to split up the pro-Japanese groups to win the sympathy of those whom we could win, neutralize those who had to be neutralized and isolate to the utmost the die-hard ring-leaders, with a view to eliminating them.

In the August general insurrection, our Party exploited the contradictions between the Japanese who stood for continuing the war and those who advocated capitulation, struggled with the Japanese both politically and militarily, mobilized our political and armed forces to bring pressure to bear upon the Japanese to accept our terms, and thus we were able to rapidly win power before the entry of the imperialists into Indochina in the name of the Allies

allegedly to disarm Japanese troops, but in reality to strangle the Vietnamese revolution and set up a new puppet administration in our country.

As to the imperialists who came to our country under the Allied cloak, our Party cleverly took advantage of the contradictions between them, and advocated a policy firm in principle but flexible in tactics, so as to consolidate the revolutionary power.

The lessons of the Vietnamese revolution have shown that in the revolution of a country, one often faces several enemies at the same time. That is why the revolution must thoroughly exploit the contradictions between the different enemies, divide them to the utmost and concentrate the fire of the struggle on the immediate enemy who is at the same time the main enemy. In so doing, it must have a very flexible policy, even make partial concessions now and then, make detours, temporarily put aside certain interests to secure the main ones. But it is *necessary to constantly heighten vigilance, firmly take in hand the Party's leadership of the revolution, on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, preserve national independence and sovereignty, raise the revolutionary spirit of the masses and strengthen their confidence in the revolution, unceasingly develop political and armed forces, keep the initiative and ensure the development of the revolution.*

3. *Build up a broad national united front based on a firm worker-peasant alliance.*

The Party is fully aware that revolution is the work of the masses. To secure the victory of the

revolution, the unity of the entire people in a national united front based on a firm worker-peasant alliance led by the working class is needed.

The *Viet Minh Front*, created on President Ho Chi Minh's initiative, met with the historical demands and the cherished aspirations of our entire nation.

Contrary to previous periods of revolutionary agitation, the Viet Minh Front was set up within the framework of the Vietnamese nation rather than for the whole of Indochina. This gave a strong stimulus to our people's national spirit and at the same time smashed all the enemy's schemes aimed at sowing discord between the Vietnamese people and the neighbouring Khmer and Lao peoples. This also created conditions for the latter to muster their forces to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese people against the common enemy, namely the imperialist aggressors and their henchmen in each country.

With a correct program marked with national and democratic spirit, the Viet Minh Front was able to unite different democratic parties, mass organizations, social classes, majority and minority nationalities living on the soil of Viet Nam and religious communities, into a powerful "political army of the masses" for the insurrection to seize power. The Front really constituted the banner which united and stimulated our people's patriotic movement. In the pre-insurrection upsurge, it had assumed real functions of a revolutionary power in many localities.

The success of the Viet Minh Front demonstrates that in order to achieve the unity of the entire

people, the Party must distinguish between friends and foes of the revolution, make proper appraisal of different social classes and strata, and work out policies which correspond to their interests and aspirations. Meanwhile, suitable and varied forms of organization are needed to enhance the entire people's national sentiment, create conditions for every patriot to join the Front and to serve the Fatherland in his or her own capacity.

The more the national united front is expanded, the more possibilities the revolution will have in isolating the enemy. However, it is necessary to admit into the Front only those who are worthy to be admitted, and to put the national union bloc under the leadership of the working class, on the basis of a firm worker-peasant alliance. This alliance constitutes the basis, and at the same time the backbone of the anti-imperialist national united front. In a colonial and semi-feudal country like ours where peasants make up 90 per cent of the population, to secure the leadership of the revolution for the working class we must first of all and essentially secure its leadership of the peasants and build up a worker-peasant alliance. Such a firm alliance makes it possible for us to win the intermediary strata over to the national united front and bring the revolution to victory. President Ho Chi Minh said:

"Only the worker-peasant alliance led by the working class is capable of struggling resolutely and thoroughly to overthrow the counter-revolutionary forces, seize and consolidate the labouring people's

power, fulfil the historical task of the national democratic revolution and advance towards socialism." ¹

As regards the policy of the Front, if we are not fully aware of the importance of the leadership of the Front by the working class, if we share this leadership with another class, or if we only favour the expansion of the Front and give little thought to consolidating the worker-peasant alliance — the foundation of the Front — and to fostering revolutionary forces among the basic masses, we shall commit rightist blunders. On the other hand, if we only think of organizing the masses of workers and peasants, and do not work out correct policies and suitable forms of organization in order to win other strata over to the Front, we shall be isolated, because of our "leftist" narrow-mindedness.

In short, our Party succeeded in creating a factor of victory for the August Revolution: the foundation of the Viet Minh Front — a broad national united front — based on the worker-peasant alliance and led by the Party.

4. *Resolutely follow the path of revolutionary violence to win power.*

Born in the struggle in the conditions of a colonial and semi-feudal country where the imperialists and their hirelings ruthlessly oppressed and exploited our people and deprived them of all democratic liberties, our Party has, since its coming into existence,

1. Ho Chi Minh, *op. cit.*, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1970, p. 302.

affirmed that *national liberation can only be achieved through revolutionary violence*.

The August 1945 Revolution was indeed the victory of the Marxist-Leninist conception of revolutionary violence which was creatively applied by our Party to the concrete conditions of Viet Nam.

In the August Revolution, the Party inherited our elders' experience in armed insurrection against the French colonialists (e. g. reliance on rural and mountainous areas for setting up resistance bases, waging protracted guerilla warfare, etc). It was able to draw extremely precious practical lessons from the 1930-1931 and 1936-1939 revolutionary movements; and at the same time, it also learnt from the rich experience of world revolution, especially those of the Russian, Chinese and French revolutions.

As regards experience in the use of violence during the August Revolution, our Party was able to build both armed and political forces, resort to armed struggle as well as political struggle, closely combine the revolutionary movement in the countryside with that in the cities, combine the offensive of the revolutionary armed forces in a number of localities with popular mass uprising in the whole country. All these factors were intertwined, constituting a great global strength to defeat the enemy.

In the process of *building up revolutionary forces*, attention was paid by our Party first of all to building *political forces*, on the basis of which it built up the *people's armed forces and para-military forces*. Political forces constitutes the firm basis of the armed forces and the latter constitute the

“spearhead” of the former. The experience of the August Revolution has shown that armed forces can only be built on the basis of existing political forces which were consolidated and developed. The activities of the armed forces protect the political forces, support and stimulate the political struggle of the masses.

As regards the forms of action, our Party deems that the fundamental form of revolutionary violence is the combination of armed struggle with political struggle.

In the pre-insurrection upsurge, our Party closely combined guerilla warfare with mass uprisings to stage partial insurrection and set up local revolutionary power, strictly wedded political struggle to armed struggle in order to seize paddy stocks to cope with the famine, and annihilated Japanese troops and traitors, etc. The enemy was reduced to a difficult situation, passivity, confusion and disintegration.

In the days of the August 1945 general insurrection, our Party mobilized the entire population from North to South to rise up simultaneously, resorted to both armed and political forces, and closely co-ordinated military offensives and mass strikes in factories, markets, schools, offices, etc. and mass demonstrations and manifestations of force to prepare for the insurrection to seize power.

At that time, we had a powerful “political army of the masses”, whereas our concentrated armed forces were in small number and insufficiently equipped. The armed forces of the masses which included units of national salvation and combat

militia, armed propaganda brigades, groups for the annihilation of traitors, etc. comprised hundreds of thousands of people. Meanwhile, the Japanese fascists — the main and immediate enemy of the Vietnamese revolution — were defeated by the Soviet Army and had to surrender unconditionally, the Japanese occupation troops in Indochina were like a snake without a head. Therefore, the August Revolution was rapidly brought to a fundamental victory by the political forces equipped with rudimentary weapons, by armed insurrections in combination with military offensives in a number of localities (both in rural areas and in provincial capitals). But, prior to that period, if we had not been able to build revolutionary bases, organize armed forces, wage a heroic armed struggle, and launch in time a general insurrection at the opportune moment, we would not have been able to win such splendid victory as we had won in the August Revolution.

The main forces of national people's democratic revolution in our country are made up of workers and peasants. Our Party considered both the town and countryside as bases of the revolution, therefore it attached much importance to building revolutionary forces in the towns and countryside, combining closely the revolutionary movements in urban areas with those in rural areas. This made it possible for the revolution to be in a continuously and all-sidedly offensive posture during the August general insurrection.

In a colonial, semi-feudal, agricultural and backward country like Viet Nam in those days, the

countryside offered much more favourable conditions for the preparation and execution of political struggle in co-ordination with protracted armed struggle, culminating in an insurrection to seize power. Our countryside has an abundant reserve of peasants who make up ninety per cent of the population. Our peasants, full of revolutionary enthusiasm, constitute a faithful and reliable ally of the working class. Our Party can rely on the countryside to organize powerful political and armed forces. *Once the peasant masses are organized and led by our Party, the countryside will become an extremely strong bulwark of the revolution.*

Our country's immense rural areas with its natural economy was not so dependent on the cities. The enemy's ruling apparatus there was however relatively weak. It could hold the cities in its grip, but was unable to strictly control the countryside. Therefore, the revolution could rely on the countryside to establish revolutionary bases, secretly build up its forces, mobilize the masses for political struggle, and when conditions permitted, waged armed struggle and guerilla fighting. In a directly revolutionary situation, the countryside was the place where the enemy was weakest and most exposed, where his ruling apparatus underwent the earliest disintegration and crisis, therefore with well-prepared revolutionary forces, we could launch partial uprisings, destroy by chunks the enemy's administrative system in the countryside, set up local revolutionary power, build vast and complete revolutionary bases serving

as springboards for the general insurrection to seize nation-wide power in the whole country.

Our Party relied on the countryside, but at the same time attached great importance to the role of cities, to building revolutionary bases and developing the revolutionary movement in the cities. Big cities were the country's political, economic and cultural centres, and where the enemy's leading bodies were concentrated. The urban revolutionary bases made it possible for the Party to lead the urban masses' struggle right in enemy dens, closely follow the situation and promptly assess the development of events, and the Party was thus able to decide in time swift changes in orientation in order to vigorously impel the movement and when the general insurrection was launched, deal decisive blows at the enemy, paralyse and disintegrate him and seize power throughout the country. The foundation of the *Secure Zone* in the suburbs and rural areas adjacent to the Capital of Hanoi, which served as a support base for the Standing Bureau of the Party Central Committee to cling to the Capital and provide timely direction for the nation-wide movement, was a precious lesson of our country's revolution.

Our principle of action in the cities is to rely on the working class, therefore the workers should be made to actively participate in the struggle against the imperialists and their valets, join various revolutionary organizations and become vanguard forces of the struggle for national liberation. Meanwhile, importance should be attached to organizing and leading school students, intellectuals, small traders and small

proprietors. In the cities, we neither "lay in ambush for a long time", without budging an inch nor waited for the revolutionary forces from the countryside to come and liberate the cities. On the contrary, we actively engaged in propaganda, mobilized, organized and led the urban masses to struggle from lower to higher forms, in close co-ordination with the rural movement. When the opportune moment came and conditions for insurrection were ripe, the cities together with the countryside rose up in time and on their own initiative to seize power in the whole country. Then, rural revolutionary masses can enter the cities to help urban revolutionary masses rise up to seize power, as was the case of the August Revolution. Nevertheless, the urban revolutionary masses must hold firm the initiative and the urban Party committees must assume direct leadership of the movement.

In a word, the victory of the August Revolution was due to our Party's firm line of revolutionary violence. Our Party knew how to build and use both political and armed forces, combine armed struggle with political struggle, the rural revolutionary movement with the urban revolutionary movement; rely on the countryside to build revolutionary bases, launch partial uprisings first in rural areas, and when the opportune moment comes, lead both the towns and countryside to rise up for the seizure of power.

5. Make active preparations, seize the opportune moment and resolutely mobilize the entire people for the insurrection.

Applying Marxism-Leninism and the lessons of the world revolutionary movement and following our nation's traditions of struggle, our Party considered that our revolution for national liberation would be a long and difficult one, but it could eventually triumph through insurrection. That was why prior to the August Revolution, our Party had resorted to all forms of struggle, from lower to higher ones, to oppose the enemy and at the same time had actively made preparations in all aspects to wait for the opportunity to launch armed insurrection for the seizure of power. At its Eighth Session in 1941, the Party Central Committee decided that "the preparation for insurrection is the central task of our Party and people in the present stage."¹ As shown by various documents the Party had foreseen in an increasingly concrete and accurate manner the opportune moment for the revolution. The Party Central Committee enjoined and gave concrete instructions to the entire Party and people to prepare for armed insurrection. Meanwhile, it criticized pessimistic and wavering attitudes, lack of vigour in preparation for insurrection as well as impatience and haste which might reveal our forces too soon or lead to spontaneous insurrection when conditions were not ripe, etc.

Another characteristic of the August Revolution is that it proceeded from *partial uprisings* to liberate region after region, build revolutionary bases and set up local revolutionary power, to general insurrection

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 393.

to liberate the whole country and set up revolutionary power throughout the country.

To stage partial uprisings and advance to general insurrection constituted a correct strategy which embodied our Party's independent, self-reliant and creative spirit in the application of the Marxist-Leninist theory of armed insurrection to the concrete conditions of Viet Nam.

While awaiting the opportune moment for general insurrection to win power in the whole country, partial uprisings played an important role. They facilitated the seizure of local power, created conditions for the rapid expansion of our forces, and at the same time widened the scope and influence of the revolution, driving the enemy into a posture of passivity and confusion. The setting up of the *Liberated Zone* and *resistance bases* all over the country gave a strong impulse to our people's struggle against the Japanese fascists for national salvation and eliminated tendencies to overestimate the enemy, doubt of the final victory and of the forces of the masses, and the lack of determination of those who dared not launch an insurrection. Partial uprisings are the most active and effective preparations which contribute to the maturity of conditions for a nationwide insurrection. Careful preparations and favourable conditions are therefore needed for the success of partial uprisings.

At the opportune moment, our Party launched in time a general insurrection for the seizure of power in the whole country.

The opportune moment is the combination of mature subjective and objective conditions in order to ensure the victory of the revolution. It is the moment when the country's political crisis reaches its climax, when the vanguard is ready to fight till the end and the reserve is prepared to support the vanguard and when confusion and division prevail in the enemy's ranks. In revolutionary agitation the opportune moment comes as a historical necessity placing the masses on the threshold of general insurrection for the seizure of power, but it may pass by quickly if we do not grasp it and start our action. What matters most is that the Party should carefully prepare subjective conditions for the revolution, thereby influencing objective conditions and creating the opportune moment or hastening its appearance.

Lenin said: "This is the fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions and especially by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century: for a revolution to take place, it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realize the impossibility of living in the old way, and to demand changes; for a revolution to take place, it is essential that the exploiters should not be allowed to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the *'lower classes' no longer want and the 'upper classes' are no longer able to live in the old way that revolution can triumph.*"

The opportune moment of the August 1945 general insurrection appeared at a time when the upsurge

1. Lenin, "Left-wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Vol. 31, p. 392.

against the Japanese fascists for national salvation was at its peak, when World War II was drawing to an end and the Japanese fascists had already been defeated, their puppet administration was disintegrating, not knowing who it should cling to, and when the British, American, French imperialists and the Chiang Kai-shek troops in the pay of the Americans had not yet arrived in Viet Nam. It was at this moment that our Party, being sensitive to the development of the situation, resolutely mobilized the entire people to rise up to smash the imperialist and feudal state apparatus and found the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

The opportune moment of the August Revolution only lasted a short time. If the general insurrection had taken place at an earlier time when the Japanese fascists had not yet capitulated, it would have met with many difficulties. The Japanese fascists were weakened, but still had enough strength to fiercely oppose the revolution, and the insurrection would not have seized power throughout the country so easily. If it took place later when the British troops (with the French colonialists in their wake) and Chiang Kai-shek troops (manipulated by the American imperialists) had already entered our country and the Tran Trong Kim puppet government had already been able to contact them, the most favourable moment would have already passed by.

Insurrection is an art the perfection of which consists in the choice of the right opportunity to muster forces and deal decisive blows at the enemy. In order

to grasp the opportune moment, one has to thoroughly understand Marxist-Leninist principles on revolutionary opportunities, closely follow the situation, be sensitive to changes and have the "necessary political sense," in order to accurately foresee what one must and can do and how to do, and especially how to prepare actively one's forces which will be used to win victory when the opportune moment comes.

Karl Marx taught us: "Insurrection is no trifling matter." But once insurrection is launched, one must resolutely attack, attack more and attack till total victory because "defensive means death for armed insurrection." V.I. Lenin also recalled an important lesson for all revolutionary armed insurrection: "To be courageous, more courageous, always courageous."

Acting upon those teachings, our Party bravely surmounted difficulties and resolutely led the insurrection, without fear of hardships and sacrifices. The determination, courage and opportune action of our entire Party and people found their expression in these words of President Ho Chi Minh: "The national and international situation is extremely favourable to us. Our Party should not let the occasion pass by. We must resolutely lead the national struggle for independence, whatever the sacrifices, even if we have to burn down the Truong Son Range."

In short, the victory of the August 1945 general insurrection was due first of all to our Party's correct political line and method of struggle, active preparation of its forces, anticipation and grasping of the opportune moment, determination and dauntlessness

in mobilizing the masses to rise up to stage partial insurrections and to advance to a general insurrection for the seizure of power throughout the country.

6. Build a vanguard and fighting Party armed with Marxism-Leninism, having a correct political line, ideologically unified, organizationally upright and strong, and keeping close contacts with the masses.

The essential factor which determined the victory of the August Revolution in particular, and the whole revolutionary cause of the Vietnamese people in general, is a new-type working class party, a Marxist-Leninist party founded, trained and educated by comrade Ho Chi Minh, a party armed with Marxism-Leninism and having a correct political line, ideologically unified, organizationally upright and strong, and keeping close contact with the masses.

Our Party was able to work out a political line, build its revolutionary forces and determine the methods of struggle in a correct manner, because it stood firm on the position of the working class, was imbued with Marxism-Leninism which it applied in a creative way to the concrete conditions of our country. The line and policies worked out and implemented by the Party in the August Revolution testify to its absolute loyalty to the cause of class and national liberation and are a reflection of its independent and self-reliant spirit, its will to rely mainly on its own forces, and its high creativeness.

On the basis of a correct political line, our Party was able to achieve unity of ideology and action

within the Party, and guarantee its organizational purity and solidity.

In the preparation and execution of the August Revolution the essential task of our *ideological work* was to make the entire Party understand thoroughly the line of the national democratic revolution, see clearly the nation's main enemy, and realize that the goal of the insurrection is the seizure of power, so that the entire Party is at one with the Party Central Committee's line and does its utmost to propagate and explain it to the masses, help them carry it out and resolutely oppose erroneous views harmful to its implementation.

The Party educated all its members to resolutely fight with self-denial, initiative and self-reliance, make preparations in all respects and seize the opportune moment for insurrection. Meanwhile, it criticized pessimistic and wavering attitudes, the fear of sacrifices, and resolutely opposed erroneous rightist and "leftist" tendencies, especially those opportunists who wished to make use of the Japanese or did not see their manoeuvres.

Our Party attaches special importance to realizing *unity within its ranks*. This unity constitutes the source of its strength, but requires first of all and essentially political and ideological unity. Without real political and ideological unity, organizational unity could only be a formal one.

In the August Revolution certain errors were made which badly affected Party unity in a number of localities. However, the Party was in the main able to preserve its unity and cohesion. This made

it possible for the Party to lead the entire people to successful insurrection.

Parallel with ideological work, care was taken by the Party to build *an incorruptible and strong organization*.

Being the vanguard and commanding staff of the working class, the Party must naturally pay great attention to building its bases among the working class. That is a matter of principle which guarantees the consolidation of the Party's proletarian character. With the peculiarities of our society it is, however, necessary for the Party to admit into its ranks loyal persons and the best elements of other strata of the labouring people. With the admission of those people into the Party, non-proletarian ideas naturally affect more or less the Party's ideology and the struggle to preserve the Party's proletarian character is more difficult. But what determines the character of a new-type party of the working class is not merely the social origin of its members, it is essentially its political line, ideological education work and its political life and struggle.

In the Party's organizational work, a deviation from the principles and rules of the Party and a lack of revolutionary vigilance and Party unity would make possible for the enemy to infiltrate into the Party and sabotage it. Our Party's experience in the struggle against the anti-bolsheviks during the preparatory period of the August Revolution gave ample proof of it.

To struggle against the A. B., the Party must periodically re-examine its own ranks, step up criti-

cism and self-criticism, control and supervise the execution of its line and policies, while Party members must improve the level of their political and theoretical level, so as to be able to quickly detect the saboteurs.

When the Party is engaging in illegal activities and the enemy resorts to all tricks to sabotage it, its organization must be kept in extreme secrecy; the admission of new members must be done in strict observance of the Party's rules after a careful examination, so as not to let the counter-revolutionaries infiltrate into the Party, and if such cases happen, detect and deal with them in time. However, narrow-mindedness and reluctance to expand the Party should be avoided if we are to strengthen the Party's fighting capacity and leadership.

During the period of preparation and execution of the August Revolution, our Party was small in number, but its members were highly qualified and maintained *close contact with the masses*. This constituted the source of the Party's invincible strength. Maintaining contacts with the masses means maintaining contacts with our own class, the working class and large strata of the people. The Party cadres and members could mingle with the masses, due to the fact that the Party organized and led the Viet Minh Front and many of its Associations for national salvation, and especially due to the fact that these Party cadres and members had to work illegally in extremely difficult conditions. This made it possible for the Party to listen to the opinion of the masses, understand the vital interests of all strata

of the population, work out correct line, policies and slogans reflecting the profound sentiments and aspirations of the masses. In this way, the Party enjoyed their confidence and total support. In the days of the August general insurrection, our entire people tightened their ranks, united as one man, rose up for the seizure of power in the whole country and resolutely defended the revolutionary power under the leadership of the Party.

The Party's Third National Congress in 1960 pointed out: "In the conditions of a small and backward country like ours, if one can build a *united Marxist-Leninist political party which maintains close contact with the masses and always takes firm in hand the leadership of the revolution* the revolutionary movement of the people will certainly triumph, whatever the difficulties might be."¹

The problem of cadres occupies an important place in Party's organizational work and leadership. A cadre has the task of propagating and explaining the Party's line and policies to the masses, and of organizing the latter for the implementation of those line and policies. The preparation and execution of insurrection for the seizure of power require a great number of cadres and an adequate assignment of tasks. In the 1939-1945 period, although our Party made great efforts to train its cadres, the number of cadres was insufficient to meet the requirements of the movement. The Japanese and French fascists' extremely savage policy of terror cost our Party

1. *Party Documents*, op. cit., p. 143.

quite a number of its cadres. In the places where there was a lack of cadres, local Party committees took the bold step of training active and loyal members of National Salvation Associations into Viet Minh cadres and later through their work and struggle, into good Party cadres.

In this period, a large number of Party cadres and members were imprisoned by the enemy. Most of them preserved their revolutionary qualities and turned the enemy prisons into schools and places where they drew lessons from their work, organized political and theoretical studies. The Party organized the escape of a number of its cadres, in order to replenish its ranks outside. Almost all those escaped from the prisons before and after March 9, 1945 became key cadres leading the people in their insurrection for the seizure of power in various localities.

CONCLUSION

August 1945.

August 1970.

Twenty-five years have elapsed. During this historic period, our people have gone through innumerable sacrifices and hardships, yet they have accomplished an extremely glorious task.

We are very proud of our Party, of our President Ho Chi Minh, outstanding leader and great educator of our entire Party and people. Under the leadership of the Party our people won victory in the August Revolution and restored Viet Nam on the world map. The victory of the August Revolution, the victory of the war of resistance against the French colonialists in former years, and the present war against the US imperialists have brought glory to our Fatherland, and enhanced the prestige of our Party and people, as well as the position of our country on the international arena.

At present, US imperialism, the chieftain of the world's war maniacs, the common enemy of mankind, is nurturing the hope of making use of force and ma-

chiavellian manoeuvres to turn Viet Nam into a US new-type colony and military base. To safeguard our fundamental national rights (independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity), and make our contribution to the world people's struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism, our people are resolved to continue and step up the struggle against the US aggressors and their henchmen till total victory.

Bringing into play the spirit of the August Revolution and of the two wars of resistance against the French colonialists and the American imperialists, let our entire people close their ranks, display their courage in combat and in work, in order to defeat the American aggressors and successfully build socialism, resolutely defend the North, liberate the South and advance to the peaceful reunification of the country. We will realize the last wish of President Ho Chi Minh :

*"Let our entire Party and people closely unite and exert the great efforts, to build a peaceful, reunified, independent, democratic and prosperous Viet Nam, and make a worthy contribution to the world revolution."*¹

1. President Ho Chi Minh's Testament.



